

Hull Women's Aid

Policies & Procedures

Equality and Diversity

Author	CEO
Name of responsible individual/group	The board of trustees
Previous version issued on	July 2022
Review version	July 2025
Target audience	Trustees/Staff/Service users

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

Hull Women's Aid has as its central value a belief in equal opportunities. It recognises that many groups and individuals within society have been and continue to be discriminated against, both directly and indirectly, on the grounds of, for example, their race, nationality, ethnic or cultural origins, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religious belief, including non-belief, political belief, social class, employment status, low income, mental health, marital status and civil partnership, gender reassignment, HIV/AIDS status, appearance, refugee status, caring responsibilities and unrelated criminal conviction. (This list is not in any order of priority.)

The Equality Act 2010 identifies 9 protected characteristics which are included in the above list they are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage & Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy & Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Cultural beliefs

Hull Women's Aid is opposed to all forms of oppression and discrimination that exists in society and we are fully committed to challenging them both in terms of employment and service provision.

Hull Women's Aid's women's services are delivered by female staff, operating under Schedule 9, Part 1, and Paragraph 1 of The Equality Act 2010 the Sex Discrimination Act in terms of employment and service provision.

The organisation aims to enable survivors of domestic abuse to develop their potential and to overcome abuse and its effects, within an environment, which is anti-oppressive and non-abusive.

Hull Women's Aid recognises and will not tolerate any type of discrimination:

- Direct discrimination: treating someone less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic.
- Discrimination by association: discriminating against an individual because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic;
- Perception discrimination: discriminating against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic, even if the person does not possess this characteristic.
- Indirect discrimination: Hull Women's Aid will endeavour to not implement any condition, rule, policy or practice which applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.
- Harassment: employees can complain of any behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them or they do not possess the relevant characteristic themselves. Hull Women's Aid will not tolerate the harassment of its staff by people who are not employed by Hull Women's Aid.
- Victimisation: Hull Women's Aid will not treat any member of staff badly who supports or made a complaint or raised a grievance.

Hull Women's Aid will adhere to the requirements and guidance contained in all relevant equality legislation and regulations in all of its work. These include:

- The Equal Pay Act 1970
- The Equal Pay (Amendment) Act 1983
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- The Gender Reassignment Regulations 1999
- The Race Relation Act 1976

- The Race Relation (Amendment) Act 2000
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Human Rights Acts 1998 and 2001
- The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- The Equality Act 2010

The above list is by no means exhaustive and our policy includes any other relevant legislation, regulations and codes of practice including any amendments to them, particularly arising from the Equality Act 2010 that would assist Hull Women's Aid to fulfil its commitments and meet the needs of the clients we support. Hull Women's Aid will also acknowledge the right to dignity and respect of every human being that the organisation comes across.

No one seeking access to services from Hull Women's Aid will be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable.

Every board member and employee of the organisation has a responsibility to implement this policy and equality training will be made available.

Hull Women's Aid recognises that passive policies are inadequate as a means of combating discrimination. It therefore commits itself to taking positive action to address barriers experienced by people who are discriminated against.

Hull Women's Aid will demonstrate its commitment to equal opportunities by:

- Working in an anti-racist, anti-sexist and any other anti-discriminatory manner;
- Requiring its Board members and employees actively to promote and implement this policy throughout all aspects of the organisation's work and services;
- Requiring its members (both individuals and organisations) to respect and support the principle of this policy;
- Recognising its responsibilities under all relevant anti-discriminatory legislation and regulations;
- Providing relevant information, training, advice and other resources to staff, board members and member organisations on working in an anti-discriminatory way;

- Encouraging co-operation, networking, consultation, participation and negotiation between voluntary and statutory agencies in a way which promotes equal opportunities to include all sections of society;
- Monitoring and evaluating this policy on a regular basis;
- Remaining flexible and responding to change;
- Conducting staff recruitment in a way that will ensure that selection is based on merit;
- Seeking to deal swiftly and fairly with any accusation of harassment or discrimination in whatever form it may occur and whether direct or indirect;

2. WHAT THIS POLICY COVERS

This policy aims to cover all aspects of the operation of Hull Women's Aid. In particular it covers:

- Employment of paid workers;
- Membership of the organisation and the Board of trustees;
- Service Delivery;
- Access and Premises;
- Publicity.

2.1 Employment of Paid Workers

In addition to abiding by all relevant anti-discriminatory legislation and regulations Hull Women's Aid is committed to carrying out the following:

2.1.1. Job description

Every job will have a clear and concise job description setting out precisely what the worker will be expected to do. The job description should include the requirement on the employee to work in a way that promotes the equal opportunities policy.

2.1.2. Person Specification

Every job will have a person specification outlining the minimum essential skills, abilities, knowledge, experience and qualifications necessary to carry out the tasks set out in the

job description. In addition, desirable requirements may be listed where it is genuinely felt that these would assist the undertaking of the duties.

Formal qualifications should not be required unless absolutely essential to the role.

2.1.3. Advertising

All job vacancies will be advertised openly and as widely as possible (e.g. local and national press, via word of mouth and circulars to community organisations) unless there is a redundancy of an existing employee for whom the vacancy is suitable, or there are contractual delivery issues which can be best met by internal recruitment.

Where funding allows, job vacancy adverts will be targeted at members of oppressed groups via specialist press. And existing relevant networks. All advertisements must include an equal opportunities statement. Where appropriate adverts can encourage applications from particular groups within the community. For example, the advert could include a statement saying "Hull Women's Aid particularly welcomes applications from people with disabilities for this post, as they are under-represented in the workforce."

2.1.4. Applications

All applicants will be sent an application form, job description, person specification, copy of the equal opportunities policy statement and any other relevant documents.

Applicants should be informed that CVs will not be considered.

2.1.5. Selection and recruitment

Hull Women's Aid is committed, wherever practicable and within the framework of the law, to achieving and retaining a workforce which reflects the aims of the organisation.

Hull Women's Aid will implement equality practices and procedures in order to ensure that individual workers are treated fairly and that decisions on recruitment and selection are based on objective criteria.

Recruitment methods must avoid informal discussions which may discriminate against certain groups.

Selection procedures should take account of the value of unpaid community and voluntary work and of experience gained in domestic or family work. Throughout the selection procedure the only information about a candidate which should be used should be that contained on the application form, together with information obtained during the interview.

Hull Women's Aid will only ask health-related questions to determine the following:

- whether any reasonable adjustments are needed for the candidate to take part in the recruitment process;

- help to decide whether an applicant can carry out a function that is essential to the job;
- to monitor diversity among people making applications for the job;
- Enable Hull Women's Aid to take positive action to assist disabled people to be selected for interview.

Shortlisting should be carried out by the whole panel (minimum 2 members) on the basis of the essential requirements listed in the person specification.

Prior to the interview the panel should agree questions to be asked, who is to ask which question and how to record notes.

Interviews will always be conducted by recruitment panels who have been advised in interviewing techniques and in the application of the Equal Opportunities Policy.

All questions asked at interview will relate directly to the person specification and job description. All possible efforts will be made to facilitate the employment of any candidate with a disability or additional needs.

The decision on whom to appoint must be agreed by a majority of the interviewers.

Training and support in equal opportunities recruitment and selection procedures is made available to all Board members and staff. In particular, Hull Women's Aid ensures that all those who are involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences. Hull Women's Aid also ensure they have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders, e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act.

At interview, or in a separate discussion, Hull Women's Aid will ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment, or subsequent dismissal.

When recruiting paid staff and volunteers it is important to always follow the processes set out in the organisation's safer recruitment policy. This will ensure potential staff and volunteers are screened for their suitability to work with vulnerable groups including children.

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) helps employers make safer recruitment decisions and prevents unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including children.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service/about>

A person who is barred from working with children or vulnerable adults will be breaking the law if they work or volunteer, or try to work or volunteer with those groups. If Hull women's Aid knowingly employs someone who is barred to work with those groups they will also be breaking the law. If there is an incident where a member of staff or volunteer has to be dismissed because they have harmed a child or vulnerable adult, or would have been if they had not left, Hull women's Aid will notify the DBS.

Recruitment and selection will be on merit by open and fair competition and will be conducted to ensure that no job applicant receives less favourable treatment on any of the grounds laid out in the first section of this Policy. Written records will be kept of the shortlisting, interviews and outcomes for a limited period to provide evidence in case of claims of discrimination.

2.1.6. References

References will be used to support or deny the appointment of a candidate, and not to choose between candidates.

2.1.7. Terms and conditions of employment

Conditions of employment will incorporate good practice on equal opportunities issues as well as adhering to employment legislation. This may require operating flexibly and sensitively to take account of any needs of staff members who have domestic or family responsibilities or who have medical or other personal needs.

Written grievance and disciplinary procedures are not part of the terms and conditions of employment, but staff are consulted before changes are made.

2.1.8. Staff Support and supervision

All staff should receive support, supervision and line management, which should be carried out with due regard to equal opportunities.

Adjustments will be made as needed for staff with a physical, sensory, mental health impairment, or learning disability. All reasonable adaptations will be made to: hours, location of work, work stations and financial or other assistance to enable the carrying out of duties relevant to the post. Referrals to appropriate government schemes of assistance will be made in relevant cases.

2.2.1. The Board

The membership of the Board of Hull Women's Aid shall reflect the diversity of the area and service users that Hull Women's Aid serves. Composition of the Board will be monitored annually, and, if necessary, under-represented groups will be encouraged to make nominations.

Workers, volunteers and management members need to be over 18 years old to be able to take legal responsibility. Therefore we will not accept applications for membership or employment from under 18s

Support and training will be offered to assist individual Board members to participate fully. Support will be provided in the form of meeting out of pocket expenses, making meetings fully accessible and participatory, providing papers in appropriate formats, and providing translation or signing facilities where necessary.

2.3 Service Delivery

Prioritising service provision

Hull Women's Aid aims to provide services to all sections of the community. However, in recognition of the disadvantages and discrimination faced by certain sectors of the community, priority is given to disadvantaged groups. In particular Hull Women's Aid prioritises work with groups who experience discrimination by raising awareness of racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, class, religion, political belief, social class, employment status, low income, mental health, marital status, HIV/AIDS status, appearance, refugee status, caring responsibilities and unrelated criminal conviction.

2.4. Access and Premises

2.4.1 Access to services and information

Hull Women's Aid aims to make all areas of its services (advice, support, training and information) as accessible as possible.

In particular Hull Women's Aid aims to ensure the following:

- that accessible premises are used for training and meetings;
- that travel and carers costs are offered to people attending Hull Women's Aid meetings;
- that signers, loop systems, other aids and interpreters are available on request;
- that information is made available where necessary on tape, in Braille, in large print or in translation;
- that issues of safety, access to venues and timings of meetings are taken into account to address the needs of the diverse sections of the community
- That particular needs (e.g. religious or cultural) or responsibilities (e.g. childcare and other dependants) of people are taken into account.

2.4.2. Premises

Hull Women's Aid current premises are not fully accessible and Hull Women's Aid will continue to make improvements where possible to ensure accessibility for all. Hull Women's Aid aims to ensure that accessible premises are used for training and meetings and are made available for meetings with clients.

2.5. Publicity

In all its publicity and information materials, Hull Women's Aid tries to:

- avoid jargon and use clear, direct language;
- use positive images of a wide range of groups;
- Reach all sections of the community by advertising in a wide range of appropriate publications and locations'.
- target particular groups where appropriate;
- produce materials in a variety of formats (e.g. on tape, in Braille, in large print, or in translation), where requested;
- Proactively visit disadvantaged groups and offer Hull Women's Aid services.

3. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

3.1 Policy Implementation

Hull Women's Aid regards the implementation of its equal opportunities policy as an ongoing process. Responsibility for implementing and monitoring the policy rests with the Board with pro-active support and guidance from the Heads of Service. However, every Board member and employee has a personal responsibility to accept, adhere to and promote this Policy at all times. In Particular, staff are expected to co-operate with measures taken to implement this Policy and take particular care to ensure that

enquiries from groups facing disadvantage are dealt with in a way which, those groups find helpful, relevant and appropriate.

3.2. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation takes place in a variety of ways, including:

- the Board receiving regular reports from its recruitment panels, heads of service
- all staff receiving line management which includes monitoring the equal opportunities aspects of their work;
- major projects managed by Hull Women's Aid are regularly evaluated by means of questionnaires, surveys and other forms of consultation
- specific surveys are carried out from time to time with communities experiencing disadvantages;
- the results of any monitoring and evaluation exercises are fed into priorities for work and future planning.

4. COMPLAINTS UNDER THIS POLICY

4.1. General Complaints from Staff

Any complaints or concerns relating to the ineffective practice, or non-enforcement of this Policy should be raised either informally with team leaders or heads of service, or formal, in which case the steps laid out in Hull Women's Aid' Grievance Procedure should be followed. Staff and Board members are encouraged to draw to the Heads of Service attention any improvements, which may be needed to this Policy or its operation.

4.2 Service Provision

Any individual or group wishing to complain about any aspect of service provision by Hull Women's Aid should follow the procedures outlined in Hull Women's Aid' Complaints Policy.

4.3 Freedom from Victimisation

As far as is reasonably practical, Hull Women's Aid will ensure employees or service users who make a complaint under these procedures are free from victimization

4.4. Procedures for dealing with breaches of the policy

a) In the case of paid staff, a serious breach of this policy may be grounds for disciplinary action.

b) In the case of members (including Board members), a serious breach of this policy may result in termination of membership and removal from the Board, in line with the procedures contained within the Memorandum of Agreement and Articles of Association (which includes calling a Special General Meeting).

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any comments or queries about this policy, or if there is anything in it that you do not understand, or if you would like a copy of it in a different language or format, please speak to a member of staff or contact Michelle Donnelly, Chief Executive Officer, Hull Women's Aid, PO BOX 557, Hull HU5 2YB