



CEDR Accreditation:	2006
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Location:	United Kingdom

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Chambers & Partners Guide to the Legal Profession 2012

## Caroline Sheridan

### Overview

Caroline Sheridan is a highly regarded full time professional mediator and executive coach from a financial services background. Over a number of years, she has successfully helped parties to resolve their issues in a wide range of disputes and is an expert in resolving employment and workplace issues in particular. She is one of only a handful of women members of the CEDR Chambers group of elite mediators. Caroline is known for her complete dedication and commitment to helping companies and individuals across a wide range of industry sectors define and resolve their differences. In 2013, Caroline was invited to join the Court of Appeal’s Mediator Panel.

Before becoming a full-time mediator and coach, Caroline spent over 20 years working in the financial services sector on Change Management, Career Transition, Sales and Marketing, Human Resources, Compliance, Risk Management, Settlements and Accounting. She then switched to a mediation and coaching career and now works closely with CEDR as a Consultant. Her previous Director-level appointments in Compliance, Marketing/Business Development and HR bring very strong business and interpersonal skills into her mediation work. With strong interpersonal skills and the ability to challenge, Caroline is widely acknowledged for her ability to build rapport at every organisational level, from the most junior to Board Director. Her training in neuro-linguistic programming and extensive coaching experience strengthen even further her ability to deal with highly emotional and sometimes challenging personalities so that trust and rapport are firmly established.

Caroline is also a coach, visiting tutor and coach supervisor for Henley Business School and acts as coach to MSc delegates at Cass Business School. She is in demand as a writer and speaker on mediation matters, including for law firms, training courses and Radio 4. She has been instructed as mediator by leading law firms including Linklaters, Farrers, Allen & Overy, Eversheds, Squire Sanders and SNR Denton.

## Experience

- Banking & Finance
- Construction & Engineering
- Employment & Workplace
- ICT
- Partnership & Shareholder
- Professional Negligence
- Property
- Public Sector

Caroline has mediated in sectors including utilities, education, insurance, asset management, commodity trading, retail and investment banking, professional services, financial services regulation, retail, accountancy, leisure, housing and public sector, banking, media, charities and IT.

## Dispute Resolution

### Construction & Engineering

- Dispute between a main contractor and sub-contractor over final accounts.
- Claim for £70,000 plus costs by a building contractor against a property owner by way of unpaid fees in relation to the re-building of a domestic property.
- Housing Trust refurbishment works dispute where contractors claimed outstanding sums with costs, of £250,000.

### Employment & Workplace

Caroline has extensively supported global financial and top FTSE 100 companies in dealing with the people aspects of organisational change and development. Having worked with many cultures, she has gained strong commercial experience of mergers, acquisitions and restructurings, and the people and managerial issues which arise as a result. Her past work in HR, career transition and change management gives her invaluable insight into the psychologies involved in workplace

dispute and relationship breakdowns at work, and her coaching and NLP experience provide her with the tools with which to address them most effectively.

*"We all benefited from your professionalism and your compassionate and deeply perceptive approach"* – Client Feedback, Employment mediation

### **Breach of Contract**

- Breach of contract for competitive activities. A £500,000 claim was made by a Company against a former employee for breach of contract and direct loss of revenue as a result of his secretly bidding for work against his employer.
- Private Equity - claim for £200,000 underpayment of cash in respect of carried interests.
- NHS - Tax and Compromise Agreements - dispute arising out of a Compromise Agreement which did not set out responsibility for tax on the payment provided for. Amount claimed: £150k. Case settled. The claimant received an acknowledgement of his distress and an apology for the delay in reaching a mutual settlement.
- Education – Head of Department wrongful dismissal claim – highly charged and emotional parties.
- Utilities – Very emotional case. Alleged discrimination against cancer sufferer claiming (rightly) to have only a few months to live and consequently nothing to lose by legal proceedings. Significant adverse PR risk for employer regardless of legal merits. Required very strong empathy skills given emotive situation impacting all parties and possible damage and distress to dependants.

### **Bullying, Discrimination, Harassment and Victimisation**

- Allegations were made against the line manager of a Housing Trust by a direct report. Phased return to work agreed.
- Sexual harassment, race and victimisation claim for £1m. Trust was established by careful listening and reflection, allowing for full exploration of the issues, including termination of employment options, which enabled a settlement to be reached by way of a compromise agreement.
- Public Sector – harassment claim (pre-grievance) resulting in total relationship breakdown between two departmental peers. Extremely sensitive case due to the inappropriate and

unrequited emotional attachment of one party to the other. Dispute resolved without a physical meeting between the parties due to the high degree of anxiety on each part about meeting the other pre-settlement.

- Charity – bullying, race discrimination and victimisation. Allegations were made against the line manager by a direct report. Phased return to work agreed with both parties leaving the mediation on good terms having not spoken previously for some four months. Follow up agreed six weeks later also successfully concluded.
- Accountancy – Grievance and appeal following bullying and harassment claim including the lodging of a personal injury claim by long-service employee emotionally impacted by outcome of hearing. Settled with a full withdrawal of the PI claim and a programme of support including CBT, coaching sessions, an apology and proactive help for the employee to move forward rebuilding trust in the organisation.
- Public Sector – Employee with Aspergers Syndrome creating behavioural difficulties and allegations of bullying. Required understanding of the likely impact of Aspergers on thought processes and to ensure that the employer took this into account in its own approach to the process.
- Insurance – Grievance arising from allegation of micro-management and unjustified performance management procedures. Used coaching techniques to raise self-awareness. Now used as an internal case study.
- Civil Service – Employee suffering from mental illness had become effectively unmanageable by repeated claims and threats of claims of disability discrimination. Employer at wits end. Difficulty in obtaining employee's understanding that any of the problems he had encountered might lie with him in whole or part. Employee's inability or unwillingness to enter any Settlement Agreement which imposed responsibilities on him. Not settled but improved understanding of how best to manage him going forward. Used coaching skills to lead employer to that better understanding – employee still in employment and working without current dispute.
- Corporate Finance – bullying, discrimination and victimisation – a six-figure sum was likely to be claimed if the individual had claimed constructive dismissal. Employee returned from long-term sick leave to attend mediation. Compromise agreement drawn up.

### Relationship Breakdowns

- Financial Services Team – Dispute (4-parties) involving breakdown in communication amongst four Japanese staff, two expatriates and two local staff.

- Boss/subordinate relationship – Dispute related to grievance lodged by employee against line manager following appraisal. Successfully resolved in one day, followed by coaching of line manager over six month period to address management style.
- Insurance – Rebuilding relationships post grievance appeal - claim against line manager for bullying not upheld. Coaching and mediation recommended as part of review. Significant shifts were made by each party, leaving the mediation already on the road to rebuilding their relationship.
- Retaliatory grievance – Disciplinary appeal followed by grievance against manager for victimisation. Outcome: each acknowledged his part in the breakdown. Agreement that communication had been lacking on both sides.
- Charity – Appraisal/bonus – boss/subordinate relationship dispute leading to grievance lodged following appraisal. Settled in one day, followed by coaching of line manager over six month period.
- Private Banking Board of Directors – three party relationship breakdown – the cost of not rebuilding relationship to the business was estimated to be £2 million. A series of private meetings and a day and half face-to-face put relationships on a new track. Follow up ‘facilitation meeting’ agreed two months later.
- Financial Services Regulation – Some employees suffering from serious illnesses affecting their past behaviours, their perceptions of others’ behaviours and the conduct of the mediations, including bi-polar disorder, manic depression, cancer. Drew on active listening skills as a Coach to defuse highly charged situations. All resolved.
- Asset Management – Coaching a senior in-house lawyer whose relationship with key business stakeholders was failing. Transitioned into mediation role as part of procuring a successful outcome to the coaching process.
- Commodity trading – Bitter personal dispute between members of a team caused by fault on both parts. Reached settlement re-drawing demarcation lines between parties and setting out agreed perimeters for behaviours going forward. Used psychometrics to assist each towards a better understanding of the other’s position. Also guidance to departmental management as to over-sight techniques to minimise the risk of recurring disputes.
- Education – Occupational Health referral to mediation following mental breakdown and six months’ sick leave. Parallel mediations with one common party. All employees in key operational roles within the School. Resolved.

### Whistleblowing

- Charity – Employee dismissed for refusal to reduce her hours. Alleged that this was instead retaliation for blowing the whistle on serious impropriety by the senior management. Senior management resigned and resolution of matter benefited from the dispassionate involvement of trustees in their place.
- Insurance – rebuilding of relationships following high-profile incident to manage emotion and re-build confidence in themselves, each other within department and the Company.

### Work Absences

- Stress claim between individual and line manager regarding a phased return to work.

### ICT - Information, Communication & Technology

- Breach of contract – software licensing agreement and copyright.

### Partnership & Shareholder

- Dispute over software rights. Sum claimed £200,000. Settled within four hours of opening joint meeting.
- Family partnership – breakdown in relations forcing a potential sale during recession and hence a division of assets at less than normal market value. Inevitably high emotions, leading from a fraught opening to an eventual understanding all round that recriminations formed no constructive way forward. Matter settled swiftly on a pragmatic basis.
- Disputes over division of assets at probate and responsibility for on-going management of a family business.

### Professional Negligence

- Professional services – consultant's negligence – claim for £1m for issues relating to professional negligence which caused significant delays and costs to the business.
- Bank negligence claim in relation to default loan payments – cost to business £1m.
- Fund Management – dispute of fund management asset claim.
- Insurance/reinsurance – public liability negligence.

## Property

- Dispute against a developer by a freehold owner of a property for breach of contract in relation to structural issues and remedial works.
- Housing Association tenancy dispute involving four parties for unpaid rent over six month period.
- Breach of contract – major developer claim against purchaser’s failure to complete on property purchase due to lack of finance.
- Property management contractual dispute.

## Neighbourhood

- Dispute over cleaning of common parts and rubbish thrown out of the upstairs window of Housing Association flats. Mediation recommended by Association following one tenant’s complaint.
- Neighbour dispute over lack of light to garden and threatening behaviour causing stress and anxiety.

## Public Sector

- Claim for damages against a police force by claimant in relation to scrapping a car.
- Local Authority – alleged breach of contract claim for £1m against private contractor for failure to meet contractual obligations.

## Other Dispute Resolution Experience

### Independent Investigations

Caroline has undertaken a number of investigations and assessments, followed by independent reports and in most instances recommendations for future actions:

- Trade Finance team of 35. Interviews followed by detailed report with recommendations to improve morale, overcome conflict with resulting improved productivity. Allowed organisation to objectively review key drivers for change and engagement.
- Detailed assessment of multiple complaints and grievances, primarily related to employment and discrimination matters. One particularly difficult case concerning alleged race

discrimination involved interviewing 12 witnesses and the production of a 6,000 word report with recommendations.

- Complaints of hostility and rudeness between 2 peer senior managers within a retail chain which affected the work and relationships of their respective teams. Report produced for senior management and then worked with the individuals on a protocol of future behaviours.
- Investigation of allegations of sex and disability discrimination and bullying behaviour against a high profile Executive. Report produced, with a separate advisory report on resolution of the dispute presented.
- Report and recommendations on collective grievance alleging bullying, harassment and religious discrimination presented by two managers against their newly appointed Director. Report presented and recommendations implemented by the organisation.
- Appointed by a local government body to investigate grievance claims brought by a senior employee in relation to claims of racial discrimination, bullying, harassment and unfair demotion.

## Change Management

- Collective disputes and consultative arrangements on organizational change issues across global financial institutions in relation to the impact on employees.
- Integration, downsizing plans and processes across small to large organizations following takeover, merger, acquisition, restructuring, outsourcing and shared service arrangements.
- Closure of Final Salary Pension Scheme and transition to money purchase scheme.
- Team coaching and team building to deal with team conflict in a positive way following refusal of mediation.
- Executive coaching focused on business outcomes and on interpersonal relationships and conflict situations.
- Independent assessments including recommendations.
- Consultant on the use of mediation, dispute resolution processes and policies, and conflict management systems.
- Facilitation of key partner business relationships to further increase mediation awareness to the business community.



## Coaching

- Coach Supervisor to: Henley Business School MSc in Coaching and Behavioural Change; Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution Coach Panel; Atrium Synergies Resilience Coach Panel.
- Coaching delegates on Cass Business School's MSc Leadership.
- Conflict Coach, CEDR.
- Executive coaching focused on business outcomes and on interpersonal relationships and conflict situations.
- Team coaching and team building to deal with team conflict in a positive way following refusal of mediation.
- Collective disputes and consultative arrangements on organisational change issues across global financial institutions in relation to the impact on employees.
- Integration, downsizing plans and processes across small to large organizations following takeover, merger, acquisition, restructuring, outsourcing and shared service arrangements.

## Feedback – Clients

- *"She opened our eyes to solutions which would otherwise have escaped us."*
- *"We managed to get an outcome we would never have thought possible because of your tenacity. We felt supported, understood and challenged which enabled us to move forward and draw a line under the past."*
- *"Extremely confident and competent in her role as Mediator."*
- *"Very well prepared and easy to talk to"... "First-class"*
- *"Heartfelt thanks for your stellar mediation services. Your assistance and perseverance was extremely appreciated and very well executed."*
- *"Caroline was extremely proactive in following up after the mediation. All in all it was a positive experience and we would certainly recommend her in future."*
- *"3 months of negativity and conflict were turned around in one day ... Without Caroline's skill, sensitivity and intuition the outcome would probably have been continued stress, negativity and eventual job loss or sickness. My only regret is that I did not start the mediation process earlier."*

- *"The directness of her approach. Her unflagging energy. Her frankness and her coaching in eye contact and choosing the right words to put my messages over... This was a highly worthwhile appointment. I didn't expect the outcome to have such an enormous turnaround effect on what had become such a negative conflict over several months. But somehow it did and I know that much of the credit for that should go to Caroline."*
- *"I liked the directness of her approach. Her unflagging energy. Her frankness and her coaching in eye contact and choosing the right words to put my messages over."*
- *"Keen, energetic and enthusiastic with good observations and probing of issues."*
- *"Struck the right balance between pushing things along and allowing us to explore issues."*
- *"Clear understanding of the problems and issues – very sensible suggestions as to the way forward."*
- *"Immensely helpful – thank you so much for your assistance today, I am really pleased with the outcome."*
- *"Very impressed with Caroline. We would definitely want her to mediate for us again in the future."*
- *"I did not think mediation would work – I've been proved wrong – thank you so much for your support in enabling me to move forward and return to work."*
- *"We have used her before and would again. Very well prepared and easy to talk to"*
- *"Driven and energetic until the last even during the early hours."*
- *"She was by far the best mediator we have used to date. Her professionalism remained intact throughout as did her ability to remain neutral and fair at all times."*

## Feedback – Directories

- *"Sources say that as a mediator, Sheridan is "able to pick up on the nuances of the different personalities and as such adapt her style and approach to meet the needs of the attendees of the session." She has special expertise in disputes in charities, IT, banking and insurance."*  
- Chambers & Partners Guide to the Legal Profession 2013
- *"The "amenable" Sheridan "quickly establishes trust in mediations" and "doesn't let the parties go off on tangents." She regularly handles employment disputes across a wide range of sectors, including banking, insurance, charities and IT."*  
- Chambers & Partners Guide to the Legal Profession 2012
- Rated in Legal Experts Directory 2011, 2012; Legal 500 2012

## Professional Background

Over twenty-five years' experience spanning Mediation, Coaching, Compliance, Change Management, Career Transition, and Human Resources, including:

- CEDR Chambers Mediator, Facilitator and Executive Coach, 2006 to present
- Coach, MSc Leadership, Cass Business School
- Part of the 'Coaching Faculty' at Henley on its MSc in Coaching and Behavioural Change
- Knowledge Centre Director – HR and Mediation and Coaching panel expert, at [www.knowledgepeers.com](http://www.knowledgepeers.com)
- CEDR Consultant instrumental in the setting up CEDR's Investigations Service
- Speaker on Mediation, Facilitation and Coaching – SNR Denton, Squire Sanders Hammonds, City HR Association, CEDR
- Director of Marketing and Business Development, Global Financial Services 1999 to 2006
- Head of Compliance and Director of HR, and Company Secretary, Securities Industry, 1990 to 1999
- Retail and Investment Banking, 1984 to 1990
- Teaching Assistant, Marseille, France 1982 - 1983

## Qualifications and Training

- Professional Certificate in Supervision, 2013
- Certificate in Coaching, Henley Management College, 2008
- Accredited CEDR Mediator, 2006
- Diploma in Hypnotherapy, Psychotherapy and Counselling Skills, 2006
- Accredited CEDR Mediator
- Master Practitioner in neuro-linguistic programming (MNLP)
- MA in Human Resource Management, University of Westminster
- Level A and B Psychometrics including Myers Briggs Type Indicator, Thomas Kilmann, EQi
- Postgraduate Diploma in Personnel Management, University of Westminster
- BA (Hons) French

Member of the Institute of Directors, Association for Coaching, Member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and the Society of Neuro-linguistic Programming.