

Bullying & Harassment Policy

The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company is committed to providing all team members with an environment free from bullying and harassment.

This includes everyone; eg the self-employed freelancers, trainees and our volunteers – in all capacities, including those of actors, technical crew, administration persons, or anyone else acting in an official capacity with The South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company.

Definition of our “team”, all of whom this document applies to.

Our team at any given time, consists of

- three permanent company directors (working in a sole volunteer capacity)
- freelance self-employed actors and stage crew (who join us on a project by project basis, sometimes for one project only, sometimes for several, or dropping in and out, whatever fits with their own wider business as freelance actors & creatives)
- Volunteer fundraisers and supporters.

All persons involved with our projects or administration, will be expected to comply with this policy and management will take appropriate measures to ensure that bullying/harassment does not occur.

The South Devon Players is committed to dealing with complaints of bullying and/or harassment in a fair and sensitive manner, and endeavouring to ensure confidentiality with respect to any complaints.

Appropriate disciplinary action, ranging from an informal verbal warning, to removal from our projects for serious offences, will be taken where bullying/harassment allegations are upheld against persons involved with our projects or administration.

The policy applies to project team members both in the workplace and at work associated events such as meetings, conferences and work related social events, whether on the premises or off site, and also to conduct on electronic media such as email, social media, or websites.

The policy applies to bullying/harassment not only by fellow project team members but also by a client, customer or other business contact to which a project team member might reasonably expect to come into contact with.

Definition of Bullying

“Bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual’s right to dignity at work.

An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work but as a one off incident may not be considered to be bullying.”

The bullying can include conduct offensive to a reasonable person, e.g. oral or written slurs, unwanted physical contact, gestures, jokes, displaying pictures/ flags/emblems/ graffiti or other material which state/imply prejudicial attitudes which are offensive to fellow team members.

Other examples of bullying behaviour include:

Personal insults and name calling
Persistent unjustified criticism and sarcasm
Public or private humiliation
Withholding required information, or documents
Sneering
Gaslighting
Turning people in or outside the team, against other team members by gossip
Instantaneous rage, often over trivial issues
Unfair delegation of duties and responsibilities
Setting impossible deadlines
Unnecessary work interference
Making it difficult for team members to have access to necessary information
Aggression
Shouting or snapping at other people in an angry/ aggressive tone
Not giving credit for work contribution
Continuously refusing reasonable requests without good reasons
Intimidation and threats in general.
Refusal to discuss problems or questions, in a calm constructive manner
Derogatory or dismissive comments about someones protected characteristics; eg age, gender, sexuality, race, disabilities, socio-economic background.

Definition of Harassment

Sexual harassment is any form of verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person.

The unwanted conduct may consist of acts, requests, spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material.

Examples of sexual harassment include:

Sexual gestures
Displaying sexually suggestive objectives, pictures, calendars
Sending suggestive and pornographic correspondence including faxes, text messages or e-mails
Unwelcome sexual comments and jokes
Unwelcome physical conduct such as pinching, unnecessary touching, etc.
Same sex sexual harassment
Giving sexually themed gifts.

Harassment on the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, race, age, religion, sexual orientation, disability or membership of the Traveller community *is defined as any unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person. The unwanted conduct may consist of acts, requests, spoken words, gestures; or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material*

Effects of Bullying & Harassment on the victim

Bullying can have a physiological, psychological and behavioural impact on an individual's character. Victims can lose their self-confidence and self-esteem and are at increased risk of suffering stress-related conditions that can trigger further trauma.

Apart from the direct impact on a victim's health, long-term exposure to bullying may also have consequences for the victim's livelihood, through absenteeism and even resignation from work in order to avoid contact with the bully.

Responsibilities

Everyone involved in our projects has a responsibility for ensuring dignity and respect of their colleagues and contacts in the workplace and to creating and contributing to the maintenance of a work environment which is free from bullying/harassment or from conduct likely to contribute to bullying or harassment.

Management and others in positions of authority have a particular responsibility to ensure that bullying, sexual harassment and harassment does not occur and that complaints are addressed speedily through the appropriate procedures.

In particular management should:

- provide good example by treating all in the workplace with courtesy and respect
- promote awareness of the organisation's policy and complaints procedures
- be vigilant for signs of harassment and take action before a problem escalates
- respond sensitively to a team member who makes a complaint of bullying or harassment
- explain the procedures to be followed if a complaint of bullying, sexual harassment or harassment is made
- endeavour to ensure that a team member making a complaint is not victimised for doing so.
- monitor and follow up the situation after a complaint is made so that the sexual harassment or harassment does not recur

Complaints Procedure

There is both an informal and formal procedure to deal with the issue of bullying/harassment at work. Any investigation will be completed as quickly as possible.

Informal Procedure

It is often preferable for all concerned that complaints of bullying or harassment are dealt with informally whenever possible. This is likely to produce solutions that are speedy, effective and minimise embarrassment and the risk of breaching confidentiality. Thus, ideally, in the first instance a person who believes that they are the subject of bullying/harassment should ask the person responsible to stop the offensive behaviour. If a person finds it difficult to approach the alleged perpetrator directly then a person should seek help and advice on a confidential basis from the volunteer company directors. They will be able to provide advice and assistance about the company policy.

Having consulted with the company directors, the complainant may request the assistance of a manager / supervisor in raising the issue with the alleged perpetrator(s).

In this situation the approach of the manager / supervisor should initiate a confidential, non-confrontational verbal discussion with a view to resolving the issue in an informal low key manner.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the informal procedures then they have the right to proceed with the formal Procedures.

Formal procedures may also be initiated if the complainant is suffering extreme distress and unable to approach the alleged perpetrator.

Formal Procedures

A complainant may decide, for whatever reason, to bypass the informal procedure. Choosing not to use the informal procedure will not reflect negatively on a complainant in the formal procedure.

It is recognised that it may not always be practical to use the informal procedure particularly where the bullying or harassment is serious or where the people involved are at different levels in the organisation.

When a formal complaint is being made, the team member should contact the company directors as soon as possible. All formal complaints should be made in writing, outlining as much detail as possible regarding the allegation.

1. A meeting will then be held with the alleged bully or harasser. In the interests of natural justice the alleged bully or harasser will be notified in advance, in writing of the nature of the complaint, given a copy of the allegation, informed of his or her right to representation at any meetings and will be given every opportunity to rebut the detailed allegations made.

2. Whilst it is desirable to maintain utmost confidentiality, once an investigation of an issue begins, it may be necessary to interview other team members. If this is so, the importance of confidentiality will be stressed to them.

4. All complaints received will be treated seriously, confidentially and dealt with as soon as is practicable. Strict confidentiality and proper discretion will be maintained, as far as is possible, in any necessary consultation to safeguard both parties from innuendo and harmful gossip.

5. Dependant on the extremity of the offence and the evidence available, appropriate action will be taken to make sure that the situation is remedied.

External procedures.

In a case where, for example, it is a company director who is being bullied, or in a situation where the company directors feel, for whatever reason, in need of external support, advice, or assistance; or in which the alleged bully is refusing to work with the in-company anti-bullying procedures (eg refusing any meetings), the company directors may go for advice or mediation, to the anti-bullying, or welfare contacts of their relevant trade union.

Action Post Investigation

Where a complaint is upheld a disciplinary meeting will take place. The disciplinary action to be taken will be in line with the company's disciplinary policy. Should a case of bullying or harassment be proven then the organisation will take appropriate disciplinary action.

This can include a warning, or other appropriate action up to and including dismissal from a project.

Where deemed necessary, or where a potentially illegal act has taken place, the company reserves the right to contact law enforcement or other official organisations for further advice or action.

Records of any warnings for bullying/harassment will remain in the team member's file and will be used in determining disciplinary action to be taken if any further offences of the same or similar nature occur in the future, for a maximum of three months (or removed immediately should the team member leave the project).

Regular checks will be made by one of the investigators to ensure that the bullying/harassment has stopped and that there has been no victimisation for referring a complaint in good faith. Retaliation of any kind against a team member for complaining or taking part in an investigation concerning bullying/harassment at work is a serious disciplinary offence.

Malicious Complaints

If a complaint is found to be malicious and false, the appropriate disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, against the person making the false allegation will be imposed.

Further Information

This policy has been created following assessment of the risk to the health and safety of team members from bullying in the workplace with due regard to the relevant codes of practice from Equity.

This policy will be subject to regular review in line with changes in legislation, case law, other relevant developments, changes in the workplace and the experiences of the organisation in implementation.