

EQUITY

LONDON SOUTH

January Branch Meeting

19th January 2026 • 7-9 p.m. • Old Vic Backstage

In Attendance: Paul Valentine, Amanda Grace, Claude Starling, Karrim Jalali, James Fogarty, Lennie Rath, Su Gilroy, Alisdair Hankinson, Samuel Rees, Merlin Stevens, Nerissa Gamboa, Tal Profs, Neelam Sakshi, Clare Vousden (14)

On Zoom: Linda Ekman, Sally McKenna, L Brennan, Ian Crosson, Giovanni (5)

Apologies: Maria Tyminski, Belle Fin, Fiona Whitelaw, Issam Al Ghussein, Jay Lafayette Valentine, Pip Mayo, Myra Sands, Eli James (8)

CAMPAIGNS UPDATE

PAUL ON BEHALF OF MARIA

- Events
 - There's a demonstration against UKiP outside the Whitechapel Station on Saturday January 31st outside.
 - Super important: On Saturday 28 March, we'll bring Equity flags and banners to a major national demonstration in London showing that the majority of people in this country stand for unity, not division.
 - Also, Maria has joined a new initiative organised by the south-east branch of PCS union to explore ways to develop sustainable regional mobilisation networks to oppose the far-right.
- The New Actors Centre has opened its doors, and already welcomed many actors in their classes and workshops. The first masterclass will be led by Dame Harriet Walter and will explore the art of verse-speaking.
- 1. Our governments must publicly reaffirm their commitment to international law and oppose any threat or use of military force against Cuba and other sovereign nations.
 - **Sign the Call for Peace and Sovereignty and say no to war and intervention**
- 2. We encourage our members, especially those under 50 to take part in the industry-wide survey that will be used in discussions with various unions, organisations and hopefully the government (specifically the DCMS) in the spring and summer of 2026.
 - Denville Hall is the retirement and respite home for people in the entertainment industry and it is currently putting together this completely anonymous survey about ageing and retirement in the performing arts.
 - The idea is that there is not only better care for those already of retirement age, but also a better provision as we head into the future.
 - **<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Z6PCL2D>**

COUNCIL REPORT - DECEMBER 2025

GIOVANNI ON BEHALF OF FIONA

- New companies procedure
- Reviewing Safe Spaces Agreement
- Link Branches to Industrial Organisations
 - Training sessions upcoming

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- FIA: Both motions passed
- DDMC affiliated with DPAC
 - DDMC released its **Accessibility Toolkit**

GUEST SPEAKER

KARRIM, LOW & NO-PAY OFFICIAL

- Karrim oversees fringe & ITC gigs and shared with us the employment rights under the Employment Rights Act of 'self-employed' (for tax purposes) freelance actors & SMs.
 - If you have any questions about your rights or want to check a contract for a job, please e-mail **KJALALI@equity.org.uk**

UPDATE ON MOTION

AMANDA ON BEHALF OF
CHARLOTTE BENCE

Please find below the full update from Charlotte Bence (Industrial Official - Theatre):

I'm writing with an update on the motion the branch sent to Council, which was discussed at the Council meeting in October. I copy the motion and the recommendation passed by Council below for ease.

It has not been possible to incorporate the asks of the motion into the claim on the Commercial Theatre Agreement – and having considered this further since I attended the branch meeting where this was discussed I'm not convinced that putting it into the claim for changes to the collective agreement is the right approach to tackle this anyway, because the provisions of the relevant agreement appendix are already much more robust than the acas code of practice in establishing the 10 working day timeframes. As you'll likely know, the CoP itself is not a statutory document – it is best practice guidance, and failure to adhere to it does not on its own make an employer liable to proceedings at tribunal.

I also have concerns about limiting the scope of the work to the commercial theatre agreement alone. The grievance and disciplinary process is the same across the CTA, subsidised and west end agreements – that consistency is important in enabling members to better understand what they can and should expect as a basic framework when working for a SOLT/UKT member producer and issues arise, and there simply was not the time to coordinate a standardised claim item across all of the agreements prior to the claims being ratified by the Stage Actors and Stage Management committees before submission to the bosses. The other consideration is that all of the agreements establish minimum terms – the basic minimum we expect from all managers, irrespective of their resources or size. Given the provisions are already an enhancement of the acas code, achieving better than the existing procedures in a minimum terms agreement is highly unlikely. Across all of the

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agreement we have submitted big, ambitious claims on money, working time, better scheduling, allowances and accommodation because these were the key priorities members wanted us to claim on in the consultation exercises we ran prior to putting the claims together – and I was also concerned that this would get lost in the already busy bargaining agenda.

All that said: I am still very keen to do some work on the core asks of the motion, and have come up with a way of doing so across all of the collective agreements. You'll probably already know that back in 2024 the law changed to place an additional duty on employers to protect workers from sexual harassment. As of 2024, employers have to take 'reasonable steps' to prevent sexual harassment, but in October of this year this wording is being strengthened to 'all reasonable steps' as a consequence of the Employment Rights Act 2025. A further change is that employers will be liable for all types of harassment from third parties unless they have taken all reasonable steps to prevent it from happening. This presents us with an opportunity to do what the motion asks, but in a more targeted and effective way across all of the collective agreements rather than the CTA alone.

Having discussed with Adam (the AGS Live Performance, copied here) we've agreed that once the negotiations over all three of the major agreements are concluded, the department will launch an audit of existing individual producer policies and procedures on tackling bullying and harassment. This will involve us writing to every SOLT/UK producer – and likely ITC producers too, and those that have House Agreements with the union such as the RSC and National Theatre – pointing out the upcoming enhanced duty that the Employment Rights Act places on them as employers, and reviewing the in-house policies and procedures of each producer. In this way, we will be able to work across the sector to deliver the asks of the motion. This will be a much more effective, and much more widespread, way of delivering enhanced protections for members experiencing bullying or harassment in the workplace, irrespective of which part of the sector they will be working in. We did a similar piece of work in the run-up to the 2024 change I reference above, and it was very effective in delivering better policies across the board for tackling sexual harassment at work.

I'd be very happy to come along to a future branch meeting to discuss this further/seek members input on this work if that feels useful; just let me know when would be good for your schedule.

Best wishes,

Charlotte

The original motion & response from Equity Council are below:

Evidence has emerged that theatre producers are actively managing the bullying and harassment process out of time.

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As Equity is preparing to create a claim for a new Commercial Theatre Agreement, this branch asks Council or the committee to review its contract definitions and timescales and consider the bigger picture of how complaints play out when bullying and harassment at work are involved. Time is of the essence in these cases due to the deterioration of mental health and wellbeing of the person being bullied. There needs to be more clarity in the contract.

We ask Council to consider

- In particular -*
- The bullying and grievance procedure does not address the need for immediacy nor the definition of immediacy, when bullying and harassment are ongoing and form the basis of the complaint.*
- There need to be clear instructions on who and how to make complaints to - verbally or in writing.*
- Contract definitions need to focus on "cast and stage management working days" and not working days. General Managers often don't work weekends and use this as an excuse to do nothing - in this case the CSM did nothing without the instructions of the General Manager.*
- The bullying and grievance procedure permits companies to use time off as an excuse not to delegate or work overtime to address issues. There needs to be some flexibility in wording so that complaints don't fall entirely to one named job role ie. the General Manager to address. This doesn't help the individual who is being abused during the complaints process itself.*
- The bullying and grievance procedure needs to address actor/company member welfare in the light of ongoing bullying and harassment complaints during the actual complaint process itself.*

Response:

Council refers the substance of the motion to the Assistant General Secretary, Live Performance, for his determination as to how best address the issues contained within it. It is not recommended that the hands of negotiators and working parties are tied by passing motions with specific asks from industrial committees, however it is expected that the disciplinary and grievance processes will be subject to review through the negotiations taking place over the next year or so.

REQUESTS FROM BRANCH MEMBERS

- Ask Charlotte Bence to come share updates on Motion**
- Ask Dugald to brief members on the changes coming to the new Employment Rights Act**
- Request for ideas to leverage PNO status to get open Equity casting calls for venues that receive public funding**
- Request for Guest Speaker for Recorded Media to speak on PACT agreement**

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AOB & EVENTS

- **Su Gilroy** shared a survey from the General Federation of Trade Unions that takes 3-7 minutes to complete and helps analyse trade union membership in the UK.
 - https://gftuet.org.uk/workersvoices2026?link_id=4&can_id=bfceffc225e6e494202f2d86b3d99047&source=email-were-taking-a-stand-join-us-2&email_referrer=email_3048178&email_subject=-launched-today-workers-voices-on-trade-union-education-survey-2026
- **Claude Starling** shared the release on Amazon Prime of a Polish film he worked on called *Affair of Honour*
- **Ian Crosson** shared that a short film he was in called *Blondie* has been long listed for a BAFTA and will be shown at the Short Film Fest at Rich Mix

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 17th February 2026 • 7-9 p.m. • Old Vic Backstage
We'll hear from Ellen from BECTU about union power.