

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. Baobab Women's Project C.I.C. (Baobab) aims to promote equality and diversity among volunteers and staff, and seeks to ensure that equality and diversity principles underpin all areas of the organisation's work and services.
- 1.2. Baobab recognises that many people and groups suffer discrimination and face serious barriers when trying to fulfil their true potential. Baobab also recognises that not all forms of unreasonable and unfair discrimination are the subject of legislation. It is the aim of this organisation to take positive steps to redress discrimination, to improve equality of opportunity and to combat any unreasonable or unfair treatment which places people at a disadvantage for any reasons not directly related to their ability to do their job or to their eligibility to receive services from Baobab.
- 1.3. Baobab accepts its responsibility to operate within the terms of the Equality Act 2010 which makes it unlawful to discriminate against people on the basis of the following 'protected characteristics':
 - (a) Sex,
 - (b) Sexual orientation;
 - (c) Marriage or civil partnership;
 - (d) Gender reassignment;
 - (e) Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin);
 - (f) Religion or belief;
 - (g) Age;
 - (h) Disability; and
 - (i) Pregnancy and maternity.
- 1.4. Baobab also accepts its responsibility to operate within the terms of the following legislation which promotes equality of opportunities and fair treatment within employment:
 - (a) Part-time workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000;
 - (b) Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002; and
 - (c) Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- 1.5. However, Baobab also recognises that people may experience discrimination for additional reasons not covered by the law, for example, because of language, immigration status, social, educational and economic reasons.
- 1.6. Baobab recognises that the Equality Act defines different types of unlawful discrimination. Baobab will introduce and implement measures to prevent direct, indirect, associative and perceptive discrimination in its employment practice and also in its service delivery. Baobab recognises its duty as an employer and service provider to make 'reasonable adjustments' to accommodate people's disabilities. Baobab also strives to include asylum seeker and refugee communities who experience many barriers to opportunities and services.
- 1.7. Baobab aims to ensure that its Management Committee, which includes Directors and Steering Group Members will, collectively, have sufficient knowledge and information about people who are migrants and refugees in this country and their experiences so that its activities and services can correspond to their needs. Baobab will always include members of refugee and asylum seeking communities to this effect.
- 1.8. Baobab takes very seriously instances where any service users feel or express that Baobab has not met the values expressed in this statement. Service users in this situation will be given every opportunity to express their concerns and provided with a copy of Baobab's complaints form and procedure.

2. The Scope of the Policy

- 2.1. This policy applies to:
- (a) All staff members employed by Baobab;
 - (b) All members of the Baobab management and volunteers;
 - (c) All aspects of service delivery and work of Baobab; and
 - (d) All organisations. Baobab works in partnership with.
- 2.2. The Directors have ultimate responsibility for the Equality and Diversity policy. It is however the responsibility of the nominated Director to implement, monitor and evaluate the policy in terms of employment practice and service delivery. This Director is also under a duty to ensure that the Directors, and wider steering group is regularly kept informed of the policy's implementation.

3. Policy on Service Delivery

Publicity of the Equality and Diversity Policy

- 3.1. Baobab will publicise its Equality and Diversity Policy on its website.
- 3.2. Baobab will deliver all its services in an accessible manner as much as its resources allow. This means that Baobab will provide interpreters when consulting clients and ensure that its training sessions and any other service delivery take place in an accessible venue. Baobab's main leaflet can be provided in audio tape and other accessible format upon request.

Publicity of services

- 3.3. Baobab will publicise its work in a way that targets its migrant and refugee women and also as wide an audience as possible. Baobab leaflets are displayed and leaflets are available at community and voluntary centres and statutory agencies across the West Midlands. Where possible, Baobab will conduct information sessions on an outreach basis to ensure it reaches relevant organisations that are not linked into mainstream service providers' networks. Baobab will also publicise its work on its website at www.baobabwomensproject.net and through partner networks.

Monitoring service users and types of enquiries

- 3.4. Baobab will regularly monitor the profile of women we assist and its effectiveness using its work database, statistical analysis, questionnaire, observations and case studies. This information will be used by the staff members and the Management Committee when reviewing and monitoring Baobab's service delivery, as well as developing and planning its future strategy to improve its effectiveness. Baobab will use this information to inform its policy development work. The information will also be shared with other stakeholders of Baobab, the funders and Baobab members on a regular basis without breaching client confidentiality.

Consultation with beneficiaries about services

- 3.5. Baobab will consult its beneficiaries so that it can find out if it is successful in delivering its services and making a positive difference as a result of its work. The result of these consultations are vital in shaping the way Baobab will work in the future.
- 3.6. Baobab will consult its beneficiaries of the advocacy service primarily through client feedback sessions quarterly. Baobab will also follow this up with an in-depth case study interview where resources allow, and where clients have given permission for this.
- 3.7. Baobab will ask partner organisations to complete a feedback questionnaire once a year or when appropriate. Representatives from these organisations who attend Baobab's training sessions are also asked to complete feedback forms.

Referral and signposting arrangements

- 3.8. Baobab offers specialist services in the field of women, immigration support, health, subsistence and housing issues. This may not cover all the areas of concern that Baobab's service users might be faced with. When this happens, Baobab will refer or signpost service users to other organisations and service providers who can meet their needs better. Baobab will maintain a list of local and national agencies to which service users can be referred, prioritising quality services, based on women's feedback and experiences. Baobab will make a referral only with the consent of the service user.

Campaign/Social Policy/Lobbying work

- 3.9. Baobab believes that all migrant and refugee women have a right to competent, free advice and representation on immigration support, health, subsistence and housing issues. Baobab also believes that their legal rights to food and shelter must be defended. Therefore, Baobab will use anonymised versions of the information it gathers from its service users to lobby for a change and raise awareness of the negative impact of current legislation, policies and procedures on migrant and refugee community organisations and other organisations that support them. Baobab will also try to influence current practice by participating in user meetings and other interagency forums where possible.

Challenging discriminatory behaviour

- 3.10. Baobab is committed to opposing any discrimination and it expects the same commitment to anti-discriminatory practice from all its members and beneficiaries. Baobab staff and volunteers will challenge discriminatory comments or attitudes in an appropriate way, bearing in mind the vulnerability of some beneficiaries.
- 3.11. If the matter is not resolved, they should report it to the Director who will consider the issue and take appropriate action, including raising the issue with the person involved first verbally, then in writing.

Right to withdraw service

- 3.12. If the matter is not resolved by the Director, Baobab reserves the right to withdraw the service. If the beneficiary is not happy with the Director's decision, they should follow Baobab's complaints procedures.

How service users make complaints

- 3.13. If the service users feel that they were treated by Baobab in a discriminatory manner and wish to complain, they will be given a copy of Baobab's complaints form and procedure. There will be an annual review of all complaints by the Director to be reported to the Management Committee to consider any areas for improvement in the service.

4. Policy on Employment

- 4.1. Baobab aims to promote equality and diversity as an employer and to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable within the context of the policy. This policy should be read in conjunction with the recruitment and selection policy.

Forms of Discrimination

- 4.2. Discrimination by or against an employee is generally prohibited unless there is a specific legal exemption. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

- 4.3. Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one or more of the protected characteristics set out above. For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because they would not "fit in" would be direct discrimination.
- 4.4. Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that also puts other people with the same protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. For example, a requirement to work full time puts women at a particular disadvantage because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement will need to be objectively justified.
- 4.5. Harassment related to any of the protected characteristics is prohibited. Harassment is unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.
- 4.6. Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination or harassment, or supported someone else's complaint.

5. Conditions of Service

Working hours

- 5.1. Baobab's normal working hours are from 10am to 6pm, our core drop in hours are 11am - 3pm. However, Baobab offers flexible including part-time working hours for those volunteers and employees with a disability, health needs and/or caring responsibilities. When making this decision, both the individual circumstances of the women and the needs of the organisation must be taken into consideration by the Management Committee.

Leave (dependants, paternity, adoption, religious holidays)

- 5.2. Baobab will be as flexible as possible and take into account each individual volunteer or employee's needs, such as religious affiliation, disability, caring responsibility and ill health when considering special leave or unpaid leave (staff only).
- 5.3. When such leave is requested, the Management Committee will provide clear reasons for accepting or rejecting the request and this information will be kept for future reference. Please refer to the leave procedure and sickness and absence policy for more information.

Commitment to implementing Baobab's Equality and Diversity Policy as a condition of employment

- 5.4. Baobab regards discrimination, harassment, abuse and victimisation as a disciplinary offence. It expects all its staff and volunteer members to comply with Baobab's Equality and Diversity Policy. Therefore, job descriptions will clearly state that abiding by this Equality and Diversity Policy is one of the responsibilities of the job.

Redundancies

- 5.5. Baobab will aim to maintain and enhance the financial sustainability of the organisation which will safeguard the employment of Baobab employees. However when changes in funding, service or organisational requirements affect staffing, various preventive measures might be considered in order to avoid redundancies.
- 5.6. When implementing these preventive measures and also, where necessary, redundancies, Baobab will ensure fairness and consultation when selecting staff for these preventive measures or redundancy in accordance with the Equality and Diversity Policy.

Staff development and training

- 5.7. Baobab will ensure that all its employees, volunteers and the directors members have equal access to opportunities for on-going personal development and training in accordance with this Equality and Diversity Policy. Baobab will also aim to obtain enough resources, both financial and expertise, to achieve this aim.
- 5.8. At the start of their volunteering or employment, all new volunteers or employees are given a comprehensive induction. They will be provided with regular support and supervision by the designated supervisor with appropriate experience and knowledge in relevant areas of expertise of the post holder's work.
- 5.9. Through this support and supervision mechanism, all volunteers or employees will have opportunities to identify their own training needs, access to training, and receive support in areas of work in which they need guidance and advice so that they can develop and perform their duties to the best of their abilities.
- 5.10. All Directors and steering group members will also receive a comprehensive induction to the management committee.

Positive action

- 5.11. If, after continuous Equal Opportunities monitoring, it is found that a particular group of people are excluded from the volunteer or staff pool, the Management Committee will consider taking positive action to redress the imbalance. This might result in publicising job adverts in specific publications to attract minority groups or providing access to more training for those applicants from minority backgrounds where resources are available.

Equal Opportunities awareness for staff and the management committee

- 5.12. Baobab will ensure that all new staff members, volunteers, directors and steering group members are introduced to its Equality and Diversity Policy during their initial induction period. Equal Opportunities / Diversity Training will be provided where resources are available.

6. Management Committee

- 6.1. Baobab will conduct regular skills audits and monitor membership of the Directors and Steering Group members to ensure that the diversity of the Management Committee reflects the needs and experiences of Baobab's beneficiaries, migrant and refugee women, who are undocumented and documented.
- 6.2. Where possible, vacancies on the Management Committee will be advertised through the existing network of women's refugee and other community organisations so that their views and opinions can be reflected in the governance of Baobab.

7. Developing, implementing, monitoring and reviewing Equal Opportunities

- 7.1. It is the responsibility of the Management Committee to develop, implement, monitor and review Equal Opportunities at Baobab. Baobab's volunteers and staff members will assist the Management Committee in carrying out this responsibility.

New projects and service development

- 7.2. In its process for formulating strategic and delivery plans, the Management Committee will consider what practical implications there might be for, and ensure that all work adheres to, this Equality and Diversity Policy. This includes any implications in terms of resources needed to carry out Baobab's plans.

Implementation

- 7.3. The Management Committee will ensure Equal Opportunities are adhered to in all aspects of Baobab's activities, including service delivery and employment through annual monitoring and reviewing.
- 7.4. Sub-committees may be set up to develop action plans based on this policy. Baobab's volunteers and staff members are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of this policy.
- 7.5. The Management Committee will also ensure that all Baobab practice and procedure is undertaken strictly in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

How do we monitor and review Equal Opportunities?

- 7.6. If as a result of monitoring and reviewing, the Management Committee is not satisfied that the Equality and Diversity Policy is being adhered to within the organisation, they will appoint a sub-committee who will take the following steps to ensure that Baobab achieves greater equality:
 - (a) Devise and advise on organisational priorities;
 - (b) Make recommendations to the Management Committee;
 - (c) Oversee the work and pursue the recommendations of the Management Committee;
 - (d) Oversee priorities and performance of the organisation as a whole; and
 - (e) Report back to the Management Committee.

Distributing and Reviewing the Policy

- 7.7. This policy should be circulated to all Baobab employees, members of the Management Committee and volunteers.
- 7.8. This policy will be reviewed annually by the Directors.

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