

## **EMPLOYEE RELATIONS - CONSULTATION**

1. A clearly defined framework for consultation and negotiation between managers and employees must be in place for a good Employee Relations (ER) system to work well. MOD's policy is to seek to maintain good ER through the Whitley System. Consultation and negotiation, with a view to reaching agreement between the MOD and TUs is the cornerstone of this policy and is based on full co-operation, at all levels, between management and employees.
2. **The MOD Whitley system** is the formal means of consultation and negotiation for industrial and non industrial staff in the MOD and aims to bring about co-operation and agreement between the MOD (as employer) and its staff. The desired outcome is to secure agreement, but the success depends on the goodwill of management and the TUs and a willingness to consider each others point of view. The Whitley System exists to support managers in ER matters, not to replace them.
3. The Whitley system aims to seek co-operation between Employer and Employees to increase business efficiency and ensure the well-being of staff. It provides a mechanism for dealing with grievances which are not of a personal nature; and provides a forum for discussion, where differing views can be expressed and a range of experience can be drawn upon. A joint Equality and Diversity Whitley meeting is held twice a year and the Minutes are made available to all staff.
4. **Consultation** within the employment context is often confused with negotiation. Consultation is about seeking views where as negotiation is about seeking agreement. The MOD is committed to meaningful consultation with its TUs on any proposed changes likely to affect civilian staff before final decisions are taken, with a view to seeking agreement, and recognises that this gives the TUs an opportunity to represent their member's views. It is obligatory in those areas of the Department's business to which it applies. The requirement to consult the TUs is embodied in law and the ACAS Code of Practice. It is also reinforced by the MOD's commitment to the Whitley system.
5. Consultation covers both formal and informal contact between management and the TUs. Central to MOD policy, which follows Cabinet Office guidance, is the principle that management and the TUs meet with a genuine desire to reach agreement.
6. Meaningful consultation is a means by which alternative options can be put forward and considered, with the arguments for and against them being aired. It involves taking account of as well as listening to the views of employees and must therefore take place before decisions are made. Consultation may not necessarily result in agreement being reached.
7. Our consultation arrangements and the operation of the Whitley System are agreed with the MOD recognised Trade Unions and Staff Associations.