



**Turtle Dove Cambridge Community Interest Company
Prioritising Women Statement**

Implemented: August 2025

Review due: August 2026

Statement

Turtle Dove Cambridge is for all women who were assigned female at birth. Turtle Dove Cambridge is a women-led, women-only, social enterprise and has been delivering services to young women and girls in Cambridge who have been subjected to disadvantage, sexual and domestic violence and abuse, since 2013.

As women of Turtle Dove Cambridge, there are many differences between us. Some of these differences reflect structural inequalities. It is central to our work that we identify, interrogate and dismantle those differences that become inequalities, outside and inside our organisation, on an ongoing and continual basis. Equally, that we value the differences that each of us bring. The one thing that unites us is our sex – we are women.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, this organisation provides services exclusively to individuals legally recognised as female based on biological sex. Under Schedule 3, Paragraphs 26–27 of the Act, we reserve the right to operate as a single-sex organisation where doing so is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, including the protection of privacy, dignity, and safety of our members. This approach is further supported by the Supreme Court ruling in *For Women Scotland v Scottish Ministers* (2025), which clarified that the protected characteristic of “sex” under the Equality Act refers to biological sex, not gender identity. As such, our services are designated for those assigned female at birth, and we do not include individuals who identify as female but were not born female. This policy is designed to uphold the rights of biological women and ensure the integrity of our female-only spaces.

We stand in solidarity with our sisters in specialist organisations led by and for minoritised women. We recognise that you bring something that we do not to service provision and strategic development. We recognise that your expertise and input over decades has led to changes for women that otherwise would not have happened. Your work and expertise has made and continues to make our services better. The need for your work, your specialist services and expertise remains.

At Turtle Dove Cambridge we prioritise women, women as a sex class. We recognise that race and class inequality intersect with sex inequality. Turtle Dove Cambridge rejects accusations that a feminism that prioritises women is white feminism. This accusation places those of us who are not white outside the sex class of woman. This is as absurd as it is insulting. It silences us: it fails to recognise the additional barriers that some of us face when speaking out and disregards our contributions to feminism. Those who call feminism that prioritises women as a sex class, white feminism, do not speak for us.

Our work to protect single-sex services and spaces for women, particularly but not only women who have been subjected to men’s violence and abuse; and naming men as the

agents or perpetrators of sexual and domestic violence and abuse, including prostitution, is not defining women through victimisation, it is not weaponising the violence perpetrated by men upon us and using it against marginalised groups. It is standing against male domination and abuse of women.

Feminism is a movement of all women for the liberation of women from subjugation and male domination under patriarchy. Women are not free until all women are free. Turtle Dove Cambridge is for all women.

Why does Turtle Dove Cambridge prioritise women?

Turtle Dove Cambridge is a feminist organisation. A feminist approach is an essential foundation for understanding and working to end men's violence against women and children because:

- Women experience the majority of violence – physical and sexual – in relationships. Women are more likely than men to be injured, killed and to fear the abuser.
- Approximately 85,000 women are raped in England and Wales every year. These figures include assaults by penetration and attempts.
- Men perpetrate the majority of incidents of violence, whether in intimate relationships or not, whether against women or other men.
- Women who are killed by men, whether current or former partners, mothers, victims of robbery, prostituted women, significantly outnumber men who are killed by women.
- There is inequality between women and men in society including, but not limited to, income, work opportunities, childcare & domestic responsibilities and access to public space.
- There are different expectations of typical and acceptable forms of male and female behaviours, and girls and boys are socialised into these from birth.
- Women and girls are routinely objectified, a key element of men's subordination of women.
- Research shows that young women learn and achieve more when there is an absence of their male peers.

Turtle Dove Cambridge believes that denying women's much greater suffering as victims of domestic and/or sexual violence and prostitution is a political act. This does not mean that we think that domestic violence, sexual violence, prostitution and forced marriage etc. do

not happen to men and boys, neither that we think that all men are violent. The differences between men and women's use of violence and experiences of victimisation do not need to be denied or minimised for all victim-survivors to be deserving of safety and support.

Turtle Dove Cambridge recognises that men's violence against women and girls is both a cause and consequence of sex inequality. Whilst perpetrators must be held responsible for their actions and behaviours; men's violence against women is not reducible simply to

individual acts perpetrated by individual men, but is a key instrument of men's domination of women, supported and normalised by patriarchal institutions, attitudes and social norms and values.

To achieve equality in practice, different groups may require different treatment because they are differently situated in an unequal society. Equal treatment, without consideration of people's different characteristics and structural inequality, can perpetuate disadvantage.

For these reasons, Turtle Dove Cambridge believes that a sex-based approach is an essential foundation for understanding and working to bring equality of opportunity for women, girls and children. Especially when they have experienced violence and abuse at the hands of men.*

*Adapted from NIA's "Prioritising Women" statement, last accessed 12.08.25:
<https://niaendingviolence.org.uk/get-informed/prioritising-women/>