

ASSIST Sheffield

Anti Racist Statement (Published Aug 2021)

Annual Review Aug 2022

1. We commit to perpetual reflection at all levels in order to identify actions to tackle structural racism both internally and externally.

Action	<i>"We will continue to support our Anti-Oppression Working Group (AOWG) which has created a space for addressing structural inequalities within ASSIST, ensuring that we are conscious, active, and reflexive in tackling oppression within our organisation."</i>
Achieved this year	<p>The Anti Oppression Working Group has met six times over the last year. The group is made up of ASSIST staff and volunteers. In November 2021 the group reviewed its Terms of Reference and in January 2022 we engaged the services of an external anti racism consultant to review our work to date and to develop our plans for the future.</p> <p>In May 2022 we held an open meeting at which staff and volunteers were encouraged to understand and speak openly about how racism manifests itself in ASSIST, and reflected on interpersonal, institutional, ideological, and internalised aspects of racism. In July, we began a process of planning how to respond to racist incidents.</p>
Plans for next year	<p>We aim to work systematically through all the key actions that were recommended, and adopted by the AOWG, following our external review.</p> <p>We will draw up a plan of action for consulting on and implementing the recommendations.</p> <p>We aim to broaden the membership of the AOWG to include more people of colour and those with lived experience of the asylum system.</p>

Action	<i>"We will commission a programme of training, learning, and reflection, to develop a shared understanding of racism within ASSIST as 'ordinary, systemic, and institutional'. We will also advance a recognition of racism as intersectional, exacerbated by other forms of inequality, including gender, class, migration status, religion, age, and disability. This includes mandatory training for staff, trustees, and volunteers, self-study learning resources, and a public statement on anti-racism which will be revisited on a regular basis."</i>
Achieved this year	<p>We have introduced the mandatory training for all staff, volunteers and trustees with an emphasis on anti racist practice. The specific anti-racist training has been trialled with some groups of volunteers but not rolled out as mandatory yet, due to limited training capacity.</p>

	<p>An anti-racism book club for staff/volunteers/trustees has been established. 8 people initially read and discussed 'Me and White Supremacy' by Layla F Saad. A number of other books and videos have subsequently been discussed.</p> <p>Online self-study learning resources are available to all staff and volunteers. This includes videos such as 'How white fragility reinforces racism' and articles such as '10 things you can do to promote racial justice in the workplace'.</p> <p>We have reported on our website and social media channels about progress towards the targets set in our Anti Racist Statement which was first published in 2021.</p>
Plans for next year	<p>We will expand our library of online self-study resources and promote this regularly to our staff, volunteers and supporters.</p> <p>We will continue to report publicly on our anti racist work every 12 months.</p>

Action	<i>"We will commission an external consultation to check our internal practices and make recommendations."</i>
Achieved this year	<p>As briefly mentioned above, in late 2021 the AOWG sought proposals from external anti-racist consultants to conduct an independent review of our work over the last year and help us draw up plans for developing the group's work further. We appointed Jamie Schearer who works as a freelance trainer and consultant on matters of racism and intersectional forms of discrimination.</p> <p>We met with Jamie in January 2022 and as a result have adopted a number of specific recommendations (listed below) relating to how we can maintain and develop our anti oppressive work.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue the anti-racist working group 2. Schedule regular meetings 3. Rotate facilitation. 4. Allow for unplanned time in the meetings/ use check-in & check-out 5. Create offers of support for staff of Colour thought this process 6. Understand and speak openly about how racism manifests in Assist 7. Define what is anti-racism/ What are you striving for? 8. Create exchange and spaces with the wider team/ organisation and discuss how these perspectives align 9. Create space for discomfort and work with it instead of ignoring it 10. Only then look at locations of change in the organisation 11. Get support on a regular basis from an anti-racism facilitator, offering guidance and direction
Plans for next year	We are now implementing these recommendations and will continue to do so over the next 12 months and beyond.

	We will consider further externally facilitated meetings as required into the future.
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Action	<i>“We will develop and disseminate a clear mechanism for reporting any experiences of racism within the organisation, and to treat such reports seriously and fairly.”</i>
Achieved this year	The Anti Oppression Working Group has convened a series of workshops with staff and volunteers beginning with a session on identifying interpersonal and institutional racism within ASSIST. In the most recent workshop we focus on exploring how we can respond to racist incidents and practices.
Plans for next year	The Anti Oppression Working Group will continue to address the various priorities identified by our external consultant (described above) in particular with the aim of drawing up clear guidance to all clients, volunteers and staff about how to confidentially report incidents of racism and further developing protocols for staff about how such reports should be handled, responded to, and learned from.

2. We commit to ensuring that our services are empowering by taking a client-centred approach.

Action	“We will introduce mechanisms of positive action in our recruitment practices which will encourage people with lived experience of the asylum system to join us as volunteers, staff, and trustees. Their expertise and insight is invaluable for ASSIST and we will always make sure that ‘the door is open’ by actively working to support applications from underrepresented backgrounds.”
Achieved this year	<p>We have worked in partnership with Voluntary Action Sheffield’s New Beginnings Project which supports people seeking asylum and refugees to integrate into Sheffield life, through volunteering, employment, education and mentoring. ASSIST has worked with them as part of our recruitment process this year to share our vacancies through their network of people with lived experience.</p> <p>We also now hold pre-application ‘meet ASSIST’ sessions at our office to encourage potential applicants with lived experience of the asylum system and others to be able to find out more about the role, our organisation and the recruitment process.</p> <p>ASSIST uses a weighted scoring system when shortlisting candidates with lived experience for all staff roles.</p> <p>In November 2021 we began a recruitment process for new trustees. We</p>

	<p>have a target of having 50% of our board made up of people from Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BAMER) backgrounds. We targeted advertising through local partner organisations such as New Beginnings, Sheffield and District African Caribbean Community Association (SADACCA), Faithstar, and City of Sanctuary Sheffield. We were pleased to be able to appoint three new trustees all of whom come from BAMER backgrounds and one of whom is a current ASSIST client.</p>
Plans for next year	<p>We will continue to attempt to remove barriers to people with lived experience of the asylum system joining our organisation as staff, volunteers or trustees.</p> <p>In the next 12 months we will set targets for more diverse recruitment in all areas of our charity.</p> <p>We will be undertaking a further round of trustee recruitment in Autumn 2022 and aim to increase further the diversity of our board.</p>

Action	<p>“We will create and develop stronger partnerships with Sheffield-based organisations led by people of colour and/or people with lived experience of the asylum system. This will include involvement in local advocacy and campaigning where needed, as well as actively listening to local community experiences of the hostile environment within Sheffield. The Leadership Team and Executive Director will agree targets for staff and trustees to link with community groups in their areas of responsibility.”</p>
Achieved this year	<p>We have developed a local volunteering partnership, including organisations led by people of colour which we have used to raise awareness of volunteer and trustee vacancies amongst appropriate communities.</p> <p>We have established a positive action policy on recruitment of new volunteers (in which we apply preferential recruitment to suitable candidates with lived experience of the asylum system or people of colour..</p>
Plans for next year	<p>We will seek additional funding to enable us to appoint a bBAMER Community Engagement Officer to work with minority ethnic groups.</p> <p>We will set targets for specific staff to establish and develop links with appropriate ethnic minority led community organisations in their areas of work (eg volunteer recruitment, events etc).</p>

3. We commit to reflect critically on our role as a charity and create a culture of solidarity.

Action	<p>“We will make a policy commitment to consulting and involving clients in key decisions around the design of ASSIST services, consulting and incorporating feedback from clients and using client well-being calls to consult on priorities.”</p>
Achieved this year	<p>We strive to co-design our services with our clients. In the early part of 2021 we embarked on an extensive client research programme. The aim was to consult ASSIST clients on their opinions of the ASSIST services to inform the reopening of services after lockdown. This process was informed by the idea of ‘Experts by Experience’ - that as people who have experienced the ASSIST services firsthand, they are experts in the service.</p> <p>In 2021 we established an ongoing, permanent, monthly Client Consultation Group (CCG) which is made up of a revolving group of our clients supported by a facilitator.</p> <p>The purposes of CCG include giving feedback on ASSIST’s existing services, contributing to the development of new services, providing input into key decisions affecting ASSIST’s work and acting as a stepping stone towards wider client involvement in ASSIST service design and delivery.</p> <p>This forum provides a much needed opportunity for safe, accessible, anti oppressive dialogue between ASSIST management and governance structures and ASSIST clients.</p> <p>House visitor volunteers feedback on specific day-to-day issues raised by clients in ASSIST houses.</p>
Plans for next year	<p>Seek to expand the recruitment of volunteer interpreters who can undertake phone consultations with clients</p> <p>Maximise the use of the chalkboard in the ASSIST office corridor to seek client responses to questions and identify their preferences./ preferences</p> <p>Introduce an annual survey to gauge residents' feedback and gather suggestions for improvement.</p>

Action	<p>“Inspired by the City of Sanctuary’s Guide to Use of Language, we will be mindful, specific and sensitive in our use of language, to ensure that the terminology we use avoids further dehumanising people seeking sanctuary and that we challenge symbolic violence in wider society. In recognition of the fact that language is constantly evolving, and the appropriateness of different terms are context dependent, regular reflections on terminology will be incorporated into staff, trustee, and volunteer training.”</p>
Achieved this year	<p>In July 2021 ASSIST developed a ‘Guide to the use of Language’ for our staff and volunteers engaged in any form of internal or external communication. ASSIST supports the City of Sanctuary ‘Guide to the use of language’, and this document, tailored to the specific needs of ASSIST is a summary of the main changes that we encourage all staff and volunteers, who produce written communications for ASSIST, to use.</p>
Plans for next year	<p>We will conduct a review of documents and communications to check that the Guide is being applied across our various communication channels. We will ask the Client Consultation Group for their thoughts on the Guide and update it as appropriate.</p>