

CALL TO ACTION FOR THE VAWG SECTOR ON ANTI-RACISM

This Call to Action is for organisations that work in and with the End Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) sector in England and Wales to unite with renewed commitment and mutual accountability to end racism within our movement.

Anti-racism has always been a fundamental principle of our movement but lacks meaningful action without a shared recognition of where we are, what we stand for and what we need to change. Black and minoritised women have no choice but to recognise racism because it is inherent in their lived experience, but for their white counterparts confronting racism is all too often optional.

During 2020 we have seen the powerful impact of the global call to action by Black Lives Matter (BLM) movements worldwide for racial justice following the murder of George Floyd. In the UK this has led to wide-scale mobilisations and a reinvigorated anti-racism movement that has sharpened the focus on structural and everyday racism. The BLM movement has highlighted the persistence of white supremacy and led to a critical reckoning with the realities of racism within workplaces, communities and wider society.

Within the charity sector and wider social justice movement, Black and minoritised people have challenged how organisations can claim to stand for feminism, equality and justice whilst failing to tackle structural racism within their workplace. The VAWG sector is no exception.

Systemic racism shapes how Black and minoritised women experience violence and abuse, and their access to safety, support and justice. Structural inequality is reproduced within our sector through inequitable funding, unequal power and partnerships, the appropriation of specialist services developed by Black and minoritised women, and continued failures to ensure that Black and minoritised women are treated equally within organisations and represented in leadership and governance structures.

None of these issues are new – they have been repeatedly raised by Black and minoritised women within the VAWG sector over many years. White-led organisations have the opportunity to break this cycle by stepping up to accept their role in reproducing inequality and committing to change, in the spirit of a shared vision and solidarity across all parts of our sector.

This call to action invites all organisations that operate in the VAWG sector to join forces with us and commit to a clear set of anti-racist standards. We hope that the pledges, listed below, will kick-start the work that is needed to end racism in our organisations. In order to provide a starting point, the VAWG Anti-Racism Working Group have produced an accompanying charter, outlining a practical framework for dismantling everyday and structural racism within our workplaces. But it is also a living document that we want organisations who sign up to this call to own and develop alongside us.

OUR VALUES AND PLEDGES

1. Accountability: We will demonstrate our anti-racist values through our actions and through accountability to Black and minoritised women and to the sector as a whole.

2. Fairness: We will work together to ensure truly equitable distribution of funding and resources through a collaborative process that actively ensures meaningful inclusion and challenges funding and commissioning practices that perpetuate exclusion.

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3. Collaboration: We have a genuine commitment to equality and ending power imbalances in our sector, through meaningful and collaborative partnership working.

4. Diversity: Black and minoritised women's organisations have unique expertise, knowledge and experience, and we will be active in recognising their autonomy and ending the appropriation of their work.

5. Representation: Effective and equitable policy, practice and decision-making needs Black and minoritised women, and 'by and for' organisations, to be visible and represented at every stage.

6. Equality: We will scrutinise and change organisational practices that lead to Black and minoritised women being excluded from, treated unequally, silenced or side-lined within white-led organisations.

7. Intersectionality: We will centre an intersectional approach within our work and centre the needs of women facing multiple forms of oppression – including due to race, class, faith, immigration status, disability and sexuality.

8. Inclusivity: We will communicate in a truly inclusive way which enables the full and equal participation of Black and minoritised women and organisations.

OUR VALUES WILL UNDERPIN OUR COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVING THESE ACTIONS:

Centring anti-racism in our work

- Anti-racism will be a core part of our organisation's strategy, and our board will hold accountability for this.
- We will develop a best practice approach to monitoring and reporting on diversity, lived experience and protected characteristics within our organisation, and develop targets to tackle any issues identified.
- We will ensure Black and minoritised staff and volunteers trust, and are confident in, the procedures for reporting and redressing racism within our organisation.

Representative leadership and governance

- Our recruitment and progression approach will be anti-racist - striving to achieve fair representation at every level including leadership, staff, volunteers, interns, consultants and board members.
- Our senior management teams will educate themselves on anti-racism, reflect on white privilege and white supremacy, and provide opportunities for all staff to do so.
- We will actively uphold anti-racist values and practices throughout our work alongside nurturing the contributions from Black and minoritised women within the VAWG sector so that Black and minoritised leadership can grow.

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Ending funding inequality

- We commit to fair and equal partnerships, with Black and minoritised women's organisations, which includes valuing and paying for their expertise. We will make clear to funders and government that we need 'by and for' Black and minoritised women's organisations and demand the end of funding and commissioning processes that perpetuate their inequality.
- We should not compete with, undercut or act in a way that is detrimental to specialist 'by and for' Black and minoritised women's organisations in public funding and commissioning processes.
- We should not subsume 'by and for' Black and minoritised women's services into our organisation, and should not bid for public contracts, projects or services which support Black and minoritised women alone, unless to support a 'by and for' service as part of a partnership.

Disrupting power and influence

- We will address power imbalances within our sector, by sharing space, power and resources with Black and minoritised women's organisations.
- We will work towards ending white silence in tackling racism – recognising how structural inequalities and state racism impact survivors, and standing in solidarity with the challenges that Black and minoritised sisters raise with national and local government.
- We will demand that national and local strategic partnerships, forums or meetings include representation from Black and minoritised women 'by and for' organisations.

We invite organisations to work with us over the next three months, ahead of International Women's Day 2021, to deliver a robust charter for anti-racism, which will carry forward into sustained change across our sector.