



THE **CULTURE**
NETWORK LCR

ALLYSHIP, SOLIDARITY AND ACTION

Working together to make our
region a fairer, more equitable
and supportive place

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Audio version of this document is available here

Plus other alternative formats are available for this document,
please get in contact via admin@culturenetwork.co.uk to request.



Photo: Large group of Culture Network members speed dating at an in person event. Photo by **Mark McNulty**



Photo: Culture Network members having a one to one animated discussion. Photo by **Mark McNulty**

CONTEXT

In a world that feels increasingly uncertain - globally, regionally, and locally - where policies and behaviours often divide and undervalue communities, our network stands together; **supporting one another and celebrating our diversity.**

The UK is witnessing an alarming rise in hate crime, with anti-immigration riots fuelling racism, Islamophobia, misogyny, homophobia and ableism. This climate is being stoked by political shifts, most notably the Prime Minister's 'Island of Strangers' crackdown on immigration, cuts to welfare benefits, and the recent Supreme Court ruling altering the Equality Act. As fear and division deepen, our communities face growing vulnerability. In this moment, we must not only support one another but also move beyond allyship towards true solidarity.

Traditionally, allyship has meant 'to stand by', but this passive act is flawed. We can transform 'standing by' - or being a bystander - into safe action if we move to being 'Upstanders'. An Upstander is someone who acts, speaks or intervenes on behalf of another who is being oppressed. By being informed, and understanding how we can engage, we can offer deeper and more meaningful support. There is more information about this on page 5.

As our communities are experiencing heightened and multiple frictions, we know we have a significant role in supporting underrepresented voices and unheard stories. In challenging narratives and offering support and solidarity to those who are feeling marginalised.

Our network can provide spaces for joy, connection and hope!

As a network we are committed to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Access (EDIA).

Our values run through our work:

Collaboration: We work together

Inclusivity: We include everyone

Sustainability: Helping people and planet grow

Creativity: Sharing and supporting new ideas

Community: Supporting each other

We have created this reviewable document to share ideas and resources focusing on what supporting each other, and going beyond allyship, could look like. This is a working document, and we encourage the network to share resources and information that can build on what is currently provided. There is also a section around keeping teams as safe as possible.

LIVING OUR VALUES

Solidarity and Advocating for Change

As a network, we are a diverse and committed group of people, serving and representing so many communities and people with varied, rich lived experience.

Taking personal responsibility to **learn, listen and engage** in meaningful solidarity is essential right now.

This document aims to offer ways in which we as leaders, organisations and communities can use our coalition and creativity to reduce hate crime and harm, advocate for change and to go beyond allyship to become Upstanders.

It helps us to think about the intersecting, interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage people are facing right now in our region; such as race, class, gender, disability, age and sexuality. This helps us to recognise and honour identities and to rectify interlocking systems of oppression.



Photo: Seated audience enjoying 20 Stories High Capital B event.

Photo by Julian Gill

GOING BEYOND

Allyship guidelines

The leading principles of the below is to support others by being **Aware, Active** and to **Advocate**.

This list is not exhaustive, but features some key actions we can all take on board within our roles, especially those of us who hold power, to work together to break down systems and bring about positive change.

Recognise privilege and inequality

Acknowledge your own privilege, educate yourself, and advocate for fairer systems. Take action!

Self-educate

Don't rely on or burden marginalised groups to be educators. Keep educating yourself as a leader. Bring together working groups and spaces to build strategies together, and connect.

Be an active Upstander

Call out inappropriate behavior, challenge it safely, or report it if needed. See [Speak Out policy](#) [here](#).

Check in

Support, employ and collaborate with marginalised groups/people. Provide ongoing support for colleagues and communities. Offer a variety of ways to support our communities.

Amplify underrepresented voices

Share a diversity of stories, work, and perspectives. Uplift underrepresented voices.

Commit long-term to EDIA

Develop, practice, and review Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Access plans with training and accountability.

Use inclusive language

including respecting and using correct pronouns – e.g., asking for and using a person's correct pronouns, and using gender-neutral terms like "partner" instead of gendered terms.

Create belonging spaces

Ensure physical, mental and digital inclusion. (See [Safer Spaces Guidelines](#) [here](#) or below)

Advocate for inclusivity

Routinely champion equitable practices within and beyond your organisation.

Take action

Use privilege to open opportunities, particularly in creative and cultural spaces, to build a fairer society.

SAFER INTERVENTIONS

Direct, distract, delegate, delay

When speaking up for others, we need to always consider if you can intervene in a safe way for you and the person who is facing discrimination.

The four D technique (NHS Staff Equalities network) is discussed widely, highlighting different forms of intervention. Your risk assessment of the situation can help you to make a more informed decision on which intervention technique is most appropriate at any given time.

Direct action: You can step in, as an Upstander, in a respectful manner, and challenge potentially harmful behaviour when you witness it. Start a curious conversation.

Distraction: You can create a diversion to interrupt the situation.

Delegate: You can alert or contact someone with more authority or specialist knowledge to take action

Delay: You should not act immediately if this will put you in potential danger. But remember, it is never too late to act. Talk to the person affected after the situation has passed to ask them if they are OK. Or report the incident when it's safe to do so.

Culture Network's Jay Farley of First Take gives their take on how this could look.

If a person or group is obviously aggressive and looking to cause trouble it might be better to simply state your personal allyship or give a positive comment or experience about that protected group and move on. In extreme cases, recognise the importance of safety and just leave it and show allyship in other ways.

If you think there is a genuine conversation to be had, start the conversation with curiosity. Listen to them deeply. Say how you feel and ask why they feel the way they do. Keep it positive. Listen for ways to connect and agree on small points. Ask questions about their beliefs.

Don't expect to change someone in one conversation. A good interaction or simply listening might be the start of a journey towards new inclusive ways of being. This is just from my experience, but I think it's important to mention as doing it wrong can end up being more harmful. Eg. Saying 'that was transphobic' is likely to elicit a defensive or even aggressive response.

TOOLS AND TRAINING

Here are some manifestos, riders and tools that may be useful, including the Culture Network's recommended reading list [here](#).

Anti-Racism Touring Rider



The 7 Principles to Ensure Inclusive Recovery

(We Shall Not be Removed)



Anti-Racism Toolkit

(Inc Arts Unlock)



The New Normal: Manifesto to Create a Safe Space for Black Artists

(Fuel Theatre)



Accountability Agreement

(Heart of Glass)



Neurodiversity in the workplace

(ACAS)



Safer Spaces Guidelines

(Culture Network LCR)



Access Manifesto: A New Chapter in the Arts

(20 Stories High)



Guide to Use of Language

(Graeae Theatre)



Difficult Conversations

(Hope Not Hate)



Various Community Resources

(Hope Not Hate)



Access Rider Template

(Liverpool Biennial
of Contemporary Art)



SELF CARE

As leaders, staff and freelancers working in an ever changing climate, we encourage self-care and wellbeing as a priority. Here are some tools that might be useful and some organisations offering ongoing support.

Racism, Islamophobia & Antisemitism Selfcare Toolkit

(20 Stories High)



General Self Care Guide

(Mind)



LGBTQIA+Self-Care

(Mind)



Wellbeing Info for Trans People

(Transactual)



Managing Mental Health

(Scope)



Various Community Resources

(Hope Not Hate)



Peri & Menopause in Work

(Menopause Friendly)



Photo: Two people enjoying a discussion along with refreshments at in person Culture Network event. Photo by **Mark McNulty**

SAFETY MITIGATION AND RISK MANAGEMENT

As organisations, we want to do all we can to ensure our teams feel supported and protected.

This section offers safety plans/risk assessments that might be useful when working in new spaces or spaces that have higher rates of hate crime.

Internal Working Document Safety Plan

(20 Stories High)



Risk Assessment & Method Statement Example

(Heart of Glass)



Various Community Resources

(Hope Not Hate)



Venues & Public Spaces Guidance

(ProtectUK)



Venues, Events & Public Spaces

(National Protective
Security Authority)



Working Together Saving Lives

(JESIP)



Photo: Seated Culture Network members engaging in animated speed dating conversation at an in person Culture Network event. Photo by **Mark McNulty**

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESS WORKING GROUP

Please do get in touch if you have any questions about any of the content or would like to add to the future versions of this document. Additionally, feel free to get in touch if you need any support.

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Photo: Culture Network members having a one to one animated discussion. Photo by **Mark McNulty**

This reviewable document has been created by the Culture Network LCR's EDIA Working Group, with valuable input from Keith Saha of 20 Stories High and Kat Dempsey from Heart of Glass.

This document was launched in December 2025 and will face its first review by the EDIA Working Group in Winter 2026.