

## ActionAid UK

# Environmental Policy

### Who we are

ActionAid is an international charity that works with women and girls living in poverty. Our dedicated local staff are changing the world with women and girls. We are ending violence and fighting poverty so that all women, everywhere, can create the future they want.

We are a charitable company limited by guarantee, with company number 01295174, and registered charity numbers 274467 (England and Wales) and SCO45476 (Scotland).

### Introduction

ActionAid UK (AAUK) is a member of a global Federation with the primary mission to end poverty through increasing equality and the resilience of vulnerable populations, specifically addressing the needs of women and girls.

Climate change and environmental degradation represent major challenges to human development and there is strong evidence that these challenges disproportionately affect the lives and well-being of women and girls (UNDP, 2012; UNFCCC, 2019; Arora-Jonsson, 2011).

ActionAid UK acknowledges that our own operations, especially the use of renewable and non-renewable resources, the use of goods and services and our international and domestic travel, directly and indirectly impact the environment. We are committed to being an environmentally responsible organisation and to becoming environmentally sustainable in our operations.

### Purpose and scope

ActionAid UK works on various green initiatives that were developed under previous iterations of the AAUK Environmental Policy. This policy formalises these initiatives by bringing them together into a series of statements and commitments to guide behaviour and improve monitoring and accountability.

The policy scope recognises the following:

- At present, the policy focuses largely on our UK operations only, as these are the elements over which we have direct control. Alongside this, AAUK works with the wider ActionAid federation to build the environmental sustainability of the organisation as a whole.

- AAUK currently rents our UK offices in serviced buildings and therefore has limited influence over certain facilities, such as energy supplier and waste management.
- Due to the nature of the organisation, a certain degree of international air travel is a necessary part of our operations.

ActionAid UK is in the early stages of the journey of formalising our green initiatives, and we will need to allocate staff time and resource to set up the various systems to record, monitor and report against them. Additionally, many initiatives require consideration and consultation to fully understand the impact before being written into policy.

To balance these considerations, this policy sets out specific, realistic commitments for the forthcoming policy term (2021-2022) for which we will hold ourselves accountable. We are committed to continual improvement and each year we will seek to deliver the maximum number of initiatives the organisation can sustain. The results of these initiatives and ongoing monitoring will help inform additional processes, commitments and targets of future policy iterations.

The controls and commitments outlined in this policy are broad, but there is much more that staff and partners can do to help improve the organisation’s environmental performance. Further practical guidance is held in the ‘Guidance to support the environmental policy implementation’ available to our staff.

### Roles and Responsibilities

All staff employed by ActionAid UK in our UK office locations<sup>1</sup> are responsible for **following and implementing** this policy wherever applicable to their role.

The policy owner has delegated the responsibility of **monitoring and reporting** on the policy’s commitments to the Strategy, Performance and Assurance (SPA) team in the Organisational Effectiveness department.

Specific roles and responsibilities for **consultation** on this policy and its future iterations on an annual basis are (at minimum):

Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	Set and agree direction and ambition for the organisation’s Environmental Policy commitments for the forthcoming policy term. The commitments will inform the more granular implementation guide. Provide sign-off prior to board ratification.
Trustees Advisor	Provide climate expertise on policy refresh and planned commitments
AAUK Board	Provide board ratification for final policy paper
Donor Compliance and Contracts Advisor	Advisory capacity for policy paper from institutional donor compliance perspective

<sup>1</sup> Farringdon, Central London and Chard, Somerset

Resilience and Climate Advisor	Advisory capacity for policy paper from climate expert perspective
Deputy Directors of IDPP, HPP, P&P, IG, Supporter Experience, Supporter Operations	Advise and agree on policy commitments particularly around international travel and supporter print communications
Procurement Manager	Advise on policy implementation from procurement and contracts perspective, ensuring AAUK Procurement Policy is aligned with new environmental commitments
Facilities Manager	Advise on policy implementation from office, travel and facilities perspective, ensuring feasibility of FM led commitments and alignment of future plans for 2022.

**How we monitor and reduce our environmental impact**

**1. General**

- ActionAid UK is committed to adhering to relevant regulations concerning waste and environmental well-being.
- ActionAid UK measures its carbon footprint annually and has also drafted a Carbon Reduction Plan<sup>2</sup> which will be updated each year, with the support of an external company with specialist technical expertise in this area.
- ActionAid UK is committed to reaching net zero by 2040 and we are taking steps to try and further reduce this timeline where possible. Progress against net zero will be monitored on an annual basis.
- ActionAid UK is committed to putting in place processes and structures to analyse our position as a contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, and how to drive our emissions down systematically.

**2. Green Taskforce/Ownership, strategy, and planning**

What we do

- ActionAid UK has appointed staff volunteers as ‘Green Champions’ who form part of an ActionAid federation-wide network focused on reducing ActionAid’s environmental impact. The Green Champions group do this by working on initiatives such as research and guidance documents to support countries in their efforts to make their operations more sustainable.

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<sup>2</sup> The current public AAUK Carbon Reduction Plan has been completed according to requirements in UK Government’s new [Procurement Policy Note \(PPN\) 06/21](#)

### Our commitments for this policy term

- We create a cross-organisational 'Green Taskforce' within AAUK to support policy implementation and to innovate, trial and promote green initiatives. The Green Taskforce will consist of staff volunteers across departments and become a formal part of the staff member's role.
- We include environmental considerations in the next AAUK organisational strategy development due to commence in 2022 and complete in 2023.
- We incorporate environmental risks and climate change into organisational risk registers and consider the impact of different future scenarios on organisational growth, strategy and direction.
- We consider the commitments of this policy within annual financial planning and budgeting to ensure the costs of implementing them are thought through and accounted for.
- We convene AAUK Board of Trustees to discuss the organisation's environmental policy and impact, setting ambitions for AAUK's ongoing work in this area.

### **3. Green Workspace**

#### What we do

- We track our consumption as part of our annual carbon reduction plan which monitors the amount of waste produced in our offices.
- AAUK does not provide single-use plastics (e.g. disposable water bottles, plastic cups, plates, cutlery) in any of our premises. Cutlery, crockery and bottle-free water coolers are provided. We will opt for vegetarian/fully plant-based catering at our events.
- Mixed recycling, food waste and battery recycling points are available in our offices. Staff are expected to recycle wherever possible.
- We only provide paper in the office that is 100% recycled and de-inked without bleaching. We provide a printing system that minimises wastage. Staff are expected to print only when necessary, using as little paper as possible. Staff should use electronic forms and signatures instead of printed forms wherever possible.
- Our offices are in buildings that use a green energy supplier for electricity. Our London office does not use any natural gas. We use motion activated lighting in many areas to reduce wastage.
- We recycle old IT equipment through an ethical supplier, [a charity](#) that provides IT hardware, training and programmes to schools across Africa and partners with IT Asset Disposition (ITAD) companies that are ISO 14001 certified.

#### Our commitments for this policy term

- We make enquiries to understand the environmental impact of our IT systems and consider if there are green alternatives.
- We review our pension suppliers and partner financial institutions (i.e.: banks) and explore green options.

## 4. Green Procurement and Supply Chains

### What we do

- We monitor our usage of print-based supporter communications and public engagement products as part of our carbon reduction plan.
- All suppliers are required to sign an Ethical Code of Business Conduct. This includes a commitment to have policies in place to encourage the responsible use of resources and to reduce output of all types of waste and harmful emissions.
- As part of new supplier vetting, for contracts exceeding £5K we currently request a copy of the supplier's environmental policy. Evaluating the supplier's environmental commitments and practices forms part of the scoring criteria in new supplier selection process.

### Our commitments for this policy term

- We always request 100% recycled paper and card for our external communications products. We will actively avoid procuring any materials which use single-use plastic.
- We review the organisational procurement policy in light of AA's environmental sustainability ambitions and the 5R principles (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle). We will explicitly promote purchasing goods and services which are derived from sustainable sources and are manufactured and delivered in an environmentally responsible way, using 100% recycled materials whenever available.
- We consider ways to reduce our print-based supporter communications and public engagement products, exploring how we can reduce paper-based communications in a way that engages and inspires supporters, informed by evidence and insight.

## 5. Green Travel

### What we do

- We track our flight data as part of our carbon reduction plan.
- Departments set targets to reduce the number of flights they take each year.
- Our flight booking system is set up so that flights can only be bought once a business case for travel has been approved by a Deputy Director. Deputy Directors are responsible for assessing business cases, considering the following:
  - Digital communication should replace travel where possible.
  - Rail should be selected over flights when feasible, even if this means a reasonable increase in cost or duration. All internal trips in mainland UK (e.g. Scotland or Wales) and all short-haul trips to Eurotunnel destinations (e.g. Paris, Brussels) should be done by train.
  - Direct flights should be selected over multi-leg flights when feasible, even if this means a reasonable increase in cost.
- ActionAid UK offers all staff Season Ticket loans and a cycle-to-work scheme to promote sustainable commuting.

- We use a green courier and taxi service, which operates a zero-emissions passenger fleet, for all bookings made via the London office.

#### Our commitments by the next policy term

- We refresh our travel business case template to make explicit reference to environmental considerations and include a travel criteria checklist – environmental impact should be front of mind for staff when planning any air travel.
- We plan any overseas workshops with environmental impact in mind – actively considering locations that require the least travel from participants
- We monitor departmental air travel against plans and report back to staff to increase transparency and accountability, via the Strategy, Performance and Assurance team
- We explore greener options for taxi and courier services in use at our Chard office, which are essential part of our operations there.

## **6. Green Awareness**

#### What we do

- ActionAid UK promotes this policy to all staff. The policy is available on our Policy Hub on the company intranet, and line managers are required to ensure their staff have read and understood it as a mandatory part of staff inductions.

#### Our commitments by the next policy term

- We deliver engagement workshop to a subset of staff members to increase awareness, and look at ways to broaden it out to the wider staff body.
- We include staff awareness raising activities within the remit of the newly established cross-organisational Green Taskforce.

## **7. Green Programming**

#### Our commitments by the next policy term

- We develop an environmental checklist for programmes in receipt of restricted AAUK institutional funding to help ensuring that environmental impacts of programme work and operations are well-considered within project proposals.