

ASSIST
Sheffield
Anti-Racist
Statement



“In a racist society,
it is not enough to be
non-racist, we must
be anti-racist.”
Angela Y. Davis



CHALLENGING
ASYLUM
DESTITUTION.

assistsheffield.org.uk

ASSIST Sheffield Anti-Racist Statement

We are committed to being an anti-racist organisation and have developed this statement as a public commitment to fighting racism in our society and in all of our own activities and campaigns.

In combination with our vision ‘for all people seeking asylum in Sheffield to live life with dignity and hope for the future’ and our mission ‘to enable all people seeking asylum with no recourse to public funds to build resilience against the effects of destitution and to make informed decisions about their future’, this document is intended to identify and publicly share concrete actions, in order to ensure we are accountable to them. We recognise as an organisation that we have much to learn, develop, and improve upon, and that this is an open-ended process. Our aim is to put into practice our core values of respect, empowerment, social justice, partnership, empathy, competency, and transparency.

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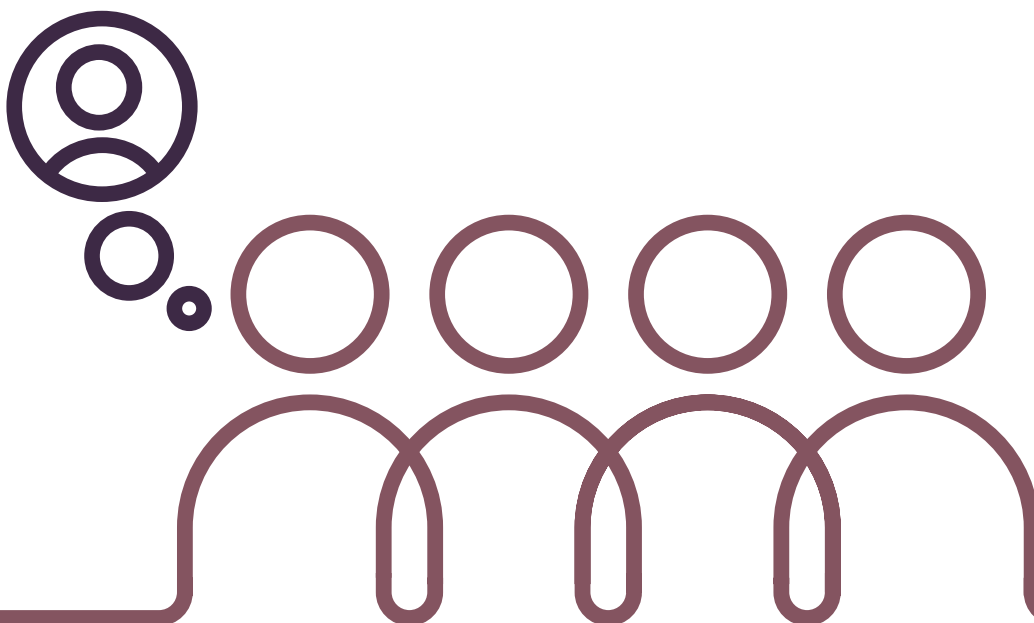
1. We commit to perpetual reflection at all levels in order to identify actions to tackle structural racism both internally and externally.

By continually reflecting on unequal distributions of power and privilege, as individuals and a community, we will ensure repeated re-examinations of our organisational culture. Structural racism is not always obvious or explicit. It exists in our society in a multitude of different forms and can be sustained inadvertently through microaggressions, structures of power and privilege, and ordinary actions.

We acknowledge that ASSIST has been culpable of reinforcing systematic and structural racism, including against individuals. We apologise to the staff and clients who have been subjected to, and impacted by, systemic and structural racism within our organisation. We are committed to learning from this, taking action and making significant change in the organisation.

Actions:

- 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.
- 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.
- We will commission an external consultation to check our internal practices and make recommendations.
- 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.



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

ASSIST Sheffield is currently a majority white organisation working with a client base that is majority people of colour. This divide creates an unequal and disempowering dynamic within ASSIST which must be addressed and repeatedly checked going forwards.

Actions:

- 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 under-represented backgrounds.
- 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.



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

While charitable status allows us to maximise funding and to formally negotiate with businesses and government, we recognise that, as a charity, we inevitably create a relationship of inequality with the people we work with (between a 'giver' and 'receiver' of aid) which is disempowering. We believe strongly in what we do. Our services are vital for assisting people who are destitute and seeking asylum with no recourse to public funds living in a hostile environment.

We are therefore well positioned to lead the way as an anti-racist organisation in Sheffield and the wider refugee solidarity movement, but this commitment to anti-racism must begin with meaningful reflection and action internally, building empowering relationships with clients and one another.

Actions:

- 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.
- 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.



Moving Forwards

We will hold ourselves accountable to the principles and actions outlined above by:

- Annually revisiting the anti-racist statement and publishing progress on these actions with our annual report.
- Including a standing item on the Anti-Oppression Working Group (AOWG) agenda for constant review of the statement, which will feed into a quarterly report to trustees.
- The AOWG will publish a public update every 6 months on progress.
- Inviting external partner organisations to read and support this statement.