DIGNITY AND RESPECT POLICY

This Dignity and Respect Policy is designed to ensure that the SoA remains a respectful, considerate and professional organisation. The SoA is committed to protecting the rights and dignity of employees, members and industry colleagues, and we expect the same commitment from others.

Useful definitions

Harassment is defined by the Equality Act as 'unwanted conduct ... which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual'.

Bullying is defined by ACAS as 'as unwanted behaviour from a person or group that is either offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting or an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone.'

The Equality Act 2010 is the UK's discrimination law which protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society. The protected characteristics covered by the legislation are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation

POLICY

Everyone who interacts with the SoA has a right to work in an environment in which their dignity is respected and which is free from harassment, bullying and discrimination. This includes (but is not limited to) communications with staff, visits to the SoA premises, attendance at SoA events, serving on committees or being involved in prize or award applications or deliberations.

For all other professional interactions, we request that members conduct themselves in accordance with the Book and Publishing Industry's Professional Values, the principles of which are reflected below. Please note that the cross-industry Values are limited to professional behaviour in work environments, online and offline, though they do not cover authorship specifically.

In accordance with the Book and Publishing Industry's Professional Values, we aim to hold ourselves and our colleagues to high standards of professional behaviour, based on mutual respect, compassion, humanity, an openness to difference and an unwavering commitment to the free exchange of ideas.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND BEHAVIOUR

Mirroring the cross-industry statement, these values are designed to promote better practice in interactions between members, industry colleagues and organisations throughout the publishing industry.

Note: these values are listed in the order they appear in the cross-industry values statement but they have been adapted for the Society of Authors.

1. We support and champion creative expression and freedom of speech. We understand the power of what is printed and published and will endeavour to protect the passion, imagination and creativity of everyone in our industry.

2. We are colleagues and collaborators in the business of authorship and we expect a high standard of professional behaviour from one another.

3. We will be respectful in our professional communication to all parties. We understand that at times we may not agree with one another but we will communicate respectfully. We understand how and what we communicate might impact others positively but also negatively.

4. We celebrate and actively promote and cultivate diversity and inclusion in all its forms, including but not limited to the nine protected characteristics cited in The Equality Act 2010, but also of socio-economic status, educational background, caring responsibilities, and regional location. We condemn abuse and the incitement of hatred of any kind.

5. We will endeavour to ensure that everyone in our industry is treated with dignity and respect so that individuals are supported and are able to speak out. We recognise that power is situational and that we can all be in a position of greater relative power over others.

6. We support and are sensitive to the mental health of fellow members, industry colleagues and other industry professionals, as well as those experiencing chronic illness, neurodiversity, disability and other physical challenges. We recognise that not all disabilities are visible.

7. We are working towards improving inclusion and access for everyone to our industry across all the areas mentioned in 4 above.

8. Our professional behaviour is thoughtful and anticipates consequences – and is required in every environment where people interact for work reasons, including (but not limited to): offices, bookshops, parties, committees, lunch meetings, awards ceremonies, rights fairs, festivals and any other venue, formal or informal; as well as online and in all communications.

9. We have a right to personal privacy, and to feel safe and valued in the working environment.

10. We will support one another and take action by:

    - Listening: If someone tells us that they find something racist, sexist, bullying, threatening, or uncomfortable, they have a right to that feeling. We will behave with empathy, respect and understanding.
    - Being allies: We will not remain silent in the face of unacceptable behaviour. We will listen to, speak up for, empower and support those who have experienced such behaviour. We will bear witness and support appropriate action being taken, regardless of the status or the relative status of the individuals involved.

We understand that those who have experienced unacceptable behaviour may not feel safe to raise or report this straight away. We will support individuals, as above, whenever they feel safe to raise or report unacceptable behaviour.

FEEDBACK OR COMPLAINTS

If you, as a member or service user* have feedback about this policy, or a complaint about an alleged breach of this policy, please use our complaints procedure.

**A service user is someone who makes use of our advisory or other services, attends our events or meetings, applies for our prizes and grants or interacts with us in any way, for example, acting as a judge or an assessor in relation to something connected with the SoA or who receives a communication from us directed to them personally.*