Respect at work guidance for independent productions

The BBC is committed to providing a working environment where people are treated with respect and we extend that requirement to all of our suppliers and partners. The production environment is often intense. Teams are under pressure, occasionally working long hours and often working with people they have not met before in a close and sometimes intimate environment.

Team members may feel uncomfortable explaining how they feel and may not know how to approach a conversation about behaviour that makes them feel uncomfortable.

That is particularly true if a team member is junior and perceives bad behaviour from those in a position of power.

This can then make it difficult for those in powerful positions because they may not always know how others are feeling and in the absence of any feedback may be unaware of causing offense.

We therefore recommend that the following guidance is shared with all members of the production team as early as possible in the production.

What is unacceptable behaviour?

Behaviour is unacceptable if it is regarded as bullying or harassment, including sexual harassment

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

There is no statutory definition of bullying, however it can take the form of someone exercising power over another person through a negative act or acts that undermine the individual personally and/or professionally.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) characterises bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

The definition of harassment as defined in law as unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic or of a sexual nature, and where the conduct has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

Protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Examples of bullying and harassment behaviours include when someone:

- puts someone down or deliberately embarrasses them
- makes insulting or offensive comments or jokes
- scares someone, makes threats or shouts at them
- uses insulting words or threatening body language
- ignores an individual or unreasonably keeps them out of meetings or events
- stops or blocks someone from doing their job
- threatens an individual or commits physical violence
- leaves offensive items around an individual's work area

Examples of sexual harassment include when someone:

- makes unwelcome sexual advances or touches someone in an intrusive way
- makes sexual jokes
- displays pornographic photographs or drawings around the work area
- sends someone emails with material of a sexual nature

What should production staff do if they experience or observe unwanted or inappropriate behaviour?

- If you feel able, let the person know that their behaviour is making you feel uncomfortable and ask them if they would stop. It's often best to try and calmly and carefully explain how you feel directly. Often the offence is not intentional and is simply ill-judged. Ideally the individual causing offence will immediately apologise and change their approach.
- If you don't feel able to do that or the individual doesn't respond and continues to cause you offence you should talk to the Executive Producer/Production Manager who will intervene or work with you to decide how to deal with the situation.
- If the behaviour is very serious (e.g., sexual or physical assault), report it immediately to the Executive Producer/Production manager.

Please remember it is everyone's responsibility to be respectful and to think about how their behaviour and language could be perceived by others.