



# **DSFL~AWG**

**ACCOUNTABILITY  
AT DIY SPACE FOR LONDON**

**OVERVIEW, HANDBOOK, PROCEDURAL  
GUIDE AND HOW-TO**

**BY THE DSFL:AWG  
[DIY SPACE FOR LONDON:  
ACCOUNTABILITY WORKING GROUP]  
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**QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, IDEAS, PRAISE, PRIZES:**

[awg@diyspaceforlondon.org](mailto:awg@diyspaceforlondon.org)

## **1. DIY SPACE FOR LONDON ACCOUNTABILITY AGREEMENT**

The accountability agreement is a code of behaviour that all club members agree to adhere to and embrace on joining the club. The text of the agreement is displayed on posters and flyers throughout space, and reads:

*We communicate in an open, clear simple way. We don't judge. We approach every situation with an open mind. We come from a place of belief. When people share experiences, we will support and believe them. We know that everyone's personal boundaries are in different places. We never assume. We accept that others' lives and histories outside the space may be different to our own. We stay mindful of how much space we take up (both bodies and voices) and of how we act or speak might be affecting other people around us.*

*Let's be ready to own how we act and how we speak. This is accountability. When challenged, each of us should be ready to take on board other's points of view, be responsible for our actions, and ready to make amends in the ways are asked of us. If you need immediate support during an event find any DSFL volunteer (bar membership desk, event steward & security) If you'd like to raise any issue at all feel free to email DSFL accountability working group (AWG) in confidence for support, some options, and more info about next steps.*

### **What is the Accountability Working Group?**

The Accountability Working Group (AWG) is an independent mechanism and 'working group' within DIY SPACE FOR LONDON (DSFL) that acts as a sounding board and a confidential, friendly ear for collectives that are handling any issues about volunteer or collective member behaviour. The working group has drafted, and had approved by the whole of DSFL, an accountability agreement.

We want to make sure everyone is as welcome in the space as possible, so we see holding each other to account a collective-wide responsibility. Likewise, DSFL has over five thousand members, all of whom should have read our Accountability Agreement upon joining. This creates an expectancy amongst members. If the agreement is seen to have been breached, we can take action to make sure that all parties feel that an appropriate outcome is reached.

The AWG will help DSFL members to do this by supporting volunteers in their work, and we pledge to look at any issues in an objective and timely manner, prioritising the needs of those harmed. We will act in good faith, avoid cynicism, and provide resources for individuals whose behaviour or language has been questioned with which to educate themselves.

## **2. BACKGROUND INFO**

### ***What is accountability?***

Accountability means lots of different things to different people. In a community context, accountability could be described as a strategy to address violence, abuse, or harm that creates safety, justice, reparations, and healing—most significantly as an alternative to legal frameworks.

DSFL has a community accountability system that allows all members and guests to be held to an agreement about their conduct, both within the space and as individuals in the wider world, and for members to help each other in situations where this agreement has not been upheld. Members from individual collectives will be given help and support to work both with the person who has been harmed and the person who has caused harm to push for appropriate outcomes. The nature and depth of this work is entirely dependent on the nature of the harm caused.

This guide will provide information about how you, as a member of DSFL, can help to hold another member to account, either from within a collective or as a general user of the building, and about what help the AWG can give you.

### ***Transformative Justice and learning at DSFL***

Through our work, we want to highlight the role that healing and personal growth can play in challenging oppression and making communities stronger and more inclusive. To this end, we can make use of Transformative Justice and learning to help with both.

**Transformative Justice (TJ)** is an alternative justice model. This information from Philadelphia-based Punk/Anarchist Accountability Group Philly's Pissed sums it up well:

The goals of Transformative Justice are:

- Safety, healing, and agency for survivors
- Accountability and transformation for people who harm
- Community action, healing, and accountability
- Transformation of the social conditions that perpetuate violence, systems of oppression and exploitation, domination, and state violence

The principles of a Transformative Justice approach include:

- Liberation
- Shifting power
- Accountability
- Safety
- Collective Action
- Respecting Cultural Difference
- Sustainability

In practice, then, to practice accountability as informed by Transformative Justice is to:  
acknowledge and validate the hurt and harm caused

start by listening to the person who has been hurt and prioritising their needs

enact consequences for the person who caused harm and provide opportunities for them to learn and change

help address the root cause of why this has happened whilst recognising that we cannot fix everything!

In doing this, we have to create safe boundaries and substantive consequences for different types of behaviour, which can include ‘cooling off’, temporary requests to stay away, and outright bans if considered serious enough. The TJ model holds that those who perpetrate harm are complex individuals who are often part of our community, and that our community is made stronger by holding these people to account (should they choose to engage), rather than by shutting them out without the resources to learn and change. While the ‘transformative’ element of TJ (the intention to transform the conditions that led to this person hurting another) is important, we must prioritise the overall safety of our members in any decisions we make.

As well as believing in the power of Transformative Justice, AWG advocates for a culture of care at DSFL. This means that while we will support each other in having honest, tough conversations with clear boundaries, we can still, for example, acknowledge how being questioned on our behaviour as an individual can impact on our mental health. All those involved in accountability work at DSFL, whether at an AWG or collective member level, must refrain from gossip, muckraking, or any other behaviour which uses individuals’ lives as social currency and creates an atmosphere of fear or recrimination—we must take confidentiality seriously.

DSFL believes in the fundamental right of those who have been hurt or harmed to take back power in situations where that power has been taken away from them, to steer the terms of their healing, and remain as involved as they want to be in the process of holding a person who has caused them any kind of harm to account. This includes respecting that someone may share information with DSFL about a person who has caused harm in the past, long before DSFL existed.

### ***DSFL and safe/r spaces***

The ‘debate’ about safer spaces is a very live issue. We deliberately chose the formation of accountability over that of ‘safe/r spaces’ because:

- as a collectively-run space, the idea that any one person or even grouping within that holds the power to ‘keep’ others safe is flawed and unfair.
- what ‘safety’ looks and feels like is entirely unique to every individual.
- many critiques of safe/r spaces hold that until the much larger systems of oppression have been toppled, no space is truly safe.

We believe in the work being done around safer spaces, but all too often the process for how to engage with ‘breaches’ is left out. We unequivocally support other spaces using the term, but for the purposes of a self-organising space like DSFL, we can best hold each other to account through a shared agreement that doesn’t focus on a list of ‘isms’ or ‘phobias,’ but on individual behaviour and an open, generative culture of care.

### 3. DSFL ACCOUNTABILITY PROCEDURES

In this section, we will look at:

- Consequence levels for people who have caused harm
- Supporting and intervening *on the night*
- How to lead an accountability process within a collective
- Keeping records

Below, we outline suggested consequences for members who have caused harm, based on current working practices at DSFL as of Spring 2016. You can use these as guidance in how to engage with a person who has caused harm, depending on what has happened. You should work to these regardless of whether this person is a member, a working volunteer, or guest.

#### ***Levels of consequence (for interventions)***

These levels are here to give us all a guide of where to locate a situation that has occurred, and to help us decide what action is appropriate.

<b>Level 1 – Check In</b>	<b>Chat</b>
	<p>A check-in is the lowest level of intervention possible. Remember if you don't know someone's name, give yours and ask theirs first.</p> <p>Checking in can be used when a person causes harm through the use of language that oppresses or hurts others.</p> <p>Checking in is a way to reach out to a person to let them know they have breached the agreement and start a dialogue about why we have it, or just a reminder, and to be mindful about their behaviour in the future.</p> <p>Be warm and open to the confusion or embarrassment someone may feel as a result of the check-in. Hold your ground in communicating what you need to.</p> <p>This is the most common type of intervention.</p> <p>Can be done in person or via email.</p>

<b>Level 2 – Call In</b>	<b>Chat with consequences</b>
	<p>This method is more likely to be applicable if someone has perpetrated any kind of physical, sexual or psychological violence. More serious – like level 1 +consequences</p> <p>Firmly remind the person that their violent words or behaviour are unacceptable in this space.</p> <p>Ask them to take some time out and reflect.</p> <p>Ask them to stay away from the person they hurt, or give them space as appropriate.</p> <p>If the person hurt explicitly says they would appreciate an apology, suggest that the person who caused harm apologise, and offer to act as a witness to that or be on hand for support if needed.</p>
<b>Level 3 – Call Out</b>	<b>Mostly consequences, no chat!</b>
	<p>For serious breaches only, where it is felt that immediate safety of members is at risk.</p> <p>Once you have notified SIA of your intentions (have them with you), ask the person for their contact details and let them know that under the terms of the AA you need to ask them to leave the building. Give them an AWG card and ask them to contact the AWG via email about their next visit. Make it clear they must enter into dialogue via email (or off site meetings) if they hope to return to DSFL in the future. This is so that people who have been called out at this level realise they cannot just return with no consequences. We can look to ban the member from volunteer shifts and visits to the space for the foreseeable future. Under the terms of our rules, this can only be done via a vote at a General Collectives Meeting.</p> <p>Arrange to physically remove the violent person from the space, as a last resort.</p>

It is important to record and report any check-ins or other interventions you have made. This is because unchecked behaviour can escalate. The best way to do this is to let your shift lead (Promoter Liaison, Bar Lead or SIA) know, or otherwise email [awg@diyspaceforlondon.org](mailto:awg@diyspaceforlondon.org) with as much info as you have.

### ***On the night support***

In the accountability agreement posters, DSFL lets everyone know they can seek immediate support from a member who is working at the space during an event if they feel they need to. Someone who approaches you in this way is already feeling in need of support, so it is important to make sure this person does not regret reaching out to you.

**Procedure:** Providing immediate support at an event.

**Who should do this:** ANY Member, but specifically bar staff, event volunteers, promoter liaison, or SIA supervisor are most likely to be approached.

**You will need:** You should offer a safe place to chat (office or lobby) a warm, empathetic, human response to whatever they tell you, and some options for what you can do next.

<b>Believe them, listen, and validate</b>	<p>This is rule number one for how you can help! Don't ask lots of questions in response (even if it's 'are you ok?') and validate how this person is feeling first to show belief:</p> <p>Even if you think someone else could handle it better, remember, they've picked YOU to speak to, so try to respond in a warm, human way to what you've heard:</p> <p><i>"That sounds really annoying/difficult/frustrating, thank you for telling me."</i></p> <p><i>"That's not okay."</i></p> <p><i>"That should not have happened, I'm really sorry to hear that it did."</i></p>
<b>Don't make assumptions and stay calm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Don't rush into anything.</li><li>- Practice They pronouns for everyone, all the time, until you're directly told otherwise.</li><li>- The person causing harm may already be known to them, so be discreet and sensitive.</li></ul> <p>N.B. You may personally feel worried or panicked—try to hold onto and regulate this emotion. This person has come to you for support; focus on their experience, stay calm, and know that others in the space will always have your back—never try to deal with a situation by yourself.</p>



**Give them options for what can happen next.**

*“We can handle this however makes you feel most comfortable. One option would be we could X, the other is that we could Y. Which would be best for you right now?”*

If a course of action seems obviously most relevant, try

*“How would you feel about X?”*

It may be enough for this person to just let you know about an issue; they may not want any consequences for the person who’s causing harm. In this case, you can validate and offer to be there if they change their mind and do want us to act.

If the person reporting the harmful behaviour **does** want you to intervene with the person who’s caused the harm directly, you will need to pair up with another member who will need to be briefed about the situation, so explain this to to the person reporting first.

Make sure to find out from the person reporting if it’s okay for the person you’re going to approach to speak with them afterwards, as it’s likely they will want to. You can then pass this information on.

Options for **on the night** intervention could include:

**At Level 1 [Check In]**

- We can have a word with this person about the language they’re using.
- We can ask this person to be more mindful of the space they take up.

**At Level 2 [Call In]**

- We can ask this person to take some time out from the room/meeting/gig.

**At Level 3 [Call Out]**

- We can ask this person to leave the building altogether.
- We can ask that person to leave and not return for a set period of time - the period is set by the AWG in consultation with the person

**Remember:** if someone reports physical violence, it is a condition of our license that the violent person be removed.

<b>Record keeping:</b> Let them know you need to make a note of your conversation as part of our accountability work so we can make sure that, if anyone else speaks up, we can coordinate.	With the consent of the person who approached you, make a confidential note of your conversation by leaving a note in the AWG folder and/or by emailing to <a href="mailto:awg@diyspaceforlondon.org">awg@diyspaceforlondon.org</a> . This creates a record so that if multiple issues with one person arise, they can be addressed. If they do want action to be taken on their behalf, we need to know who they are i.e. their name. If they are a guest of a member, we need to know who.
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Sometimes the person reporting may not want the person they are reporting removed for their own safety and for fear of recriminations. In this instance, we should respect these wishes and the AWG will attempt to open communication via email with the perpetrator after the event.

If the perpetrator's identity is not known to the person reporting and they have specifically said they do not want us to remove them, then the perpetrator can be monitored until they are ready to leave and spoken to about their behaviour at that point. Again, always work in twos.

## On the night intervention

**Procedure:** Intervening directly with a person who has caused harm on the night.

**Who can do this:** Any member, but promoter liaison or SIA supervisor are most likely to be in the position of initiating this conversation.

**You will need:** Two of you; clear, calm, and assertive language.

**What record should be kept:** As above. Include in your note to AWG how the person who has caused harm responded and any agreements that were made as a result.

<p><b>Deciding to act</b></p> <p>Confer with your buddy first about what your aims for the conversation are. A good way to engage someone in this context is to introduce yourself and then ask a question. You could bring the accountability agreement flyer with you so you have something to give them and to engage with.</p>	<p>If the person disclosing wants you to take action, make a mental note of exactly what this was (e.g. I want them to know that it's not ok to...) and form your goals for the conversation in advance e.g.:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This person will know they've hurt someone else.</li> <li>2. This person will reconsider their behaviour.</li> <li>3. This person will not hurt anyone else</li> <li>4. This person will stay away from the person they have hurt and not approach or speak to them.</li> </ol> <p>Have an agreed start and end point for the conversation e.g. 'Thanks for listening.'</p> <p><b>THEN GO AND FIND SOMEONE ELSE TO WORK WITH ON THIS. DO NOT DO THIS ALONE.</b></p>
<p><b>Making the approach</b></p>	<p>The two of you should aim to separate this person from any peers and ask to speak to them.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"Hi, we need to have a quick chat."</i>  <i>"Can I borrow you for a second?"</i>  <i>"Excuse me mate, can we have a word please?"</i></p> <p><b>Do not swear, raise your voice, or use aggressive posture.</b>          If you do not trust yourself to be able to speak neutrally to the person in question, pass it on.</p>
<p><b>Explaining the consequences</b></p>	<p>Outline why you're talking to them; avoid specifics, but don't be evasive. Ideally you should have no social link to this person. Defensive psychology means they will listen to you less if you do!</p> <p><b>Example of a Level 1 – Check In:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"Hi, I'm [NAME], I do x, y, z at DSFL. Have you seen our accountability agreement? One of our members has let us know that you're acting inappropriately/that you're speaking in a way that's making people feel uncomfortable. Because of that, we'd like to ask you to consider how you're talking more carefully. Is that ok?"</i></p> <p>Keep it casual and human, but also clear.</p> <p>If they engage with what you say, thank them for their time, explain to them too that you have to make a note of the conversation, and give them an accountability agreement flyer.</p> <p>Check back in with the person who disclosed to let them know—but ensure you are DISCREET about this.</p>

**Taking action**

Remember: you may not resolve this issue in a two minute conversation!

“I’d be happy to send you some more info if you have an email.”

This can then be passed to AWG who can share resources with them.

**Remember:** it is not your job to educate people. The majority of people will feel embarrassed and want to make amends. Be empathetic to this, remember we are all capable of oppressive behaviour.

**Remember:** you are not facilitating or pre-empting a conversation between these two people. This is NOT a negotiation. This is about you representing DSFL to take some action, so make sure you know what that action is going to be before you start.

**Example of a Level 2 – Call In:**

*“Hi, I’m [NAME], I do x, y, z at DSFL. Have you seen our accountability agreement? One of our members has let us know that you’re acting inappropriately/ that you’re speaking in a way that’s making people feel uncomfortable, and would like you do stop, and apologise to them. Is that ok?”*

***N.B. Training is available!***

**Ejections (Level 3 – Call Out)**

In cases of physical violence, we need to know who the perpetrator is and what they look like in order to remove them (i.e. a name if they will give it, and if they are a guest of a member, we need to know who that member is).

**Remember:** ejection is a last resort, it will colour the rest of the night, could result in further violence and is ONLY to be considered if there is physical violence that has taken place.

All volunteers working should be notified ahead of time if anyone is going to be asked to leave, especially the SIA supervisor, who should be physically present during the interaction, with a minimum of three volunteers on hand to help with this.

***“We need to let you know that under the terms of our licence, physical violence is not allowed in DSFL. We are going to have to ask you to make your way out.”***

#### 4. LONGER TERM SUPPORT AND INTERVENTIONS

The AWG and its members are not the cops of DSFL; every collective member has a responsibility to step up when a problem arises, and this responsibility should be shared. If you have, or hear of, an experience that makes you think of the AA - come and ask your fellow members for advice and support - consult this handbook.

***Do not expect others to do the work for you.***

There are two options for who takes ownership of these processes. See below.

Taking ownership here means leading on decisions, handling direct communication, and setting boundaries and goals with both the harmed person and the person who has caused harm.

It is very important that leadership and understanding are both shown from the outset.

Type of complaint	Who takes ownership	Procedure
Complaint against a member who is an active volunteer or part of a collective	Any two collective members take ownership and enact process with support and guidance available from AWG. They can choose whether to be named or not and it should always be clear they have been appointed to act on behalf of whole collective.	<b>Collective Accountability</b>
Complaint against a member or guest who comes to the space who is not involved in the running of DSFL	AWG takes ownership of this after the initial event on the night – any info can be forwarded to <a href="mailto:awg@diyspaceforlondon.org">awg@diyspaceforlondon.org</a> , either <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– after initial intervention on the night</li> <li>– or if email or other contact comes in directly</li> </ul> If the breach relates to behaviour that happened away from DSFL, the process can be initiated via an email.	<b>Member Accountability (as covered in ‘on the night’ accountability)</b>

## Collective Accountability

Speed is important. Steps 1–3 should be completed within one month of the decision to begin the accountability process.

<b>STEP ONE: Acknowledge and validate the hurt / harm caused between members</b>	
<p>Coordinate two members of the collective to liaise with the two or more parties in the dispute (via email or meeting) and keep a record of this.</p> <p>Send an initial email to the person/s asking for a written account of the issue/s. Reiterate confidentiality and that we will always ask before sharing info.</p>	<p>Ask AWG for help with wording and cc AWG if helpful.</p>
<b>STEP TWO: Listen to the person who has been hurt and prioritise their needs</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Signpost person/s to counselling and other support services if needed (ask AWG).</li> <li>– Explain we will do our best to meet their requests as far as possible</li> <li>– Be honest about anything that is beyond the remit of DSFL, explain that this is being handled collectively.</li> <li>– Check in with the person who has experienced harm during the process/they can let someone know if they are having any issues. Sometimes processes can end up causing further harm.</li> </ul> <p>Common requests could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A written apology from the person who has caused harm</li> <li>– That they no longer volunteer at DSFL, stop for a while</li> <li>– That they tell their partners and friends that they are in an accountability process as a result of their behaviour</li> </ul>	<p>Explain timelines and boundaries (e.g. if they have a number, agree when is ok to call).</p>
<b>STEP THREE: Engage with the person who caused the harm</b>	
<p>Draft an email (cc AWG) from the collective explaining the harm caused and any resultant consequences there may be for them in a clear, fair way.</p> <p>Start with what the person harmed has asked for, and see how this sits with DSFL policy (the 3 Levels of consequence).</p> <p>Resist any urge to be punitive, remember that it takes strength to admit you have hurt someone.</p> <p><b>DSFL operates a <u>standard 3 month shift break</u> for any collective members with more than one complaint against them.</b></p> <p>This will <i>not always</i> affect their collective membership, decisions about how they interact with the collective during this period should be made on a case by case basis and prioritise collective comfort and safety.</p> <p>Physical violence should generally result in a plan to implement a foreseeable ban from shifts and visits (which will have to be voted on) depending on the needs of the person affected and attitude of the violent person with regard to the incident. In this incidence, remember to GET NAMES and give all parties involved an AWG card to contact the space directly - ESPECIALLY if they are being ejected.</p> <p><i>“Please email this address before returning as we need to discuss.”</i></p>	<p>Be clear and fair; is your email passive aggressive?</p> <p>Always offer a face to face meeting or telephone call if needed.</p> <p>If engagement breaks down, AWG can step in to act as mediators. Provide AWG with information so they can understand why and how the issue has come up.</p>

#### **STEP FOUR: Root Causes**

This means reflecting together on the situation and looking to make changes. It could mean enacting a new policy or instigating a collective group discussion on power dynamics, language, shared procedures, boundaries, racism, etc. to help address the root cause whilst recognising that *we cannot fix everything!*

When starting to engage with a person who may have knowingly or unknowingly breached the accountability agreement, it may be useful to consider that these are the usual stages a person will go through in the process of transformative learning:

#### ***Disorienting dilemma (i.e being challenged on behaviour, words, actions)***

1. Self-examination (including denial – that's not racist etc.)
2. Sense of alienation (others around me don't speak/act like this?)
3. Relating discontent to others (Usually/often defensive)
4. Explaining options of new behaviour (What is a better word I could use instead?)
5. Building confidence in new ways (Trying out monitoring how much I speak in meetings)
6. Planning a course of action (Starting to build this behaviour into my everyday actions)
7. Knowledge to implement plans (Reading learning points and resources via email)
8. Experimenting with new roles (Becoming an ally or supporter)

***It is not your responsibility to guide someone through these steps, but we can all play a part in helping each other to learn, grow and be accountable for our own behaviour. Being open, direct and fair to everyone you work with as part of an accountability process is key.***

## 5. SAUCY RESOURCES

DSFL Anti-Oppression Reading List, which where appropriate can form part of the 'Root Causes' work as an outcome - i.e sharing these links as learning work for the person who has caused harm.

### ***So you've been called out:***

- » <http://fruitiondesign.com/dealwithit/02wispy.php>
- » <https://www.psychologytoday.com/comment/reply/56214/844982>

### ***What's the deal with accountability anyway?***

- » <https://saferspacesnyc.wordpress.com/resources>
- » <https://supportny.org>
- » <https://projectsalvage.wordpress.com/>
- » <https://communityaccountability.wordpress.com/resources/>

### ***'Taking up space'***

- » <http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/09/6-ways-men-dominate-space/>

### ***Microaggressions***

- » <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201010/racial-microaggressions-in-everyday-life>
- » <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201011/microaggressions-more-just-race>
- » <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201102/how-does-oppression-microaggressions-affect>
- » <https://blavity.com/how-i-explained-microaggressions-to-my-non-black-partner/>

### ***Bullying***

- » <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201101/bullying-microaggressions>

### ***Sexual assault and rape - Consent and boundaries***

- » <http://www.bishuk.com/sex/consent-innit/>

### ***Racism***

- » <http://www.bustle.com/articles/124681-5-things-you-might-not-think-are-racist-but-are>

### ***Gender, trans, and non-binary identities***

- » <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/sexual-orientation-gender/trans-identities>

### ***Cultural appropriation***

- » <http://everydayfeminism.com/2016/05/defending-cultural-appropriation/>
- » <http://www.makezine.enoughenough.org/mohawksdreads.htm>

### ***Mental Health awareness***

- » <http://thoughtcatalog.com/samantha-pugsley/2014/11/how-language-impacts-the-stigma-against-mental-health-and-what-we-must-do-to-change-it/>