

# **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy**

## **Commitment to Equality and Inclusion**

Kent Sexual assault and Abuse Services (KSAAS) acknowledges the systemic inequalities that shape our society. We are resolutely committed to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality, and fostering inclusive environments—both within our services and across the wider sector.

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## **Values-Driven Practice**

Our service delivery and employment practices are rooted in gender equality, human rights, and anti-discrimination. We champion equal opportunity and personal freedom, and we strive to engage with every individual in a respectful, non-prejudiced, and affirming manner.

KSAAS focus on preventing all forms of violence and discrimination against all genders and will strive to.

- Protect and promote human rights in our service provision
  - Encourage equality of opportunity, diversity, inclusion and dignity
  - Eliminate discrimination
  - Foster positive relations between groups
  - Aim to create a culture that values and respects other's differences
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## **Substantive Equality**

KSAAS recognises the importance of striving for substantive equality—ensuring that outcomes reflect the distinct needs, experiences, and circumstances of each person.

We tailor our approaches to achieve meaningful, equitable impact.

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## **Legal Framework & Protected Characteristics**

KSAAS upholds the Equality Act 2010 and actively protects individuals from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation based on the following nine protected characteristics:

<b>Protected Characteristic</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Age</b>	Including all age groups, with attention to age-specific needs and barriers
<b>Disability</b>	Including physical, mental, sensory, and neurodivergent conditions
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	Including trans and non-binary identities and transition-related needs
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	Respecting all legal relationship statuses
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Including pregnancy, childbirth, and postnatal care
<b>Race</b>	Including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins
<b>Religion or belief</b>	Including all faiths, spiritual practices, and non-belief
<b>Sex</b>	Protecting against sex-based discrimination and ensuring gender equity
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Including lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and other identities

We recognise that survivors may experience compounded discrimination and trauma at the intersections of these characteristics. Our practice is therefore intersectional, trauma-informed, and tailored to individual needs.

KSAAS are committed to the following.

- All employees, trustees, and volunteers must uphold and support the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy (EDI) policy.
- Ensuring our services meet the needs of all service users.
- Review and update this policy, especially considering any new legislations.
- Understanding procedures that enable staff and service users to make a complaint if they feel they have been unfairly treated.

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### **KSAAS’s Commitment to Women-Only Services Under the Equality Act 2010**

The Equality Act 2010 acknowledges that certain groups—such as women—face disadvantage due to historic and ongoing discrimination and exclusion.

In response, the Act empowers organisations like KSAAS to take proportionate steps to address these inequalities, meet distinct needs, and promote equitable participation. Whilst we support all genders, KSAAS endeavours to provide safe women-only and girl-only services where this approach is demonstrably the most effective way to deliver support, or where the service is specifically required by one sex.

These services are lawful, appropriate, and rooted in the recognition that individuals often need access to safe, separate, and non-judgmental spaces to heal, recover, and thrive.

KSAAS is committed to protecting and nurturing these spaces.

Our women-only services are inclusive of all women and girls, including trans women, non-binary individuals assigned female at birth (AFAB), and those who have experienced oppression as women and feel safe and supported in services delivered by women, for women.

We honour the diverse experiences of our service users and uphold their right to access support that is trauma-informed, survivor-led, and emotionally safe.

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### **Accessibility Commitments**

- Services are designed to be flexible, confidential, and inclusive.
  - KSAAS uses equalities data to identify gaps and plan outreach.
  - Strategic plans include funding for accessibility measures like interpretation, travel support, and inclusive publicity.
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### **KSAAS commitment to Employment Practices**

- Fair treatment across recruitment, promotion, training, and employment terms.
  - Zero tolerance for bullying, harassment, or victimisation.
  - Regular monitoring of practices to prevent hidden or indirect discrimination.
  - Targeted recruitment to address underrepresentation.
  - Monitor and review this policy regularly and in line with new legislations
  - Ensure all staff attend EDI training and updates
  - Having clear grievance procedures for staff who feel they have been unfairly treated
  - Treating serious breaches of these policy/incidents of harassment as gross misconduct and considering any allegations of discrimination that are not made in good faith to be a disciplinary matter.
  - Taking disciplinary action against staff found to have committed an act of unlawful discrimination
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### **Recruitment and Selection: KSAAS Principles**

KSAAS is committed to fair, inclusive, and values-driven recruitment and selection.

**The following principles guide all hiring processes:**

- **Capability-Based Assessment** -Candidates will be assessed solely on their ability to perform the role, with no assumptions made about who can or cannot do the work.
- **Core Values Embedded in Every Role** - A demonstrable understanding of intersectionality and a commitment to equality and anti-oppressive practice are essential criteria for all positions. Interviews will include questions exploring these areas.

- **Inclusive Criteria** -Qualifications or requirements that may unintentionally discourage applications from underrepresented groups will only be retained if they are demonstrably necessary for the role.
- **Age-Neutral Approach** -Age limits will only be applied where they are objectively justified by the nature of the role.
- **Equitable Outreach** -Recruitment will not rely solely on word-of-mouth methods that may exclude certain groups. Targeted outreach will be used to address underrepresentation, including through partner agencies, support networks, and regional newsletters.
- **Fair Testing** - Selection tests will be directly relevant to the role and designed to assess actual or trainable ability. These tests will be regularly reviewed to ensure they are free from bias in both content and scoring.
- **Consistent Processing** -All applications will be handled consistently, with written records of interviews and decisions maintained in line with data protection best practice.
- **Objective Interviewing** -Interview questions will relate directly to the role. Where personal circumstances may impact job performance, these will be explored objectively and without reliance on stereotypes.
- **Reasonable Adjustments** -Where recruitment arrangements place disabled applicants at a substantial disadvantage, KSAAS will make reasonable adjustments to eliminate or reduce that disadvantage wherever practicable.
- **Policy Adherence** -No recruitment or selection decisions should be made by individuals who have not read and understood this policy.
- **Targeted Representation** - KSAAS will actively pursue recruitment strategies that promote workforce diversity, including inviting members of underrepresented communities to participate in interview panels.
- **Fair Consideration of Offending Backgrounds** - KSAAS will not discriminate against applicants based on offending history, except where there is a known safeguarding risk to children or vulnerable adults.

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### **Promotion, Transfer and Training: KSAAS Principles**

KSAAS is committed to ensuring that all staff have fair and equitable access to career progression, role mobility, and professional development. Our approach is guided by anti-oppressive practice, inclusive governance, and continuous reflection. **The following principles apply:**

- **Fair and Inclusive Assessment** - All criteria used for promotion, transfer, and training will be reviewed to ensure they are free from direct or indirect discrimination. Appraisal schemes will be regularly monitored to identify and address any patterns of exclusion or imbalance.

- **Equity in Access** - If promotion or development opportunities disproportionately benefit one group of staff, we will investigate and address any underlying structural or procedural barriers.
  - **Career Development Monitoring** - Patterns of advancement will be tracked to ensure that no group is unreasonably excluded from progression or development pathways.
  - **Review of Traditional Requirements** - Criteria such as length of service or age will be critically examined. These will only be retained where they are demonstrably relevant and reasonable in the context of the role or opportunity.
  - **Balanced Training Opportunities** - Access to training, day release, and personal development will be distributed equitably. Any imbalance must be justifiable and proportionate to operational needs.
  - **Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Staff** - Where our arrangements place disabled staff at a substantial disadvantage, CRCC will make reasonable adjustments to remove or reduce that disadvantage wherever practicable.
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### **Terms of Employment, Benefits, Facilities and Services**

KSAAS is committed to ensuring that all employment terms and workplace provisions are fair, inclusive, and free from discrimination.

#### **The following principles guide our approach:**

- **Equity in Provision** - All terms of employment, benefits, facilities, and services will be regularly reviewed to ensure they are delivered in a way that upholds equality and avoids unlawful discrimination.
  - **Fair Treatment of Part-Time Staff** - Part-time workers will receive pay, benefits, and access to facilities and services on a pro rata basis compared to full-time colleagues, unless a different approach is objectively justified.
  - **Accessibility and Adjustment** - Where any aspect of employment arrangements places disabled staff at a substantial disadvantage due to a reason connected with their disability, KSAAS will make reasonable adjustments to remove or reduce that disadvantage wherever practicable.
  - **Monitoring Pay and Reward Structures** - Pay, bonus criteria, and related policies will be carefully examined and monitored. If patterns of disadvantage emerge for any group, we will investigate and address any hidden or indirect discrimination.
  - **Support for Gender Reassignment** - Employment terms for staff who are undergoing, have undergone, or intend to undergo gender reassignment—whether physiological or otherwise—are outlined in KSAAS’s Trans Inclusion Policy. These terms are designed to ensure dignity, privacy, and equitable treatment throughout the process.
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### **Grievances, Disciplinary Procedures, Dismissals and Redundancies**

KSAAS is committed to fostering a workplace culture where concerns can be raised safely, and all employment decisions are made fairly and without discrimination.

- **Protection for Raising Concerns** - Any worker who raises a grievance in good faith—or supports another in doing so—particularly in relation to equal opportunities, will not face disciplinary action, dismissal, or victimisation as a result.
  - **Fair and Consistent Standards** - No employee will be subject to disciplinary action or dismissal for conduct or performance that would be overlooked or accepted in another group, unless there is a clear, lawful, and proportionate justification.
  - **Equitable Redundancy Practices** - Redundancy criteria and procedures will be regularly reviewed to ensure they do not result in unlawful discrimination. Voluntary redundancy benefits will be made equally available to all eligible staff, unless there is a legitimate and lawful reason to do otherwise.
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## **Harassment**

KSAAS maintains a zero-tolerance approach to harassment in all its forms. KSAAS are committed to creating a working environment that is respectful, inclusive, and emotionally safe.

- **Definition and Impact** - Harassment is any unwanted behaviour that causes offence, distress, or discomfort to the recipient. It may be directed at an individual or witnessed by others and can occur as a single serious incident or through repeated actions.
- **Distinguishing Harassment from Friendly Conduct** -The key distinction lies in the recipient's experience—harassment is unwelcome and non-mutual, regardless of intent.

### **Grounds for Harassment May Include:**

- Actual or perceived race, sex, colour, religion or belief, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, or disability
- Power dynamics or hierarchical status
- Advocacy against harassment (including victimisation)
- Trade union membership or non-membership
- Health status, including links to AIDS/HIV
- Criminal record or status as an ex-offender
- Physical characteristics

### **Examples of Harassment can Include:**

- Unwanted physical contact
- Offensive jokes, language, gossip, or slander
- Sectarian songs, letters, posters, graffiti, gestures, emblems, or flags
- Inappropriate digital content (e.g. emails, screen savers)
- Social exclusion or deliberate non-cooperation
- Coercion for sexual favours
- Pressure to join political or religious groups
- Intrusive behaviour such as pestering, spying, or stalking

Harassment is unlawful in many instances, and individuals may be held personally accountable.

All complaints will be addressed in line with KSAAS's Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy, ensuring a trauma-informed and survivor-sensitive response.

