Anti-oppressive principles

Anti-oppressive approaches aim to challenge the structure of society and the use of power where they are being used to maintain some groups in disadvantaged positions. This is rooted in the notions of improving the quality of life and wellbeing of individuals, groups and communities and the intrinsic value of a diverse society.

Concepts of power, and how groups use power to achieve their mutual aims, underpin the ideas of oppression. An anti-oppressive approach involves a commitment to social justice as well as understanding one's own social location and how this affects one's relationships and practice behaviours. Our anti-oppressive work is influenced by the following concepts:

- **Understanding power dynamics.** As consultants, we are mindful that we have the power of expertise and resources. We consider who we serve and who is not in the room, who benefits and who is harmed by our use of power. When undertaking consultancy work, we want to work as a diverse team with life experiences and characteristics reflecting wider society (including gender, race and class as well as those relevant to any potential target groups or beneficiaries). We seek to fill in any diversity gaps by an advisory group, where possible.
- **Working collaboratively and inclusively.** We want to be collaborative and work in partnership to co-create work with stakeholders. It is our standard practice for this to include experts through experience. We take advantage of the digital approaches to make engagement effective and resource efficient and consider adopting action research and creative approaches to ensure inclusive participation. We make reasonable adjustments so that people can participate.
- **Using evidence to drive change.** We aim to work within the available evidence on how change happens and for whom, and are critical of the way it is produced. We examine changes and lessons learned from different points of view, or in different ways, to improve the quality of information and make analyses more reliable. Where possible, we take advantage of open data sources to understand the wider context and systems, and where the service or organisation sits within this wider context. As 'critical friends', we coach and advocate for internal learning and reflective practice for real change from the start, embedding learning into our ways of working.
- **Addressing harm and seeking justice.** Where reasonable, we speak truth to power and understand our duty to bring about a real change with our consultancy work. We consider how our work and its results can address the systemic injustice in our society and tackle harms when we see them. We expect everyone to be treated with dignity and respect.
- **Being transparent, open and reflexive.** We ensure there is space for critical analysis and reporting. This involves self-reflexive practice to identify our own biases, unintended outcomes from the project or intervention, and what the client needs to make their work more socially just. We interpret the data in conjunction with colleagues, including those less familiar with the project, to test our judgements and to avoid bias. In our reporting we include a section around data limitations as standard to identify where we have not been able to do a critical analysis.