

EMBARGOED until 09:00am Friday 7 December

Bookselling and Publishing Industry joins together to publish new Commitment to Professional Behaviour

The Association of Authors' Agents, The Booksellers Association, The Publishers Association and The Society of Authors launch first ever industry-wide commitment to Professional Behaviour today

[NEWS RELEASE: LONDON, 7 DECEMBER 2018]: The first Industry Commitment to Professional Behaviour in Bookselling and Publishing (published today, 7 December 2018) has been created and endorsed by The Association of Authors' Agents, The Booksellers Association, The Publishers Association and The Society of Authors.

The industry was galvanised to work together to set out the high professional standards that we should expect from one another after last year's *Bookseller* survey on sexual harassment and a subsequent blog by Lizzy Kremer from David Higham Associates (now President of the AAA). These four major publishing trade organisations came together in a significant example of collaboration across the bookselling and publishing industry; to signal their unwavering determination and commitment to ensuring and maintaining dignity at work for everyone in bookselling and publishing.

In an initial consultation meeting that brought together a representative group of people who work across the broad reach of the industry, it quickly became apparent that as well as sexual harassment being a key and urgent issue to address, there were other universally shared concerns about behaviour and conduct within the workplace and within the wider social events and environments which characterise the world of publishing.

The Commitment issued today distils and unites these diverse voices in a document which addresses freedom of speech, diversity and inclusion as well as sexual and other harassment, discrimination, bullying and intimidation.

This Commitment signals the major trade organisations working together as an industry to make it a better, safer and dignified place to work in which no abuse of power will be tolerated.

The Principles laid out in the Industry Commitment to Professional Behaviour in Bookselling and Publishing are:-

- 1) We in the books industry support creative expression and freedom of speech. However, our creative realm is also a professional one and we expect high standards of behaviour from everyone we encounter in the course of our work, including colleagues and customers.
- 2) We will protect the passion, imagination and creativity of everyone in the books industry. We will celebrate and promote diversity and inclusion so that all voices can be heard.
- 3) We will recognise our influence and make a commitment to work together to prevent abuse of power, creating a work environment free of discrimination, harassment including sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation.
- 4) We will ensure that everyone in our industry is treated with dignity and respect so that individuals are supported and able to speak out.

The full commitment (<http://www.publishers.org.uk/activities/inclusivity/industry-commitment>) has been issued to members of all organisations this morning (7 December) and published on the front pages of the trade associations' websites. All associations will be encouraging their members – and all others in the book industry – to read and respect what this Commitment stands for. The AAA, BA, The PA and The SOA will be promoting it on social media, and to members via direct newsletters, events and through committees and councils.

Lizzy Kremer, President of The Association of Authors' Agents, said:

“Working together as trade associations and colleagues over the last several months to write down our ideals and aims, we have provoked discussion of what ‘professional behaviour’ means to us across every echelon of the business we love. I am excited that we can now open up our conversation to the whole industry. We invite all of our colleagues to join with us in our commitment to articulating, creating and protecting a professional environment of which we can feel proud, and in which we can all work safely and with dignity.

As readers and writers we hold the value of text and of language in high esteem and can do better than to simply assume that we all agree on the most important issues, such as the vital importance of creating workplaces free of harassment and discrimination. It is only fitting that an industry fuelled and inspired by the written word should have taken exceptional steps to collaborate on a written Commitment.

In a business which can often seem to have relatively horizontal hierarchies, and in which we enjoy plenty of informal contact, it is easy to overlook the situations in which we have more power than the colleagues with whom we are working. The Commitment urges us each to take responsibility for preventing any abuse of power, whether that be through careful monitoring of our own actions, or watchful protection of those colleagues with less influence than us. As well as reminding us of our individual and corporate responsibility in every workplace, whether that be office, festival, party or rights fair; those who endorse the Commitment will be pledging their support to any colleague who feels that they have been subject to inappropriate behaviour.”

Meryl Halls, Managing Director, The Booksellers Association, said:

“Bookselling and publishing expect and demand high standards of professional, respectful behaviour from everyone encountered in the course of work, including colleagues, customers and other industry professionals. This is the first time the BA has worked with this number of other representative groups on the production of a joint commitment of this nature, and we are proud to issue this in unison. This affects all of us and we are speaking with one voice supporting dignity at work. The commitment exhorts people to support one another and take action by Listening Up; Speaking Up; and Standing Up.

We come together representing very diverse memberships and unfortunately, as trade associations rather than merely employers, we are not able to implement a trade complaints and enforcement procedure. But we know that words matter and this commitment matters. We hope to inspire colleagues to be more aware, more sensitive to others, and to behave appropriately. It is particularly important that it has been created jointly and endorsed by all of us, representing staff of all levels from across the industry.”



Emma House, Deputy CEO of the Publishers Association, said:

“A document like this can’t ever be the whole answer, but we hope that it will be an important part of surfacing these issues, encouraging conversations and helping people feel confident that their industry is one that takes their dignity at work very seriously. Our intention is that the commitment is meaningful, helpful and makes people feel seen and supported. We also hope that businesses will use it alongside any existing policies they have or to help develop these if they don’t have them. We want to thank everyone who has fed into the process of developing the commitment, commented and shared their experiences.”

Nicola Solomon, Chief Executive, The Society of Authors, said:

“Any statement worth making should be about more than words alone, so we intend the publication of this Industry Commitment not to be an endpoint but a milestone in ongoing cross-sector culture change. If we can share, repeat and embed these core values, I hope we can ensure not only that everyone we work with is clear on appropriate behaviour, but also that we can foster working environments where anyone, regardless of role, is treated with dignity and empowered to speak up when they feel the commitment is not being honoured.

At the Society of Authors, we’re taking today’s publication as an opportunity to refresh and clarify our own guidelines and policies for staff, members and all our partners when working with us. These also go live today, explicitly embedding the principles of the Industry Commitment into our daily interactions.”

All the associations will continue to work closely with and support their own memberships, with the commitment providing an overarching framework that we will all work from.

...Ends...

For media enquiries, please contact: **Nicola Green at Midas Public Relations on nicola.green@midaspr.co.uk or 020 7361 7860.**

About The Booksellers Association (BA)

The Booksellers Association is a membership organization for all booksellers in the UK & Ireland. It represents over 95% of specialist booksellers selling new books. The BA exists to support, advise and work with its members to create excellent products for booksellers. These range from National Book Tokens, a gift card which drives footfall and keeps gift spending in the book trade; Batch, the award-winning payments service, which saves time, money and hassle when settling invoices and organising returns; a full range of money-saving affinity deals; a free Business Support Helpline; and a whole range of tailored promotional campaign work, including Bookshop Day, Books Are My Bag Readers Awards, World Book Day, the Christmas Books catalogue and Independent Bookshop Week.

About the Association of Authors’ Agents

The Association of Authors’ Agents (the AAA) is a voluntary trade organisation whose members comprise over 100 UK literary agencies representing the majority of published authors in the UK. The AAA exists to offer support and guidance to member agencies; to offer a collective voice for member agencies and their clients in public affairs, across the publishing industry and in the media; and to establish and promote codes of best practice for member agencies. Lizzy Kremer was elected



THE **PUBLISHERS**
ASSOCIATION



President in January 2018 and will serve a two year term. Isobel Dixon of Blake Friedmann is Vice-President.

About the Publishers Association

The Publishers Association (the PA) represents book and journal publishers in the UK, spanning fiction and non-fiction, academic and education publishing in print and digital. UK publishing has a turnover of £5.7bn, with export income accounting for 60% of revenues. Our membership includes global companies such as Elsevier, Wiley, Pearson, Penguin Random House and Hachette, as well as many independent publishing houses and university presses. Our objective as an association is to provide our members with the influence, insight and support necessary to compete and prosper.

About The Society of Authors

The Society of Authors is the UK trade union for more than 10,000 writers, illustrators and literary translators, at all stages of their careers. We've been advising individuals and speaking out for the profession since 1884.