

Felicity Steadman

MA (Warwick), HDip Labour Law, BA (Hons), ILM, CEDR Accredited, CMC Fellow, IMI Certified

CEDR Accreditation:	2003
CEDR Panel:	2004
CEDR Head of Faculty:	2019
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"Her manner creates trust and confidence in her ability." Client Feedback

"Ms. Steadman has the ability, which frankly cannot be taught, to put both lay clients and corporate officers at ease. She has an impressive knowledge of employment law… Steadman's obvious skill as a mediator will no doubt lead to her being highly sought after and successful in that field." Claimant Barrister

Winner – Workplace Mediator of the Year, National Mediation Awards (2024)

Ranked Mediator – The Legal 500

Overview – Employment and Workplace

Felicity Steadman is one of the UK's most experienced employment, workplace, and industrial relations mediators. In a dispute resolution career spanning over 35 years, she has mediated more than 500 disputes across public sector bodies, multinational corporations, higher education, healthcare, charities, and statutory agencies. Ranked in *The Legal 500* and named **Workplace Mediator of the Year 2024** at the National Mediation Awards, Felicity is celebrated for her exceptional emotional intelligence, deep employment law mastery, calm authority, and outstanding track record in highly charged, multi-party, and collective workplace conflicts.

Felicity's expertise spans individual executive fallouts, team and departmental breakdowns, Equality Act claims (discrimination, harassment, and victimisation), whistleblowing, constructive dismissal, and trade union/industrial relations disputes. Having begun her career resolving turbulent industrial and community disputes in South Africa—including work with the historic National Peace Accord and the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA)—she brings rare gravitas and composure when managing entrenched stances, high emotion, and delicate post-dispute workplace reintegration.

Felicity is the **Head of the CEDR Mediator Training Faculty**, responsible for the quality standards and delivery of CEDR's flagship Mediator Skills Training worldwide. She is a Fellow of the Civil Mediation Council (CMC), an accredited Senior Conciliator (ACAS training 1991), an ILM Qualified Workplace Mediator, and a director of Conflict Dynamics.
With a settlement rate close to 90–100% on the day, Felicity is widely praised for restoring working relationships, creating sustainable frameworks, and enabling dignified exits where return is impossible.

Professional Background

Felicity has spent her entire professional career specialising in industrial relations, human resources, labour law, and conflict management.

- **1991 – Present: Independent Mediator, Arbitrator, Facilitator and Trainer**, CEDR, Oxford Mediation, and Conflict Dynamics. Mediates complex workplace, board-level, employment tribunal, and collective disputes.
- **2019 – Present: Head of Faculty**, Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR). Oversees international mediator training, curriculum design, and assessment.
- **1996 – Present: Founder and Director**, Conflict Dynamics (South Africa). Leading commercial and workplace conflict management consultancy.
- **1996 – 2003 - Senior Commissioner / Panellist**, Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) and statutory labour bodies.
- **Founding Chairperson**, South African Society for Labour Law (SASLAW).
- **1991 – 1992: Project Manager**, Community Dispute Resolution Trust, Centre for Applied Legal Studies, University of the Witwatersrand. Facilitated community and workplace conflict resolutions during the transition to democracy.
- **1989 – 1990: Assistant to the Director and Panel Mediator/Arbitrator**, Independent Mediation Service of South Africa (IMSSA). Handled high-stakes collective bargaining and trade union strike mediations.

- **1986 – 1989: Group Industrial Relations Advisor**, The Premier Group of Companies (36,000 employees). In-house lead negotiator and advisor on collective bargaining, union recognition, and dispute management.
- **1982 – 1984: Senior Professional Officer**, Institute for Industrial Relations.

Expertise

- Employment & Workplace
- Commercial & Corporate
- Construction, Property & Planning
- Public Sector & Governance
- Culture, Lifestyle & Sport
- Equality & Social Justice

Dispute Experience – Employment and Workplace Mediation

Board Level, Executive and Senior Management

- **University Academic Leadership**: Mediated an intractable conflict within a Russell Group University department involving four senior subject-matter specialists pitted against each other and the incoming/acting Head of Department.
- **Executive Team Breakdown in Charity Sector**: Mediated a total relationship breakdown across the senior management team of an international NGO working to overcome malnutrition, where a key director had become completely alienated and isolated.
- **Senior Partner and Consultancy Fallouts**: Successfully resolved high-level disputes between equity partners and senior executives in professional services and global financial consultancies, formulating operational and exit frameworks.
- **Higher Education Senior Lecturers**: Resolved a dispute between two senior lecturers at a leading UK university concerning mutual allegations of toxic behaviour, nationality-based discrimination, and probation-related job security.
- **Board and Governance Impasses**: Mediated complex termination and settlement agreements involving executive directors, severance packages, restrictive covenants, and corporate governance concerns.

Discrimination (Equality Act), Harassment and Bullying

- **Race, Nationality and Cultural Conflict**: Mediated multi-layered discrimination allegations between corporate officers and staff across diverse cultural and national backgrounds.
- **Gender and Religious Discrimination**: Successfully settled a dispute between a publishing house and a director alleging sex and religious discrimination, structuring agreed terms that preserved ongoing employment.

- **Disability Discrimination and Failure to Accommodate**: Resolved a pre-Tribunal disability discrimination claim between an in-house solicitor (represented by a trade union) and a major public sector body, settled six weeks prior to a multi-day Employment Tribunal hearing.
- **Hate Speech and Victimisation Allegations**: Defused high-friction university and public sector grievances alleging bullying, defamatory rumours, and discriminatory remarks.
- **Whistleblowing and Retaliation**: Handled claims involving employees raising protected disclosures regarding internal procedures and experiencing subsequent disciplinary action or exclusion.

Industrial Relations, Collective Disputes and Trade Unions

- **Union–Management Collective Disputes**: Extensive background mediating collective wage, terms, and working conditions disputes between senior management and trade union negotiating bodies.
- **Strike and Industrial Action Resolution**: Mediated during volatile industrial action, managing large negotiating committees, overcoming ideological deadlocks, and restoring mutual trust.
- **Post-Restructuring / Redundancy Disputes**: Facilitated post-industrial action and large-scale redundancy dispute settlements, helping unions and leadership rebuild operational working protocols.
- **Joint Problem-Solving Frameworks**: Facilitated collective relationship-building sessions between plant managers and union shop stewards (e.g. Mercedes-Benz South Africa).

Workplace Relationships, Team Dynamics and Reintegration

- **Dysfunctional Teams in Education and Healthcare**: Mediated multi-party grievances in NHS Trusts and academic institutions, rebuilding broken communication channels and establishing behavioural charters.
- **Post-Grievance Team Reintegration**: Mediated within a major museum setting following formal grievance procedures concerning performance management and uncooperative behaviour, preserving employment and team functioning.
- **Sick Leave and Return-to-Work Interpersonal Conflicts**: Mediated a three-way conflict within a youth charity involving junior staff returning from long-term stress-related sick leave against two senior managers over procedural non-compliance and rumours.
- **Healthcare and GP Practice Consortia**: Mediated acute workplace friction between clinicians, practice managers, and administrative partners to stabilise patient services.

Other ADR Experience

Facilitation and Relationship Building

Felicity designs and chairs structured dialogue processes for teams ranging from small executive units (4–5 people) to large divisions of up to 80 people. She assists parties who must maintain long-term working relationships to overcome mistrust following industrial action, structural reorganization, or leadership transitions.

Independent Investigations, Disciplinary and Grievance Panels

- Independent Chair of complex internal grievance panels appeals against dismissal, and senior disciplinary hearings.
- Statutory and private labour dispute arbitration in dismissal, unfair labour practices, and interpretation of collective agreements.
- Neutral evaluations and root-cause workplace conflict reviews.

Conflict Coaching

Felicity works with executives, HR leads, line managers, and union representatives prior to and following mediation. She equips leaders to navigate difficult conversations, de-escalate departmental hostility, and manage interpersonal workplace tensions constructively.

Personal Style and Approach

Felicity defines her approach as **"hands-on process, hands-off substance"** and **"firm but fair"**. She takes decisive charge of managing the process and creating a psychologically safe environment, while ensuring the parties retain full ownership of their outcomes.

Drawing on interest-based and mutual-gains negotiation models, she is exceptionally comfortable with high emotion and encourages direct communication in joint sessions whenever constructive. Clients consistently highlight her diligence, calm authority, empathy without judgment, and persistence in driving intractable matters to sustainable resolution.

Feedback – Clients, Barristers and Users

- *"Felicity managed to do things that required emotional intelligence that I know are beyond my capabilities – and the capabilities of anyone at my then-employer. She is probably in the top 2-3 of all the people I have ever met. She enabled me to feel that I had been listened to, when no-one at my employer had listened."*— **Defendant | Head of School**

- *"The outcomes of the mediation with Felicity have continued well past the meetings themselves and resulted in tangible relationship and hence business improvements. Both sides provided only positive feedback on the experience and on Felicity herself."* — **Commissioner | HR Manager**
- *"The control and calm you provided through this challenging situation was hugely welcome. The clarity you provided to each party has been helpful. The process has allowed us to have an easier forum to have follow-up conversations and monitor and manage the situation."* — **Claimant | Senior Partner**
- *"She showed a degree of empathy for how I was feeling without passing comment or judgment on the events that I said had led me to feeling that way, which was very professional."* — **Claimant | Scientist**
- *"Your intervention at crucial moments in the meeting helped us keep on track and maintain a clear focus on reaching an outcome that we are all happy with."* — **Manager | GP Practice**
- *"This is the second time I have asked for Felicity's help in two intractable situations – she has brokered an agreement in this case which has remained intact and usable by the parties involved."* — **Claimant Solicitor**
- *"Your stamina and patience were very much appreciated. With your help, we managed to achieve something that I think would have taken the parties weeks to achieve."* — **Defendant Solicitor**

Professional Skills, Appointments and Training

Current Appointments and Affiliations

- **Head of Faculty**, CEDR Mediator Training Faculty (2019 – Present)
- **CEDR Chambers Leading Mediator and Panel Member** (Accredited 2003, Panel 2004)
- **Director**, Conflict Dynamics (1996 – Present)
- **Steering Committee and Founding Member**, Oxford Mediation
- **Fellow**, Civil Mediation Council (CMC)
- **Certified Mediator**, International Mediation Institute (IMI)
- **International Trainer**, International Labour Organisation (ILO) (training ministries of labour, trade unions, and employers)

Education and Qualifications

- **Master of Arts (MA) in Industrial Relations**, University of Warwick (1985)
- **Higher Diploma in Labour Law (HDip Labour Law)** *(Distinction, Top Student)*, University of the Witwatersrand (2003)
- **Certificate Programme in Industrial Relations (CPIR)** *(Distinction, Top Student)*, University of the Witwatersrand (1984)
- **BA Honours**, University of the Witwatersrand (1981)
- **Accredited Mediator**, CEDR (2003)
- **ILM Qualified Workplace Mediator**
- **Senior Conciliator Training**, ACAS (1991)
- **Accredited Mediator**, Independent Mediation Service of South Africa (IMSSA) (1989)

Awards and Publications

- **Winner – Workplace Mediator of the Year**, National Mediation Awards (2024)
- **CEDR ADR Trainer's Award** (2012)
- *Handbook on Alternative Labour Dispute Resolution*, International Labour Organisation (Author, 2007)
- *Labour Dispute Resolution*, Juta (Co-Author, 1997; 2nd ed. 2008)
- *Dispute Resolution*, Juta (Contributor, 1993)
- *How to Master Negotiation*, Bloomsbury Professional (Contributor, 2013)
- *Commercial Mediation: A User's Guide*, Juta (Co-Author, 2012; 2nd ed. 2016)