

# Abianda Theory of Change: *Rationale*

Abianda strives to be a critical friend of statutory and other services and hold them to account on issues related to gender alongside other intersections of identity.

The young women who are referred to Abianda have not always received the support they need from statutory services. This often includes being excluded from education and negative responses from the care and criminal justice systems. This is partly due to not having their voices heard properly by services.

The language used in this area should be engaged with critically as terms such as 'gang' can be racist, marginalising and work to place the blame onto young women.

Abianda is an organisation for young women and is rooted in youth work, participatory and solution focused practice.

**'Gangs' Definition:**  
We recognise the term 'gangs' is problematic for a number of reasons including its oppressive impact. We use the term 'gangs' cautiously, being mindful of its history, classist and discriminatory connotations. We continuously consider the bias and assumptions made when a young person is labelled as involved with 'gangs'. You can see Abianda's more detailed exploration of the term on our website.

Abianda knows that to achieve external systems change and equality, the work must start internally within our organisation.

There is a gap in or barrier to provision for young women who are affected by serious violence, organised crime, peer-on-peer violence and mistreatment. There is a lack of awareness from other service providers around their needs. This has led to young women who have been let down not feeling safe to access services.

Abianda diplomatically and compassionately supports and provides training to other organisations to raise awareness of the impact of power imbalance and develop skills to better support young women.

People affected by a problem are best placed to find the solutions. Young women need to have their voices heard in order to influence the design and delivery of both Abianda and other services. However, young women's involvement in this often isn't supported by power structures in the wider culture. There is an aspiration for Abianda to stand shoulder to shoulder with these young women.

The young women who are referred to Abianda lead lives that are complex and experience normalised and high levels of violence and harm in which they oscillate between 'victim' and 'perpetrator'. This harm and adversity that young women experience should be seen through the lens of the systemic inequality they face and has a wider impact on young women's emotional wellbeing and mental health.

Abianda believes all young women are experts of their own lives and have skills and resilience.

Women's rights and the rights of young people are human rights which are too often ignored by statutory services. The young women who are referred to Abianda have a human right to be protected from harm and abuse. They have the right to participate in the decisions and be heard on the issues that affect their lives. This includes rights to safe housing and support from police and other professionals.

The young women who are referred to Abianda are not the creators of the issues they are experiencing despite being often blamed. They are likely to have experienced substantial inequalities and diversity, which leads to violence, harm and abuse.

Staff at Abianda bring their different life experiences into their roles. They need ongoing support to allow them to do this challenging work.



# Abianda Theory of Change: *Drivers*

## Behaviours/Relationships

- Young women as the experts in their own lives
- Creating the internal space for young women to thrive
- Advocating fiercely for young women
- Compassionate individualised formal and informal support
- Respecting young women's lived experience
- Ongoing awareness of inequalities

## Processes

- Young women embedded in the fabric of the organisation including as Interns
- Youth work principles
- Consistent flexible and individual support
- Solution-focused approach and interventions
- Support structures for participation and involvement of young women
- Training professionals in statutory and other services to change their approach and practice
- Being a critical friend to professionals who work with young women

## Systems

- Partnership working
- Clear internal systems and structures in place
- Professional network surrounding young women
- Links into extra support services
- Support for an internal culture of peer learning
- Contextual Safeguarding
- Business model building independence

**1.** Young women have increased resilience and are able to identify their own skills, autonomy and self-efficacy to better navigate their circumstances, accessing services and resources that they need to achieve their best hopes.

**2.** Young women affected by or at risk of 'gangs' and county line activity experience reduced harm.

## Outcomes

**3.** Local services and professionals are encouraged to create systems change, increase trust, redress power dynamics and include young women in safeguarding processes.

**4.** The Abianda team are skilled, supported and energised to carry out their individual and collective role.

**5.** Young women participate in the design and delivery of Abianda programmes and the strategic direction of the organisation.



# Abianda Theory of Change: *Outcomes*

## Outcome 1

Young women have increased resilience and are able to identify their own skills, autonomy and self-efficacy to better navigate their circumstances, accessing services and resources that they need to achieve their best hopes.

### *Indicators - 12 months*

- More young women feel able to take the lead on making their own decisions.
- Young women increasingly speak up for themselves in meetings.
- More young women identifying their own strengths and skills.
- An increase in young women feeling better equipped to think about their long-term aspirations, ambitions and hopes.
- Young women increase their coping strategies when excluded or shut down by professionals.
- Increase in young women participating in their own safeguarding processes and influencing services that affect them.

### *Indicators - 3 years*

- Young women have been able to become independent from Abianda and thrive.
- Young women have increasingly identified their skills and strengths and are forging their way in the world.

## Outcome 2

Young women affected by or at risk of 'gangs' and county line activity experience reduced harm.

### *Indicators - 12 months*

- Young women report moving away from unhealthy and harmful relationships and networks.
- Young women start to build healthy relationships.
- Young women hold a steady number of positions within Abianda increasing their influence in professional spaces.
- There has been work to consolidate, further develop and grow contextual safeguarding.
- Young women report reduced involvement in 'gangs'/county lines.
- Young women report reduced missing episodes.

### *Indicators - 3 years*

- Contextual safeguarding has become embedded within systems to reduce harm.
- For example: all team would be confident in how and when to use peer mapping; seeing professional networks take on CS approach; internal safeguarding reporting consistently addressing contextual risk/harm and safety planning; increased interventions delivered in schools and community settings.

## Outcome 3

Young women participate in the design and delivery of Abianda programmes and the strategic direction of the organisation.

### *Indicators - 12 months*

- Young women have increased contact with Abianda's board and leadership team to inform strategic decision-making.
- Increased opportunities to engage in team and other organisational meetings.
- Young women feeling skilled and prepared to contribute in professional spaces.

### *Indicators - 3 years*

- There is evidence that the organisation's principles are embedded into practice.
- More systems and processes in Abianda demonstrate that young women are embedded in the organization.
- Young women Interns participate in the design and delivery of Abianda programmes as well as fully participating in team meetings and organisational strategy.



# Abianda Theory of Change: *Outcomes*

## Outcome 4

The Abianda team are skilled, supported and energised to carry out their individual and collective role.

### *Indicators - 12 months*

- More staff feel happy and fulfilled in their job, with access to professional development opportunities.
- All staff know how to contact the Board and SLT both formally and informally.
- Staff feel able to voice how their supportive meetings are (or aren't) working for them.
- All new staff have a complete and comprehensive induction process.
- Staff are confident of Abianda's systematic commitment to and focus on their wellbeing, and are confident to speak up when this isn't working for them.
- Abianda has a comprehensive set of policies and procedures that focus on equality and wellbeing, and all staff know how to access them.

### *Indicators - 3 years*

- Staff feel able to grow in their role, including opportunities for further training, and flexible working to support training, professional development, external commitments, and wellbeing.
- Staff feel able to participate and voice opinions in organisational strategy planning meetings.
- Abianda has a reduced staff turnover.
- The Abianda team identify and understand where and how inequalities surface and how their own privilege and bias impact this. They increasingly challenge this internally and externally.

## Outcome 5

Local services and professionals are encouraged to create systems change, increase trust, redress power dynamics and include young women in safeguarding processes.

### *Indicators - 12 months*

- Young women attend an increased number of professional meetings alongside Abianda practitioners.
- More professionals from a variety of sectors attend Abianda training or hear about the organisation through public engagement events, and grow their understanding of the issues.
- Increase in requests for case consultations.
- There is increased understanding of contextual safeguarding among partners and stakeholders to reduce harm including the development of community interventions.

### *Indicators - 3 years*

- Increased referrals of young women into other services.
- Increased Abianda presence at strategic planning and high-profile meetings.
- More young women apply for Intern roles.
- Young women creating content for other young women.
- Growth of partnerships with other organisations suitable for referral and onward support.
- Increased number of case consultations and training delivered externally.

