

Choice Support

Anti Racism Statement of Intent

We are a national charity formed in 1984, supporting people with autism, learning disabilities and mental health needs.

We recognise that structural racism is deeply rooted within our society and is prevalent everywhere, including within the third sector. We also acknowledge the inequalities it produces for Black people and for those who are from Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

The consequences of structural racism for individuals, families and communities and their traumatic impacts have been all too apparent over the recent months. The Black Lives Matter protests and the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities have highlighted the urgent need to examine more closely what we can do, as individuals, as a team and as an organisation, to tackle racial injustice, prejudice, inequality and unconscious bias.

There is an urgent need for systemic and permanent change, and we are committed to doing our share and to taking actions within our own organisation to bring these about.

We acknowledge that we do not have all the answers. We also acknowledge that we are learning from our staff on how to create a healthy and happy workplace for us all. However, over the last year or so, we have been thinking and working together to bring about meaningful change in the organisation.

These are some of the actions we have taken:

- We are auditing all our policies to ensure that there is no adverse impact on any racial or ethnic groups.
- We provide 'Addressing Racial Inequality' training. This is a series of two modules exploring the uncomfortable truths surrounding racial inequality in the workplace. In creating these two modules, we have taken guidance and received vital support from the Centre for Inclusive Leadership, from Learning Pool's Black employees, and from our Black friends and family.
- We are looking at how we use language. We would all prefer not to be categorised. At Choice Support we understand that language can be divisive and offensive when used without thought and care. We will always attempt to describe individuals in the way they have chosen to define themselves. This will be a conversation we continue to have, but at this point have agreed to use the term 'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic' when describing, as a group, those who may experience racism. So that we are consistent with our external reporting systems who also use Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic or BAME to describe people who are non-White.
- We are providing information and resources on racism.
- We also run a 'Hate Crime' project in Kent. This is in partnership with local schools, University of Kent and the local Police.
- We are drawing on the learning from others who have succeeded in stamping out racism in their organisations or communities and learning from those who have not been able to.
- We have set up an employee network called 'Diverse Voices' for our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff to have a platform, where they can discuss their views and suggest ways to make improvements and for us to become more inclusive.

- We are working on a diversity and inclusion strategy which will be informed by our current discussions to embrace and develop the diversity of our staff and to foster an inclusive environment. An environment where everyone feels that they belong and where they can feel safe and secure.

This set of actions is not exhaustive, nor will it all happen overnight. However, our CEO, Trustees and Directors are committed to driving the change. With guidance from our Diversity and Inclusion Manager, we will learn about what more we can do to make this crucial progress in the organisation.

'We must live our values. We are working for "a world where everyone matters and everyone cares". Our values: care, respect, lead and learn apply equally to how we treat our colleagues and the people that we support. We pride ourselves on being a progressive organisation that stands up for the rights of the people that we support to promote equality, fairness and inclusion. We must ensure that we live these same principles every day within Choice Support to be our very best.' Mark Ferry, Director of HR and Executive Diversity Champion.

Our values have not changed over the years. We are still ambitious, continuing to take bold steps forward to promote the rights of people we support. We value people for who they are, and we expect everyone we support to be respected in society.

Choice Support Group 14 January 2021