










Ten principles of trauma-informed VAWG services

Creating a trauma-informed VAWG service or strategy requires a set of principles that underpin everything from design to policy. For some, this would mean significant change, and for others, it would require little change from current operation/strategy.

How trauma-informed is your service for women and girls?

In a trauma-informed VAWG service:

1. Women and girls are supported and understood as traumatised, distressed human beings who have been subjected to violence, abuse, oppression, and harm. Their trauma responses and coping mechanisms are understood to be normal, natural, logical, valid, and expected. 
2. Women and girls are not positioned or diagnosed as mentally ill or disordered when they have been subjected to violence, abuse, oppression, and harm. When trauma is present, no diagnostic process should begin. 
3. Women and girls are supported and understood to be living in a society which is inherently misogynistic and patriarchal, where it is near-universal experience to be sexually harassed, assaulted, abused, raped, bullied, belittled, or insulted based on their sex at some point in their lifespan. 
4. Women and girls are not encouraged or forced to accept psychiatric disorders and psychiatric medication when they seek help as a victim of violence, abuse, and crime. 
5. Women and girls are supported in a strengths-based approach to their lives, choices, experiences and needs. We do not define or discuss a woman or girl based on her past, or on what other people have done to her. We do not predict her outcomes based on the actions and crimes of others that she was subjected to as a victim of crime 
6. Women and girls are not perceived as unreliable witnesses because they have been diagnosed with psychiatric disorders, mental health issues or personality disorders. Women and girls have full access to justice processes no matter what their medical files may say. 
7. Women and girls are not positioned as 'vulnerable', 'responsible', 'risk-taking' or otherwise victim-blamed for being subjected to violent crime by others. We do not seek to modify the behaviour of the woman or girl to stop others from committing violence against her 
8. Women and girls are not expected to disclose repeatedly, in detail, to all services. They are supported and understood based on the information required only. 
9. Women and girls are not referred into services that require them to be diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder to access therapy or support services. 
10. Staff and management are supported with their own trauma responses, compassion fatigue, burnout, and distress from working in VAWG 