



CLAUDIA JONES ORGANISATION

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS WORKPLACE POLICY

Vision and Values

Claudia Jones Organisation was established in 1982. Primarily the organisation supports and empowers women and families of African Caribbean heritage. We aim to provide culturally sensitive services that meet the needs of women and families of African Caribbean heritage.

Our Aim

Our aim is to encourage families to learn and grow together so as to ensure that their educational, health & wellbeing, social and cultural needs are catered for in a positive environment.

We aim to improve education amongst African Caribbean individuals and families.

Lastly, we develop effective collaboration and partnerships which aim to raise awareness about the challenges facing Caribbean women and families and to provide good practice solutions to improve family wellbeing.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS WORKPLACE POLICY

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Aim

Claudia Jones Organisation recognises that anyone can be experiencing forms of violence against women and girls. We therefore will support every employee, Trustee, student or volunteer who is experiencing or has experienced VAWG in an effective, sympathetic and confidential way. This policy covers the approach we will take where there are concerns that an employee may be the perpetrator of VAWG. We are committed to developing a workplace culture that recognises that some employees will be experiencing VAWG and that the workplace should be a place of safety and one that recognises that perpetrators of VAWG are responsible for their behaviour and for addressing this. Through this VAWG policy and working to reduce the risks related to VAWG, we aim to create a safer environment for women who experience violence/abuse, although it does also occur against men in mixed or same sex relationships.

- VAWG is not a 'one off' occurrence but is frequent and persistent, aimed at instilling fear into, and compliance from, the victims/survivors. On average a victim/survivor of VAWG is assaulted 35 times before they report the matter to the police.

This policy is written in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1992), Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (1995) and the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations (1996), Claudia Jones Organisation recognises its legal responsibilities in promoting the welfare and safety of all staff. Therefore, this policy applies to staff across all sites as well as agency and contract staff, Trustees, students on work placements and volunteers.

1. Definition of Violence Against Women and Girls

The United Nations defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (General Assembly Resolution 48/104 [Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993](#)). This can manifest itself as physical, sexual, emotional and economical. Forms of violence also includes Domestic abuse and harmful practices.

1.2 Domestic

Abuse

The UK government's definition of domestic abuse is “**any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence** or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual

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- financial
- emotional

1.3 Harmful Practises

Harmful practices are persistent practices and behaviours that are grounded on discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, age and other grounds as well as multiple and/or intersecting forms of discrimination that often involve violence and cause physical and/or psychological harm or suffering.

(National FGM Centre)

This includes

- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- So called 'Honour-Based' Violence
- Forced Marriage
- Faith-Based Violence

1.4 Controlling

Behaviour

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

1.5 Coercive

Behaviour

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. This definition includes stalking and so called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.

1.6 Other forms of Violence Against Women and Girls that are included in this policy

- Sexual Abuse
- Rape
- Gang-related Violence/Contextual Violence
- Peer on Peer Abuse
- Human Trafficking/Modern Slavery
- Women involved in prostitution
- Historic VAWG

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2. Identification of the problem at work

While it is for the individual themselves to recognise they are a survivor of VAWG, there are signs which may indicate an employee may be a victim/survivor. These may include;

- The member of staff may confide in their colleagues/manager
- Staff may inform their manager that a colleague is suffering from a form of VAWG
- There may be obvious effects of physical abuse
- It may come to light as a result of enquires into a drop in performance or a significant change in behaviour
- It may reveal itself as the background to poor attendance

It is essential to understand that any of the above may arise from a range of circumstances of which VAWG may be one. Line managers should address the issue positively and sympathetically ensuring that the employee is aware that support and assistance can be provided.

Claudia Jones Organisation respects employees' right to privacy. Whilst Claudia Jones Organisation strongly encourages victims/survivors of VAWG to disclose VAWG for the safety of themselves and all those in the workplace, it does not force them to share this information if they do not want to.

3. Confidentiality and right to privacy

Employees who disclose experiencing abuse can be assured that the information they provide is confidential and will not be shared with other members of staff without their permission.

Where VAWG in a same sex relationship is disclosed, due regard will be paid to the double disclosure of confidential information if the individual recipient of abuse is not out at work.

There are, however, some circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured. These occur when there are concerns about children or vulnerable adults or where the employer needs to act to protect the safety of employees. In circumstances where Claudia Jones Organisation has to breach confidentiality, it will seek specialist advice before doing so. If it decides to proceed in breaching confidentiality after having taken advice, it will discuss with the employee why it is doing so and it will seek the employee's agreement where possible. As far as possible, information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis. All records concerning VAWG will be kept strictly confidential. No local records will be kept of absences related to abuse and there will be no adverse impact on the employment records of victims/survivors of abuse. Improper disclosure of information i.e. breaches of confidentiality by any member of staff will be taken seriously and may be subject to disciplinary action.

4. Disclosure of abuse

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An employee, Trustee, student or volunteer experiencing VAWG may choose to disclose, report to or seek support from a union representative, a line manager, or a colleague. Line managers and union representatives will not counsel victims/survivors, but offer information, workplace support, and signpost other organisations. Claudia Jones Organisation will respond sympathetically, confidentially and effectively to any member of staff who discloses that they are experiencing VAWG. A **Trustee** trained in VAWG issues will be nominated as an additional confidential contact for staff. This person will also provide guidance for line managers and union representatives who are approached by staff who are being abused.

5. **Role of colleagues**

Claudia Jones Organisation encourages all employees to report if they suspect a colleague is experiencing or perpetrating abuse. Employees should speak to their line manager about their concerns in confidence. In dealing with a disclosure from a colleague, Claudia Jones Organisation will ensure that the person with concerns is made aware of the existence of this policy.

6. **Support for individuals experiencing VAWG**

Claudia Jones Organisation recognises that developing a life free from abuse is a process not an event and will therefore provide ongoing support for employees who disclose abuse. Claudia Jones Organisation will respond sympathetically, confidentially and effectively to any member of staff who discloses that they are experiencing abuse.

Where abuse has been reported, line managers will treat unplanned absences and temporary poor timekeeping sympathetically.

Line managers may offer employees, Trustees, students or volunteers experiencing abuse a broad range of support. This may include, but is not limited to:

- special paid leave for relevant appointments, including with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments
- temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns
- changes to specific duties, for example to avoid potential contact with an abuser in a customer facing role
- redeployment or relocation
- measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example changing a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls
- using other existing policies, including flexible working
- access to counselling/support services in paid time
- an advance of pay
- access to courses developed to support female survivors of domestic abuse, for example, The Freedom Programme (www.freedomprogramme.co.uk) or assertiveness training.

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Line managers will respect the right of employees, Trustees, students or volunteers to make their own decisions on the course of action at every stage and should avoid being judgmental. It must be recognised that the employee, Trustee, student or volunteer may need some time to decide what to do and may try many different options during this process. Other existing provisions (including occupational health, independent counselling services) will also be signposted to employee, Trustee, student or volunteer as a means of help.

7. **Safety Planning**

Claudia Jones Organisation will prioritise the safety of employees, Trustees, students or volunteers if they make it known that they are experiencing abuse. Line managers may have to consider incidents such as violent partners or ex-partners, family members visiting the workplace, abusive phone calls, intimidation or harassment of an employee by the alleged perpetrator(s), and these will need to be addressed in any safety planning. When an employee, Trustee, student or volunteer discloses abuse, Claudia Jones Organisation will encourage its employee, Trustee, student or volunteer to contact a specialist support agency, this could include Claudia Jones Organisation or an independent Organisation, who can undertake a DASH (domestic abuse, stalking and harassment, and honour based violence risk assessment—and make appropriate referrals where necessary.

Claudia Jones Organisation will work with the employee, Trustee, student or volunteer and a specialist agency (with the employee's consent) to identify what actions can be taken to increase their personal safety as well as address any risks there may be to colleagues, taking into account the duty of care for all employees.

8. **Organisational Planning**

All employees, trustees, students or volunteers will be made aware of this policy through a range of methods including induction, training, appraisal, leaflets and posters. Claudia Jones Organisation will support raising awareness and tackling the issue of VAWG amongst their members. Claudia Jones Organisation will remind staff of the importance of not divulging personal details of other employees, such as addresses, telephone numbers or shift patterns.

9. **Training**

Claudia Jones Organisation is committed to ensuring all line managers are aware of what constitutes VAWG and its implications in the workplace. Information, briefings or awareness-raising sessions will ensure that all managers are able to:

- identify if an employee/Volunteer/Trustee/Student is experiencing difficulties because of VAWG
- respond to disclosure in a sensitive and non-judgmental manner

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- provide initial support – be clear about available workplace support including in-house specialist staff where applicable
- discuss how the organisation can contribute to safety planning

10. Perpetrators of VAWG

VAWG perpetrated by employee, Trustee, student or volunteer will not be condoned under any circumstances nor will it be treated as a purely private matter. Claudia Jones Organisation recognises that it has a role in encouraging and supporting employees, Trustees, students or volunteers to address violent and abusive behaviour of all kinds. If an employee approaches Claudia Jones Organisation about their abusive behaviour, Claudia Jones Organisation will provide information about the services and support available to them, and will encourage the perpetrator to seek support and help from an appropriate source. Claudia Jones Organisation will treat any allegation, disclosure or conviction of a VAWG related offence on a case-by-case basis with the aim of reducing risk and supporting change.

There are four potential strands in the consideration of an allegation:

- a police investigation of a possible criminal offence
- disciplinary action by the employer
- providing specialist, safety-focused counselling
- identifying risk.

An individual cautioned or convicted of a criminal offence may be subject to the organisation's code of conduct policy and procedure. Claudia Jones Organisation also reserves the right to consider the use of this policy, should an employee's activities outside of work (whether or not it leads to a criminal conviction), have an impact on their ability to perform the role for which they are employed and/or be considered to bring the organisation into disrepute.

As Claudia Jones Organisation works with vulnerable Adults and Children, it may be deemed inappropriate for the individual to continue in his/her current role(s). And due to the nature of our work it may not be possible to consider redeployment into an alternative role.

Claudia Jones Organisation views the use of violence and abusive behaviour by an employee, wherever this occurs, as a breach of the organisation's code of conduct for disciplinary purposes.

There may also be circumstances where such behaviour by a regulated professional might indicate a potential risk to patients or service users or bring the profession into disrepute or breach a professional code of conduct.

Where an employee, Trustee, student or volunteer is aware of such misconduct, they should report it to the appropriate regulator. There may also be a mandatory obligation on the regulated professional to self-refer if they receive any police caution or conviction, and for the police to report such action if they are aware an individual is regulated. [NOTE: This is based on requirements for health and social care professionals regulated by the Health and Care

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Professions Council/Social Work England/British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.]

Claudia Jones Organisation's code of conduct is intended to inform all employees, Trustees, students or volunteers, irrespective of grade, of the standards of conduct expected of them. It identifies a set of principles governing behaviour by which staff members are expected to abide. Employee, Trustee, student or volunteer are expected at all times to present high standards of personal integrity and conduct that will not reflect adversely on the organisation and its reputation.

Claudia Jones Organisation is committed to ensuring that:

- allegations will be dealt with fairly and in a way that provides support for the person who is the subject of the allegation or disclosure
- all employees, Trustees, students or volunteers will receive guidance and support
- confidentiality will be maintained, and information restricted only to those who have a need-to-know
- investigations will be thorough and independent
- all cases will be dealt with quickly avoiding unnecessary delays
- all efforts will be made to resolve the matter within four to six weeks, although some cases will take longer because of their nature or complexity. NOTE: This procedure is intended to be safety focused and supportive rather than punitive.

The alleged perpetrator will be:

- treated fairly and honestly
- helped to understand the concerns expressed and processes involved
- kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation and the implications for any disciplinary process
- advised to contact their union or professional organisation.

Any employee who is responsible for giving advice or support to those experiencing VAWG needs to be particularly aware of the potential consequences if they are found to be perpetrators.

If a employees, Trustees, students or volunteers is found to be assisting an abuser in perpetrating the abuse, for example, by giving them access to facilities such as telephones, email or fax machines then they will be seen as having committed a disciplinary offence.

If it becomes evident that an employee, Trustee, student or volunteer has made a malicious allegation that another employee is perpetrating abuse then this will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence and action will be taken.

If the victim/survivor and the perpetrator work in the same organisation In cases where both the victim/survivor and the perpetrator of VAWG work in the organisation, Claudia Jones Organisation will take appropriate action.

In addition to considering disciplinary action against the employee, Trustee, student or volunteer who is perpetrating the abuse, action may need to be taken

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to ensure that the victim/survivor and perpetrator do not come into contact in the workplace. Action may also need to be taken to minimise the potential for the perpetrator to use their position or work resources to find out details about the whereabouts of the victim/survivor. This may include a change of duties for one or both employees or withdrawing the perpetrator's access to certain computer programmes or offices.

However, it is also recognised that in certain circumstances, those experiencing and perpetrating VAWG in a relationship may choose to seek solutions jointly, and in such situations, appropriate support should be given.

Where you can get VAWG support:

If you are in immediate danger please call 999.

For immediate support and information, including access to women's refuge provision and specialist services for minoritised women please contact the freephone 24hour National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0808 2000 247.

For Hackney-based DV support please call the Domestic Abuse Intervention Service duty line on 020 8356 4459/58 or 0800 056 0905 (free from a landline).

For out-of-hours emergency housing in Hackney please call 0208 356 2300 or your local authority emergency housing team

The VAWG policy should be read in conjunction with the Claudia Jones Organisation's Children and Adults Safeguarding policies.

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