

Notes for Training

“Single mum’s a special case”

Key personalities in this scene are:

Annette and Wayne - Lecturers

Reece - Subject Coordinator



The video is concerned with two colleagues who are arguing about the extra workload placed on one by the other. It provides an opportunity for discussing workload management and sex and marital status discrimination.

Online question list

Question 1: Is there anything potentially unlawful about the interaction between Wayne and Annette?

Question 2: From what you have seen of this situation, what would you say are the responsibilities of the employer?

Question 3: How could the employer prevent further recurrences of this type of behaviour?

Question 4: At the meeting with Wayne and Annette, what should the subject coordinator do to ensure the process is fair?

Question 5: If the subject coordinator had not intervened, how could Annette and Wayne have sorted this problem out for themselves?

Question 6: If the subject coordinator is unable to resolve the dispute between Annette and Wayne, which one of them could take up a complaint to the EOC?

Ideas for training staff, managers (anyone in a supervisory position) or contact officers:

Staff

As a large group exercise, put the question: ‘What might have informed the views Wayne and Annette had of each other which led to the personal attacks?’

Include in your training some information about ‘being assertive’

Make sure the notion of ‘assertive people know their rights’ is addressed in the discussion. Then, in groups of three, on a rotation basis, have one person role play Annette, another to play Wayne and one observer, present the challenge: ‘How would you communicate to Wayne or Annette without having the interaction become heated?’

Initially have the group work collaboratively at preparing what each of the parties would say and determine the appropriate manner to use. Then role play with the observer looking for assertiveness skills and knowledge of the rights of each disputant.

The video is based on a complaint from a single mum received at the Commission. The complainant did not trust that the issues would be dealt with by management and felt it important to lodge a complaint outside. The matter was actually resolved within the organisation.

In other similar complaints the agreement reached at conciliation has included an apology and resulted in greater flexibility for staff. Discuss the impact of workload on people's behaviour.

Managers

Action learning exercise which has managers working in groups of four. Initially the group plans to interview each of the disputants separately then together.

After the planning, each manager takes turns to carry out the interviews with one manager acting as observer. Each of the managers in the quadrant has a turn at role playing either [or both] of the disputants and an observer. All managers in the quadrant get a chance to interview, at least one of, the parties.

As a large group, brainstorm ideas for 'how this situation could have been prevented'.

Contact Officers

Ask small groups of contact officers how they would prepare to interview either Wayne or Annette.

What would be the structure of the interview and what considerations would be made about where the interview took place?

Each group prepares a plan then presents to the collective.

Question: 'What would you do if both parties approached you for help or support?'

Look for 'conflict of interest' and the need for flexibility among the network of contact officers, in their responses.