

Commission on a Gender-Equal Economy

1. **Which policy or practice, that you know of, has had a transformative impact on gender equality?**
2. **What happened as a result of the policy or practice?**
3. **Was the policy or practice implemented at local, regional, national or international level?**
4. **Could the policy or practice be implemented in other contexts? If so, how? If not, why not?**

Equity is the trade union representing over 45,000 people working in the UK's film, television, theatre, dance, variety and music industries. Our membership includes actors, singers, dancers, stage managers, circus artists, theatre directors and many other performers and creative workers.

Equity welcomes the opportunity to submit further evidence to the Commission on a Gender Equal Economy to provide examples of policies that have had a transformative impact on gender equality. This follows on from its first submission which provided an overview of gender inequality across the entertainment industry - from issues affecting women's full participation in it early in their careers, to pension inequality - and policies that are needed to address these issues to achieve greater gender equality.

This submission focusses on two policies that is having (or will have) a transformative effect on addressing some of the key inequalities identified in our first submission. The first is Equity's Agenda for Change programme to end sexual harassment in the entertainment industry. The second is PIPA Flexible Family Care, a pilot scheme launched earlier this year.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment, bullying and abuse of women in the workplace restricts their full participation in it and their ability to perform fully and to the full extent of their talents and abilities. For too long those working in the entertainment industry had accepted bad behaviour and harassment as part of the business. The insecurity and precariousness of work, characterised by short-term contracts, low pay and anti-social hours, makes it particularly vulnerable, exacerbating existing power relationships and leading to an environment where harassment and other forms of abuse – bullying, discrimination, lack of regard for health and safety – can flourish. Women workers are particularly vulnerable in this sector without access to the same protections or support mechanisms as employees and are less likely to report incidents for fear of losing work in a tight-knit community. The testimonies that followed in the wake of the Weinstein allegations gave Equity the opportunity to work to finally change this, to shift workplace culture from a hotspot for bad behaviour to one that is leading the way in best practice.

At the time of the Weinstein allegations, Equity conducted a members' survey and established a working group which took evidence from a wide range of interested parties including other unions, trade bodies and vocational training providers. This work produced

nearly 200 ideas, which formed the basis of its [Agenda for Change report](#), published in February 2018. This report set out steps for creating a culture shift in the entertainment industry and zero tolerance of behaviour that is against the law under the Equality Act 2010. All of Equity's key documents on this agenda and related campaigns can be accessed at <https://www.equity.org.uk/getting-involved/campaigns/safe-spaces/>

The International Federation of Actors (FIA), which represents performers' unions worldwide, has described the action taken by Equity UK as "exemplary", offering "a global approach to tackling sexual harassment". It is currently developing a manual for its members on 'Combatting Sexual Harassment: Resources, Inspirations and Recommended Practices among Performer Unions', with a chapter examining Equity's 'zero-tolerance strategy from A to Z' as an example of best practice for unions' worldwide.

Equity's Safe Spaces campaign was a product of its Agenda for Change programme. The aim of the campaign is to give members the confidence to challenge and report inappropriate behaviour, knowing the union is always behind them. They can report inappropriate behaviour via Equity's Harassment Helpline (020 7670 0268) or directly with their organiser. [Posters](#) with this phone number are up in members' workplaces, including rehearsal spaces, casting suites and green rooms. Equity also created a [statement](#) for a cast or crew member to read aloud at the beginning of a production's rehearsal period. By doing this, a company demonstrates its commitment to creating safe spaces "free of bullying and harassment".

Equity held an anniversary event in February to thank the activists who served on the working party and who gave evidence, to look at what had been achieved so far and next steps. Further information about the event is [here](#), including some very powerful testimony, including from Helen Vine, who spoke up about what happened to her, having taken her case of sexual harassment to court with Equity's backing and won.

Members regularly feedback about the affirmation and how positive it is to start rehearsals with it, reminding those in power and those working for them that bad behaviour will not be tolerated and engagers will be held to account. We know it has encouraged victims of harassment and bullying and those who witness it to come forward; who can get advice and support from the dedicated helpline and their organiser.

Equity has also worked with employers and casting professionals on new sets of principles and guidance for sexual harassment and bullying, that have been produced by the BFI/BAFTA, UK Theatre/SOLT, Directors UK, the Casting Directors' Guild and PACT. It has also been working closely with engagers to ensure they have clear and robust policies in place, which have been developed from these principles, that can be used by the union to hold engagers to account and are getting incorporated into collective agreements. This work is essential for making employers and regulators take their legal responsibilities for preventing harm much more seriously and for redressing the current imbalance in the system which currently rests far too heavily on the individual in holding harassers and employers to account.

Equity's [Manifesto for Casting](#) also addresses particular abuses that can happen at auditions and interviews. It is one of the most vulnerable and exploited aspects of members' working

lives, and members — especially women and under-represented groups — can suffer belittling and discriminatory treatment. This includes everything from objectifying casting breakdowns, to requests to improvise fights and sex scenes, to inappropriate personal questions and feedback during the interview itself. The Manifesto for Casting sets out good practice principles to ensure that casting is fairer, clearer, less stressful and more inclusive, from ensuring performers are given enough notice before an audition to secure childcare, to guidelines on nudity and appropriate questions. Critical progress has been made towards making these principles standard practice, with the adoption of the Manifesto by the Casting Directors' Guild and the Personal Managers Association. In January 2018, the Casting Directors' Guild (CDG) released [a new code of conduct](#) that includes key points from the manifesto, and membership of the CDG is conditional upon an applicant accepting the code of conduct.

Progress has been made on two of Equity's key legislative priorities under this agenda. The Government listened to it and many others on Non-Disclosure Agreements and the need to extend the time limit to bring a case to an Employment Tribunal from three to six months, agreeing to consult on both. Its consultation on the former recently closed and it recently re-acknowledged its commitment to a consultation on the latter, which Equity and others are encouraging it to bring forward at the earliest opportunity. The Government now accepts NDAs can intimidate workers from pursuing claims, even where it cannot possibly be enforced, echoing Christine's Payne's words that were quoted by the Women & Equalities Select Committee in its report. That Committee has played a leading role in setting the legislative agenda - to require employers and regulators to meet their responsibilities, with the burden currently falling far too heavily on the victim to hold harassers and employers to account. A high-profile member of that Committee, Jess Phillips MP, spoke at the launch – footage of her speech and interview after it is available via the link above.

Over the next 6 months, Equity will be reviewing where it's got to with each of its action points in Agenda for Change – how effective they've been and next steps. On one of the action points, for example, which relates to scenes involving nudity and simulated sex, Directors UK is developing guidance for directing intimacy, nudity and sex scenes, that Equity and other stakeholders will feed into.

Shared Parental Leave

As outlined in our first submission, there are particular difficulties for women working in this sector when they are pregnant and combining work with caring for young children. Women can fall out of the sector entirely at this point in their careers because of the lack of support and provision. According to research from Raising Films, 74% of creative workers surveyed have turned down work because they are a parent, while 22% said that their career had come to a halt or had stopped altogether once they had a child.

Affordable and flexible childcare and work life balance are particularly difficult to achieve in the entertainment industry. A 2008 International Federation of Actors (FIA) report found that parenting was considered a career disadvantage for 56% of women performers, but only 15% of men performers. Throughout the arts and entertainment industries practices

such as touring, night-time working, filming away from home and extended rehearsals are common.

Temporary employment and the fact that labour supply greatly outstrips demand, particularly for female performers, means that power is highly unbalanced in favour of employers. As a result, individual performers and creative workers perceive that they could be vulnerable to exclusion from employment opportunities if they make demands in favour of improving work life balance. Conversely the absence of family friendly policies, enhanced redundancy or unfair dismissal rights for many of Equity's members further exacerbates the vulnerability of the workforce in an industry already characterised by insecurity.

Equity supports the work of Parents in the Performing Arts (PIPA) which has found that access to ad-hoc, flexible childcare is critical for maintaining a career in the performing arts at the same time as meeting caring responsibilities and is working with organisations to develop practices and policies aimed at attracting and retaining working parents.

A new practice it is developing is PIPA Flexible Family Care, a pilot scheme launched in January 2019. PIPA (Parents in Performing Arts) have partnered with My Family Care, to offer a resolution for parents and carers in the performing arts who require flexible family support, due to the unpredictable nature of their careers. My Family Care delivers family-friendly solutions and a wide range of resources for those with caring needs.

Equity and Spotlight have joined forces with PIPA to trial and test the model as well as assess demand and usage. Throughout this year, its members, as well as those referred from PIPA strategic partners, are able to take part in this pilot, to access a range of services, help and support, which includes Emergency Childcare, School Holiday Cover and Backup Adult and Eldercare. The scheme has been offered to an initial 500 user registrations on a first come, first served basis. There are no sign-up fees and the care is available UK-wide. Widely used by corporate employers, this innovative partnership makes available a range of flexible child and elder care accessible to an industry with unpredictable working patterns, last minute engagements and late hours. The scheme is in the process of doing its first meaningful, statistic analysis, so Equity is unable to yet provide details of how it is working for members in addressing significant barriers affecting the full participation of women and men with young children in the industry. The long term aim of this pilot is for employers to invest in caring solutions for entertainment workers; this pilot year is a chance to see whether the proposal works for members, and, if it does, to campaign for employers to bear the cost in years to come
