SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

our commitment to creating a culture that respects the wellbeing of everyone working in UK live comedy





SIGNATORIES

This agreement is made between recognised members and Get Off Live Comedy, a registered CIC.

SIGNED HR

VERSION DATE: 1st November 2024



Warning: Print copies not subjected to version control

POLICY STATEMENT

Get Off Live Comedy and its members are committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for everyone who works in UK live comedy. This includes a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment and recognises appropriate steps should be taken to achieve this.

The aim of the policy is to set out expectations of behaviour, protect all workers from sexual harassment and foster a working environment that supports the dignity and respect of all workers.

Get Off Live Comedy and its members will take seriously and investigate any complaints of, sexual harassment or victimisation, using the agreed procedures and respecting confidentiality.

This policy is part of Get Off Live Comedy's commitment to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all working in UK live comedy.

This policy is also part of Get Off Live Comedy's commitment to equality and diversity. We are committed to creating a culture that respects and values each other's differences, that promotes dignity and combats prejudice, discrimination and harassment.

This policy seeks to benefit the welfare of individual workers; retain valued workers; improve morale and performance; and enhance the reputation of our members as an employer of choice.

All workers will be made aware of Get Off Live Comedy's policy forbidding the sexual harassment of any worker by another worker and will be expected to comply with this policy.



Sexual harassment will be treated as a disciplinary offence. Appropriate disciplinary action, including warnings, compulsory transfers (without protection of wages or salary), and dismissal for serious offences, may be taken against any worker who violates this policy. Abuse of power over another worker will be taken into account when deciding what disciplinary action to take.

Get Off Live Comedy also recognises that sexual harassment of workers by members of the public and contractors will not be tolerated and workers are encouraged to report it to someone in a position of authority. The Equality and Human Rights Commission advises that third party harassment can result in legal liability, therefore steps should be taken to prevent harassment, remedy a complaint or prevent it from happening again. For example, warning a customer about their behaviour, banning a customer, reporting any criminal acts to the police, or sharing information where appropriate.

Contractors and freelancers will be required to comply with this policy as part of their contract of engagement.

All workers have a clear role to play in helping to create a work environment in which all forms of bullying or harassing behaviour are unacceptable. In particular, workers should be aware of their own conduct, avoid colluding with inappropriate behaviour and co-operate fully in any complaints procedure.

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STATEMENT OF INTENT

In line with the Workers Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2024, Get Off Live Comedy and it's members recognise its positive duty to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. This includes proactive measures to foster a safe, inclusive environment for all staff, volunteers, and service users. We are committed to embedding preventative practice into our culture, training, and leadership.



SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to all workers who are employed or engaged by Get Off Live Comedy members on and off workplace premises. This includes, those working away from home, attending any formal or informal industry networking, while travelling, staff parties and other social events related to work.

This policy is supported by and developed with input from industry focus groups. It will be communicated to all workers using a variety of methods including training, information and publicity, meetings and in-house publications.

DEFINITION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is unlawful. As defined by the Equality Act 2010, it is when a person engages in unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature, whether verbal, non- verbal or physical, that creates an intimidating, hostile, offensive, degrading or humiliating working environment.

It is also unlawful to treat someone less favourably because they have either submitted a complaint of sexual harassment or have rejected such behaviour.

What is important is not necessarily the action, but how the recipient feels about what has been done and whether or not it is unwanted.

An individual can experience sexual harassment from someone of the same or different sex. It may be persistent or an isolated incident. Sexual harassment may be obvious or it may be subtle and more difficult to recognise. It can take place at any level and within any workplace relationship and can also be carried out by third parties (such as audience members, venue staff, clients, visitors or contractors).

It can happen anywhere in the workplace such as the greenroom, toilets, smoking area or office. It can also occur away from the workplace such as at a client's home or office, while travelling for work, networking events, staff parties and other social events related to work. It may be face to face or in written communications, on the phone, while using social media and any other form of online interaction including communication in or outside of a work situation. It may take place in private or in public. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual.

REPORTING AND RESPONSE

We encourage all workers to report incidents of sexual harassment. Reports can be made to through designated reporting routes shared by employers. Get Off Live Comedy and it's members will handle all reports sensitively, maintain confidentiality where possible, and take appropriate action.

EXAMPLES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT



unwelcome sexual advances, propositions and demands for sexual favours



leering and suggestive gestures and remarks or jokes



sexual posts or contact on social media



sending sexually explicit emails or text messages



comments of a sexual nature about your or a colleague's gender identity



'upskirting' that typically involves someone taking a picture under another person's clothing without their knowledge



physical contact such as the invasion of personal space and unnecessary touching, hugging or kissing through to sexual assault, indecent exposure, stalking and rape (although rape is defined as a separate criminal offence).



unwanted or derogatory comments or nicknames about clothing or appearance



intrusive questioning or suggestions about your sex life or a colleague's sex life, and discussing their own sex life



spreading sexual rumours about a person



comments of a sexual nature about your or a colleague's sexual orientation



displaying offensive material, including those in electronic forms such as computer screen savers or by circulating such material in emails or via social media



predatory behaviour



coercion

This list shows some examples of common forms of sexual harassment but is by no means exhaustive.





PREVENTATIVE ACTION

Get Off Live Comedy and its members take proactive steps to prevent harassment before it occurs. This includes:

- Mandatory training for all staff and managers on recognising, preventing, and responding to harassment.
- undertaking risk assessments that include; consideration of power imbalances, job insecurity, lone working, customer-facing duties, lack of diversity in the workforce, appropriate induction and training on sexual harassment and this policy for all staff. This will include information on what constitutes harassment and, for managers and safeguarding leads, on what their responsibilities are.
- Communicating this policy during induction and at regular intervals.
- specific training for safeguarding leads, and anyone potentially responsible for investigating complaints
- awareness-raising about the issues of sexual harassment and the requirement of respectful behaviour
- Providing safe and anonymous channels for staff to report concerns or feedback.
- Ensuring our working environments are designed to support safety and respect.
- improving diversity and inclusion at all levels of the organisation

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANAGERS AND SAFEGUARDING **LEADS**

Managers and Safeguarding Leads should ensure that all workers are aware of this policy and understand their own and the employer's responsibilities. Training on sexual harassment will be provided to all managers.

Managers and Safeguarding Leads have a particular responsibility to ensure that within their area of control, everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect. They should:





always challenge any unacceptable behaviour in the workplace



respond to complaints of sexual harassment swiftly, sensitively and objectively and be aware of behaviour that would cause offence, if necessary reminding workers of expected standards



deal explicitly with third party perpetrators (such as customers, clients, venue staff or contractors) with a view to withdrawing service or ending a contract or banning from the premises if behaviour is not moderated



ensure that this policy is followed and that there are thorough investigations if required. GOLC HR specialists will assist any manager in dealing with complaints of sexual harassment.

All complaints of sexual harassment must be dealt with confidentially using the agreed procedures and in accordance with the data protection policy.

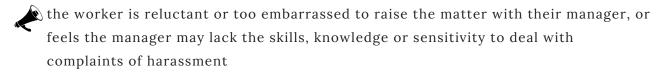
Managers and safeguarding leads have an additional responsibility to be exemplars of acceptable behaviour. They should be aware that an abuse of their positional power will send mixed messages about what is acceptable behaviour, and will only serve to condone harassment.

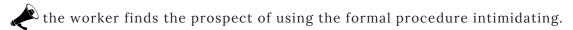
Failure to actively implement this policy within your area of responsibility or to fail to deal with sexual harassment when they become aware of it could constitute a breach of the policy and Get Off Live Comedy may review membership status.

HR SUPPORT

Get Off Live Comedy and its members recognise that there can be difficulties in raising the issue of sexual harassment and bullying, particularly if:







Get Off Live Comedy and its members are committed to ensuring that such potential difficulties are overcome so that allegations of sexual harassment are raised and can be acted upon.

To help ensure this independent HR specialists have been appointed to deal with complaints of sexual harassment and to offer advice to workers who believe that they or their colleagues have experienced sexual harassment.

The main role of HR support is to:

- provide sympathetic assistance to workers with complaints of sexual harassment
- explain to them how the procedures for making a complaint operate
- establish the main details of any complaint
- channel the complaint to the appropriate manager for action if the worker decides to take the matter further.

HR Support will discuss cases in complete confidence and will not divulge information to any other person without the agreement of the worker.

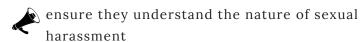
A worker who contacts HR support to talk about sexual harassment is under no obligation to take further action. HR Support is there to help workers decide what they want to do. Workers who have been sexually harassed are not obliged to refer their complaints to HR Support. It is entirely up to them whether they do so. However, the creation of HR Support is an additional means of ensuring that such workers are not discouraged from bringing forward complaints.

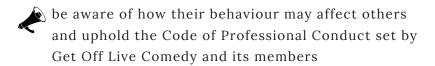
Contact details for HR support can be found on page one of this policy

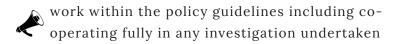
RESPONSIBILITIES OF WORKERS

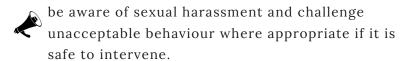
All workers have a responsibility to contribute to a respectful and productive working environment. They have a duty to assist in the creation of a safe working environment, where unacceptable sexual behaviour is not tolerated.

Every worker has a personal responsibility to:









Possible ways of intervening include telling the harasser that their behaviour is unacceptable; distracting either the harasser or the target to defuse the situation and also checking in with the target of the behaviour after it has taken place. It is validating for them to know that another person believes what has happened is not acceptable

reporting incidents of sexual harassment when witnessed, or supporting targets of sexual harassment in reporting it, and co-operating in an investigation into alleged sexual harassment.



Workers should report any instances of harassment experienced whether they are the target of the behaviour or they have witnessed it. Reporting is necessary in order to address the issue both for the worker's own well-being and that of their colleagues. However Get Off Live Comedy and its members recognise that there may be many reasons that someone who has experienced sexual harassment may not complain immediately.

If worker is found to have sexually harassed another worker, then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.

PROCEDURES

An individual can deal with sexual harassment in various ways, ranging from asking the person to stop the behaviour, to informal discussions with the safeguarding lead or HR, or making a formal complaint.

You do not have to be the recipient or target to make a complaint about sexual harassment. If you see it happening or become aware of the problem you have the right to complain about it. Tackling sexual harassment is everybody's responsibility.

Some people are unaware that their behaviour in some circumstances is sexual harassment. If it is clearly pointed out to them that their behaviour is unacceptable, the problem can sometimes be resolved. With this in mind, this policy includes informal as well as formal action to deal with complaints of sexual harassment.

INFORMAL ACTION

If possible, a worker who believes that they have been the subject of sexual harassment or has witnessed it should, in the first instance, ask the person to stop the behaviour and make it clear what aspect of their behaviour is offensive and unacceptable, and the effect it is having. This can be done either verbally or in writing. If the sexually harassed person or witness feels unable to approach the person responsible directly, a safeguarding lead, work colleague or HR can make this initial approach.

If a worker is approached informally about stopping their unwelcome or upsetting behaviour, they should not consider the reaction to be over-sensitive nor the incident to be too trivial but should remember that different people find different things acceptable and everyone has the right to decide what behaviour is acceptable to them and to have their feelings respected by others. An apology and assurance that the behaviour will not be repeated may be enough to end the matter.

If a worker who believes that they have been the subject of sexual harassment or has witnessed it is unable to adopt the above approach, or the sexual harassment is of a very serious nature, they can approach the safeguarding lead or HR who will provide informal advice in confidence. No further action will be taken without the consent of the worker making the complaint. Confidential advice is also available to other workers who themselves may not be the subject of sexual harassment but are concerned about the sexual harassment of others.

If a worker complains of sexual harassment but does not want to take the matter any further, the employer will keep a record of the complaint and periodically check in with the worker to find out if the situation has improved. The employer will respect the wishes of the complainant but there may be some circumstances where the harassment is of such a serious nature that the employer will need to take action because of the high immediate risk to the safety of the complainant, their colleagues or someone else the harasser may come into contact with. In such situations, the employer will put in place appropriate safeguards to prevent further harassment, or victimisation of the complainant.

FORMAL ACTION

If informal action does not stop the sexual harassment, or a formal complaint is made from the outset, the complaints procedure should be initiated and a formal report should be made. Throughout this procedure, the complainant and the person against whom the complaint is made has the right to be accompanied by a representative or by a colleague, and to seek informal advice from HR support.

A worker who believes that they have been the subject of sexual harassment should formally report the alleged act or acts to the Safeguarding Lead or someone in a position of authority, or if the person doing the harassment is the Safeguarding Lead or is in a position of authority, a report can be made to HR Support. Where possible, the worker should set out details of the complaint in writing with specifics as to dates and times and an account of what the sexual harassment is alleged to consist of.

All complaints will be handled and investigated in a timely and confidential manner. The complainant will be invited to a meeting with the Safeguarding Lead at a reasonable time and place following reporting the alleged act or acts. The worker has the right to be accompanied by a representative or a work colleague at this meeting.

Confidentiality will be maintained at all times, including by witnesses spoken to as part of the investigation, subject to any requirement to involve external agencies where a criminal offence may have been committed or where maintaining confidentially would pose a risk to the complainant, or to others. Workers shall be guaranteed a fair and impartial hearing whether they are the harassed or the harasser. Breach of confidentiality may be a disciplinary offence.

As a first stage in a thorough investigation of the complaint, the safeguarding lead or HR will arrange to interview separately both the complainant and the person against whom the complaint has been made, with a representative if requested. Wherever possible the investigator will not be the same person who hears the complaint nor any subsequent appeal, in order to help ensure independence and objectivity. Because of any particular sensitivities of the case, it is recognised that the complainant may prefer to talk to an investigator of the same gender.

A target timescale for completion of the investigation will be set and communicated to the complainant, along with updates on progress. Should the target timescale not be met, a clear explanation should be given to the complainant.

Wherever possible, Get Off Live Comedy members will try to ensure that both the complainant, and the person against whom the complaint has been made are not required to work together while the complaint is under investigation. In a serious case, the person against whom the complaint has been made may be suspended while investigation and any subsequent disciplinary procedure are undertaken as a precaution for the protection of the complainant or to prevent interference in the investigation.



Following the investigation, a detailed response in writing will be given to the complainant including, outcomes wherever appropriate or possible, action taken to address the specific complaint if it is upheld, and any measures taken to prevent a similar event happening again in the future.

If the investigation reveals that the complaint is upheld, prompt action designed to stop the sexual harassment immediately and prevent its recurrence will be taken. In such circumstances, if relocation proves necessary, the alleged harasser and not the complainant will be relocated unless the person complaining requests otherwise.

Disciplinary action up to and including dismissal may be taken in accordance with the disciplinary procedure if a complaint of sexual harassment is upheld. Appropriate adjustments will be made to enable the complainant to participate in the disciplinary process without fear of victimisation.

If the sexual harassment is believed to be a criminal offence, such as a sexual assault, indecent exposure, stalking and offensive communications, the safeguarding lead or HR support should advise the complainant to report the matter to the police as soon as possible and give them appropriate support. In cases where the police are involved, GOLC members will liaise with the police regarding the disciplinary process and take advice on how to conduct a fair process.

If it is believed that there is an ongoing risk of serious harm to an individual, the safeguarding lead or HR support will contact the police themselves and inform the complainant that they have done so.

Workers shall be protected from intimidation, victimisation or discrimination for filing a complaint or assisting in an investigation. Retaliating against a worker for complaining about or assisting in an investigation of sexual harassment is a disciplinary offence.

Any decisions taken under this procedure do not preclude any worker from pursuing a grievance in the usual way under the employers own grievance procedures and/or reporting the matter to the police should they believe that a criminal offence may have been committed.

The complainant has the right to appeal against the decision following the investigation within 5 working days of receiving the decision from the safeguarding lead or HR. Any appeal must be made in writing, stating the reasons for the appeal.

An appeal meeting will be arranged with a safeguarding lead or HR specialist not previously involved in the procedure where possible who will consider the appeal. The worker will be given the opportunity to put forward their case and explain why they are not satisfied with the outcome. The meeting may be adjourned by the person hearing the appeal, if it is considered necessary to undertake further investigation. The meeting will be reconvened as soon as possible. The decision of the person hearing the appeal shall be final.



REVIEW AND MONITORING

Adequate resources will be made available to fulfil the aims of this policy by both members and Get Off Live Comedy HR Support. The policy will be widely promoted, and copies will be freely available.

This policy will be reviewed annually and following any reported incident. Members are responsible to track staff training, gather anonymous feedback, and maintain an audit trail of preventative steps. Compliance with the Workers Protection Act 2024 will be monitored internally and is enforceable by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), who may investigate and issue compliance notices where required.

SUPPORT FOR WORKERS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Get Off Live Comedy and its members recognise that sexual harassment can affect job performance and cause stress, anxiety or other mental health as well as physical health problems. Where sexual harassment causes deterioration in job performance, this will be treated as a health problem and the person will be encouraged to seek help under the terms of this policy. There will be no discrimination against individuals suffering from stress caused by sexual harassment.

Confidential support, practical information and advice is also available for individual employees from HR Support.

Where the workers' complaint is not upheld, or it is upheld but results in disciplinary action short of dismissal of the harasser, mediation and/or an offer of redeployment may be offered to affected parties

WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

In this section we aim to establish professional and personal boundaries between professionals, ensuring that all actions are open and transparent. GOLC and it's members do not seek to regulate relationships between workers. This policy provides advice and guidance when dealing with such situations and seeks to strike a balance between an employees' right to a private life and our members right to protect its interests. It is intended for use where a relationship may have a negative impact on the workplace, not simply because of the relationship itself.

It is recognised that situations will arise where GOLC members will employ individuals with a close personal relationship. Close personal relationships for the purpose of this policy refers to people who are close friends or relatives or individuals who are in a romantic or intimate relationship. Close friends refers to colleagues who know each other personally and meet socially. Relatives for the purposes of this policy refers to people who are related by blood, marriage or civil partnership, or who co-habit, or dependents of such people.

Such relationships can give rise to challenges about professionalism, integrity and to suggestions of coercion. There can be a thin line between workplace romance and possible sexual harassment, so any inappropriate behaviour or unwanted conduct should not be accepted. This could be a particular concern if a workplace relationship fails. It is not suggested that individual employees would allow themselves to be influenced by personal relationships, however, it is best practice to avoid circumstances in which such practice might be alleged or inferred. In a working environment with many close personal relationships it can be perceived as difficult for victims of unwanted behaviour to know who to approach safely with a disclosure.



WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

To make sure GOLC members continue to protect safeguarding procedures, while also allowing employees to date who they wish, it's important to have a fair policy on workplace relationships in place. Most workplace relationship policies highlight any relationships where one party holds more workplace authority than the other for the following reasons:

- There can be a conflict of interest between the individual in a position of authority and their workplace duties. For example, the senior party may show bias towards an employee that they are in a relationship. Even unintentionally, this bias could impact their partner's pay, work offered and provide other perks and benefits.
- Workplace relationships can also cause hostility in the wider team. This can happen if
 other co-workers believe a colleague is getting 'special treatment' by engaging in a
 relationship with someone higher in the company or sexually harassing behaviour is
 observed.
- Confidential information may be shared between the couple, or fear that information may be shared could prevent other employees from highlighting concerns.
- Sexual harassment and claims of coercion or predatory behaviour could be raised when a power imbalance exists between employees in a workplace relationship. For example, the senior party may use their control over pay, perks and benefits to illicit compliance from the other party.
- If the relationship ends it could hurt working relationships and expose the business to discrimination claims.
- Employees who a related or develop close personal relationships have the potential for conflict between personal/family loyalty and work responsibilities.

RECOMENDATIONS

RECRUITMENT

GOLC strongly recommends that recruitment decisions are based purely on merit. An appointment that is based on anything other than the ability of the individual to do the job may leave the GOLC members vulnerable to allegations of discrimination. GOLC members must be conscious that when encouraging the employment of a close friend or romantic partner, this can create an automatic conflict of interest for the recruiting manager who may feel unable to fairly assess, appoint or supervise an individual without perceived fear of reprisal.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Wherever possible confidentiality regarding the existence of a close personal relationship will not be disclosed. However, should this prove necessary then no disclosure will be made without consultation with the employees concerned.

WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

POWER DYNAMICS

Intimate relationships between members of staff who have a management connection or where one party possesses control over the career or earning potential of another present a potential conflict of interest. Intimate relationships between members of staff where there is not a management connection, but where the nature of the roles undertaken results in close working relationships, may also present a conflict of interest. Close working relationships may, for example, involve a power dynamic and/or professional hierarchy that lies outside of a direct management connection. Intimate relationships between members of staff can also give rise to situations where there is coercive or predatory behaviour associated with sexual misconduct.

COERCIVE BEHAVIOUR

It's important to ensure the relationship was entered freely by both parties. This might not always be the case in relationships with larger age gaps, large status gaps or if one party is vulnerable in some manner. For example, if a manager is dating their employee, there is a risk that the employee cannot leave the relationship or be forced into the relationship with the threat of losing their job.

There is also the risk that the employee may feel like they cannot complain if they are unhappy with the relationship in fear of losing their job or not believed. It can be difficult for an employer to spot this happening, but it is vital to encourage a workplace culture where anyone can raise concerns safely, you can prevent these dangerous relationships. It's important to make sure your employees feel listened to, safe and supported.

GOLC members must not abuse their position in any way, including any form of sexual harassment, exerting sexual pressure over a member of staff, or who behaving in a coercive or predatory manner. This includes promising or alluding to rewards in return for sexual favours or suggesting or threatening withdrawal of employment if sexual favours are not granted. Such behaviour, which involves recognition of professional boundaries, constitutes serious or gross misconduct and will be subject to investigation, the consequence of which can include withdrawal of GOLC membership.

MANAGING SITUATIONS WHEN A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP ADVERSLY AFFECTS THE WORKPLACE

In most cases where a personal relationship causes issues in the workplace these should initially be able to be addressed and resolved informally. Issues arising should be dealt with promptly and sensitively by the relevant manager and not allowed to continue unchecked.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Employee is responsible for:

- Ensuring that any close personal relationships at work do not interfere with their duties and responsibilities
- Declaring the existence of close personal relationships, or when they develop, to the relevant manager as required under this policy
- Taking active steps that are reasonable and practical to ensure any close personal relationships at work does not interfere with or prejudice their employment thereby impairing their judgement
- Remaining professional in the workplace and ensuring that any close personal relationships do not have a negative impact on their colleagues

The Manager is responsible for:

- Dealing promptly and sensitively with issues involving close personal relationships at work
- Managing matters involving close personal relationships at work in a consistent, fair and reasonable manner
- Declaring any relationships formed with a direct report employee
- Ensuring employees are aware of and understand the Policy
- Ensuring all employees are treated fairly and equitably
- Maintaining confidentiality during and after the application of this policy

REPORTING TO THE EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (EHRC)

If you believe your employer has not taken reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, you have the right to raise a concern with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). The EHRC is responsible for enforcing the Workers Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2024 and can investigate failures to comply with this duty.

You can contact the EHRC via:

- M Email: correspondence@equalityhumanrights.com
- Phone (England): 0808 800 0082
- Phone (Scotland): 0808 800 0082
- Phone (Wales): 0808 800 0082

All reports are confidential and can be made by individuals who have experienced, witnessed, or are concerned about systemic issues in their workplace.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Up to date lists of UK wide support agencies and resources can be found at www.getofflivecomedy.org. If you have been affected by sexual harassment these organisations offer professional, confidential, advice and support.

If you are in immediate danger phone 999 or visit your local A&E Department.