

## Investigation – be sure to check the facts

A female middle manager complained she had been bullied by her male senior manager, who she had described as aggressive and demanding. One of the allegations related to an occasion when she had gone into his office for a discussion, which had become heated on both sides and, according to her, he had started to shout and swear at her and continued to do so as he followed her out of the room. She said that she had been so upset that she got her coat and bag and went home early.

There were a number of witnesses put forward to corroborate what had happened. One of these told the investigator he could remember the occasion vividly and went on to recount in detail what had happened. However, on closer questioning it became apparent that not only had he been on leave on the day in question, he had heard about the incident from the complainant when he saw her in the car park the following week!

Investigating allegations of bullying and harassment in the workplace is never an easy task. Investigators need to be sensitive, yet thorough, skilful and always keep an open mind until the investigation has been completed and all the necessary evidence gathered. I often think it is like doing a jigsaw puzzle, trying to fit pieces together to build up the full picture. Just like jigsaws, however, it is sometimes tricky to fit the pieces together and sometimes there is a gap, when a piece of the jigsaw is missing.





When conducting interviews with the key people and witnesses, a number of factors can affect memory and recall. These include the state and stress level of the individual, selective attention, the degree of involvement and stereotyping. It is vital that investigators use their questioning and listening skills to get as close to the facts of the actual event as possible. Information may be presented as fact when in fact it is a flawed memory or worse still information that has been passed on second, third or fourth hand.

**Contact CMP Resolutions for further guidance, to outsource your service requirements or to train your managers in investigation skills.**

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