

SAASSBMK DOCUMENT IDENTITY			
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Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Policy Statement

Sexual Assault and Abuse Support Service Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes (SAASSBMK) is committed to strive for equality in the provision of its services and in the treatment of staff, volunteers, and trustees. SAASSBMK will adhere to all relevant legislation and seek to ensure best practice is followed if possible.

SAASSBMK opposes discrimination against all characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010. There are nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

We believe that everyone has the right to be treated with respect and dignity. SAASSBMK will challenge all forms of discrimination within its service users, staff, volunteers, and trustees and will actively strive to combat all direct or indirect discrimination within the organisation. Should someone behave in a discriminatory way, and the situation cannot be resolved, then the member of the organisation will be asked to leave, or the service user may no longer have access to the organisations services in accordance with relevant legislation and policies.

As per SAASSBMK's Statement of Values, SAASSBMK is an intersectionally feminist organisation that recognises that groups of people are affected differently by the compounded effects of past and continuing inequalities based on sex, gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, faith, age, ethnicity, economic situation and other status. We commit to proactively working towards making services available and accessible to all survivors.

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of trustees, staff, and volunteers. SAASSBMK also expect the co-operation from the service users in this task.

Definitions

Equity: providing full access to all people. This is different to Equality, which means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. Equity acknowledges and removes structural barriers that prevent full participation of some individuals and groups.

Diversity: reflecting and supporting the variations of experience and identity between different people and groups.

Inclusion: ensuring all people feel welcomed and valued. Fostering a sense of belonging.

Forms of discrimination

Discrimination by or against an employee is generally prohibited unless there is a

specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.

Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage.

Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment is dealt with further in our Dignity at Work Policy.

Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment or supported someone else's complaint.

Please see our appendices for particular statements around discrimination.

Employment and Volunteering

SAASSBMK is an equal opportunity employer and is fully committed to the policy of treating all its employees, volunteers, and job applicants equally. SAASSBMK will strive to achieve representation of all sections of the community at all levels within the organisation and within all types of work carried out. This includes the provision of reasonable adjustments where needed throughout recruitment processes. Please see our Recruitment Policy for more information.

In line with SAASSBMK's Recruitment Policy, certain roles within SAASSBMK may be restricted in line with our Statement of Values where there is a Genuine Occupational Requirement, exempt under Schedule 9, Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010. Where roles are restricted (including trustee, staff and volunteer roles), the nature of any restrictions will be made clear in the role advertisement.

Access, planning and delivery of services

Service delivery will be determined at any time by the availability of resources. SAASSBMK will take all reasonable steps to ensure that its services are accessible to all individuals who are experiencing or have experienced any kind of sexual assault or domestic abuse recently or in the past regardless of the protected characteristics listed above.

During initial meetings with service users, SAASSBMK will consider the differing needs of the service users in deciding the way in which services are to be provided in order to reduce barriers to access and respond to and address sensitively those differing needs.

SAASSBMK sets clear guidelines to set out whom each service is for and how it can be accessed. The services and the information about them will be available to any eligible person.

Regardless of any belief a worker at SAASSBMK holds, we expect all staff, volunteers and trustees to be able to work collaboratively, inclusively and without discriminatory conduct. Therefore, it is unacceptable for any workers at SAASSBMK to decline working with a service user because of a protected characteristic or inclusion need, including language and interpretation needs. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion forms a part of SAASSBMK's core training for all staff and volunteers and we encourage all workers to speak with their Line Manager if they have any concerns or require support or additional training.

Premises

SAASSBMK will make every effort to use offices and premises that are accessible to people with disabilities, and, where possible, alterations will be made, and equipment provided. When SAASSBMK is using external venues, it will always seek to use accessible venues and take appropriate transport into consideration.

We will monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they place disabled workers, job applicants or service users at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled people. Where reasonable, we will take steps to improve access for disabled staff, volunteers and service users.

Services may be offered for specific groups of people based on sex or gender in line with the Equality Act 2010, however our offices are based in a mixed gender space and due to demand for our services, we provide a range of support services simultaneously. This means we are unable to guarantee that the entire centre will be restricted to a specific group of people at any time. Please also see our Transgender, Non-Binary and Intersex Inclusion Policy for more information.

Publicity and Promotions

SAASSBMK will take all reasonable steps to use methods, text and images that adhere to the principles of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy, using positive and inclusive messages. Please see our Social Media Policy and Brand Guidelines for more information.

Procedural Guidance

Employment and Volunteering

SAASSBMK will make any reasonable adjustments to overcome any factor which puts a disabled employee, volunteer, or job applicant at a disadvantage. Recruitment packs will include an equality monitoring form that asks for details in relevant areas. The details of the monitoring sheet will be collected and analysed against the profile of individuals employed. SAASSBMK will strive to encourage people from

underrepresented communities to apply for job/volunteer opportunities. Selection will be based on job experience, qualifications and supporting details provided by the applicant.

SAASSBMK will provide adaptations to existing work practise, where reasonably practicable, to enable cultural, physical etc. needs to be met.

Any employee or volunteer who feels that they have been discriminated against in any area is encouraged to discuss this with their Line Manager, or a more senior Manager if this is not appropriate.

Staff, volunteers and trustees have a duty to co-operate to ensure that this policy is effective in ensuring equal opportunities and in preventing discrimination. Anyone who is found to have discriminated against another in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action under the disciplinary procedure. Such behaviour may be treated as gross misconduct and could render the individual liable to summary dismissal. In addition, Line Managers who had knowledge that such discrimination had occurred in their departments but who had taken no action to eliminate it will also be subject to disciplinary action under the disciplinary procedure.

Staff, volunteers and trustees should also bear in mind that they can be held personally liable for any act of unlawful discrimination. Anyone who commits serious acts of harassment may also be guilty of a criminal offence.

Recruitment, Advertising and Selection

The recruitment process will be conducted in such a way as to result in the selection of the most suitable person for the job in terms of relevant experience, abilities, and qualifications. SAASSBMK is committed to applying its equal opportunities policy statement at all stages of recruitment and selection.

Advertisements will encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced people. When advertising job vacancies, to attract applications from all sections of the community, the organisation will, as far as reasonably practicable limit person specifications and job descriptions to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. All job adverts will include an inclusivity statement which specifically encourages applicants from underrepresented groups as well as offering reasonable adjustments throughout the entire recruitment process. These adjustments will continue to be offered to candidates as they progress through the process, including in any onboarding or induction period.

Wherever possible, all applicants will be interviewed by at least two interviewers and all questions asked of the applicants will relate to the requirements of the job. The selection of new staff will be based on the job requirements and the individual's suitability and ability to do, or to train for, the job in question. If you have any questions, please speak to the Hiring Manager.

Terms of Employment

All terms of employment, benefits, facilities, and service will be reviewed from time to time, in order to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, marital or civil partnership status or disability.

We monitor the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, and promotion opportunities. We will ensure requests to alter working hours are dealt with appropriately under our Flexible Working Policy.

Monitoring and evaluation

SAASSBMK welcomes contributions and comments from anyone connected with the organisation who may have ideas on how to enhance the service delivery to different sections of the community we serve.

Service users are encouraged to provide feedback at all stages of their experience with SAASSBMK and will receive a feedback form at the end of their time within any service. Options will be offered to support service users to complete these forms, including face to face, telephone and online. Service users are also provided with an opportunity to opt into hearing from SAASSBMK with opportunities to participate in organised evaluation processes, such as focus groups.

As well as these formal and informal opportunities, service users are made aware in their Service Agreement that our Complaints Policy and Procedure is available via our website, which also includes an anonymous “feedback and suggestions” form to reduce barriers to receiving feedback and to support our commitment to continuous learning and improvement.

All staff, volunteers and trustees are subject to performance management processes which include 1:1 supervision and annual appraisals where their Line Manager will provide continual feedback to support the individual’s professional development in the role. These meetings provide the individuals to provide an opportunity to request further help, support and training as well as the opportunity to provide “upward” feedback to their Line Manager. Employees also receive annual 360° feedback from relevant colleagues and stakeholders to support their learning and development. Please see the Performance Management and Appraisal Policy for more information.

Exiting staff and volunteers will be offered the opportunity to have an exit interview with their Manager, to provide further feedback about their experience of working for SAASSBMK.

SAASSBMK will ensure it has in place systems to collect information about the diversity of its staff, volunteers, and service users and feedback. This information is reported to the Board of Trustees on a quarterly basis and will be used to enhance practice and identify actions.

Appendix A – Anti-Racism Statement

At SAASSBMK, we are unequivocally committed to anti-racism as a core principle of our work. Racism, in all its forms, undermines equality, dignity, and safety, and it is fundamentally incompatible with our mission to support survivors of sexual assault and domestic abuse.

We recognise that racism is both systemic and personal, manifesting in policies, practices, behaviours, and societal norms that disproportionately disadvantage minoritised communities. We also acknowledge that racism intersects with other forms of discrimination, compounding the barriers faced by individuals from marginalised groups.

As part of our commitment to fostering equality, diversity, and inclusion, we will:

Embed Anti-Racism in Organisational Practices:

- Ensure that our policies, procedures, and practices are actively anti-racist, identifying and addressing any biases or inequities.
- Regularly review our services to ensure they meet the needs of all communities, particularly those disproportionately affected by sexual assault and domestic abuse and systemic racism.

Foster a Diverse and Inclusive Workplace:

- Actively recruit and retain staff and volunteers from underrepresented and minoritised racial and ethnic groups, regularly reviewing recruitment practices to reduce bias.
- Provide equitable opportunities for professional development and leadership, ensuring a culture of belonging for all team members.
- Commit to sensitively respond to concerns of racism (including microaggressions) within the workplace so staff and volunteers feel safe and heard.

Provide Anti-Racism Training and Awareness:

- Offer regular, mandatory training for all staff and volunteers on anti-racism, cultural competency, and the impact of intersectionality on survivors of sexual assault and abuse.
- Encourage open conversations and reflection to challenge unconscious bias and foster accountability.

Support Survivors from Minoritised Communities:

- Tailor our services to address the specific and intersectional needs of survivors from minoritised communities, ensuring cultural sensitivity and accessibility. This includes the offer of interpretation support where English is not the survivor's first language.
- Ensure all service users agree to our anti-discrimination stance before accessing group spaces, to ensure these spaces are open and welcoming to all.
- Partner with organisations and leaders from racialised communities to deliver holistic support and advocate for systemic change.

Appendix B – Disability Support

Statistics show that disabled people are more than twice as likely to be impacted sexual assault and domestic abuse than non-disabled people and can face additional barriers in seeking support. We aim to make all of our services as accessible as possible, in both physical accessibility (see above “Premises”) as well as catering for any other access needs, including any requirements around neurodiversity. These needs will be assessed during service user’s initial meetings and will be continually reviewed throughout their time with SAASSBMK.

We encourage any staff, volunteers or trustees to tell us about their conditions so that we can offer support as appropriate. Line Managers are responsible for exploring and implementing any reasonable adjustments required for their staff and volunteers.

Your Line Manager may wish to consult with you and your medical adviser(s) about possible adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs within reason. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable, we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.