

## Third Sector Mediation Case Study 2

### Bullying between peers

Sarah and Emma are senior managers in a medium sized charity. Sarah had been finding it difficult to work with Emma for some time and there were a series of disagreements over workplace issues where Sarah considered Emma to have spoken to her in an inappropriate and unprofessional way. On one occasion Emma shouted and behaved aggressively towards Sarah and this brought to a head some underlying professional frictions between them and prompted Sarah to bring a formal complaint against Emma. Sarah wanted to use an empathic and humanistic approach rather than being punitive and so a mediation was set up.

Through mediation Emma realised that her actions had been unreasonable and apologised, while Sarah acknowledged they had exacerbated the situation by not communicating properly. Further exploration resulted in both parties realising they had similar work pressures to which they both reacted by behaving poorly towards colleagues, so they agreed ways to communicate in future and ways they could actually reduce the impact of short notice demands by helping each other.

Four months after the mediation Sarah commented “I was nervous before engaging in mediation as I did not know what to expect, I was also concerned that the process might break down. My concerns were unfounded and I felt that mediation was the best choice I could’ve made in the situation. I felt totally supported by our mediator and found the structure of the appointments to be ideal. I felt heard during our sessions and when it came to our two joint meetings I felt that it was safe to discuss how I felt, what the impact of the behaviour had been for me and how I would like to resolve the situation. We were facilitated in creating an agreement around our professional relationship and this also covered what we would do in the event of any further occurrences of inappropriate verbal conduct.

I am happy to say that since our mediation there have been no further incidents and slowly my confidence in the workplace and myself is returning. The intervention of mediation prevented the situation from becoming irreparable and I would highly recommend this service.”

### Engaging Positively with Conflict