

**Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LBTI)**

 **Inclusivity plan**

**Introduction**

As a feminist organisation, Shetland Women’s Aid believes that violence against women is both the result of and a contributor to wider social, economic and political inequality of women. We also recognise that some marginalised women experience multiple, intersecting forms of oppression. This can result in significant additional barriers when they seek safety and support.

Shetland Women’s Aid operates with an inclusive, person-centred ethos, offering support to all women, children and young people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. We acknowledge that LBTI women experience high levels of abuse and believe that all women should have access to appropriate, safe and therapeutic support. We take a holistic approach to helping women, children and young people affected by domestic abuse which includes being aware of the issues, needs, challenges and risks for LBTI survivors of abuse. We will provide services sensitively, safely and with regard to confidentiality. LBTI women who access our service are treated with the same dignity and understanding as other clients; and are accepted as they are so they can be heard and understood.

**Synergies with other Policies**

Shetland Women’s Aid are currently writing and updating all our policies. We are ensuring that LBTI women are included in all our policies including Equality and Diversity, Anti-Bullying, Equal Opportunities, Disciplinary/Grievance Procedures and Volunteer Policy. We are affiliated with Scottish Women’s Aid who gives us support and offer guidance and training on these issues.

**Awareness**

Shetland Women’s Aid staff are sensitive, understanding and responsive to individual needs, and adhere strictly to our confidentiality and information sharing agreement, which applies to all clients regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Our service website (currently under development) will include a clear statement that we provide a service for LBTI women, as well as links to other sites, including those which provide transgender support.

Our information leaflet (currently under revision) will include a clear statement of our provision of support to LBTI women.

**Learning**

All staff will undertake transgender awareness training. We provide opportunities for learning and development of our Trustees, staff and volunteers to ensure they are aware of the challenges faced by LBTI women, children and young people affected by domestic abuse to ensure our services are evidence-informed, sensitive and inclusive.

Guidance on our LBTI policies will form part of our induction training for new staff and Trustees.

**Procedure**

Our procedure is guided by paperwork which enables all new clients to discuss their gender identity, acknowledging the additional barriers that can coincide with protected characteristics, including age, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation. We ask open questions which allow clients to disclose things about themselves which may be sensitive and highly personal.

During assessment sessions, clients are introduced to our Working Together Agreement which familiarises them with their rights as a client, which includes being provided with professional and respectful care and listened to in a non-judgemental way.

**Partnership**

We will make links with Shetland LGBT, the first group in Shetland for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. We hope to work in partnership to maximise resources and opportunities for prevention of domestic abuse, to help survivors, for advice on ensuring our policies and practice remain inclusive and to collaborate in efforts to achieve a more inclusive, equal and just community.

We will actively seek the views of women in Scotland’s LBTI communities through consultation, through engagement with organisations of and for LBTI communities, through Scottish Women’s Aid and through involvement of LBTI women in our organisation.

**Challenging**

We will challenge situations where LBTI survivors face discrimination in accessing services intended to promote their safety and recovery from trauma, advocating for them where required and supporting them in self-advocacy where appropriate.

**Championing**

We will nominate a champion for LBTI women within our service who will coordinate training, developing and monitoring work with LBTI women and will act as a point of contact for other organisations.

**Employment**

All our recruitment materials for paid and voluntary posts will state that we are inclusive of LBTI women. We will include this policy, the Equality and Diversity policy and other documents that explain why and how we seek to be inclusive. We will ensure LBTI women who join the team are supported and empowered to contribute in their roles.

**Monitoring**

We will review our performance against steps in this plan, and those related to LBTI inclusion within our strategic and project plans and policies, at least annually.

*Monitoring will include, but not necessarily be limited to:*

We will review and update our communication plans and materials at least annually and address any gaps.

We will seek feedback from partners to explore new opportunities to establish new and improve existing collaboration.

We will continuously review our services and approach to helping women, children and young people affected by domestic abuse to ensure we take account of specific needs, challenges and risks faced by LBTI survivors.

We will reflect on how we have responded to situations where LBTI survivors have faced discrimination or unfairness when accessing services meant to enable their safety and recovery from trauma, to inform improvements in the future.

We will monitor the transfer of learning and the impact on practice of learning and development activities undertaken by our Board, staff and volunteers and continue to explore opportunities for relevant, high quality training to support continuous improvement in practice.

We will review the profile of applicants for paid and voluntary posts and continually consider new options for reaching a wider pool of candidates, including women who are LBTI. We will ensure LBTI women who join the team are supported and empowered to contribute in their roles.

We will continue to look at new ways of incorporating views from LBTI women in the development, delivery and evaluation of our services through engagement with organisations of and for LGBTI+ people, use of research and positive action to involve LBTI women in our organisation.

**Date of Last Review:**

**22/5/21**

**Date of next Review:**

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