

Culture of Care and Accountability Policies

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Next review: July 2024

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About

This policy is adapted from **LEVEL UP UK's Care and Accountability Policy** retrieved from the **RadHr Library September 2023**; <https://radhr.org/policy/level-up-culture-of-care-accountability/>

- All not/nowhere policies are ongoing processes that are updated and reviewed regularly.
- The editing process of these policies was a collective endeavour in which all coop members were able to give feedback, seek clarification and make suggestions. Our board of trustees was also involved in the feedback process.
- We worked with external policy consultants to support this work. In Jan 2024 we will be receiving training from People's Support Coop to deepen our policy implementation practices.
- All members of not/nowhere are allocated paid time to read these policies and ask questions about them as part of their onboarding process to the coop.
- All not/nowhere workers are offered training opportunities on accessibility. As a co-op we are invested in building a culture that promotes access intimacy. In summer 2023 we had an internal Access Intimacy workshop that foregrounded the development of this policy.

Policy

The revolution is relational, and the ways that we relate to each other at not/nowhere are everyday opportunities to nurture a more loving, and less oppressive, world into existence. We have high expectations of how we behave towards one another – and we hold each other accountable to those expectations.

This policy has two sides: the culture of care that we are proactively building, and the culture of accountability that is reactively implemented.

This policy is inspired by the visionary praxis of Good Night Out Campaign, Sisters Uncut, adrienne maree brown and Mia Mingus.

Care

The Care Manifesto by The Care Collective describes care as *“our individual and common ability to provide the political, social, material and emotional conditions that allow the vast majority of people and living creatures on this planet to thrive – along with the planet itself”*.

We have adapted this definition to describe care at not/nowhere as: our individual and collective ability to provide material, educational, social and political conditions that enables and empowers the workers of not/nowhere to thrive while working towards the organisation’s [vision](#). We also work to avoid causing harm, however when harm occurs it must be addressed and resolved collectively.

Accountability

Accountability Agreement

We communicate in an open, honest way. We don’t let problems build up – we name our discomforts. We don’t judge. When people share experiences, we will support and believe them. We accept that others’ lives and histories may be different to our own. We stay mindful of how much space we take up and of how we act or speak might affect the people around us.

Let’s be ready to own how we act and how we speak. This is accountability. When challenged, each of us should be ready to take on board other’s points of view, be responsible for our actions, and ready to make amends in the ways that are asked of us.

What is accountability?

In feminist organising, as in all relationships (friendships, families, communities and workplaces) we are likely to harm each other. Everyone has the ability to cause harm and be harmed, and whether that harm is intentional or not, accountability means it is everyone’s responsibility to engage in strategies to create safety, justice, reparations and healing. This is how we keep ourselves and our communities safe.

Accountability is a key part of Transformative Justice;: an alternative to legal, state and criminal justice frameworks which are based on punishment and create further harm. The intention behind accountability is not one of shame, guilt or punishment – but one of growth, learning and care. We

don't just want to respond to harm – we want to change the conditions that enabled that harm to take place.

Who are we accountable to?

Organisationally, we are accountable to our mission, vision and values. We are also accountable to funders in regards to reporting on grants. We are not accountable to politicians, the media or corporations.

Interpersonally, we are accountable to ourselves, each other, the Board of Trustees, and not/nowhere community of supporters and its members.

What is harm?

We are guided by adrienne maree brown's definition of harm:

“the suffering, loss, pain and impact that can occur both in conflict and in instances of abuse, as well as in misunderstandings steeped in differences of life experience, opinion or needs. Harm needs healing.”

If you have acted or spoken harmfully, even if unintentionally, someone will bring this up with you. If this happens, listen and reflect on what is being said – even if you think they may be wrong, do not respond with defensiveness. Listening and connecting is the first step to remedying harm.

Within feminist organising, no one can be left behind. Some of us experience different intersecting oppressions, which can be exhausting and painful. We are building a community that recognises and challenges the oppressions that some of us are harmed by and some of us benefit from.

Transformative Justice

The concept of accountability is rooted in the values of transformative justice. Transformative justice, as defined by Mia Mingus, is:

“a political framework and approach for responding to violence, harm and abuse. At its most basic, it seeks to respond to violence without creating more violence and/or engaging in harm reduction to lessen the violence.”

“TJ is not simply the absence of the state and violence, but the *presence* of the values, practices, relationships and world that we want. It is not only identifying what we don't want, but proactively practising and putting in place things we want, such as healthy relationships, good communication skills, skills to de-escalate active or “live” harm and violence in the moment, learning how to express our anger in ways that are not destructive, incorporating healing into our everyday lives.”

This statement from DIY Space For London, defines what practising accountability looks like, as informed by Transformative Justice:

- acknowledge and validate the hurt and harm caused
- start by listening to the person who has been hurt and prioritising their needs

- enact consequences for the person who caused harm and provide opportunities for them to learn and change
- help address the root cause of why this has happened whilst recognising that we cannot fix everything!

Whilst it is important for consequences to be enacted, at varying degrees, for someone who has caused harm, it's important that further harm is not caused. Clear boundaries are needed in this work – and as part of a culture of care, we refrain from gossip or any other individual behaviour that can contribute to fearful group dynamics.

Accountability procedure

This infrastructure is in place with an awareness that, when you have been harmed, you are likely to be in a highly emotive and possibly reactive state. Remember that this structure is here to hold us all accountable to a transformative justice framework that does not perpetuate punitive norms of exclusion, shame, destruction and guilt.

If you are called on to apologise for your behaviour, remember that apologies must be firmly grounded in acknowledging the harmful behaviours – not excusing, explaining or focusing on the emotional response of the person you've harmed. Use the analogy of stepping on someone's foot to remind you: if someone is in pain due to your actions, even if accidental, do not dismiss their pain. Apologise for your action.

Levels of consequence

Level 1 – check in	Chat
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	<p>A check-in is the lowest level of intervention possible. Checking in can be used when a person causes harm through the use of language that oppresses or hurts others. Checking in is a way to reach out to a person to let them know they've caused harm — and to remind them to be mindful of our principles and values at not/nowhere. Hold your ground in communicating what you need to. You may find the BIFF structure helpful:</p> <p>Behaviour – specific description of harmful behaviour Impact – what impact this has had on you Future – what you expect in future in terms of behaviour Feelings – check in on how the person feels receiving this</p> <p>If you are receiving feedback on how you have behaved harmfully, you may experience discomfort and a pull to defend yourself. Encourage yourself to sit in the discomfort, to listen and learn from what is being said. Make a record of when this conversation was had – the easiest way to do this is to send an email to yourself.</p>
<p>Level 2 – Call in</p>	<p>Chat with consequences</p>
	<p>This method is more likely to be applicable if someone has perpetrated any kind of physical, sexual or psychological violence. At this stage, it is important to seek support either from a mediator or a trusted member of not/nowhere's Board of Trustees. This stage of the accountability procedure also precedes the first stage of a formal grievance, as detailed in the complaints procedure.</p> <p>Firmly remind the person that their violent words or behaviour are unacceptable at not/nowhere, and ask them to take some time out to reflect. You can ask them to give you space for a set period of time, to allow the person who has been harmed the opportunity to heal, and the person who has caused harm the opportunity to reflect. If you want an apology, suggest the person who has caused harm apologise to you, and offer to act as a witness for that. If you would like a mediated conversation, feel free to reach out to a mediator external to not/nowhere.</p>
<p>Level 3 – Call out</p>	<p>Mostly consequences, no chat</p>

	If informal attempts at accountability have failed, or if the harm is so severe that it warrants a grievance and potentially immediate suspension, please follow the complaints procedure .
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Resources

Mediation:

navigate.org.uk

openedge.org.uk

Being called out:

thebodyisnotanapology.com/magazine/dont-get-defensive

fruitiondesign.com/dealwithit/02wispy.php

Transformative Justice:

transformharm.org/transformative-justice

transformharm.org/transformative-justice-a-brief-description

incite-national.org/community-accountability