

Thanks for signing up for our training – we're looking forward to meeting you.
If you have any questions, please feel free to get in touch at hello@abianda.com.
In particular, if you have any accessibility needs that we can help you with, do let us know.



A B I A N D A

Abianda is a London-based social enterprise that works with young women affected by gangs and county lines, and the professionals who support them.

Our mission is to bring about a culture shift in the way services are delivered to young women affected by gangs and county lines, so that:

- they feel safe to access help
- they are no longer a hidden group in our communities
- they are free from harm and abuse

We do this by:

- delivering frontline services to gang-affected young women aged up to 25
- delivering training and professional development programmes to professionals who work with them

What do we mean by a “gang”?

The term “gang” is used widely in our sector, in the media, in research, in offers of funding, and by professionals we work with. We recognise that it is a problematic term, and know that for the young women we work with the use of the term “gang” can open up space for some, but be a barrier for engagement for other young women.

“As an organisation we are conscious of the racist and classist connotations of the term ‘Gangs’. We believe this needs to be deconstructed across the sector and acknowledge that this starts with us.... As an organisation we are actively challenging and dismantling the systems that cultivate, maintain, and reinforce systemic racism and inequality.”

Abianda’s statement on Black Lives Matter, July 2020, <https://www.abianda.com/voices>

We encourage professionals to interrogate the term, and to more broadly develop a critical consciousness around the language that we use in relation to young people. We explore this further in our training.

Human rights and participation

The young women we work with have asked us to emphasise human rights and participation in our pre-training materials. With that in mind, we share here Article 12 from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (full text, and child-friendly version):

“States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.” <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text#>

“Children have the right to express their opinions freely on matters that affect them. Adults should listen carefully to, value and consider the opinions of children.”

<https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text-childrens-version>

Participation recognises young women’s humanity and as Roger Hart notes in his Ladder of Participation (1992):

“The term ‘participation’ ... refer[s] ... to the process of sharing decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship.”

https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens_participation.pdf

Referral links:

Please see our website for more information about referring our services: <https://www.abianda.com/services>



Abianda's Principles

A B I A N D A

Our guiding principles inform our approach and techniques, which put gang-affected young women at the heart of the process and supports them to remain engaged.

We believe that:	<p>Young women are experts of their own lives.</p> <p>Young women have innate resources, competence and resilience.</p> <p>People affected by a problem are best placed to find the solutions.</p> <p>We must shift traditional power hierarchies in service delivery in order to enable young women's participation in solution building.</p> <p>We must support young women to have their voices heard in order that they can influence the design and delivery of services.</p>		
We therefore adopt:	Youth work principles	Participation principles	Solution focused brief therapy techniques
This means that in our approach we:	<p>Work 'alongside' young women</p> <p>Start from where they are and be led by their "felt needs"</p> <p>Respect their empirical knowledge of their own lives</p> <p>Encourage them to develop a "critical consciousness" of their worlds, their experiences, and how they are affected by these</p>	<p>Work in a non-hierarchical way</p> <p>Challenge unequal dynamics power & oppression</p> <p>Tip the balance of power in favour of young women</p> <p>Ensure young women inform future practice and services</p> <p>Recognise that young women are best placed to identify issues and solutions</p>	<p>Work to the young woman's 'best hopes' or desired outcomes</p> <p>Engage with competence</p> <p>Look for alternative narratives of her and her life where she has previously demonstrated competence</p> <p>Obtain detailed descriptions of what life will be like when changes are made</p> <p>Trust the young woman's 'version of events'</p> <p>Are interested in the young woman and not the problem</p> <p>Develop techniques to understand and strategise around big and sometimes 'unmanageable' feelings</p>

Our work is trauma informed and trauma responsive because our services embody these five values:

Safety	We never put pressure on young women to disclose. We provide explanations of what we are doing and why. We are consistent in our approach.
Trustworthiness	We do what we say we are going to do. We are transparent in how we share young women's information. We continually seek the young woman's consent.
Choice	We work to the young woman's best hopes. We support her to influence decisions that affect her life.
Collaboration	We work in a non-hierarchical way. We work shoulder-to-shoulder and in partnership with young women.
Empowerment	We help young women identify their own strengths and resilience. We provide advocacy support to help young women navigate statutory services. We create spaces where young women take power and control.

Suggested reading

- Agenda's Struggling Alone: Girls' and Young Women's Mental Health: <https://weareagenda.org/struggling-alone/>
- Labour London Assembly: Gang Associated Girls: Supporting young women at risk: https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gang_associated_girls.pdf
- NSPCC's Solution-Focused Practice: A toolkit for working with children and young people: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1073/solution-focused-practice-toolkit.pdf>
- National Crime Agency: County Lines Drug Supply, Vulnerability and Harm: <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/who-we-are/publications/257-county-lines-drug-supply-vulnerability-and-harm-2018/file>