

Why you need to act now to strengthen your employment relations



The Employment Rights Act

The UK government has set out a clear road map for the introduction of the provisions in the Employment Rights Act – the biggest change in industrial relations law for a generation.

The Act will give easier access for trade unions to workplaces, change the thresholds and minimum notice periods for industrial action, as well as introducing a range of new rights at work, including day one employment rights.

Leading employers understand the many benefits of good employment relations, including:

- Improved recruitment and retention
- Fewer disputes
- Better management of change
- Increased productivity

A collaborative approach is needed to achieve these benefits and now is the time to foster this culture.

What you can do now

The new legislation presents a range of challenges and opportunities for employers as they navigate new responsibilities.

The IPA can help guide you through this process – from helping you assess how well you currently listen to your employees, to building strong and sustainable partnership relationships with recognised trade unions.

We'd be delighted to discuss your approach to the evolving industrial relations landscape and to arrange a free of charge briefing for your senior leadership team.

Contact: nita.clarke@ipa-involve.com

About the IPA

We are the UK's longest-established organisation supporting employers and employees to establish positive relations at work. In 2023 the IPA merged with the Institute for Employment Studies, a registered charity.

www.ipa-involve.com

How the IPA can help

Based on research evidence and the unrivaled knowledge and experience we have built through over a century of work in employment relations, we help organisations develop new ways of working, based on trust and collaboration, that deliver better workplaces and better outcomes.

We have worked with many of the UK's leading employers across the economy to help them listen to their employees – a key enabler of successful employee engagement.

We recognise that employers will have very different starting points on their employment relations journey. Some will have no experience at all of collective relations at work, some will have employee voice mechanisms such as staff councils, others will have formal relationships with recognised trade unions which may include collective bargaining over pay and conditions.

For organisations with no existing trade union relationships

We are experienced in helping organisations with little or no knowledge of trade unions understand the legal landscape and the positive benefits that developing a relationship with a recognised trade union can bring. We have strong relationships with a wide-range of UK trade unions, and can facilitate initial engagement and dialogue, as well as supporting the agreement of access arrangements.

We can help demystify some of the jargon and process surrounding collective employment relations, and help you lay the groundwork for positive, constructive trade union relationships.

Our support includes:

Leadership briefings and workshops:

covering the value of employee voice and engagement, the role of trade unions, the benefits of recognising a trade union and what good practice looks like.

Strengthening employee voice:

recognising that employee engagement is foundational to good employment relations, support to establish or strengthen mechanisms for hearing employee voice, including training for leaders, representatives, and line managers.

Recognising a trade union:

for organisations that are recognising a trade union for the first time, IPA can provide advice and support through the recognition process, provide guidance on good practice and facilitate the negotiation of a recognition agreement that meets the needs of the organisation and its employees, and sets a positive agenda for the future relationship.

Building from good to great

If your organisation currently recognises a trade union, now is the time to ensure that this working relationship is robust and resilient, able to deliver positive workplace outcomes and meet future challenges.

Our support includes:

Assessing how effectively your current employment relations are working, with a review of relationships and existing structures for engaging with your trade union that explores:

- Are they fit for purpose?
- Where are the friction points?
- What is working well?

A review includes interviews and listening groups with key stakeholders – members of the leadership team, representatives from the recognised trade unions, human resource and employment relations colleagues, line and operational managers. A report provides a comprehensive review of the status quo, and a roadmap for improving the employment relationship with prioritised recommendations for action. It identifies where examples of good practice exist and any barriers to moving the relationship on to the next level.

Embedding the partnership

Working in partnership with your trade unions can deliver long term value for your organisation, its people and stakeholders. This requires senior-level buy-in and commitment from both partners to co-create the strategy and plan of action.

Our support includes:

Workshops for leaders and trade union representatives, separately and jointly, focused on:

- **Developing an understanding of what partnership-based employment relations could look like and what it could deliver for the organisation and its workforce.**
- **High quality evidence and case study examples of effective partnership and its benefits.**
- **Developing and agreeing a common agenda and a joint action plan with the union.**
- **Embedding the relationship through robust partnership agreements, effective processes and succession planning.**

Strengthening engagement

We recognise that employee engagement is foundational to good employment relations, and can support you with strengthening engagement across the organisation, with a focus on the four key enablers of employee engagement:

- **a strong strategic narrative from leadership**
- **engaging and empowering managers**
- **an informed and influential employee voice**
- **consistent experience of shared organisational values**

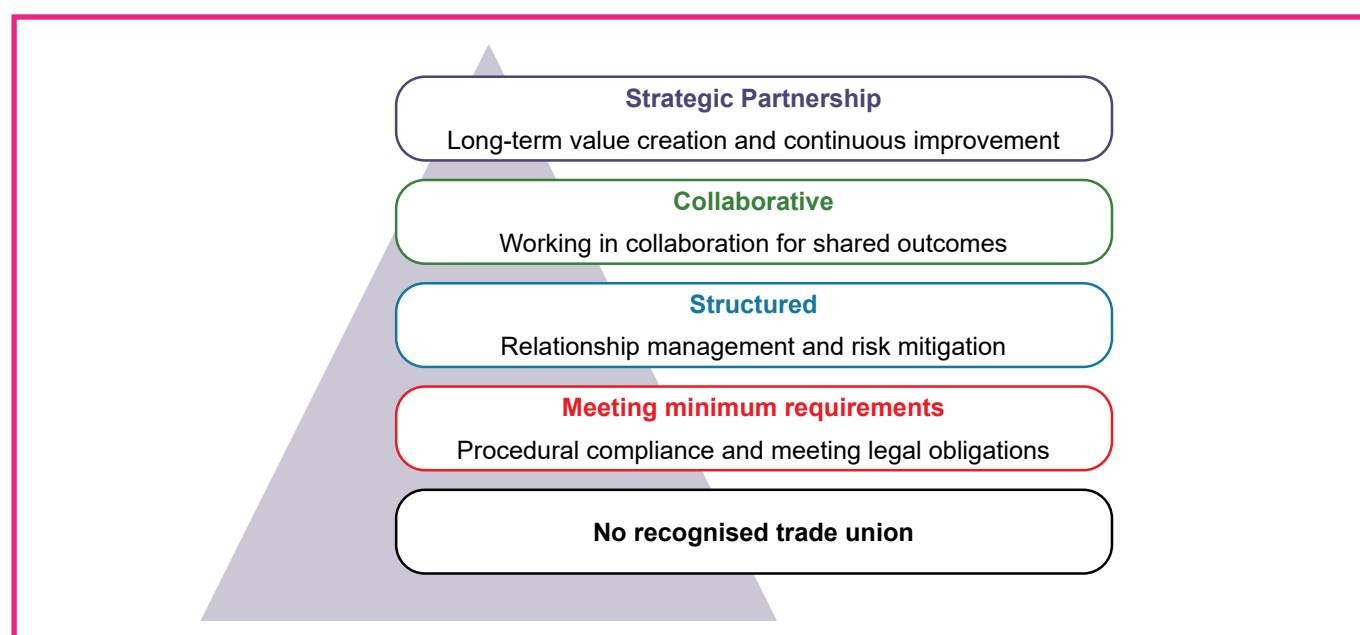
Our support includes:

Reviewing your current employee engagement through the lens of these four enablers, and making recommendations to build on these foundations.

Training for leaders, line managers and employee representatives that builds a culture of collaborative working that enhances management decision-making and improves employee wellbeing.

The maturity model – where is your organisation?

The employment relations maturity model forms the basis of a diagnostic tool to help you to assess and track where your organisation is on the journey towards strategic and value driven partnership working.



Learning and development programmes

Positive employment relations relies on key individuals – senior leaders, managers and HR colleagues – developing the knowledge and skills to understand the ER environment and how to build effective relationships. IPA's learning offer has been developed by our L&D expert Lucy O'Melia and moves beyond a tickbox approach to get to the heart of the subject matter.

Our approach includes group learning that balances subject matter expertise with collaborative and experiential learning, and one-to-one coaching where appropriate. Our training aligns with our commitment to voice and participation and is participatory by design.

Our programmes include

Laying the foundations:

A range of programmes for leaders, managers and HR colleagues to support organisations that are recognising a trade union for the first time, and designed to build the necessary knowledge and skills to work effectively with a recognised trade union.

Building the relationship:

Designed for leaders, managers and HR colleagues who are at the forefront of making employment relations work, this is a tailored programme of half and one-day workshops that will facilitate a constructive debate and help participants understand the ways in which trade unions can act as a strategic partner, and the steps necessary to build positive working relationships.

Creating value:

Tailored workshops that focus on joint organisational priorities and developing a partnership approach to tackling them.

The IPA Team



Nita Clarke OBE
Director

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Nita has detailed knowledge of employment and industrial relations. She was a TU official for 17 years before

working in No.10 as assistant policy secretary and advisor on trade unions. As IPA director, the organisations she has supported to improve their industrial relations span all sectors. Nita is co-chair of the Employee Engagement Taskforce, an honorary fellow of CIPD and Non-Executive Board Member of the Department of Business and Trade.



Lucy O'Melia
Head of learning and development

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Lucy O'Melia, is an experienced group facilitator and learning designer, and

has spent the last 12 years developing partnership working across teams and organisations in complex settings. She has worked with leaders from across sectors to take a systematic, participative approach to organisational improvement.



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