




# **Safer Spaces**

## **Policy & Guidelines**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Policy Statement

Concrete Rose Collective CIC (Concrete Rose) is committed to inclusivity and to creating safe, open-minded and welcoming environments, in which individuals can participate in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance. This includes ensuring all supported lodgings placements within 'host' homes uphold the sentiments, values, principles and practices outlined in this document. Concrete Rose believes all should be free from intimidation, harassment, abusive or coercive behaviours, resulting from prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, marital or maternity/paternity status, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, trans status, socio-economic status, or ideology or culture, or any other form of distinction. In addition, we believe all young people should receive a service that puts the needs of the individual first and is free from judgement, control and/or coercion.

We will do everything possible to ensure the 'safer spaces' we oversee and operate are supportive, non-threatening environments that encourages open-mindedness, respect, a willingness to learn from others, as well as physical and mental safety where all feel able to participate. We intend them to be places where people are assured that they are not likely to face violence, harassment, intimidation or bullying. In spaces that Concrete Rose are responsible for, people should be free from victimisation, discrimination, fear, and intimidation.

Concrete Rose regards as unacceptable language or behaviour that is racist, sexist, homophobic, threatening, oppressive, coercive or violent, that is intended to cause harm to an individual. This policy should be considered to apply wherever staff, hosts, volunteers or programme participants. It is applicable to all who represent Concrete Rose and are involved in the 'spaces' overseen by Concrete Rose. This includes buildings, host homes, and online spaces (including mailing lists, social media and our email communications).

### 1.2 A note on our Christian ethos

Concrete Rose has at its heart a Christian ethos. We do not impose these beliefs on others and we support, work alongside and employ those of all faiths and none. Our Christian ethos informs the ways in which we work and creates a culture which values the individual (and recognises their immeasurable worth and innate talents and abilities), takes care of, and empowers, the vulnerable and demonstrates a love and commitment that is long-term and resilient.

The Christian faith we endeavour to enact is one that is non-judgemental, abounding in love, person-centred and anti-oppressive. Nevertheless, we recognise that this label, through experience and perception, has negative consequences for many (including referrers and young people). With this in mind, it is important to outline our approach to creating safer spaces in three distinct areas:

- Proselytisation and spiritual exploitation
- Supporting LGBTQ+ young people
- Providing advice and guidance in sensitive and contentious areas including abortion.

#### 1.2.1 *Proselytisation and spiritual exploitation*

Concrete Rose will do its utmost to create spaces that engender and support a freedom of **any** religious or non-religious (including atheism and agnosticism) beliefs as per Article 9 of the Human Rights Act. This includes supporting young people to express their own religious or non-religious

beliefs both at home and in the community. It is the expectation that all those representing Concrete Rose, whilst free to express their religious beliefs, do not impose their beliefs upon the young people they support. In particular, we recognise the power imbalance and vulnerability of the young people in our care and will be careful to guard against spiritual exploitation of young people through, intentionally or unintentionally, applying coercive control.

Whilst, and in accordance with the national occupational standards of youth work there is a role to “encourage the spiritual development of young people” the expectation is to support the young people to explore and develop their own independent beliefs and values regardless of the beliefs of staff, hosts or the organisation as a whole.

### *1.2.2 Supporting LGBTQ+ young people*

Concrete Rose recognises that members of the LGBTQ+ community have in many instances been marginalised, ostracised, oppressed and vilified by members of the church and the Christian community. Concrete Rose is committed to creating and overseeing spaces that encourage and support the unique identities of young people providing environments in which they feel safe, valued, and supported regardless of sexuality, gender expression or trans status. Concrete Rose recognises the need to be proactive in creating spaces of tolerance, respect and individual freedom including by recruiting a diverse team of staff, hosts and volunteers and offering education and training in equality and diversity, unconscious bias, language bias etc.

### *1.2.3 Providing information advice and guidance on sensitive topics e.g. abortion*

Concrete Rose recognises the role that staff, volunteers and hosts may play in providing information, advice and guidance to young people. In all circumstances, this information should be unbiased factual information that supports a young person to make informed choices free from judgement, coercion or emotional manipulation. In this sense it is important that all Concrete Rose representatives are able to put the young people first in the process and offer non-judgemental and unconditional love and care irrespective of their own beliefs or desires. Concrete Rose also recognises the need to provide support to hosts, volunteers and staff in these circumstances and offer relevant training and/or the ability to refer to specialist services including counselling and medical health services.

## **2.0 RECRUITMENT AND PAIRING**

All our offers of accommodation are based solely on age and our ability to provide the sufficient support to meet the needs of the young person in question and regardless of gender, sex and sexual orientation, religion and beliefs, race, ethnicity, disability etc. With this in mind, we recognise that, in order to offer the best possible support and care for young people, the diversity of our staff, volunteers and particularly hosts should, where practicable, reflect the diversity of young people we support. To achieve this we look to proactively recruit host families from a range of ethnic, cultural, religious background and from under-represented groups (see above). (This is particularly important given that children from black and minority ethnic (BAME) groups are over-represented in the care system and that the number of unaccompanied asylum seeker children (UASC) leaving care continues to rise.) As a part of the recruitment process hosts are asked to voluntarily disclose information that can support with the pairing process including sexual orientation, ethnic and cultural heritage, religious beliefs and disabilities (along with feelings about supporting young people with differing sexual orientation, beliefs etc). Alongside this young people are asked to disclose the same information as

well as their preference as to the background and characteristics of their potential hosts (along with feelings about being supported by hosts of differing sexual orientation, religious beliefs etc). This information is then utilised (alongside information on the needs, risk and vulnerabilities of a young person) as part of the pairing process in order to, where possible, provide placements that reflect, encourage and support the unique identities and characteristics of young people.

### **3.0 PRACTICAL GUIDELINES**

Every representative of Concrete Rose has a responsibility to uphold this policy and endeavour to create safer spaces for staff, volunteers, hosts and young people alike. With this in mind, it is important that each individual:

- Takes responsibility for their own actions being aware of the effects that these have on others despite the underlying intentions. Any behaviour – physical or verbal – that demeans, marginalises or dominates others is not welcome.
- Respects the pronouns and names of everyone. Do not assume anyone's gender identity, sexual preference, survivor status, economic status, background, health, etc.
- Respects people's opinions, beliefs, experiences and differing points of view and however strongly you feel about a particular topic, resist inflammatory discussions.
- Is aware of the range of different identities (e.g. gender, race, class) that people may identify with, and avoid making generalisations, or assumptions about people.
- Is aware of your language and behaviour, and think about whether it might be harmful to others.
- Is aware that anyone may be a survivor of a particular form of oppression, for example, violence or racism.
- Respects everyone's physical and emotional boundaries. Listen and change your behaviour if someone tells you that it is making them feel uncomfortable.
- Takes responsibility to challenge prejudice and oppression, (ignorance is makes us complicit).

Verbal and physical abuse will not be tolerated in any of the spaces overseen by Concrete Rose. This includes:

- Violence and threat of violence
- Use of force and threat of force
- Sexual assault and sexual harassment
- Personal insult (insults or aggression towards an individual)
- Oppressive language (insults or generalisations about a group of people)
- Verbal Harassment, sexual or otherwise (repeated uninvited personal comments or requests)
- Verbal abuse in writing



#### **4.0 APPLYING THE SAFER SPACES POLICY**

It is the responsibility of every individual to ensure the practical application of Concrete Rose's Safer Spaces Policy and report any incidents which contravene the policy to an appropriate senior person. This may include a member of the Core Team or a Director of the organisation. For contact details, please ask a staff member or visit [www.concreterose.co.uk](http://www.concreterose.co.uk).

Abusive behaviours in any form are not acceptable and Concrete Rose will take prompt action to deal with concerns and cases brought to its attention. Concrete Rose will offer appropriate support to young people, staff, volunteers or hosts experiencing harassment and will undertake to agree any action with them first.

Concrete Rose will work in partnership with the police, local authorities and other agencies to prevent harassment in the community and to encourage its reporting. Concrete Rose is committed to taking positive action to address any barriers to applicable participation in our activities.