

ROYAL

COURT

PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ABUSES OF POWER

An offering, a provocation, a hope for CULTURE CHANGE.

A CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

The following code was created in response to the events at the Royal Court Theatre Day of Action on Saturday 28th October 2017.

Responsibility

Reporting

Raising Awareness

Breadth & Scope

Patterns and Scenarios

Responsibility

- You must take responsibility for the power you have. Do not use it abusively over others more vulnerable than you. Think about what you want, why you want it, what you are doing to get it, and what impact it will have. If this is achieved, the problem is solved.
- Call it out, straight away, even if it is awkward to do so. Don't feel shame. Use this language: "That is not appropriate – it makes me feel uncomfortable." Empower yourself and others. Stand up for yourself.
- No one is alone. Everyone has responsibility to stand up for each other, to call behaviour out and to report it. Do not be a bystander.
- Every organisation signs up to leading an active sexual harassment policy. Make it a living policy. It should be based around workshops and scenarios to clarify the so-called grey areas. ([See the Royal Court Theatre policy.](#))
- Once harassment and abuse is proven, it must not be hidden. Boards and organisations cannot conceal it as a reason for dismissal. Challenge confidentiality – why is it needed and who is it protecting.

Reporting

- Freelancers must be empowered to use the same reporting structures as staff. Also use ITC, UKT, SOLT, Equity, BECTU, Stage Directors UK, Federation of Drama Schools, Arts Council England, and other industry bodies.

- Have an open, clear reporting structure. There should be three possible structures to report to across an organisation. As well as line managers and senior management, use peers and trusted colleagues – everyone in the organisation is responsible.
- Talk to colleagues in other theatres or companies to support your process if you need to.
- Logging behaviour is important, even if no further action is wished for. This way patterns are picked up.
- We understand these reporting structures are not available to everyone and we will work with the industry to create clear places to report and get advice going forwards.
- The industry must develop a model for dealing with historic cases.
- ([See the Royal Court Theatre policy](#) for a reporting model).

Raising Awareness

- Induct all staff, freelancers, casting directors, actors, stage managers, writers, crew on their first day of work into the policy and code of behaviour. They should sign that this has happened.
- Run annual workshops with staff led by trained facilitators. Use scenarios and language.
- Consult with freelancers. (The Royal Court Theatre will be holding a freelancer session in January 2018). Encourage them to use theatre buildings for their one-to-one meetings.
- Recognise the blurred boundaries between work and social spaces. Don't exploit them.
- Interrogate the stories and representations we put on stage. We are in the business of representing the world. Take responsibility. Make it equal.
- Engage in a robust conversation between drama schools and industry - to tool up students – acting, stage management, technical, directing, writing, producing – to be confident, empowered and appropriate. (Since Saturday the Royal Court Theatre is in positive dialogue with Mountview and the Federation of Drama Schools in advance of their next consortium meeting).

Breadth and Scope

- Theatre is an art form – the work can and should be challenging, experimental, exploratory and bold. Artistic freedom of expression is essential but the creative space must be a safe space.
- The theatre industry is broad: it involves an intimate, rigorously personal system of drama training, it involves office work, auditions, rehearsals, crewing, late night working, bars, parties and public-facing frontline work, ambitious young people.
- The industry includes commercial producers and theatres, not-for-profit publicly funded, touring and fringe companies, presenting venues, festivals – all have different contexts and resources
- A policy needs to speak to this scope of practice, and recognise particular areas of risk.
- Drama students, freelancers, early career artists, actors at all stages of their career, ushers and bar staff, and core junior staff are all vulnerable to abuses of power.
- Recognise that abuses of power can happen across diverse gender and working relationships.
- Take responsibility and empower across the scope. Write a policy that fits.

Patterns and Scenarios

- Of our 150 stories, 126 related directly to experiences in our industry.
- 21.3% were incidents which happened in rehearsals or backstage.
- 16% were sustained inappropriate sexual comments over a period of time during a production or in a workplace.
- 14% happened at drama schools between tutors and students.
- 13.3% happened at work parties – press nights, birthdays, end of the run, Christmas, in the pub or at dinner, with alcohol. In the Town Hall meetings this blurred social context came up many times.
- 10% happened in interviews or auditions for jobs.
- 9.3% happened when invited or taken into an abuser's home.
- 7.3% happened in an office context.
- (The remaining 8.6% were "other" – witnessed, online, conference)
- That 51.3% of the stories submitted took place in rehearsals, backstage, in drama schools, or involved sustained verbal abuse suggests significant change needs to happen in institutional culture.
- There were 11 accounts of rape.

Some suggested codes of behaviour to avoid these patterns and protect the areas of risk (this is only a beginning):

- It is never appropriate for someone in a junior role to be asked by someone in a senior role to work outside hours in their private home.
- It is never appropriate to verbally sexually objectify anyone's body in a rehearsal room or theatre.
- It is never appropriate for an actor to be made to feel vulnerable through nudity, undress or costuming.
- It is never appropriate to send overly personal or suggestive communications to a junior colleague.
- It is never appropriate to initiate unwanted intimate physical contact.
- It is never appropriate to push people to share their personal experiences to deepen the work. If it is offered, it has to remain within the trust of the working room.