



OXFORD MUTUAL AID: CORE PRINCIPLES AND CODE OF CONDUCT

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Purpose

This document sets out the values and principles that underlie all we do at OMA. Following these guidelines is important, both to ensure that OMA meets its legal requirements as a charity (e.g. GDPR compliance) and to put into action the values of Mutual Aid.

Guiding principles

While working for Oxford Mutual Aid (in any role), all volunteers, staff and contractors are expected to uphold **OMA's guiding principles** as an organisation. OMA may ask individuals to cease their involvement with OMA, if these guiding principles are not followed.

- We participate in **Mutual Aid** and the redistribution of resources in a way that **minimizes hierarchies and power imbalances**. We aim to avoid perpetuating the inequalities often created by dividing participants into active givers and passive beneficiaries.-Many participants will both give and receive support while involved with OMA (and, receiving support is not conditional upon giving support). 'Givers' and 'receivers' of support are **respected equally** and are all agents of change.
- We understand that structures and **systems of inequality and injustice** create risk, vulnerability, and suffering, not the people struggling under these conditions. We **do not make judgements** on how 'deserving' anyone may be of OMA support.
- We believe in **solidarity**, and sharing resources and knowledge across linked struggles and social movements.
- We affirm **trans rights**, and recognise that OMA's roots lie in trans and queer organising.
- We commit to **confronting racism and white supremacy** in ourselves and our communities.
- We will **'call out' bias** in our organising spaces, including that on the basis of identity and lived experience, including around gender, sexuality, racial or cultural background, national origin, religion, disability, mental or physical health, housing status, poverty, age, and immigration status. We as participants will be willing to **identify and work on biases and prejudices** in ourselves and our communities.
- Mutual Aid means Mutual Accountability- we are able to **give and receive constructive criticism**. Anyone can raise a concern by emailing



coordinators@oxfordmutualaid.org (to contact the staff team for general concerns) and/or directors@oxfordmutualaid.org (to contact the trustees if you have a concern regarding a staff member)

- Concerns raised will be discussed and addressed confidentially, with decisions made by consensus and consultation of relevant parties.
- We are **transparent**; our budgets are open to all, and any member can attend meetings and access our governance structures.
- In order to help people **safely**, protocols and other forms of guidance should not be ignored. We commit to following specified procedures and complying with directions agreed by OMA members.
- **We are reflective**: we commit to tackle biases and prejudices in ourselves, others, and wider society; and engage positively with feedback to allow continual reflection, learning and growth in relation to treatment of others and societal injustices. This includes:
 - Participating in **non-judgemental discussion** relating to incidents of inappropriate behaviour or language, and approaching these conversations as a **positive opportunity** for learning
 - Recognising that **good intent alone** does not prevent behaviour or language from offending or disrespecting other individuals or groups
 - Affirming the value of **lived experience**, and acknowledging that any individual possesses the capacity to cause **intentional or unintentional harm** through their behaviour or actions
 - Understanding that **repeated or severe incidents** and/or failure to engage positively with feedback may lead to an individual being asked to cease their involvement with OMA

Principles of support

These values underpin how we deliver support and drive the following principles about how this should be done:

- **Empowerment**: we are committed to upholding the **dignity and self-determination** of everyone. We collaborate with people to try and help them find solutions which are meaningful to them, rather than imposing solutions on them.
- **Good faith**: we take seriously what people tell us about their situations, and balance information given to us by statutory services with that coming directly from the individual.
- **Consistency**: we offer the same kind of support to all, regardless of their background, power, or our own personal feelings towards them.
- **Respect**: we treat everyone we come into contact with through OMA with respect, courtesy and dignity, and refrain from engaging in physical, sexual, or emotional violence or abuse toward others.



Principles of confidentiality

We will always respect the **confidentiality** of anyone receiving support from OMA, as well as the **boundaries** of our fellow volunteers and community members, in accordance with the **OMA Data Protection policy** (available [here](#)).

Principles of safety and wellbeing

These strategies outline how we ensure we always respect the **safety** of anyone receiving support or providing support, particularly our volunteers. We commit to:

- Following the [sickness](#) and [health and safety](#) procedures
- Refrain from entering the home of anyone receiving support (unless a waiver has been signed and agreed by all parties)
- Look after **personal wellbeing** by setting appropriate boundaries and practices so that individuals can look after themselves. **We cannot look after others if we don't look after ourselves.** Volunteering should occur only as and when volunteers wish to volunteer and volunteers are under no obligation to do so.
- Follow the **Safeguarding Children** and **Safeguarding Adults Policies** (available [here](#)); all concerns involving the wellbeing of children (anyone under the age of 18) must be reported to the emergency services, a local authority, or a safeguarding lead immediately.
- Follow the **Sexual Harassment and Abuse Policies** (available [here](#) and [here](#))

More Information

Further guidance on OMA's governance structures and details of all policies can be found [here](#).