



The Paper Birds Theatre Company

DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

Date reviewed: June 2025

Staff responsible: Jemma McDonnell

Trustee responsible: Lucy Parker

Date of next review: June 2026

Introduction

The Paper Birds Theatre Company strives to offer an environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. We do not tolerate bullying and or harassment.

We have a duty of care to protect you, we will make it our priority to support you if you experience problems with bullying or harassment and this policy is designed to help us do that. If you have a problem with bullying or harassment, we encourage you to use the support available to try to resolve it as early as possible. We will investigate any complaint that you bring to our attention in a fair, independent and confidential way and, after considering all the facts, we will take prompt and appropriate action. Informal resolution is also a route available to you to deal with bullying or harassment.

Who does the policy apply to?

This policy applies to everybody working for The Paper Birds Theatre Company. This includes full-time and part-time staff, freelancers and sub-contractors. It can be used by anyone experiencing bullying or harassment at work, work-related events such as social functions or business trips, as well as via telephone, email, text messages and online.

All those working with The Paper Birds Theatre Company are expected to comply fully with the terms of this bullying and harassment policy. The Paper Birds Theatre Company regards acts of bullying and harassment as a serious disciplinary matter. Those found to be acting in an unacceptable manner towards others may find their continued employment or engagement at risk.

The Dignity at Work Policy does not form part of and is not intended to vary the contract of employment. It may be amended from time to time, as necessary.

What is bullying and harassment?

Bullying or harassment can take place face-to-face, behind your back, by telephone, email, text, social media or any other form of communication.

The Advisory, Conciliation, and Arbitration Service (Acas), a UK organisation providing free and impartial information on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law, provides definitions for bullying and harassment.

Bullying is defined as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.



Harassment is defined as unwanted conduct which is related to a protected characteristic of the Equality Act 2010 (age, sex, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation), which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or creating for that person an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Bullying and harassment can be:

- Intentional or unintentional, targeted at an individual or a group
- Not specifically targeted but have an overall impact that creates a negative work environment
- Repeated behaviour over a period of time, or one isolated incident
- Between workers and/or managers at the same or different levels in the organisation
- In the same or different departments or areas of work within or outside of the organisation
- Between employees, workers and external contractors and/or clients within or outside of the organisation
- Mobbing – when more than one person is involved
- Neglect or marginalisation
- During daily work activities, at work-organised events held on-site or off-site, inside and outside of working hours
- Face-to-face, over the telephone, by email, text messages and online, e.g. social media platforms.

It is important to note that not all harassment is sexual but keep in mind that, with sexual harassment:

- A hug, kiss on the cheek, or casual touch is not necessarily sexual harassment. The key is whether the behaviour was unwanted or offensive
- It does not matter if a person has sexual feelings towards the recipient, only that the behaviour is of a sexual nature and that it was unwanted and/or offensive
- Sexual harassment is gender neutral and orientation neutral. It can be perpetrated by any gender against any gender.

Sexual Harassment- Worker Protection

The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 introduced in October 2024, states a legal duty for employers to proactively take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment.

To ensure worker protection The Paper Birds Theatre Company are committed to:

- Educating all staff about sexual harassment



- Fostering a working environment that supports the dignity and respect of all and is free from any form of discrimination, bullying, harassment, and violence, including gender-based violence
- Providing a process and procedure for dealing with harassment to ensure it is properly managed
- Capturing learning and monitoring our progress in achieving a workplace free from harassment
- Building continuous improvement into our culture.

As part of these commitments it is also important to note that:

- This policy is supported by the Executive Leadership Team, including Board of Directors, who will all be visible champions of this policy.
- The Paper Birds Theatre Company will not tolerate any form of sexual harassment and all instances will be investigated in line with this policy
- There is no time limit around reporting an incident of sexual harassment under this policy
- No one will be victimised for making a complaint of sexual harassment or for supporting another person to make such a complaint. No one will be subject to disciplinary action or to any other detriment simply because their complaint is not upheld
- TPB recognise that as a touring company with no fixed office, sexual harassment can take place in a number of locations and settings.
- In the context of harassment, impact is paramount above intention

Third parties

Where your complaint is about someone other than a staff member, such as a participant, supplier, visitor, or individual from another organisation e.g. partner organisations or venue staff, we will consider what action may be appropriate to protect you and anyone involved pending the outcome of an investigation, bearing in mind the reasonable needs of the business, the rights of that person and any policies in place with the third party. Where appropriate, we will attempt to discuss the matter with the third party.

The Paper Birds Theatre Company's approach

The Paper Birds Theatre Company believes everybody deserves to be treated with respect. We value inclusivity, appreciate difference, welcome learning from others, and consider people equal without prejudice or favour. We will not tolerate any behaviour that does not answer to these values, including bullying or harassment in any form. We will work to the best of our ability to ensure everybody who works with or for us is treated according to these beliefs.



We will never victimise, unfairly treat or discipline anybody who makes a genuine formal or informal complaint about bullying and harassment. We will respect and maintain your confidentiality and will speak to anybody involved about their responsibility to maintain confidentiality on the issue. As we have a duty to protect you and your colleagues, there may be times we decide to act on your complaint independently. In these situations, we will encourage you to use our support services and will inform you of the outcome of our investigations if you wish to know.

The Paper Birds Theatre Company aims to offer the best possible support to those working with or for us that experience bullying and harassment. You can use our informal or formal processes to resolve your complaint although where possible, we encourage you to try to resolve any problems informally in the first instance.

How do I make a complaint about bullying and harassment?

Anyone with a complaint regarding bullying and harassment can choose to pursue it via either a formal or informal process.

- a. The informal process
- b. The formal process

a. Using informal processes

If you have a complaint about bullying and harassment, we encourage you to try to resolve problems informally where possible and appropriate, before using the formal process. It is important to remember that the other person may be unaware of their behaviour and the impact it has on you, and your informal feedback may give the person a better understanding and opportunity to change or stop their behaviour.

We advise you to try to resolve your complaint as early as possible, to reduce stress and worry for you and possibly the other person involved.

To address a complaint informally, you should speak to anyone involved in the situation about how their behaviour is affecting you. It can be helpful to describe particular instances of this behaviour, including times, places, events or conversations in order to clearly illustrate your point. You should use the opportunity to ask the person to change or stop their behaviour.

If you feel unable to speak to the person yourself, you can approach a member of the Executive Team- Charlotte, Jemma or Kylie, or if the complaint is about a member of the Executive Team, then please contact Lucy Parker from the board of directors on LParker@wolseytheatre.co.uk

b. Using the formal process

If you do not feel that the informal process is a viable option for addressing your complaint, or if you have already pursued the informal process and your issue persists, you may decide to follow the formal process for addressing complaints. Alternatively, The



Paper Birds Theatre Company may decide the matter is a disciplinary issue which needs to be dealt with formally.

We ask you to put your formal complaint in writing and send it to the Executive Team. If your complaint is against a member of the Executive Team you should send it to Lucy Parker on the board of directors on LParker@wolseytheatre.co.uk. It should include full details of your complaint including a detailed account of the incident, the date it took place, who was involved including any witnesses, and any action you may have taken. This will provide the best opportunity to fairly and reasonably investigate your complaint while details of what took place can readily be remembered by anyone involved. We understand this may not be possible in all cases and will investigate any complaint made in good faith.

Once a formal complaint has been submitted the manager/ board member will send you written acknowledgement of the complaint.

The procedure for investigating a formal complaint is outlined below.

- We will arrange a meeting with you to discuss the problem
- You have the right to be accompanied at the meeting
- We may need to speak to other witnesses
- The decision about your case will be made and communicated to you including any associated recommendations or appropriate action
- If you are unhappy with the result you will have the right to appeal

What to do if you witness bullying or harassment

At The Paper Birds Theatre Company, we all share responsibility for ensuring a safe working environment for ourselves and others. You may not have experienced bullying or harassment directly, but have witnessed someone else being bullied or harassed. If this has occurred, you should raise your concerns in order to protect the safety and wellbeing of the other person.

We understand you may feel worried about getting involved in a situation that does not directly affect you. We will support you in raising your concerns in an informal or formal way, so the bullying or harassment can stop. We will not victimise, unfairly treat or discipline you for raising a genuine concern.

If you decide to raise a formal complaint we ask you to send this in writing to the Executive Team or if the complaint is about a member of the Executive Team, to Lucy Parker from the board of directors on LParker@wolseytheatre.co.uk as soon as possible after the time of the incident. A formal complaint will be investigated in accordance with the process outlined above.

See also: Grievance & Disciplinary Procedure