

# THICK & TIGHT'S ANTI-HARASSMENT & BULLYING POLICY

## Introduction

We are committed to having a workplace which is free from harassment and bullying, and to ensuring that all freelancers and others who come into contact with Thick & Tight, in the course of our work, are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of race, colour, religion or belief, ethnic or national origins, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity or gender expression, socio-economic situation, age, disability, neurodiversity, nationality, parenthood, marital or part-time status.

As a queer-led company with queer culture at its core, Thick & Tight takes responsibility to consciously intersect with our fellow queer communities and others who face discrimination of any kind. We stand alongside our trans and QTPOC communities. We want to understand, support, promote and further marginalised voices through our work. We aim to have a high representation of people who are queer or marginalised in other ways at all levels of the company and any context we work in. We hope to create an environment:

- That is safe for people to bring all of themselves if they wish to
- That doesn't narrow people down to categories
- In which we take time to see the totality of who someone is
- In which people can understand and be understood by each other
- Which acknowledges that people are experts in their own experience
- Which recognises intersectional experience

If you feel something is missing from this list, we would love to talk to you about it.

It is important to us that any individual or institution we work with stands in solidarity with queer people and other marginalised groups. This solidarity is sometimes referred to as being an ally. For us, being a queer ally includes standing against any form of oppression or bigotry. Here is a definition of allyship from the Anti-Oppression Network:

<https://theantioppressionnetwork.com/allyship/>

If we think that an individual or institution does not seem to be actively engaging their allyship and consciously working towards equality for all, we will find a way to talk to them about it. If you'd like to talk to us more about solidarity or allyship, or feel conflicted about our approach and ethos, please do get in touch.

If any individual or institution is uncertain or confused about the meaning of queer or any other LGBTQI+ definitions please refer to online resources such as:

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/faqs-and-glossary/glossary-terms> or ask the Co-Directors (Daniel Hay-Gordon & Eleanor Perry) for more information.

This policy is intended to support Thick & Tight's commitment to safe practice and to provide guidance to everyone who works with us on how to deal with concerns of bullying or harassment.

## **Policy**

We will not tolerate bullying or harassment in our workplace or at work-related events outside the workplace, whether the conduct is a one-off act or repeated course of conduct, and whether done purposefully or not. Neither will we tolerate retaliation against, or victimisation of, any person involved in bringing a complaint of harassment or bullying. Retaliation or victimisation will also constitute a disciplinary offence, which may in appropriate circumstances lead to dismissal. You should also be aware that if a court or tribunal finds that you have bullied or harassed someone, in some circumstances the treatment may amount to a crime punishable by a fine or imprisonment.

We will take appropriate action if any of our freelancers is bullied or harassed, whether by another colleague or someone else with whom they come into contact at work.

Allegations of bullying and harassment will be treated seriously. Investigations will be carried out promptly, sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially. If, after an investigation, we decide that a freelancer has harassed or bullied a colleague, then the freelancer may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Freelancers and others who make allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith will not be treated less favourably as a result. At the same time, freelancers and others have a responsibility not to make false allegations. Deliberately false accusations of harassment or bullying can have a serious effect on innocent individuals and will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure.

## **What type of treatment amounts to bullying or harassment?**

Bullying or harassment is something that has happened that is unwelcome, unwarranted and causes a detrimental effect. There are many different ways to bully or harass someone. Here are just a few examples of bullying or harassment which won't be tolerated within Thick & Tight:

- Misgendering people purposely or repeatedly after being corrected
- Criticising or commenting on someone's body shape or size
- Objectification
- Treating someone's heritage or culture as 'exotic'

- Subtle bullying disguised as a joke
- Gaslighting
- Passive aggression
- Use of outdated derogatory language in any context, such as the r-word or other ableist words like 'lame'

If freelancers complain they are being bullied or harassed, then they have a grievance which must be dealt with regardless of whether or not their complaint accords with a standard definition. For further information, please refer to [ACAS guidance](#).

It is important to recognise that conduct which one person may find acceptable, another may find totally unacceptable. All freelancers must therefore treat their colleagues with respect and appropriate sensitivity.

As the choreographers and directors of Thick & Tight, Daniel and Eleanor may need to give appropriate criticism of a freelancer's behaviour or proper performance management, for example giving necessary 'notes' during a rehearsal or after a performance. We try to give notes sensitively and constructively, avoiding personal criticism, but are open to feedback about how we do this. If you feel that this criticism crosses over into bullying, please talk to us or someone on our Advisory Committee about it or follow our Grievance Procedure.

### **Reporting concerns**

*What should you do if you witness an incident you believe to be harassment or bullying?*

If you witness such behaviour, you should report the incident in confidence to either or both of the Co-Directors as part of Thick & Tight's Grievance Procedure. Such reports will be taken seriously and will be treated in strict confidence as far as it is possible to do so.

*What should you do if you are being bullied or harassed by a colleague?*

If you are being bullied or harassed by a colleague or someone with whom you come into contact at work, please raise this with one or both of the Co-Directors in the first instance. We will then decide how best to deal with the situation, in consultation with you.

If you are being bullied or harassed by one of the Co-Directors themselves or a member of the Advisory Committee and you wish to speak with someone beyond

the Co-Directors, please refer to Thick & Tight's Grievance Procedure which will direct you to alternatives.

If you are being bullied or harassed by another freelancer working for Thick & Tight, there are two possible avenues for you, informal or formal.

### **Raising an informal complaint**

If you are being bullied or harassed by another freelancer, you may be able to resolve the situation yourself by explaining clearly to the perpetrator(s) that their behaviour is unacceptable, contrary to our policy and must stop. Alternatively, you may wish to ask the Co-Directors or a colleague to explain this on your behalf or to be with you when confronting the perpetrator(s).

If the above approach does not work for you or if you do not want to try to resolve the situation in this way, or if you are being bullied by the Co-Directors themselves, you can involve a neutral third party (a mediator) to facilitate a resolution of the problem. This would most likely be the Chair of the Advisory Committee (or another member depending on what is needed) who would discuss with you the option of trying to resolve the situation informally by:

- telling the alleged perpetrator(s), without prejudging the matter, that there has been a complaint that their behaviour is having an adverse effect on a fellow freelancer
- that such behaviour is contrary to our policy
- that the continuation of such behaviour could amount to a serious disciplinary offence

It may be possible for the Co-Directors to have this conversation with the alleged perpetrator without revealing your name, if this is what you want. They will also stress that the conversation is confidential.

If you wish not to name the perpetrator when raising your complaint, the Co-Directors or Advisory Committee member will respect this, though they may be less able to resolve the situation without this information.

If your complaint is resolved informally, the alleged perpetrator(s) will not usually be subject to disciplinary sanctions. In exceptional circumstances, however, (such as a serious allegation of sexual or racial harassment or in cases where a problem has happened before) we may decide to investigate further and take more formal action, notwithstanding that you raised the matter informally. In line with our Safeguarding

Policy, there are certain circumstances in which we have a legal obligation to report an allegation to the police. We will consult with you before taking this step.

### **Raising a formal complaint**

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, you can make a formal complaint about the harassment or bullying to the Co-Directors or Advisory Committee. A formal complaint may ultimately lead to disciplinary action against the perpetrator(s).

Either the Co-Directors and/or the Advisory Committee will first investigate the complaint. You will be asked to provide as much information as possible to support the investigation, for example:

- The name of the alleged perpetrator(s)
- The nature of the harassment or bullying
- The dates and times the harassment or bullying occurred
- The names of any witnesses
- Any action taken by you to resolve the matter informally

Your complaint will be taken seriously whether or not you are able to provide these details (for example, if the nature of the bullying was a build-up of things over time rather than a one-off event on a certain date). You are asked for as much information as possible because if we took the matter further, having detailed evidence would give you the best possible chance of the bullying and harassment being treated seriously by an external body such as the police.

The alleged perpetrator(s) would need to be told your name and the details of your complaint in order for the issue to be investigated properly. We will, however, carry out the investigation as confidentially and sensitively as possible. Where you and the alleged perpetrator(s) work in proximity to each other, we will consider whether it is appropriate to separate you while the matter is being investigated, in discussion with you. If you feel unsafe to come to work as a result of your experience or of raising a formal complaint, you will not be considered to be breaking your contract.

As members of ITC (the Independent Theatre Council - <https://www.itc-arts.org/>) we may seek their advice in this situation to ensure we are working within the best practice.

After the investigation, we will meet with you to consider the complaint and the findings of the investigation. At the meeting, you may be accompanied by someone to support you, such as a friend, colleague or a trade union official.

After the meeting and within an agreed time we will write to you to inform you of our decision and to notify you of your right to appeal to a suggested umbrella dance organisation (South East Dance) or another organisation/individual if you are dissatisfied with the outcome. We can help you find another organisation or individual or you can choose who it should be. You should bring your appeal to the Co-Directors, explaining the reasons why you are dissatisfied with our decision. Your appeal can be in any format you prefer so long as it is tangible or recorded (ie, not just spoken to us), such as

- written in an email
- written on paper
- a film recording of you talking
- an audio recording of you talking

If you for whatever reason need assistance with this, the Co-Directors, Advisory Committee or other relevant organisation will endeavour to support you. After receiving written confirmation of our decision, you should submit your appeal within a time agreed with between you and us. If you submit an appeal, you will be invited to attend a meeting to consider it. Once again you may be accompanied by a friend, colleague or a trade union official. We will write to you afterwards to confirm our final decision.

### **Use of the Disciplinary Procedure**

Harassment and bullying constitute serious misconduct. If, at any stage from the point at which a complaint is raised, we believe there is a case to answer and a disciplinary offence might have been committed, we will instigate our Grievance Procedure Policy. Any freelancer found to have harassed or bullied a colleague will be liable to disciplinary action up to and including summary dismissal. We may be obliged to report these actions as a crime, in which case any evidence gathered during our grievance procedure investigations may be shared with the relevant authority, e.g., the police.

Date of last policy review	29 <sup>th</sup> November 2021
Date of next review	Autumn 2022
Signed	Eleanor Perry
Position	Co-Director