

# Dignity and Respect at Work Policy (last update: 31 August 2026)

## RESPECT • DIGNITY • KINDNESS • INCLUSION • PROFESSIONALISM

Wexford Festival Opera wants everyone who works with us to feel safe, welcomed, valued and respected.

We work in a creative environment that can sometimes be busy, demanding and high-pressure. **Pressure is never an excuse for bullying, harassment, discrimination, intimidation or disrespectful behaviour.**

Everyone has a responsibility to help create a positive working environment.

### 1. NEED HELP OR WANT TO RAISE A CONCERN? You do not have to deal with a concern alone.

| If...                                        | Contact...                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| You want advice or confidential support      | Your Line Manager or the Executive Director                                                                                             |
| Your concern is about your Line Manager      | The Executive Director: <a href="mailto:suzanne@wexfordopera.ie">suzanne@wexfordopera.ie</a>                                            |
| Your concern is about the Artistic Director  | The Executive Director or Chair of the WFO Board                                                                                        |
| Your concern is about the Executive Director | Chair of the WFO Board: <a href="mailto:chairman@wexfordopera.ie">chairman@wexfordopera.ie</a>                                          |
| You want to make a formal complaint          | Put the details in writing and send them to the Executive Director, or to the Chair where the complaint concerns the Executive Director |
| You witnessed something concerning           | You can raise a concern even if you are not the person directly affected                                                                |

For Festival artists and production teams, you may also raise a concern with the Director of Artistic Administration: [nora@wexfordopera.com](mailto:nora@wexfordopera.com)

**Your concern will be listened to and taken seriously.** You will be given information about the options available to you.

**You can raise a concern informally or make a formal complaint.** You do not have to try to resolve a serious matter informally before making a formal complaint.

## 2. HOW TO MAKE A FORMAL COMPLAINT

You can make a formal complaint if the matter is serious, you do not feel comfortable trying to resolve it informally, informal steps have not resolved the problem, or you believe a formal process is more appropriate.

### 1. Put your complaint in writing.

- what happened
- who was involved
- when and where it happened
- whether there were any witnesses
- whether similar incidents have happened before
- any other information you believe is relevant

## **2. Send your complaint to the Executive Director.**

- If the complaint concerns the Executive Director, send it to the Chair of the WFO Board.
- If the complaint concerns the Artistic Director, the formal complaint will be managed by the Executive Director or Chair of the WFO Board.

## **3. We will meet with you.**

- You will have an opportunity to explain your complaint and ask questions about the process. You may be accompanied by a work colleague or other person permitted under the applicable procedure.

## **4. The complaint will be assessed.**

- WFO will decide the appropriate next step. This may include a formal investigation. An independent external investigator may be appointed where appropriate.

## **5. Everyone involved will be treated fairly.**

- The person against whom the complaint is made will be told the allegations and given a fair opportunity to respond. Relevant witnesses may also be interviewed.

## **6. You will be told the outcome.**

- The outcome will be communicated to the parties in accordance with WFO's formal procedures. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may have a right to appeal.

## **3. OUR COMMITMENT TO EACH OTHER**

Everyone working with Wexford Festival Opera is expected to:

- treat others with dignity, respect and kindness;
- communicate professionally and considerately;
- respect personal and professional boundaries;
- value the contribution of every colleague, regardless of role or seniority;
- respect differences in background, identity, culture and experience;
- avoid behaviour that could reasonably intimidate, humiliate, isolate or demean another person;
- speak up or seek help when inappropriate behaviour occurs; and
- contribute to a safe, inclusive and supportive working environment.

**These expectations apply to everyone.** Artistic status, seniority, professional reputation, employment status or position within the organisation does not place anyone above these standards.

## **4. WHO IS COVERED?**

This policy applies to everyone working with or on behalf of Wexford Festival Opera, including, as appropriate:

- employees
- singers and other artists
- orchestra members
- creative teams
- production and technical personnel
- freelance and contract workers
- visiting artists and companies
- volunteers
- Board members
- others working with WFO

The policy also protects employees and volunteers from inappropriate behaviour by third parties they encounter through their work, including patrons, sponsors, suppliers and visitors.

Serious inappropriate behaviour by a third party may result in action including exclusion from WFO premises or events, termination or non-renewal of a contract or relationship, or other appropriate measures.

## 5. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY BULLYING?

Workplace bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, verbal, physical or otherwise, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining a person's right to dignity at work.

Examples can include:

- repeated insults or verbal abuse
- intimidation or aggressive behaviour
- deliberately isolating or excluding someone
- spreading malicious rumours or gossip
- repeatedly belittling someone's views or contribution
- withholding information needed to do someone's job
- unreasonable or excessive monitoring
- repeatedly blaming someone for matters outside their control
- pestering, spying or stalking
- other repeated menacing or undermining behaviour

*This list is not exhaustive.*

### What is not normally bullying?

Reasonable and appropriate management is not bullying. For example:

- constructive feedback
- reasonable performance management
- assigning work or duties
- reasonable instructions from a manager
- legitimate disciplinary or corrective action
- differences of opinion or ordinary workplace disagreement
- reasonable management action during periods of operational pressure

**However, these activities should still be carried out professionally and respectfully.** A single incident will not normally meet the definition of workplace bullying because bullying involves repeated behaviour. A single incident may still be inappropriate, may breach our standards of dignity and respect, and may constitute harassment, sexual harassment or another form of misconduct. You can still raise it.

## 6. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY HARASSMENT?

Harassment is unwanted conduct connected to a protected ground under Irish equality legislation which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Protected grounds include:

- gender
- civil status
- family status
- sexual orientation
- religion
- age
- disability
- race
- membership of the Traveller community

Harassment can include spoken or written words, jokes or comments, gestures, images or other material, messages or online communications, unwanted requests or actions, or other inappropriate conduct.

**Harassment can be a single incident. It does not have to happen repeatedly.**

## **7. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SEXUAL HARASSMENT?**

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or conduct with a sexual dimension that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Examples can include:

- unwanted sexual comments or jokes
- sexual innuendo
- suggestive remarks or gestures
- unwanted touching
- requests or demands for sexual favours
- displaying or sharing sexually explicit or suggestive material
- indecent exposure
- sexual assault

**What matters is whether the behaviour is unwanted.**

A person may object to behaviour even if they previously tolerated it. The intention of the person responsible for the behaviour does not, by itself, determine whether the behaviour was acceptable.

## **8. INFORMAL OPTIONS**

Sometimes a concern can be resolved quickly and informally.

If you feel comfortable doing so, you may tell the person that their behaviour is unwelcome and ask them to stop.

**You are not required to confront someone yourself.**

You may instead ask your Line Manager or the Executive Director for help. They can:

- advise and support you
- help you prepare for a conversation
- accompany or support you in addressing the matter
- raise the concern with the other person where appropriate
- discuss other options for resolving the issue

Mediation may also be considered where appropriate and where both parties agree.

**Using an informal process is a choice. Choosing to make a formal complaint instead will not count against you.**

## **9. IF YOU WITNESS SOMETHING**

Dignity and respect are everyone's responsibility.

If you witness behaviour that concerns you, you can:

- safely challenge the behaviour if you feel comfortable doing so
- check in with the person affected
- speak confidentially to your Line Manager or the Executive Director
- report serious behaviour through the appropriate WFO process

**Do not assume that someone else will raise the concern.**

## 10. IF A CONCERN IS RAISED ABOUT YOU

If someone tells you that your behaviour has made them uncomfortable or has caused offence or distress:

- listen
- take the concern seriously
- avoid retaliation or confrontation
- consider the impact of your behaviour, even if you did not intend to cause offence
- seek advice from your Line Manager or the Executive Director if you need support

If a formal complaint is made against you, you will be informed of the allegations and given a fair opportunity to respond.

## 11. CONFIDENTIALITY, FAIRNESS AND PROTECTION

Concerns and complaints will be handled as sensitively and confidentially as possible, while recognising that information may need to be shared in order to assess, investigate or resolve a complaint fairly.

Both the person making a complaint and the person responding to it are entitled to fair procedures.

**Retaliation or victimisation against someone because they raised a concern, made a complaint, supported another person or participated in an investigation will not be tolerated.**

A complaint made in good faith will be treated seriously, even if it is ultimately not upheld.

Deliberately false, malicious or vexatious complaints may themselves be dealt with under WFO's disciplinary procedures.

## 12. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A FORMAL COMPLAINT?

1. WFO will assess the complaint.
2. The person complained about will be informed of the allegations and allowed to respond.
3. Relevant evidence and witnesses may be considered.
4. An internal or independent external investigator may be appointed.
5. A finding will be made based on the available evidence.
6. The parties will be informed of the outcome as appropriate.
7. Where a complaint is upheld, appropriate action will be taken.
8. Any applicable right of appeal will be explained.

Detailed investigation, grievance, disciplinary and appeal procedures are contained in WFO's separate Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures.

## 13. OUR FESTIVAL COMMITMENT

Wexford Festival Opera is committed to providing a safe, creative and professional environment for everyone working at the Festival.

**We treat one another with dignity, respect and kindness.**

Opera is collaborative. Every person and every role contributes to what happens on our stages and throughout the Festival.

The rehearsal, production and performance process can be demanding. We expect high standards and excellent work, but **artistic excellence and respectful behaviour go hand in hand.**

If you experience or witness behaviour that concerns you, please speak up. Your concern will be heard and taken seriously.

Together, we share responsibility for making Wexford Festival Opera a place where people can do exceptional work while feeling safe, respected and valued.