

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement of Intent July 2021

Refuge: Statement of Intent for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We are a charity whose core purpose is to promote equality by creating better experiences for women, girls and their families.

We are committed "...to a world where domestic violence and violence against women and girls is not tolerated and where women and children can live in safety" as well as protecting and empowering women and children to rebuild their lives, free from violence and fear. We acknowledge that we must move beyond legislative requirements towards ensuring embedded pro-equality societal best practices throughout our functions for such a world to exist.

With this 'Statement of Intent', we reaffirm our commitment to meaningful change in the way we implement and embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Our Statement serves as our initial step for setting out the framework that will guide us as an organisation as we develop Refuge's long-term Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy which should be in place by the end of 2021/22.

In the last year, we have undertaken significant work by looking inwards as an organisation including, listening to our diverse staff needs and asking questions about our position and purpose in the world and for the communities we serve. Underpinning this work is the creation of an inclusive and fair environment in which the unique and personal experiences of our diverse staff (at all levels), volunteers, service users and other stakeholders are respected, valued and celebrated. *Our focus* is to improve our efficiency, effectiveness, governance, accountability, compliance and inclusivity arrangements for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as well as remove structural inequalities and barriers within Refuge and in society.

Our Commitments

In response to our recently commissioned Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Review and based on lessons learnt, we have committed to:

- **A co-created Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy developed jointly with our staff, volunteers, service users and other stakeholders so that their voices continue to impact the way we deliver our services.** We will demonstrate our strategic commitment by incorporating Equality, Diversity and Inclusion into our organisational strategy and set specific and measurable equality objectives to underpin and enhance our strategic purpose. Our Strategy will contain evidence-based priorities and align with fostering good relations and equitable treatment as well as convey our commitment to tackling structural barriers to equal opportunities and social mobility.
- **Identify and publish specific and measurable organisational Equality Objectives in such a manner that they are accessible to the public so that we continue to be held accountable.** We will have a clear set of inclusive equality priorities that go beyond legal compliance and meet our staff and service users' needs. We will transcend the equality legislation requirements making Equality, Diversity and Inclusion core to all of our functions and embedded in our provisions.
- **Actively challenge and eradicate racism and any form of discrimination from all of our functions and service provisions.** We will proactively take meaningful actions and make critical

decisions to be an anti-racist organisation. We will challenge 'conscious and unconscious' bias and injustice and dutifully work towards their eradication. We will tackle racial inequalities that are not always explicit and often structural by developing a Race Equality Plan. We will enact change across our systems, processes, and functions to tackle race inequality and dismantle systematic racism as well as address any form of discrimination, harassment and bullying.

- **Take appropriate actions to address underrepresentation in our workforce by reflecting the communities we serve.** We will actively work to diversify our workforce, focusing on increasing our disabled, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff members. We will support our diverse staff to reach their full potential by focusing on their career progression, mentoring and coaching them. We will ensure that our employee policies are reviewed and appeal to a diverse workforce and candidates, encouraging people from disabled, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds to apply to senior management roles, where we make key decisions. Our recruitment processes will be fair, accessible and transparent. We will create safe spaces for our staff to be their authentic selves and ensure a broad range of staff and external stakeholders can talk about and represent Refuge when raising the Charity's profile.
- **Empower, provide opportunities for feedback and give agency to our service users.** We will ensure that families that depend on us have accessible and barrier-free services. We acknowledge the complexities of intersectionality, including differences in the backgrounds and life circumstances of our service users and the impact it may have when accessing our services. We will work with survivors to ensure we recognise and respond to their needs and understand the expectations of all the different communities and unique individuals we serve. We will call on service users to participate in meaningful consultations ensuring their voices are fully heard in the development of our equality strategy and priorities. We will build a strong sense of belonging and pride for those experiencing or impacted by domestic violence and create safe spaces for them. Avoiding stereotypes, we will use positive and relatable images to empower survivors of domestic violence, particularly those from marginalised groups such as service users from disabled, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. We will inform our service users of our equality responsibilities and be clear of our expectations, so people of all backgrounds feel valued and able to participate in and contribute to Refuge.
- **Create a shared sense of purpose and understanding of equality matters and be a culturally intelligent organisation through learning and shared experiences.** We will foster a diverse workplace with a culture of inclusion, respect and mutual understanding. We will create opportunities to share experiences of the impact of barriers and inequalities to enhance cultural and equality understanding amongst staff. We will continue to educate and upskill our staff members, aid continuous learning and facilitate open forums on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion matters. We will develop a shared sense of purpose, building trust and positive relationships when engaging with our service users. We will enhance service delivery and staff relationships to create a shared understanding, cooperation and camaraderie on equality matters.
- **Interrogate and improve the quality of our employment and service-users equality data.** We will be accountable and transparent when handling our equality data by publishing these on our website. We will interrogate and analyse our equality data and investigate the intersections between different characteristics. We will learn from the data we gather, including our staff and



service users' experiences. With our data, we will make targeted, fair and evidence-based decisions to set our priorities, including where positive actions are needed, and intersectionality considerations are required when engaging with our staff and providing services to our diverse survivors. We will use our data to check that our employment policies and practices are fair and inclusive and that our services are equitable.

- **Maintain mechanisms for implementing, monitoring, evaluating and reviewing our 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion' related decisions and commitments so that our services and functions remain impactful, relevant and fit for purpose.** We will establish an effective governance structure with accountability at our senior leadership and Board level. We will set up a formal Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group to oversee and monitor our progress as well as work with staff and service users and report to our Senior Leadership Team and our Board of Trustees on our progress.

Reflecting on our context, this Statement of Intent shapes and sets out our commitments as we embark on our equality journey and build on our pledges. Listening to our staff and service users' voices and needs, our leadership team will direct the necessary changes, identify key actions, and the appropriate organisational structure to deliver and monitor our priorities promptly. As we embed the transformative change Refuge is devoted to, we will actively seek our stakeholders' feedback throughout the process.

We will continuously communicate on developments and expect to be held accountable for our progress.

Our Statement of Intent for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion demonstrates and communicates to our staff, service users, and other stakeholders that real change on equality has begun at Refuge.