

*A guide to*

# **BULLYING**

**WHAT  
YOU  
CAN DO**

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*Bullying is a highly destructive set of behaviours, sometimes openly aggressive and sometimes covertly manipulative. Bullying has been observed and recorded in many workplaces, including those associated with theatre, broadcasting, entertainment and the arts. The person being bullied can feel very alone and insecure which can result in damage to their confidence and work.*

Being bullied is a devastating experience that can have a negative impact on self-esteem and cause psychological and physical harm

Equity members can be particularly vulnerable as they are often on short term contracts and dependent on the organisations in which they are working for their livelihood. This means that making a complaint of bullying can be difficult, as members can feel they risk being labelled as troublemakers and losing out on opportunities for future employment.

**Bullies come in all shapes and sizes**

– they can be members of a stage crew, creative team, management or other cast members or entertainers and they crop up in all areas of the industry. Examples of negative behaviours experienced directly by Equity members include:

- **loud, abusive behaviour in front of others**
- **unjustified criticism**

- **withholding of vital information, such as changes to rehearsal times or other arrangements**
- **being asked to carry out demeaning tasks that are outside your official role**
- **unwanted jokes or jibes at your expense**
- **being isolated from your colleagues among the cast or crew**
- **being deliberately ignored or slighted e.g. left out of company events**
- **extreme isolating tactics such as mobbing when the bully persuades others to join in with their alienating behaviour**

**BE AWARE:** sometimes a number of seemingly minor, unpleasant incidents perpetrated by one or more individuals are an indication that you are being bullied.



## What can you do?

### TIP ONE

Stay calm and focused — it is not your fault as a bully can target anyone. Most often targets are competent, popular individuals while bullies can be incompetent and either socially inadequate or highly manipulative.

Remind yourself that it is not you but the bully who is causing the problem.

Take action as soon as possible, to “nip in the bud” this behaviour. If left, the bully gains power and momentum. Employers need to know what is going on with the people they have employed.

### TIP TWO

If you feel able, ask the perpetrator in as non-confrontational a way as possible if you've done something to upset them e.g. “have I done anything to offend you?”. Try to explain how their behaviour is making you feel. They may think it

is “banter” and not realise its effect on you. This may be enough to make them recognise they're not treating you in a professional and respectful manner and they will change their behaviour accordingly. However, they may react defensively or badly to being approached so think about this and how you might respond whilst remaining calm and be prepared. Remember to keep a note of what is said and what happens.

### TIP THREE

Record what is happening and whether there are any witnesses. Make notes or a diary of all incidents, dates and times, and include what was said by whom and what was done in as much detail as possible. Also keep any written “evidence” such as notes from the bully etc. It is advisable to keep your diary /notes somewhere separate from your workplace.

These notes will be very useful at any meetings about your situation.



within the company and ask them for help. Ask about the policies, procedures and any support the company has in place and give them the chance to take action to address the situation. You can ask for copies of the policies and reporting procedures.

If the bully is your immediate manager (e.g. 1st or 2nd AD, Company Manager, Director, Choreographer etc), consider whether you could approach another senior person within the company but be careful, bullying complaints are frequently disbelieved and sometimes complainants are scapegoated.

### TIP SIX

If you feel you are not making any progress, contact Equity if you have not done so before. As a member you can contact the union at any point during your experience and can go directly to a member of staff in the nearest office (see the contacts list at the end of this document) if you prefer that to speaking to your Equity Deputy, or if you are working in a part of the industry where there is no Deputy structure.

### TIP FOUR

Tell someone you trust inside or outside the workplace or both (e.g. a friend, fellow worker, your agent) about what you are going through so that you are supported. Ask for their take on the situation – people who are bullied often worry they are being over-sensitive. Talking to someone you trust will bring reassurance that you are not imagining abusive behaviour. Being bullied is a devastating experience, so do seek this kind of support.

### TIP FIVE

Make sure you know the terms and conditions of your contract so you know your rights, if you are unsure ask Equity or your Agent or the Promoter for clarification. Raise the issue with someone in authority



Remember that even if you are not on an Equity contract, you have the right to advice and support.

If you decide to make an official complaint, ask Equity for support. Be clear about what you want to achieve so that Equity understands the outcome you are seeking.

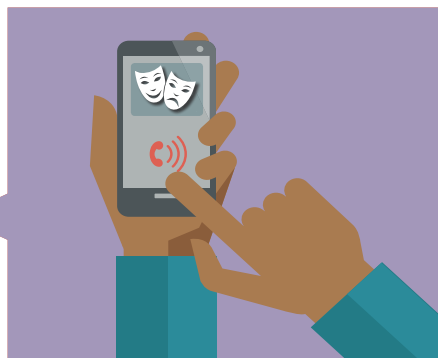
Ask someone to accompany you to any meeting to discuss the complaint. Never attend on your own any sort of meeting with management about your situation. You have the right to be accompanied by your union representative or an ally or friend or some sort of independent witness.

### TIP SEVEN

Should you decide to explore taking legal action remember that the current law governing harassment and discrimination only applies if the unwanted behaviour is connected to a protected characteristic: age, gender, race, religious belief or sexual orientation. However, in some cases of bullying Health and Safety legislation can be relevant.

There are also regulations concerning bringing legal action including how long you have worked for an organisation (the minimum is currently two years) and the rules for tribunal procedures and charges have recently changed.

Do not let any of this stop you from asking for help. Bullying can wreck lives, destroy careers, take a terrible toll on physical and mental health. The bully has probably bullied others before and if they are not challenged they are likely to bully in the future.



Ask Equity to clarify your personal situation and your contractual position, so that you are clear about your options. Remember situations can be resolved through mediation and negotiation rather than going via the law and tribunal.

### TIP EIGHT

If the situation is making you unwell do go and see your doctor for help, they will take you seriously and can advise about medication, sick leave and/or counselling. You could also contact BAPAM (British Association of Performing Arts Medicine). There are other sources of support if things become intolerable such as the Samaritans 08457 90 90 90 available day and night.

**Always remember  
you have a right to  
work in a healthy, safe  
environment and it is in  
the employer's interest  
to ensure that happens.**

## USEFUL CONTACTS AND ORGANISATIONS

### EQUITY OFFICES ▼

#### HEAD OFFICE LONDON

Telephone: 020 7379 6000  
Email: [info@equity.org.uk](mailto:info@equity.org.uk)  
Fax: 020 7379 7001

#### MIDLANDS

**Ian Bayes**  
Tel: 020 7379 6000  
Email: [midlands@equity.org.uk](mailto:midlands@equity.org.uk)

#### NORTH WEST, NORTH EAST AND ISLE OF MAN

**Jamie Briers, Max Beckmann,  
Andrew Whiteside and Mary Hooley**  
Tel: 0161 244 5995 Fax: 0161 244 5971  
Email: [northwestengland@equity.org.uk](mailto:northwestengland@equity.org.uk);  
[northeastengland@equity.org.uk](mailto:northeastengland@equity.org.uk)

#### SCOTLAND AND N.IRELAND

**Lorne Boswell, Drew McFarlane  
& Marlene Curran**  
Tel: 0141 248 2472 Fax: 0141 248 2473  
Email: [scotland@equity.org.uk](mailto:scotland@equity.org.uk),  
[northernireland@equity.org.uk](mailto:northernireland@equity.org.uk)

#### SOUTH EAST ENGLAND

**Will Holmes**  
Tel: 020 7670 2229  
Email: [southeastengland@equity.org.uk](mailto:southeastengland@equity.org.uk)  
Fax: 020 7379 7001

#### WALES AND SOUTH WEST ENGLAND

**Simon Curtis, Wayne Bebb  
and Mair James**  
Tel: 029 2039 7971  
Fax: 029 2023 0754  
Email: [wales@equity.org.uk](mailto:wales@equity.org.uk),  
[southwestengland@equity.org.uk](mailto:southwestengland@equity.org.uk)

### EQUITY SUPPORT LINES ▼

**Bullying Reporting Line** 020 7670 0268  
(leave a message)  
**Films & Commercials** 020 7670 0247  
**General Recorded Media** 020 7670 0228/54  
**Live Performance** 020 7670 0234/40  
**Equality and Diversity** 020 7670 0267  
**Personal Injury Claims** 0808 156 1440  
(England and Wales)  
0141 2482472  
(Scotland and N Ireland)

### OTHER SUPPORT ▼

**National Bullying Helpline** 0845 225 5787  
**The Samaritans** 08457 90 90 90  
(24 hours a day) [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)  
**Switchboard LGBT Helpline** 0300 330 0630  
(10am - 11pm daily) <https://switchboard.lgbt>  
**BAPAM - British Association  
of Performing Arts Medicine** 0845 602 0235  
[www.bapam.org.uk](http://www.bapam.org.uk)  
**BBC Care First Bullying  
and Harassment Support for those  
working at BBC** (includes freelancers) 0800 014 7154

### EMPLOYMENT LAW ▼

**Workplace bullying and harassment:**  
<https://www.gov.uk/workplace-bullying-and-harassment>  
**Tribunal procedure:** [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/429633/employment-tribunal-procedure-rules.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/429633/employment-tribunal-procedure-rules.pdf)  
**Citizens Advice:**  
<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>

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