



## Psychological safety and TV productions

### Background

At a meeting of the TV Industry Human Rights Forum in November 2025, participants shared ideas to help establish and maintain psychological safety on a TV production.

A lack of psychological safety can impact the human rights to life, health, justice, non-discrimination and just and favourable working conditions, amongst others.

Importantly, and from a human rights perspective, psychological safety should apply to EVERYONE in a production environment, whether that is employees, freelance crew, dailies, ancillary workers (cleaners, caterers, drivers, security etc), performers, contributors or participants.

Definition of psychological safety used:

*“In a work-related environment, psychological safety refers to people feeling confident about offering original ideas, sharing different viewpoints, asking questions, raising concerns and owning mistakes without fear of humiliation, retaliation or being ignored.”*

### What productions could consider to improve psychological safety

- **Policies** that centre people over the organisation or production
  - Provides the foundation for a culture
  - Establishes the processes and structure to support psychological safety
  - Avoids stating that some groups of people (e.g. clients, performers/artists) are more important than others
  - Provides clarity about the balance between safeguarding (including safeguarding of adults) and data protection regulations
- **Risk assessments** that include risks to psychological safety, whether from location, content, team composition, travel or nature of employment
- Open **communications** with all stakeholders, including:
  - Expectations of behaviour
  - How and where to report issues and what will happen to reports made
  - Regular check-ins
  - Getting the more junior person to lead their one-to-one meetings and choose how to use the time, rather than the manager
  - Feedback loops for when concerns have been raised
  - Taking care not to lead with reasons why people should not feel safe to report (such as a poor track record of dealing with issues in the past)
- Clear **reporting structures**, including an anonymous option
  - Particular focus on support and reporting channels for freelancers, dailies and ancillary workers
  - Avoid leading with anonymity to avoid stigmatising valid concerns and making people feel less safe to raise them openly
  - Training for those expected to respond to issues raised
  - A way of tracking smaller low-level issue in order to identify problematic patterns of behaviour or general cultural issues
  - Access to independent and trained investigators
  - Reporting channels should meet a set of criteria (see below)

## **Ideas for increasing psychological safety in different scenarios**

### **Scenario 1: An anonymous concern is raised about a serious issue but with no indication who it is regarding**

Practical steps to consider:

- Review training to see if it is effective and working
- Visit production location to check on the general culture
- Make a general announcement to ensure everyone in the production is aware that reporting channels exist, that the production is committed to supporting everyone to work safely and effectively and that poor behaviour or wrongdoing won't be tolerated
- Respect the person who wished to be anonymous and refrain from trying to work out who they are – recognise that freelancers are at particular risk of blacklisting and repercussions to their career
- Independent investigation to provide a greater sense of safety to share
- Look at why someone felt unable to trust the system and review how to improve it

Avoid:

- Announcing to everyone that an issue has been raised anonymously or what it is about
- Spending time trying to work out who raised the issue or who it is about

### **Scenario 2: The content of a production contains aspects that may affect safe and inclusive working conditions (e.g. offensive comedy with studio audience laughing, racist chants while covering a sporting event etc)**

- Conduct risk assessments early and check in with personnel
- Give people a chance to opt out of a production with no repercussions if the risk is known
- If an issue happens without prior preparation, acknowledge the issue, check in with personnel and ensure sufficient time and space for an adequate debrief
- Offer mental health support
- Have resources readily available for dailies (crew only on site for actual filming and who are unlikely to have completed mandatory training or know all the reporting policies and channels), including warnings where possible and check ins afterwards

### **Scenario 3: An allegation is made against a freelancer; if they are removed from a production then they will experience a loss of income and may be innocent; if they stay on a production and are not innocent then this may affect the psychological safety of everyone else**

- Ensure processes are clear from the outset
- Consider the seriousness of the allegation as to whether the person against whom the claim is made should be:
  - o Kept in place while under investigation
  - o Moved to another location
  - o Removed from the production (offer paid leave while under investigation)
- Communicate with the wider team – not with specific details but enough for them to know there is a situation, especially if they may be asked to work harder to make up any shortfall as a result of a suspension
- If the complaint is not upheld, prevent stigma through open communications and clearly closing out the incident

## Reporting channels

TV productions may have a range of ways that people can raise concerns, e.g. – flagging something with a line manager, an ‘open door’ to senior leaders, access to Human Resources colleagues or formal speaking up lines.

The [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights \(UNGPs\)](#) say that reporting channels (which is referred to in the document as ‘operational grievance mechanisms’) should meet 8 criteria:

Criteria	What this means
<b>Legitimate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is trusted by those supposed to use the channel</li></ul>
<b>Accessible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is known to everyone supposed to use the channel</li><li>• Helps those who may face particular barriers to access</li></ul>
<b>Predictable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A clear and known procedure with an indicative time frame for each stage</li><li>• Clarity on the types of process and outcome available and a means of monitoring implementation</li></ul>
<b>Equitable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Those reporting issues have reasonable access to sources of information, advice and expertise necessary to engage in the process on fair, informed and respectful basis</li></ul>
<b>Transparent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keeps parties to an issue informed about progress</li><li>• Provides sufficient information about the performance of the reporting channel to build confidence in its effectiveness</li></ul>
<b>Rights-compatible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensures outcomes and remedies align with internationally recognised human rights</li></ul>
<b>A source of continuous learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Draws on lessons to improve the reporting channel and to prevent future issues and harms</li></ul>
<b>Based on engagement and dialogue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consults stakeholder groups for whose use it is intended on its design and performance</li><li>• Focuses on dialogue as the means to address and resolve grievances and issues</li></ul>

These criteria are a useful way of thinking through the landscape of channels that are available on a production. The framework says that all of these aspects are needed to enable people to raise concerns effectively.

## Useful resources

1. **CIISA** (the Creative Industries Independent Standards Authority) has established universal Standards for film, music, TV and theatre on safe and inclusive working environments, open and accountable reporting mechanisms and a responsive learning culture: [www.ciisa.org.uk](http://www.ciisa.org.uk)
2. The **TV Industry Human Rights Forum** has developed a checklist for setting up appropriate reporting/grievance channels, aligned to the UNGPs: [www.tvhumanrights.org/culture](http://www.tvhumanrights.org/culture)
3. **Peace is Loud** has a range of practical resources for documentary makers to create psychological safety for crew and contributors that have relevance to other genres: <https://peaceisloud.org/participant-care/>