



RET THIRD PARTY COMPLAINTS PROCESS REGARDING RET EMPLOYEE/FREELANCE STAFF BEHAVIOURS

The Royal Exchange Theatre recognises that from time to time a third party may wish to make a complaint about the behaviour of an RET employee or freelance staff while under the engagement of the RET.

Our definition of 'third party' includes: Freelance staff, Engagement participants, placements, trustees, customers, visitors, contractors, ex- RET employees, and RET employees.

Please note, this process can only be used by RET employees when raising concerns about freelance staff, placements, trustees, volunteers and contractors. RET employees may also wish to refer to the RET Anti-Harassment & Anti-Bullying Policy.

What do we mean by making a complaint about RET employee/ freelance staff behaviours?

All employees and freelance staff are required read and sign up to the Code of Behaviour on initial engagement with the RET (Appendix A). The Code of Behaviour expects that everyone professionally engaged at the RET has a right to a working environment which encourages respectful, considerate, dignified and non-sexualised interactions.

If you believe that an RET employee or freelance staff member has behaved towards you in a manner that contravenes the Code of Behaviour, and the matter cannot be resolved informally, you are able to make a complaint.

Making a complaint

In the first instance you are recommended to resolve the issue informally, through discussion with the employee/freelance staff member and/ or their Line Manager/Director of Department. Informal discussion can frequently solve problems without the need for written record. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may request to deal with this via the formal complaints process (see below).

Under certain circumstances, you may deem it inappropriate to resolve your complaint informally.

Formal Complaints Process

If you are unable to achieve a satisfactory resolution through informal discussion you may wish to make a formal complaint.

The RET Third Party Complaints process has two possible stages. Complainants must complete each stage before they can progress to the next. Complainants can only engage in one complaints process at any one time.

Complaints should be raised no later than three months after the incident occurred. We will not consider complaints raised after this three-month period has elapsed. The exception to this rule is an allegation of sexual misconduct (when there is no time limit on raising a complaint.)

If your complaint is regarding a freelance staff member then you must endeavour to make your complaint while they are still under RET contract. The RET has little authority to pursue any complaint with a freelance staff member once their contract has ended.

All complainants will be treated equally, regardless of their age, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, disability, marital status, pregnancy or maternity, or gender reassignment.

No complainant will be treated adversely as a result of their having made a complaint in good faith.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to the procedure for those who are disabled.

The RET reserves the right to engage an independent third party to assist at any stage of the complaints process.

Stage 1

Your complaint should be submitted to the HR Manager via email*, stating:

- Your name and preferred contact details
- Date the incident occurred
- Name of RET employee you are complaining about (description of the person if you do not have their name)
- Details of the complaint

The HR Manager will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 10 working days, and endeavour to take steps to resolve the matter quickly by speaking to the RET employee, potentially their Line Manager/Director of Department and/or witnesses, and they may also request a meeting with you, the Complainant.

Once the HR Manager has gathered evidence and made a decision on the matter, they will write to you, the Complainant, summarising the nature of the complaint and if action has been taken.

This process should take no longer than 10 working days. If circumstances won't allow that then the HR Manager will mutually agree a revised timescale with you.

*If your complaint is about the HR Manager, you should instead submit your complaint to a member of the Executive team who will facilitate the Stage 1 process.

Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 you are able to request a Complaint Hearing, by completing the Complaint Hearing form available from the HR Manager*. Your Complaint Hearing request must be lodged with the RET within three months of receiving the outcome of your Stage 1 complaint.

The HR Manager will appoint a Complaints Hearing Officer. This person will be an RET Senior Manager, but they will not work within the same department as the employee you are making the complaint about.

The Complaints Hearing Officer will conduct an investigation. They will review the Stage 1 outcome, interview the RET employee and any witnesses, and they may also request an interview with you, as Complainant. When necessary, they may also take independent advice.

If an interview is requested with you, this will be scheduled at a mutually convenient time at the RET, unless you specifically request the meeting to be off premises. The HR Manager will be present as witness and minute taker. You are entitled to be accompanied by an observer of your choosing.

The Appeals Officer's decision is final, and complainants cannot appeal this decision.

Vexatious Complaints

Occasionally, the behaviour or actions of a small number of complainants makes it difficult for us to deal with their complaints. If we believe that your complaint is vexatious, we will adhere to the Vexatious Complaints Policy when handling your complaint (please refer to the RET's Vexatious Complaints Policy for definitions of a vexatious complainant and complaint, and any possible actions we may decide to take).

Privacy - who has access to your data & how is it stored?

Your information will be shared internally for the purposes of investigating your complaint. This could include the HR Manager, the Executive team, and the Senior Leadership Team.

The organisation may share your data with an independent third party if we seek assistance at any stage of the complaints process. However, we will gain your authorisation before doing so.

The organisation will not transfer your data outside of the European Economic area.

The organisation takes the security of your data seriously. It has internal policies and controls in place to ensure that your data is not lost, accidentally destroyed, misused or disclosed, and is not accessed except by our employees in the proper performance of their duties.

After your complaint has been closed, the organisation will hold your data secure on file

for six months after the end of the complaints process. If you believe that the organisation has not complied with your data protection rights, you can complain to the Information Commissioner.

REVIEW DATE	REVIEWED BY	NEXT REVIEW DATE
April 2025	HR Manager & Deputy Chief Executive	April 2026

APPENDIX A. RET CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

BACKGROUND

This Code of Behaviour draws together key messages from the Royal Exchange Theatre's (RET) Respect in the Workplace, EDI and Safeguarding policies; our company handbook; the UK Theatre / Equity Subsidised Repertory Agreement, [Equity's safe space statement](#) and [SOLT & UK Theatre's 10 Principles for Safe Spaces](#). It supports our strategic commitment to 'being an organisation that people want to work for and with', and the values we hold as a company. These are laid out below, along with the behaviours we associate with them:

ACCOUNTABLE

- We take ownership of our own part and are accountable for our own decisions.
- We trust others to be responsible for what they do, and how they do it, to drive the aims of RET and its future.
- We will challenge people and practice, as well as support them, to achieve our aims especially in our active commitment to removing discrimination.

HONEST

- We will ask difficult questions, feel empowered to do so and give and receive feedback, even if it is difficult to say or hear. This is vital for equality, diversity and inclusion.
- We will be empathetic and demonstrate emotional intelligence.
- We will apologise if we have done something wrong – and move on.

OPEN

- We will develop the appetite to learn and grow, so that we can be truly open to anyone and everyone.
- We will be collaborative, flexible and adaptable in how we do things and get “stuck in” if we see others need help.
- We will welcome innovation and show entrepreneurship where we can.

INTRODUCTION

This Code of Behaviour covers our interactions with each other as RET employees, volunteers and company - including visiting companies and freelance workers i.e.: everybody who works with and within the RET.

It outlines our expectations of and towards each other and is part of our commitment to creating a safe and inclusive culture, free of bullying, harassment, and abuse of power.

It aims to:

- provide you with practical guidelines for action
- define more clearly the boundaries between personal and professional
- give clarity to the support we are able and qualified to provide to ultimately help keep you safe emotionally and physically

It should be read alongside our Safeguarding Code of Practice which covers good practice for interactions with children, young people and adults at risk of harm. RET recognises that anyone has the potential to become an adult at risk due to a change in circumstance and the two policies work together.

SCOPE

This code of behaviour applies equally to staff, volunteers, actors, creatives, visiting companies, supported artists, freelancers and trustees. By undertaking to work with RET, you are agreeing to act in line with this Code of Behaviour.

A breach of this Code of Behaviour may lead to disciplinary action, result in termination of your contract, and/or, if the breach is of a criminal nature, may be reported to the police

No one is above this Code of Behaviour

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. It is OK to disagree with another's opinion so long as this is done in a respectful manner.

The theatre industry is broad: it involves office work, auditions, rehearsals, crewing, late night working, bars, parties and public-facing frontline work.¹

Regardless of context everyone has a right to a working environment which encourages respectful, considerate, dignified and non-sexualised working relationships.

Work will bring us together with people, be that permanently or for a fixed period of time. We recognise that colleagues may form personal connections or may have existing personal friendships. Whilst we do not wish to interfere with these relationships, we expect you to behave in an appropriate and professional manner at work and to conduct yourself in such a way that it does not compromise your ability to maintain the Code of Behaviour in the workplace.

¹ We recognise and thank [The Royal Court for their work on preventing sexual harassment and abuses of power](#).

BEHAVIOURS

1. Essential

Self-awareness:

- Be honest about your feelings
- Be willing to ask for help
- Accept challenge and be open to develop/learn from mistakes
- Make decisions without fear – get on and do things.
- Avoid blame

Be a team player

- Demonstrate humility
- Be people smart – have empathy and understanding of others and support people to speak up, co-operate with others
- Work efficacy – get things done
- Ensure activities for others are at an appropriate skill level

Be professional:

- Respect your colleagues and customers/audience members
- Respond to internal/external people in an appropriate and timely manner
- Be adaptable and flexible
- Set/clarify & manage other people's expectations

2. Never acceptable:

Abusing a position of power:

- Not taking responsibility for the power you have or using your position abusively over others more vulnerable than you
- To abuse, threaten to abuse (verbally, physically or in writing) or physically assault another person
- To ask someone to work outside hours in one-to-one meetings in private non-professional environments
- To sexually harass another person with unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour e.g. send unwanted personal or suggestive communications to a colleague
- Discriminate or unfavourably treat someone because of their race, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability or other personal characteristics
- Bully, isolate or humiliate another person
- Victimise, unjustly treat or threaten someone because they have raised a complaint or are a witness in an investigation
- Behave unethically
- At any time, allow the consumption of alcohol or restricted or dangerous drugs to adversely affect their work performance or official conduct; and
- Consume alcohol while on duty except as provided for under the company's Alcohol and other Drugs Policy.

If you are running or assisting in a rehearsal room/casting it is **never acceptable** to:

- Verbally sexually objectify anyone's body in a rehearsal room or theatre
- For an actor to be made to feel vulnerable through nudity, undress or costuming
- Initiate unwanted intimate physical contact
- Push people to share their personal experiences to deepen the work. If it is offered, it must remain within the trust of the working room

* It is important to be aware that consent can change and it is essential to check in with individuals to maintain an awareness of any changes.

Intentionally and consistently over commit and not deliver where it impacts on the business and colleagues:

- Consistently allowing the same mistake to repeat

Let emotions get to a level where it negatively impacts on others:

- Aggression to a level of letting yourself lose control – e.g. shouting, physical
- Voicing frustrations in the wrong forum (i.e. where it may negatively impact on other colleagues)
- Verbal intimidation, ridicule or humiliation, or reducing someone to tears as a form of control

Letting things you see as worrying or a risk become reality where you:

- Fail to report or act upon a health and safety, bullying or safeguarding issue
- See a potential problem and not act on it
- Keep quiet on an issue

We all share a responsibility to take action if we experience or see unacceptable behaviour regardless of circumstance.

SPEAKING UP

In the first instance and if you feel able to do so attempt to resolve problems informally and quickly.

- We encourage everyone to express their views, defend their opinions and point out unacceptable behaviours and demands.
- Call in. If you feel able, you can highlight that the behaviour doesn't align with RET's values and code of behaviour in a constructive way. This can be an important source of learning and prevent situations becoming misconduct.
- Seek Assistance. Who to talk to is included within the Code of Behaviour below – your colleagues will speak to you in confidence, hear your concerns, offer advice, support and agree with you an approach to take forward to resolve the matter.
- If an informal approach does not resolve matters, or if you think the situation is too serious to be dealt with informally, you can make a formal complaint by using the Company's grievance procedure or Third Party Complaints process available from the HR Manager.

- All complaints will be investigated promptly and sensitively, maintaining confidentiality to the maximum extent possible. If appropriate, disciplinary proceedings may be brought against a person found to be in breach of the Code of Behaviour.
- You won't always know what action has been taken as a result of an informal or formal complaint.

Who to talk to

The RET encourages a culture of openness where individuals can raise their genuine concerns. Any individual raising such concerns in good faith will be protected against retaliation. "Good faith" means that you have provided information that you believe to be comprehensive, honest and accurate at the time, even if you are later proven to be mistaken.

Anyone engaging with RET could have concerns about certain practices and needs advice and guidance to help resolve them.

Your role	In most cases	Second option
Employee	Line Manager	HR Manager
Volunteer	Visitor Experience Lead / Engagement & Volunteer Manager	Director of Engagement
Freelancers - Creative Learning and Engagement	Engagement Producers (Elders / Young People / Local Exchange)	Director of Engagement
Freelancers - Making & Production	Producer / Company Manager	HR Manager
Trustees	Chair	Another trustee
The HR Manager also holds regular drop-in sessions which can be used as an opportunity to raise or discuss concerns – but don't wait for a session before reporting. Contact them at any time for a conversation at michelle.hickman@royalexchange.co.uk or 0161 615 6704		

Any employee who believes they are being retaliated against must immediately report this by the same channels as indicated above.

We will ensure a fair process in the case of an investigation, respecting the principles of confidentiality and presumption of innocence.

Any accusations that prove to have been made in bad faith may result in disciplinary proceedings.

You can also seek help directly from these independent agencies:

Equity – Tel: 020 7670 0207 or email: membership@equity.org.uk

ITC – Tel: 0207 403 1727 or email: admin@itc-arts.org

UK Theatre – Tel: 020 7557 6700 or email: enquiries@soltukt.co.uk

Bectu – Tel: 020 7346 0900 or email: info@bectu.org.uk

The Writers Guild – Tel: 020 7833 0777 or email: admin@writersguild.org.uk

ACAS – Tel: 0300 123 1100, website: www.acas.org.uk

How RET will support this Code of Behaviour in practice

We will clearly communicate RET's policies and procedures and provide a regular programme of

training.

All employees, workers and freelancers will be given a copy of the Code of Behaviour and Respect in the Workplace Policy along with their contract and asked to sign a declaration (See page 5) to uphold the behaviours at the beginning of any work.

On the first day or rehearsals and at the start of all engagement projects Equity's [Safe Spaces statement](#) will be read and Designated Safeguarding Officers and reporting avenues clearly signposted.

We do not tolerate bullying, harassment or discrimination on any grounds, by anyone. Processes are in place for the reporting and investigation of these serious issues.

