



delivering cutting edge services
to end violence against women and children

Equality and Diversity Policy

Purpose and scope

nia, established in 1975 formerly as Hackney Women's Aid, is a feminist, secular, rights based charitable organisation providing a range of support, advisory and advocacy services to women and their children who have been subjected to sexual and domestic violence, including prostitution. The organisation has consistently valued diversity and strived to strengthen its commitment to challenge discrimination and promote equality in recruitment, employment and service delivery through policy and practice.

nia is determined to ensure equality in all its functions – in the delivery of high quality services to all women, girls and children, in our employment practices with staff, volunteers and trustees and in our dealings with funders, stakeholders and supporters.

This policy sets out **nia's** approach to preventing and addressing any allegation or incident or pattern of discrimination whether direct or indirect and providing a service and workplace where diversity is valued and encouraged.

Related policies and procedures

Equality and diversity cuts across everything we do at **nia** among staff, service users, trustees and volunteers; consequently this policy relates to all our policies and procedures, however some of those most directly applicable are highlighted here:

- Code of Conduct
- Complaints
- Health and Safety
- Lone working
- Prioritising Women
- Protection from Abuse
- Staff Handbook
- Survivor Involvement
- Volunteer Policy.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. Terminology

- 1.1** Direct Discrimination: This concerns where an individual is treated worse than another because of their background or certain attributes, including but not limited to those identified as protected characteristics under the Equality Act, unless exemptions apply as provided in the act.
- 1.2** Indirect Discrimination: This concerns situations where a requirement, condition or policy is applied which, in effect, disadvantages, excludes or is otherwise detrimental, or unfavourable, towards individuals because of their background or certain attributes, including but not limited to those identified as protected characteristics under the Equality Act.

2. Aims and principles

- 2.1** **nia** recognises that society discriminates against all women on the grounds of sex and additionally on any of several other grounds: class, age, race including nationality and ethnicity, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religion or belief, disability, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy/maternity.
- 2.2** In addition, **nia** supports women who experience multiple disadvantages resulting in additional barriers to support and often experiencing stigmatising, judgemental and discriminatory treatment. This is often the case for women involved in prostitution, women experiencing homelessness, poverty and destitution, women with no recourse to public funds, women with problematic substance use or mental health issues and women with involvement in the criminal justice system.
- 2.3** **nia** recognises that discrimination can affect every area of a woman's life: access to money, housing, justice, education, training, employment, transport, rights to a family life, rights to freedom of expression, association and movement.
- 2.4** **nia** recognises that achieving equality is not about treating everybody the same but may require the provision of different treatment to achieve an equal outcome because of pre-existing inequality.

3. Relevant Legislation

EU and UK equalities based legislation largely derives from international human rights and equalities standards and this rights based approach informs the work of **nia**.

3.1 United Kingdom

- Equality Act 2010 including the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011

The Equality Act (2010) imposes a duty on all public bodies carrying out, or sub-contracting, public functions to promote equality and eliminate direct and indirect discrimination. The Public Sector Equality Duty consists of a general equality duty, whereby those subject to the equality duty must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to the following three “aims” or “arms”:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
- The Act describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups. It states that compliance with the duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

There are nine protected characteristics covered by the duty:

- Age
- Sex
- Race including nationality and ethnicity
- Gender reassignment
- Sexual orientation
- Religion or belief
- Disability
- Marriage & civil partnership
- Pregnancy & maternity.

3.2 Europe

- The European Convention on Human Rights, 1950
- The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, 2005
- Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, 2007
- The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), 2014.

The UK has not yet ratified this but are signatories. nia supports the UK's ratification of the convention.

3.3 United Nations

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948
- United Nations Refugee Convention, 1951
- United Nations Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, 1962
- International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, 1966
- International Convention on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights, 1966
- United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 1969
- United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 1979

General Recommendation 19 of CEDAW highlights that violence against women “is a form of discrimination that seriously inhibits women’s ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men.” And that gender-based violence, which impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of human rights and fundamental freedoms under general international law or under human rights conventions, is discrimination.

- United Nations Conventions on the Right of the Child, 1989
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006.

PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE

1 Equality in service delivery

- 1.1 nia will challenge all incidents of discriminatory and oppressive behaviour or practice whether by staff, volunteers, trustees, service users or by third parties, stakeholders and outside agencies.
- 1.2 nia will ensure that all service areas are made available to, and accessible by, all women and children approaching the organisation (unless the service is restricted to a specific group).

1.3 **nia** will offer support, advice and advocacy to women and children which is relevant, tailored and appropriate to the specific needs of the individual woman.

1.4 To facilitate equality in service delivery, **nia** will take all appropriate steps – to include, but be not limited to:

- arranging interpretation
- facilitating childcare where possible
- arranging appointments at accessible venues where women feel safe comfortable and at ease
- facilitating appropriate onward referrals to other services and advocating for service users with other services
- providing multiple opportunities and avenues for service user feedback and consultation
- ensuring that we develop and consolidate effective statutory and non-statutory links, partnerships and actions with a broad range of organisations, fora and groups engaged in promoting and upholding equalities issues
- ensuring that we develop and consolidate effective statutory and non-statutory links partnerships and actions with a broad range of organisations.

2. Equality in employment and management

2.1 **nia** aims to recruit the best possible women to provide, manage and administer our services.

2.2 **nia** seeks to ensure that the Board of Trustees, staff and volunteers reflect the range of skills and experience required.

2.3 **nia** believes that our service benefits from diversity, and that this allows the contribution of the broadest possible range of ideas and experiences.

2.4 **nia** develops and upholds policies to challenge all incidents of discriminatory and oppressive behaviour or practice to promote equality in recruitment and employment.

2.5 **nia** is an organisation which promotes equalities principles and reflects and embraces workforce diversity.

2.6 **nia** supports and encourages employees to maximise their full potential as members of a valued and effective team.

2.7 **nia** delivers regular, structured in-house equalities and diversity training to raise awareness and promote individual and team responsibility on equalities issues.

2.8 **nia** ensures regular consultation with employees, volunteers and trustees to review work practices and feed in to **nia's** Strategic Plan.

3. Maintaining standards

3.1 In an effort to prevent discriminatory behaviour, **nia** has a wide range of preventative policies and practices. These include:

- training
- supervision
- reflective practice
- case management meetings
- feedback
- regular review and monitoring of our practice

We also adhere to a wide range of quality standards as well as our own policies and procedures.

3.2 **nia** will treat all allegations of discriminatory behaviour seriously and be prepared to investigate them thoroughly and fairly in line with our policies and procedures and to take appropriate steps to address concerns or behaviours.

3.3 If a service user believes that **nia** staff/volunteers/trustees have failed to adhere to national and organisational standards, policies and practices, they will be directed to **nia's** complaints procedure.

3.4 If an employee, volunteer or trustee believes that another **nia** staff member, volunteer or trustee has failed to adhere to national and organisational standards, policies and practices, they will be directed to **nia's** grievance procedure.

3.5 If a service user or a **nia** volunteer or staff member believe that a third party has behaved in a discriminatory manner towards them, they should inform their line manager who, in consultation with the appropriate Director of Operations, will consider what steps to take to try to report or address such conduct with the third party agency.

3.6 If a staff member, volunteer or trustee believes that a service user has behaved in a discriminatory manner towards them, they should inform their line manager who, in consultation with the appropriate Director of Operations, will investigate the matter and will take any necessary and appropriate action.

3.7 Any investigation or proposed action will pay due regard to the rights and welfare of all parties to the proceedings including the right to have an appropriate third party assisting in any proceedings, the impact of trauma and multiple disadvantage on service users and the power dynamics between the parties.

3.8 Investigations will undertake fact-finding enquiries and rely on available evidence and will ensure that appropriate, fair and supportive measures are taken for the parties involved.

- 3.9** Should a staff member, volunteer or service user feel that **nia** management has failed to take adequate action, the matter will be escalated as outlined in the staff handbook or Complaints Policy.

4. Monitoring and review

- 4.1** All staff must attend equalities and diversity training. Staff, trustees and volunteers cover equality and diversity in their respective induction periods.
- 4.2** Service user feedback from a range of mechanisms will be used to identify equality and diversity issues and to inform steps to take to improve performance in this area.
- 4.3** Regular consultation with staff, volunteers and trustees will input into work to improve performance in equality and diversity issues.
- 4.4** The composition of service users, staff (across the different functions/scales), volunteers, applicants (short-listed and recruited), staff leaving and staff promoted, training participants and the Board of Trustees will be monitored annually. Diversity data will be compared to the targets set in Appendix 1.
- 4.5** Where targets are not met, strategies to address variations in representation will be developed and an annual report outlining the state of play and actions taken or planned will be presented to the board.
- 4.6** **nia** will ensure it remains up-to-date, informed about and acting appropriately upon relevant, current research locally and nationally addressing equalities issues and barriers to accessing services and justice.

5. Roles and responsibilities

- 5.1** The Board of Trustees ensures the policy is regularly reviewed.
- 5.2** The CEO is responsibility for the implementation of the policy.
- 5.3** The senior management team ensures that equality and diversity is a key element in induction and training and on management team agendas.
- 5.4** Line managers ensure teams are addressing equality and diversity in all aspects of their work.
- 5.5** All staff, volunteers and trustees are responsible for ensuring that their conduct and work upholds the principles of the equality and diversity policy.

Race and Ethnicity

nia will set diversity targets on representation of women from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups based on the most recent census data available for London, see below.

nia recognises that BME groups are over represented in people from poorer economic backgrounds and are therefore more likely to require services. **nia** will seek to ensure that representation from does not fall below the average for London. Given the size of the organisation, the diversity of London’s population and **nia’s** commitment to challenging inequality and discrimination, means that there is likely to be an under-representation of staff of white British origin compared to the average population in London. **nia** believes that this will facilitate the delivery of a more equitable and informed service.

The target for BME representation on the Board of Trustees will be two members, or thirty per cent of the Board, whichever figure is highest.

London Population by Ethnic Group (based on figures from 2011 census and rounded)

Ethnic Group	Percentage
White	60
Mixed	5
Asian	18
Black	13
Other	4
	100

Sexuality

According to the London Development Agency and Stonewall, at least five per cent of London residents are lesbians or gay.

nia will therefore set the following targets for lesbians and bisexual women:

- Employees - not less than 5%
- Service users – not less than 5%
- Board of Trustees – 10 per cent or 1 member, whichever figure is highest

nia recognises that lesbians face discrimination in access to employment and services. As an organisation with a commitment to challenging inequality and discrimination, **nia** will view any representation above five per cent as a positive outcome. **nia** believes that this will facilitate the delivery of a more equitable and informed service.

Disability

According to Disabled Living Foundation approximately 20% of women aged 20-59 are registered as disabled.

The Labour Force Survey breaks down three categories of disability:

- Disability Discrimination Act and work limiting disability -62%
- DDA disability only – 20%Work limiting disability only – 18%

Therefore approximately 2 per cent of women aged between 20 and 59 have a DDA recognised disability which should not affect their ability to work.

nia will therefore set the following targets for disability:

- Employees – 2%
- Service users – not less than 20%
- Board of Trustees – 10 per cent or 1 member

	Target for representation	Staff	Service Users
DDA registered		2%	Not less than 20%

nia recognises that disabled people face discrimination in access to employment and services. As an organisation with a commitment to challenging inequality and discrimination, **nia** will view any representation above these targets as a positive outcome.

Age

nia will set diversity targets on representation of women from the range of age groups based on the data available for London from The National Statistics Office, see below.

nia Age Group Targets for employment and service use:

	Target for representation	Staff	Service Users
18-29		32%	32%
30-44		38%	38%
45-59		24%	24%
60-64		6%	6%

Document Control Table

Last Review Date	May 2019
Approved By	Board of Trustees
Issue Date	June 2019
Author	Heather Harvey
Next Review Date (must be less than 3 years from previous version date)	May 2022
What are the key changes to this procedure? (in brief)	Policy has been comprehensively reviewed. Main additions relate to maintaining standards under Procedural Guidance and more detailed reference to relevant legislation.
Amended by	Hasina Ahmed, Rosemarie Cameron, Heather Harvey
Applies to (department areas)	ALL