



ENCOURAGING SAFER AND MORE SUPPORTIVE WORKING PRACTICES IN THEATRE

JUNE 2018



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Overview

UK Theatre and SOLT are coordinating industry-wide action to ensure that everyone in theatre and the performing arts can prevent and tackle harassment and abuses of power, and ensure theatre and the performing arts is a safer, more supportive and inclusive working environment for all in the future.

This work sits alongside UK Theatre and SOLT's broader work to support the [theatre and performing arts workforce](#).

Following our conversations with the industry we are sharing

- **10 PRINCIPLES** to encourage safe and supportive working practices in theatre. The principles are intended to help all employers, employees, workers, freelancers working in all areas of the industry, volunteers, directors and trustees to create a positive tone and culture.
- **THEATRE HELPLINE**, so that anyone working in the theatre and performing arts industry has a resource to help them deal with bullying or harassment, or any other issues affecting their health and well-being.

The [support line](#) will initially run as a pilot for one year, providing the industry with insight to understand what further support might be necessary, and how it might be funded in the longer term.

- **RESOURCES AND GUIDANCE**

- [Example policies, procedures and initiatives](#) from UK Theatre and SOLT members across the country.

Including: Old Vic - Guardians programme, Royal Court – Code of Behaviour, Bristol Old Vic – Respect Charter and Respect Statement.

We will also publish blogs from these organisations over the coming weeks.

- A [checklist](#) to support you in making sure you have clear, up-to-date policies and procedures for preventing and dealing with harassment and bullying.

This checklist provides information about bullying and harassment, and key points about policies and procedures. This aims to help you to define and prevent behaviour that may cause harm or detriment to individuals and expose your organisation to legal action.

- [Key themes](#) arising from UK Theatre and SOLT's open forums.

- Suggestions of [good practice](#) arising from the open forums.
- A [list of organisations and individuals with specialist skills](#) to help deal with sensitive issues.
- [Dignity at Work training](#). The training has been developed using insight from the open forums. It is delivered by Challenge Consultancy.
- SOLT members and UK Theatre Organisation Members have been reminded that if individual issues arise they have recourse to the [Legal](#) and [Employment Relations services](#).

These resources should be considered alongside those from other industry bodies:

- Equity – [Agenda for Change](#), [Safe Spaces](#), [Manifesto for Casting](#) and [Casting Questions Card](#).
- Independent Theatre Council hold a range of [guidelines and help sheets](#).
- Incorporated Society of Musicians have developed an interim report See more [here](#).
- The Musicians' Union (MU) is building up a picture of the issues faced by workers in the music industry. See more [here](#).
- The Standing Conference of University Drama Departments (SCUDD) have put together guidelines for preventing sexual harassment in university drama. See more [here](#).
- Theatre NI – [Member Assistance Programme](#).

This issue, and UK Theatre and SOLT's recent [workforce review](#), made it increasingly clear that freelance staff – a significant proportion of the theatre workforce – could be better supported. We are also committed to leading on an industry-wide initiative to develop that support and will take this work forward through the workforce development strategy.

10 Principles

to encourage safer and more supportive working practices in theatre

These principles have been developed following conversations with individuals, organisations and industry bodies.

The principles offer a shared vision to promote a safe and inclusive workplace environment that everyone – employers, employees, workers, freelancers, volunteers, directors and trustees – should adhere to.

A shared vision, and agreement of principles, is important in ensuring that lasting and meaningful change can take place.

It is essential to have a commitment from senior leaders to help create an inclusive culture. Visible endorsement of these principles should help to show a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment. We encourage all employers and individuals to promote the principles.

The principles were developed by UK Theatre and Society of London Theatre from [those commissioned by the BFI](#), working in partnership with others in the film industry.

- 1** Everyone is responsible for creating and maintaining an inclusive workplace that is positive and supportive. We do not tolerate bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment in theatre and the performing arts.
- 2** We value inclusivity, appreciate difference, and consider people equal without prejudice or favour. We build relationships based on mutual respect. We will all work to give and receive feedback in a constructive way, which we know will improve creativity and productivity.
- 3** We recognise that harassment may be unlawful.
- 4** We accept our responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and other relevant legislation.
- 5** We will aim to ensure that everyone working for a company or an organisation, or on a project or production, is fully aware of the expectations that relate to acceptable behaviour and recognise that the manner in which they perform their role is just as important as technical competence or creative ability.

- 6 We will ensure that processes are in place for the reporting and investigation of bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment.
- 7 Where bullying or harassment is found to have occurred, we will take appropriate action against bullies or harassers.
- 8 We understand that reporting bullying or harassment can be intimidating. If anyone comes forward to report behaviour which might amount to bullying or harassment we will endeavour to investigate objectively, respect confidentiality where possible, make the process of reporting clear and straightforward and take action when appropriate. Individuals who have made complaints of bullying and harassment or participate in good faith in any investigation should not suffer any form of reprisal or victimisation as a result.
- 9 We will respect each other's dignity, regardless of the seniority of our role in an organisation.
- 10 We will ensure that these principles are embedded at the early stages of careers in theatre and the performing arts, to ensure that a safer, more inclusive working culture becomes the norm.

THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS SUPPORT THE PRINCIPLES:

[Association of British Theatre Technicians](#)

[Association of Lighting Designers](#)

[BECTU](#)

[Casting Directors Guild](#)

[Edinburgh Festival Fringe](#)

[Equity](#)

[Federation of Scottish Theatre](#)

[Incorporated Society of Musicians](#)

[ITC](#)

[Musicians' Union](#)

[SCUDD](#)

[Theatre NI](#)

[One Dance UK](#)

[Writers' Guild of Great Britain](#)

Please refer to page 8 of this handbook for a [definition of harassment](#).



Theatre Helpline

24 hour support for the theatre industry

[Theatre Helpline](#) is a free and confidential service for anyone working in theatre and the performing arts in the UK.

CALL 0800 915 4617

Theatre Helpline provides advice and support on your challenges.

- Bullying or harassment
- Health issues including mental health
- Injury and mobility problems
- Issues with employment or unemployment
- Career issues including professional development and training
- Retirement and care in later life
- Debt and financial issues

Theatre Helpline offers advice and signposting.

If you want someone to talk to get in touch, anytime. We're here to help.

You can also email advice@theatrehelpline.org

Download a [Theatre Helpline poster](#) to display at your organisation.

Read our Theatre Helpline [FAQs](#).

Example Policies, Procedures & Initiatives

Birmingham Hippodrome

- [Dignity at Work Statement](#)

Bristol Old Vic

- [Respect Charter](#)
- [Respect Statement](#)

Royal Court Theatre

- [Code of Behaviour](#), including the Royal Court Theatre's policy on bullying, harassment and unwanted sexual attention.

Standing Conference of University Drama Departments

- [Sexual Harassment Guidelines](#). These guidelines are still in their draft format. They are currently out to the SCUDD membership and may be updated before they are finalised.

The Old Vic

- [Guardians Programme](#), including a practical 'how to' guide

The Incorporated Society of Musicians

- The Incorporated Society of Musicians has published a report titled Dignity at work investigating discrimination (including sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour) in the music industry. [Download the ISM's report here](#)

Checklist

UK Theatre and SOLT produced the following checklist to support you in making sure you have clear, up-to-date policies and procedures for preventing and dealing with harassment and bullying. You can also download the checklist as a separate document [here](#).

PROMOTING A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENT CHECKLIST FOR PREVENTING AND DEALING WITH HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

1. REVIEW YOUR POLICY ON HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

- Your procedures dealing with harassment and bullying may be within a dignity or respect at work policy, a combined equal opportunities and dignity or respect at work policy or a separate anti-harassment and bullying policy.
- Your policy can apply to all staff, including contractors, consultants and agency workers, as well as to employees, and can also cover conduct by visitors, e.g. customers, members of visiting companies. You should consider how it applies to these different categories of people.
- As well as having a duty of care to employees, employers can be held legally responsible for instances of harassment which take place in the course of employment, which can be interpreted widely. Having, and following, a clear policy should help to establish that you took all reasonable steps to prevent bullying and harassment taking place.
- It should be clear from your policy what kind of behaviour could amount to harassment or bullying and that this type of behaviour is unacceptable.

WHAT IS HARASSMENT?

- For the purposes of discrimination law, harassment is unwanted conduct related to age; disability; race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins); sex; religion or belief; sexual orientation; gender reassignment, or unwanted conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment), which has the purpose or effect of violating another person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.
- Treating someone unfavourably because they have rejected or submitted to the unwanted conduct referred to above can also amount to harassment.
- Unwanted conduct can be physical, verbal or non-verbal.
- Creating an offensive environment by, for example, making racist jokes, even if the person offended is not from the ethnic group referred to or the "target".

- Examples include offensive emails, texts or social media content, suggestive comments, unwanted physical conduct such as grabbing someone, offensive comments to a man based on his wife's disability or demeaning comments to someone because they are perceived to be gay.

Serious harassment can amount to a criminal offence even if it is not related to one of the characteristics set out in discrimination law, which are referred to above.

A single incident can amount to harassment.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

- Bullying is not defined in the law but it includes offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour or a misuse or abuse of power which makes a person feel vulnerable, degraded, humiliated or offended.
- Examples include insulting or patronising comments, exclusion or intimidating levels of supervision.
- Bullying can be physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct.

Giving legitimate feedback on, for example, performance does not of itself constitute bullying.

- It should be clear what an individual should do if they consider they are being harassed or bullied, whether it is at their normal place of work or in other work-related settings, e.g. at work events, out on tour; what additional support (if any) is available; and that they will not be treated unfavourably because they have raised this issue.
- The formal process for making and dealing with a complaint which cannot be resolved informally should be clear, e.g. your grievance procedure for employees and/or a separate anti-harassment and bullying procedure for all staff.
- It should be clear what the potential consequences of unacceptable behaviour are, e.g. action under the disciplinary procedure for employees, which could include dismissal.
- If you also set out who an individual should speak to if they witness someone being bullied or harassed this should help staff understand that they have a responsibility to report such incidents and empower them to do so.
- If the policy reassures staff that complaints will be dealt with fairly, confidentially and sensitively individuals may be more likely to come forward if there is an issue.
- It is crucial to fully and promptly investigate the complaint as part of any process and to keep records of information gathered during the process.
- Consider whether your procedure works in practice for your organisation and regularly review your policy.

2. COMMUNICATE YOUR POLICY TO STAFF

- A policy can only assist if staff are made aware of it, so it should be well communicated to your staff and easily accessible. If you are revising your existing procedures, think about communicating this by using posters around the workplace, as well as by email, intranet and through staff meetings. You may also consider putting the policy on your noticeboard.
- If training is provided, this will both aid understanding and further demonstrate that you are genuinely seeking to prevent harassment and bullying.

3. ENSURE MANAGERS UNDERSTAND HOW TO HANDLE ISSUES RAISED

- Ensure managers have read your policy and been made aware of the importance of taking complaints seriously, the need to be sensitive to the emotional nature of the issue and the need to follow the procedures in an objective manner.
- As above, there are advantages to providing training on procedures, particularly for those who have specific roles to play.

4. KEEP MATTERS CONFIDENTIAL

- These types of issues can be difficult to raise, due to the nature of the behaviour concerned, fear of not being believed and the potential consequences of disclosure for an individual's career. A complaint of harassment or bullying can also affect the reputation of the person who the complaint is against, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld. Additionally, a complaint of harassment can affect the reputation of an organisation. It is, therefore, crucial that information in relation to such a complaint is kept confidential and only disclosed to those who need to know for the purposes of dealing with the matter.

5. CONSIDER A STRATEGY FOR MANAGING COMMUNICATIONS

- Consider how you would manage communications with other staff, without breaching confidentiality, both during the process and following its conclusion.
- Consider how you would manage external communications if an issue became public.

[More support](#) is available to help you to develop policies and procedures to address harassment and bullying.

Key Themes

discussed at the open forums

Around 200 people from all areas of the theatre industry and from across the country participated in the events, which were open to all.

- Bullying and abuses of power were seen to be prevalent. The behaviours can be found at all levels, all areas of the industry, and in all genders. Sexual harassment was a part, but not always a major part, of the discussions.
- There can be a passive culture of endorsing bullying. Leaders may encourage new entrants not to challenge, perpetuating the culture with statements such as 'that's just how they are' or we have 'extreme characters in our industry' or 'it's the price you pay for the talent'.
- Links were made to the 'myth of the artistic temperament' (Anne Marie Quigg, *Bullying in the Arts: Vocation, Exploitation and Abuse of Power*, 2011). It was suggested that the value placed on artistic output and process, places some individuals beyond criticism, which perpetuates the culture.
- Incidents of harassment and bullying were thought to exist across all areas and in all departments of theatre for example off stage, the rehearsal room, front of house and administrative roles. Incidents that had taken place between staff and audience, or funders, were also discussed.
- Incidents are likely to be underreported, overwhelmingly because individuals would be concerned that speaking out would have repercussions on their employment.
- This was seen to be a major issue with self-employed workers. Individuals talked about feeling powerless or isolated, of being employed project by project and of the importance of ensuring a 'good reputation'. The risks of challenging (and being thought of as outspoken) are high.
- Individuals (particularly if freelance) might not be aware of, or have access to the policies and procedures in place at each organisation. While policies exist on paper, it's also important to 'live' them through modelled and discussed expectations of behaviour.
- There is a wider culture of long hours in theatre. This can result in:
 - a merging of work and social lives, which can make individuals more vulnerable.
 - stressful working situations, which can excuse or lead to unacceptable behaviours.
 - a 24/7 culture where expectations of employees (such as not taking leave, or being available via email or phone day and night) are themselves bullying, or lead to bullying behaviours.

Good Practice

discussed at the open forums

- Promote a sense of collective responsibility in each workplace.
- Establish the language for a dialogue. Keep it simple and make it part of the conversation.
- Treat this issue as seriously as we now treat health and safety and safeguarding.
- The behaviour of the theatre leadership is critical. If peer to peer challenge is there, others will feel empowered and have confidence that issues will be dealt with.
- Establish routes for peer to peer support. Provide training and advice for the identified supporters. [See [The Old Vic's Guardians Programme](#) for a model]
- Working with freelance or self-employed: venues should consider providing a company handbook with relevant policies for freelancers to visiting companies and freelancers. This will help set out culture and expectations at a welcome meeting or induction. A debriefing and feedback are essential.
- Freelance or self-employed workers, or visiting companies: ask to see the company handbook with relevant policies for freelancers, ask for a de-brief.
- Ask individuals to sign something to acknowledge they have read the handbook or policies, or principles. This makes them more aware, and more accountable.
- A staff welfare committee, or a staff company forum, can give everyone the chance to discuss company policies and culture.
- Boards can be encouraged to engage with and be alert to the issues. Boards should ensure there is a policy, and consider appointing a nominated trustee.
- Consider how to embed this culture change in schemes for younger people.
- Organisations can help each other. Those who have policies and practices in place could help others - see [resources](#).

List of Organisations and individuals with specialist skills

UK Theatre and SOLT collated the following list of organisations and individuals with specialist skills to help deal with sensitive issues. You can download the list as a separate file [here](#).

ADVICE AND HELPLINES:

Organisation	Helpline Telephone Number	Website
ACAS - Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service	0300 123 11 00	http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=6078
Citizens Advice Bureau - harassment at work	England: 03444 111 444	https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/harassment-at-work/
Citizens Advice Bureau - rape and sexual assault	Wales: 03444 77 20 20	https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/rape-and-sexual-assault/
Citizens Advice Bureau - sexual harassment		https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/what-are-the-different-types-of-discrimination/sexual-harassment/
Emergency Services	999	
Equality Advisory Support Service	0808 800 0082	http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/
Equality and Human Rights Commission – Sexual Harassment	England: 0845 605 6610 Scotland: 0845 604 5510 Wales: 0845 604 8810	https://www.equalityhumanrights.com
Mind - workplace relations	0300 123 3393	https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace-relations/
National Domestic Violence Helpline	0808 2000 247	http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk/
NHS	111	https://www.nhs.uk
NHS Direct Wales	111 or 0845 46 47	https://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/
Police	101	
Rape Crisis	0808 802 9999	https://rapecrisis.org.uk/
Reach Out - information on sexual harassment at work		https://ie.reachout.com/
Safeline	0808 800 5008	https://www.safeline.org.uk/
Samaritans	116 123	http://www.samaritans.org
Survivors UK (for male victims of sexual assault)	020 3598 3898	https://www.survivorsuk.org/
The Survivor's Trust	0808 801 0818	http://thesurvivorstrust.org/
Victim Support England and Wales	0808 16 89 111	https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/
Victim Support Northern Ireland	Belfast 02890 243133 Foyle 02871 370086	http://www.victimsupportni.co.uk/
Victim Support Scotland	0345 603 9213	https://www.victimsupportscotland.org.uk/

INDUSTRY SPECIFIC:

Organisation	Helpline Telephone Number	Website
Society of London Theatre and UK Theatre	020 7557 6700	http://solt.co.uk/ https://uktheatre.org/
Federation of Scottish Theatres	0131 248 4842	http://www.scottishtheatre.org/
Independent Theatre Council	020 7403 1727	https://www.itc-arts.org/
One Dance UK	020 7713 0730	http://www.onedanceuk.org/
Equity	Equity main switchboard: 020 7379 6000 Scotland and NI: 0141 248 2472 Wales: 029 2039 7971 Manchester: 0161 244 5995	http://www.equity.org.uk
BECTU	London office: 020 7346 0900 Midlands office: 0121 632 5372 Wales office: 02920 666557 Scotland office: 0141 370 1590 Manchester office: 0161 334 0171	https://www.bectu.org.uk
The Musicians' Union	London office: 020 7840 5504 East and South East office: 020 7840 5537 Midlands office: 0121 236 4028 Wales and South West office: 029 2045 6585 North office: 0161 236 1764 Scotland and NI office: 0141 341 2960	https://www.musiciansunion.org.uk
Theatre chaplaincy UK	07501 829491	http://www.theatrechaplaincyuk.com
Artsminds		http://www.artsminds.co.uk
Incorporated Society of Musicians	020 7221 4399	https://www.ism.org/