

# Anti-Oppressive Policy

## Aims of Policy

The purpose of this Anti-Oppressive Policy is to foster an inclusive, respectful, and equitable environment for all individuals associated with our organisation. We commit to actively challenging and dismantling systemic oppression, including, discrimination, and inequality in all forms.

Our commitment to an anti-oppressive environment is foundational to the values and mission of our organisation. By actively challenging and dismantling oppression, we aim to create a space where everyone can thrive and contribute to their fullest potential.

## Scope

This policy applies to all members of the organisation, including but not limited to employees, survivors, volunteers and trustees.

## Legislation

This policy is primarily governed by the Equality Act 2010 which makes it unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment, employment or the provision of services because of a protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Sex
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage or civil partnership

Other relevant legislation provides protection for part-time and fixed-term workers, trade union members (or potential members) and ex-offenders:

- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974)

- Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations (2000) (Amendment Regulations) 2002
- Fixed-Term Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations (2002)
- Trade Union & Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992

Your Sanctuary will adhere to the requirements and guidance contained in the above pieces of legislation (and any subsequent amendments to them) and in any other relevant legislation.

## Principles

1. **Equity and Inclusion:** Ensure equitable access and opportunities for all individuals, actively working to include voices and perspectives from marginalised communities.
2. **Respect and Dignity:** Treat all individuals with respect and uphold their dignity in all interactions.
3. **Accountability:** Hold individuals accountable for actions that maintain oppression and discrimination and provide ways for reporting and addressing such behaviours.
4. **Education and Awareness:** Promote ongoing education and awareness about oppression, discrimination, and ways to counteract these forces within the organisation.

## Definitions

1. **Systemic:** Relating to a system, affecting the entirety of a thing or place. Relating to the beliefs, policy or practice that has been established as normal. Systemic change includes the changing of a system to create a lasting difference.
2. **Oppression:** Systemic and pervasive inequality and discrimination experienced by individuals based on their marginalised social groups.
3. **Discrimination:** Unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or other protected characteristics.
4. **Microaggressions:** Everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely on their marginalised group.
5. **Intersectionality** refers to aspects of a person's identities that combine to create different and multiple discrimination and privilege. Different intersecting identities such as gender, race and disability can create additional barriers. Intersectionality is the individual's experience in response to those intersecting identities.
6. **Anti-Discriminatory:** Focuses more on specific, visible, and often illegal acts of unfair treatment. It's about ensuring that individuals or groups are not unfairly disadvantaged in certain contexts, often relying on legal frameworks and policies to guarantee rights.
7. **Anti-Oppressive:** Involves a deeper understanding of structural inequalities and how they intersect. It seeks to challenge and transform the underlying power dynamics that maintain inequality, rather than just addressing surface-level discriminatory acts.

8. **Equity:** Equity is an interpretation of fairness or justice. Equity is different from equality, which means treating everyone the same, while equity means treating people differently to account for different circumstances. Equity recognises that people don't start in the same place in society and provides what people need to succeed.
9. **Marginalised:** Refers to individuals or groups who are excluded, disadvantaged, or pushed to the edges of society due to factors such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, immigration status, or other identities. Marginalisation can result in limited access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making, making individuals more vulnerable to systemic oppression, discrimination, and social inequalities.

## Policy Statements

1. **Zero Tolerance for Discrimination and Harassment**
  - The organisation will not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment based on, including but not limited to, race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or socioeconomic status.
  - Any reported incidents will be taken seriously and investigated promptly, please refer to staff handbook for further information.
2. **Inclusive Practices**
  - All organisational policies, practices, and procedures will be reviewed and updated every 3 years to ensure they promote inclusion and equity.
  - Recruitment, hiring, and promotion practices will promote diversity and the inclusion of marginalised groups, and this would be measured through our EDI monitoring.
3. **Training and Development**
  - Mandatory anti-oppression training will be provided for all members of the organisation.
4. **Reporting Mechanisms**
  - A confidential and accessible reporting system is in place for individuals to report incidents of discrimination, harassment, or oppressive behaviour (see staff handbook).
  - Reports will be investigated promptly and fairly, with appropriate actions taken to address and rectify any confirmed issues. (see staff handbook).
5. **Support and Resources**
  - Support will be provided to individuals who experience discrimination or harassment, including counselling services, advocacy, and reasonable adjustments will be considered as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
6. **Lived experience**
  - The organisation will engage with and support marginalised communities, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are addressed in organisational decisions and actions.

## Implementation and Review

1. **Implementation**
  - The Anti-Oppressive Policy will be communicated to all members of the organisation and incorporated into the onboarding process for new members.

## 2. Review and Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and relevance.
- Feedback from all members of the organisation will be sought to continuously improve anti-oppressive practices.

A copy of this policy will be made available to all employees (both permanent and fixed term) and volunteers as part of the induction process and updates circulated via email.

## Types of Discrimination

**Direct discrimination** – this occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have (or are thought to have).

**Discrimination by association** – applies to age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability gender reassignment and sex. This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

**Perception discrimination** – applies to age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment and sex. This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think that they possess a particular protected characteristic even if the person does not actually do so.

**Indirect discrimination** – applies to age, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, disability and gender reassignment. This can occur when an organisation has a condition, rule, policy or practice that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who have a protected characteristic.

**Harassment** – unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. Employees are able to complain about behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them and the complainant need not possess the relevant characteristic themselves. They are also protected from harassment because of perception and association (see above).

**Harassment by others** – applies to age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. An employer is potentially liable for harassment of its employees by people who are not employees (such as service users). An employer may be liable if aware that harassment has taken place but has not taken reasonable steps to prevent it from happening again.

**Victimisation** – occurs when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act (or because they are suspected of doing so). An employee is not protected if they have maliciously made or supported a complaint knowing it to be untrue.

## Neurodiversity

### Definitions:

**Neurodiversity:** The concept that differences in brain function and behavioural traits are normal variations.

**Neurodivergent:** Neurodivergent is a term used to describe individual's whose brain may process information differently from what is considered 'neurotypical'. People who may have diagnoses of ADHD, ASD, ADD, Dyslexia and any other neurological differences.

Your Sanctuary is committed to fostering an inclusive environment that respects and values neurodiversity. We recognise and support the contributions of neurodivergent individuals. Your Sanctuary is committed to compliance with the Equality Act 2010, the SEND Code of Practice 2015, and other relevant UK legislation. We aim to provide an inclusive environment that supports neurodiverse individuals.

This applies to all employees, contractors, clients, and stakeholders interacting with our organisation.

## **Neurodiversity**

### **Staff Accommodations and Support**

- **Training and Development:** Offer training programs to enhance understanding and support for neurodivergent colleagues.
- **Performance Management:** Implement fair performance evaluation processes that consider individual strengths and needs.

### **Client Accommodations and Support**

- **Service Accessibility:** Ensure services are accessible to neurodivergent clients, including thought given to sensory-friendly environments, led by the survivors wishes. Alternative communication methods. i.e emails, chat services, phone calls, virtual spaces and face to face meetings will be offered.
- **Needs Led Support:** Tailor services to meet the needs of neurodivergent clients, providing individualised support plans where necessary.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish channels for neurodivergent clients to provide feedback and suggestions for improving service accessibility.

### **Training and Awareness**

- **Training:** Implement neurodiversity training for all staff to increase awareness and understanding.

### **Recruitment and Retention**

- **Inclusive Recruitment:** Ensure job descriptions and recruitment processes are inclusive and free of bias. Look at ways to make reasonable adjustments to the process.
- **Supportive Onboarding:** Provide a supportive onboarding process for neurodivergent employees, including mentorship.

### **Accessibility and Environment**

- **Physical Environment:** Make reasonable adjustments to workplaces and client service areas to be sensory-friendly and accessible, where reasonably possible, led by the employee's wishes.

## **Access to and receipt of Services**

Wherever possible, Your Sanctuary will take practical steps to ensure that services are diverse and accessible to all service users and their children who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse regardless of their age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, socio-economic status, neurodiversity and responsibility for children.

However, due to the specialised nature of Your Sanctuary's work, services may be delivered by specialist staff/teams who focus on a particular protected characteristic and provide that service in separate spaces. We understand that due to the trauma of domestic abuse some survivors may be triggered by the presence of people of the opposite sex in spaces where they need to feel safe. Therefore, our support groups, services and spaces may apply single sex exemptions under Schedule 3, Part 7 of the Equality Act 2010 so that services for males and females are delivered separately.

There is a fair and transparent process for application and assessment for access to our services including application, referral and acceptance into refuge or outreach support, needs assessment, individual support planning, risk assessment, consultation, involvement move on and resettlement. Clients receiving services from Your Sanctuary will be treated equitably.

Potential service users and their children seeking to access Your Sanctuary's services will not be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable and will be treated equitably.

## **Service Users**

Your Sanctuary takes an intersectional approach to working with people who have experienced gender-based abuse, taking into account multiple forms of oppression and discrimination that may have accumulated over time.

Service users (or potential service users) who feel that they have been discriminated against are encouraged to use Your Sanctuary's Compliments and Complaints procedure which can be found on our website ([www.yoursanctuary.org.uk](http://www.yoursanctuary.org.uk))

## **Safe Accommodation (Refuge) Services**

Our refuges are shared spaces and provide specialist support to women and their children who have experienced domestic abuse.

We provide single sex refuge services based on the exceptions provided in the Equality Act 2010 specifically:

- Schedule 3 Part 7 Paragraph 26 of the Equality Act 2010 – provision of services to women who have been subjected to sexual and domestic abuse by men is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. Specifically, our refuge service qualifies under the condition that a joint service for persons of both sexes would be less effective and the extent to which the service is required by persons of each sex makes it not reasonably practicable to provide separate spaces.

- Also, the condition is that the service is provided for or is likely to be used by two or more persons at the same time and the circumstances are such that a person of one sex might reasonably object to the presence of a person of the opposite sex.
- Paragraph 28 Part 7 Schedule 3 of the Equality Act 2010 states that providers of single sex services can provide a different service to, or exclude someone related to gender reassignment, if it is done with proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Our refuge service is a single sex, female only service and therefore does not require a case by case assessment. We ask that referring agencies make this clear and do not signpost or refer males (including those who identify as women i.e transwomen) to our refuge service.

On an exception basis, females who identify as transgender (i.e transmen and who may have changed their appearance through taking testosterone) will need to be individually assessed and may not be able to be accommodated in our refuges.

Males (including those who identify as women and/or have a Gender Recognition Certificate (transwomen) ) can be referred or signposted to our helpline service. If they require safe accommodation we are able to refer to our sister organisation 'I Choose Freedom' who provide safe accommodation units for males and males who identify as women (transwomen) as well as any other suitable safe accommodation that may be available through 'Routes to Support'.

We are able to support male, transgender and non-binary survivors through our 1:1 outreach community service and telephone helpline.

## **Procedures**

### **Recruitment and employees**

**Occupational Requirement** – in limited circumstances, it is lawful for an employer to require a job to be done by someone with a particular characteristic if having this characteristic is an occupational requirement for the job. This must be crucial to the post and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

### **Training and Development**

Through its performance management procedures, Your Sanctuary ensures all employees are given access to appropriate training and the opportunity to develop their skills and experience. Where possible, training opportunities will be published widely to all appropriate employees (and where appropriate, volunteers) and not in such a way so as to exclude any particular groups.

### **Selection processes for Promotion and Redundancy**

Whenever undertaking a process to select between groups of employees, for example in a promotion or redundancy situation, Your Sanctuary undertakes to ensure a fair and consistent procedure is applied and that any selection criteria are non-discriminatory. Promotion will be based upon merit alone.

## **Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure**

Your Sanctuary takes a serious view of discrimination and breaches of this policy are deemed as misconduct; any such actions will be investigated as possible disciplinary offences and dealt with in accordance with the organisation's disciplinary process which can be found in our staff handbook.

An employee who feels that they have been discriminated against should discuss this initially with their line manager. If this does not address or resolve the concern, then the employee should raise a formal grievance in line with Your Sanctuary's Grievance procedure or, if appropriate, the Whistleblowing procedure, these can be found in the staff handbook.

Volunteers should address any concerns to a member of the Senior leadership team.

## **Data Monitoring**

Data monitoring exercises will be carried out on a bi-annual basis and may include gathering diversity data on: recruitment, training, promotion and leaver statistics; accessibility of services; employee/ volunteers relative to service users. Any data gathered will be anonymised to comply with Data Protection legislation and reviewed by the Senior Leadership team on an agreed basis.