

Our Peer Support Principles

The Haringey Women's Voices Project (2020-21):

The Haringey Women's Voices project was a partnership project between AVA, Solace Women's Aid, IMECE, and Haringey Council, funded by Homeless Link as part of their Ending Women's Homelessness Fund. The project ran between Jan 2020 - June 2021 and focused on improving gender and trauma informed responses to women with experiences of domestic abuse and/or sexual violence and housing insecurity and/or homelessness.

As part of this project, AVA provided peer facilitation training to 9 women with lived experience. The facilitators then set up online peer support groups, taking referrals for women who had experienced domestic and/or sexual violence and housing insecurity and/or homelessness in Haringey. These groups were run online between January - June 2021.

At AVA we believe women's voices are at the heart of gender and trauma informed practice, and giving women agency and choice over the way they are supported is the key to appropriate responses to those with experiences of domestic abuse and homelessness. This project highlights the importance of peer support spaces as a key site of growth and recovery for women with these experiences. This project also highlights the importance and power of bringing women with lived experience into the centre of any efforts to support them.

At the end of the project, facilitators were invited to reflect on their work and the experience of running these groups. The facilitators discussed the ideas and considerations guiding their work and formulated a list of key principles of peer support. These principles are presented below and represent the core areas of focus needed when setting up and running gender and trauma informed peer support groups.

solace



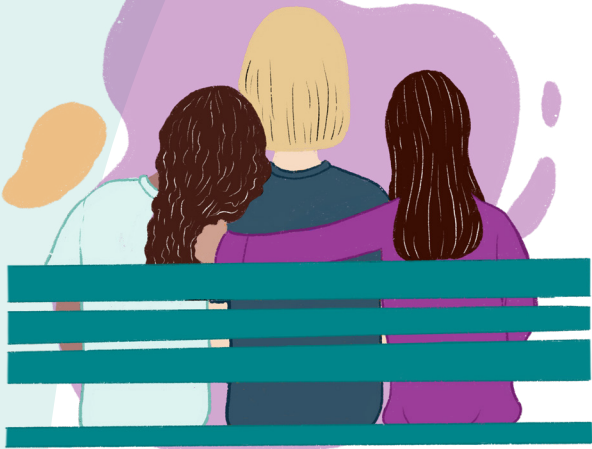
Haringey
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EMPOWERMENT



EMPATHY



Trauma-Informed Peer Support Principles

DIVERSITY



SAFETY



Building Gender and Trauma-Informed Peer Support

What Do These Principles Look Like In Practice?

Safety means protecting each other's confidentiality (whilst maintaining safeguarding responsibilities); creating an inclusive space where all voices, experiences and identities are validated; encouraging and modelling self-care.

Empathy means committing to non-judgement; focusing on trust-building; asking questions, not giving answers (active listening); valuing and practicing openness and honesty.

Empowerment means sharing power; valuing imperfection and difference; giving each other autonomy; recognising and validating each other's experiences; working towards growth, resilience and healing.

Inclusion and diversity means valuing and respecting everyone's uniqueness; committing to the safety and equality of all group members (no isms: racism, homophobia, sexism, ageism, classism, ableism); ensuring spaces are accessible and tailored to the comfort and safety of every member.

Solidarity means using shared experience as a grounds for shared understanding; working together whilst maintaining strong boundaries; building a space of love, care and understanding.

Flexibility means giving everyone time and space; encouraging input without pressure; ensuring every member has a choice over how they are supported.