

DIGNITY AND RESPECT

SoA POLICY

November 2018



The Society of Authors (“SoA”) is committed to protecting the rights and dignity of its employees, members and colleagues and expects the same commitment from those with whom it works.

The SoA recognises that all employees and all individuals in their interactions with the SoA - whether in communications with staff, attendances on SoA premises, attending SoA events, serving on committees or being involved in prize or award applications or deliberations - have a right to work in an environment in which the dignity of individuals is respected and which is free from harassment and bullying.

The SoA endorses the cross-industry Commitment to Professional Behaviour in Bookselling and Publishing, and the BFI principles to tackle and prevent bullying and harassment in the screen industries (together “the Principles”) and expects those interacting with the SoA to comply with the Principles as well as the SoA’s Equality Policy.

This Policy has been produced to help ensure the SoA remains a respectful, considerate and professional organisation and to signpost appropriate action in the face of any breaches of the Principles.

1 In interactions with the SoA, at SoA events or on SoA business:

- a) If you experience any breach of the Principles please raise it with the Chair or person responsible for the meeting, any member of SoA staff or the Chief Executive. The SoA will consider and, if necessary, investigate all complaints and take whatever action is necessary and appropriate to prevent a recurrence and protect the SoA, its members and its staff.
- b) Sanctions may include any of the following:
 - i. warning the party involved that the particular behaviour is inappropriate and must cease;
 - ii. directing a person to discontinue speaking, asking for an apology, ordering a short adjournment of a meeting, or adjourning the meeting;
 - iii. immediate removal from a particular meeting or event without refund;
 - iv. denial of access to SoA offices, venues or meetings on a temporary or permanent basis;
 - v. withholding of a contracted fee;
 - vi. removal from any Committee subject to a vote of fellow Committee members;
 - vii. Removal from a judging panel;
 - viii. In the case of members, should it appear that any member’s continuance would prejudicially affect the SoA, the Management Committee may, if it thinks fit, remove him or her from such position (in accordance with the SoA’s Bye-laws Section 7 (‘Removal’));
 - ix. If the conduct complained of involves an SoA employee, the SoA will deal with the issue in accordance with the SoA’s employment policies and practices.
- c) The SoA will not be able to follow up on an anonymous report. The SoA will, if requested, take steps to protect the confidentiality of the complainant from the person complained of and any third party to the extent possible. However, complete confidentiality may not be possible in all circumstances.
- d) The SoA will make every attempt to respond to a complaint in a timely fashion (and within 5 working days). If appropriate, the SoA may report the incident to local authorities.
- e) This Policy prohibits retaliation against any person for reporting a breach of the Principles, or for participating in an investigation relating to any complaint made under this Policy. The sanctions for retaliation are the same sanctions available to address any other breach of the Policy.

2. Members or Associates experiencing unacceptable/inappropriate behaviour outside the SoA:

Reporting inappropriate behaviour can be difficult whoever you are, whether staff, freelance or otherwise. Freelancers may not know who to speak to or what the process may be; they may also feel they have less time to act. Whatever the complaint, or contractual status, we encourage members to contact ACAS or to get in touch with the SoA for a confidential discussion.

If members feel that they or someone else has been bullied, harassed or that someone is in breach of the Principles we advise:

- a) Anyone who wants advice about making a complaint or wishes to make a complaint should act swiftly.
- b) If there is any form of physical threat, abuse or criminal activity, contact the police immediately.
- c) Think about what your concerns are and why you feel there is a breach.
- d) Keep a written record of what is happening and make notes. Establish a clear order of incidents as this could be useful to help with any formal action further down the line. If you're working in less formal work environments, this is even more important.
- e) Think about how you want the complaint to be resolved and be willing to discuss solutions.
- f) If you are comfortable, at the time or soon after the incident, we may suggest you talk to the person involved and ask them to stop.
- g) If it is not appropriate or comfortable to speak to the individual concerned, for whatever reason, report the incident to the correct person to action. This may be the employing organisation, the event organiser, someone in charge of a venue, social media moderator or otherwise.

3. SoA as trusted Intermediary

In certain circumstances the SoA can act as trusted intermediary to assist with effective complaint resolution. If a member of the SoA gets in touch about a complaint of a breach of the Principles outside the auspices of the SoA, we will support members with this process and, if necessary, act as a trusted intermediary on their behalf.

We will maintain and supply guidance on the 'Advice' section of our website and remind members about this in our regular communications with them. Where appropriate, we will refer members to the following free confidential 24-hour helplines:

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS): tel: 0300 123 1100 or online at [acas.org.uk/bullying](https://www.acas.org.uk/bullying)

The National Bullying Helpline: 0845 22 55 787

Film & TV Support Line: 0800 054 00 00

The BBC Care First Bullying and Harassment Support Line: 01452 623367

We will review and update our guidance and this Policy annually and as needed.

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