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INTERACTIVE EXPERT PANEL

**Multisectoral Services and Responses for Women and Girls
Subject to Violence**

MAKING THE DIFFERENCE

by

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Violence against women and girls (VAWG) describes a range of heinous crimes that are so much more than this acronym. It is a description that belies the consequences that affect individual women and girls limiting and compromising communities and humanity as a whole. It is a seamless procession of women and girls that stretches far back in generations and with an unwavering pace moves forwards in time. VAWG needs to be understood within a wider construct than individual acts of violence. It is a human rights violation and is a cause and consequence of inequality between men and women.

The global statistics on VAWG make stark reading, and indicate that whether it is developed countries or developing countries the forms that VAWG take may change but the

communities with the additional intersecting dynamics of oppression and disadvantage, the outsider margins have been pushed back even wider. The consequences mean an even more limited response to the complexity of their needs. Typically, therapeutic services are driven by funding restraints providing condensed short term interventions, dominated by Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and the management of symptoms. For most survivors, the complexity of VAWG trauma takes women and girls to the limits of human distress. It is a long way back and requires a sustained investment and commitment from both survivor and support services.

UK Standards in VAWG Provision

Despite financial constraints and limited resources there are some remarkable examples of innovation and good practice in specialist VAWG services in the UK. Quality markers for standards in VAWG practice are derived from numerous guidelines, directing ethical practice and setting outcomes frameworks to ensure efficacy in service delivery. Standards are generated by professional bodies, local statutory services and central government departments. However, standards relating specially to VAWG and offering distinct guidelines on practice are virtually non-existent. Rape Crisis (England and Wales) have developed national service standards (RCNSS) for the 49 member organisations and specifically focuses on sexual violence. The RCNSS are underpinned by a set of core principles agreed by Women's Aid England and the Women's National Commission. They have also been mapped against other key quality assurance

Women and Girls Network

The above standards are enshrined within the ethos and implementation of service provision at Women and Girls Network (WGN). For 25 years WGN has provided an integrated therapeutic service for women and girls surviving the continuum of VAWG.

WGN's service delivery has evolved from listening and responding to women using the service, internal debate and external clinical developments. It has taken decades to develop into the holistic integrated provision that we have today. Therapeutic provision is delivered through a wraparound comprehensive range of services, to support and facilitate total and sustainable recovery for women and girls surviving violence. The therapeutic journey includes: individual counselling with variable long term contracts, access to a range of body therapies and group work. An Independent Sexual Violence Advocate, advice workers and a helpline provides practical support such as; negotiating through the criminal justice system, housing, advises on benefits, medical help and moving on opportunities such as accessing employment and training. We provide a specialist young women and girls project with an advocate whose remit includes case work and a preventative programme in schools. This work is partnered with a specialist young women's counselling service.

The experience of VAWG is devastating, described by Van der Kolk, B (1996) as 'injuries that bruise the soul' therefore therapeutic response and interventions require a similar level of complexity and depth formed around the uniqueness of the survivor's experience. The clinical model at WGN is a holistic approach following the unique impact of trauma, providing a multifocal series of interventions addressing co-occurring problems concurrently and comprehensively facilitating choice and control. The approach is underpinned by a "strengths and resilience" based model aimed at expanding capacities to achieve personal empowerment. The model consists of seven different domains worked at differing levels of intensity dependent on the type of provision.

HOLISTIC EMPOWERMENT RECOVERY MODEL

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trauma. The work is informed by an understanding of the neuroscience of trauma responses, the impact on brain development and the link to the emergence of chronic conditions such as Developmental Trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Complex Traumatic Stress.

