

Organisation Name		Reference code	
Abianda		2024-05-YWG01	
Organisation Address			
Unit 414 ScreenWorks 22 Highbury Grove London N5 2EF			
Website Address			
www.abianda.com			
Type of organisation? (tick all that apply and complete relevant details)			
Charity	Registered Charity Number	Date Registered	
No			
Community Interest Company	Registered Companies House Number	Date Registered	
No	08875988		
Social Enterprise	Social Enterprise Mark Awarded Yes/No	Date Awarded	
Yes	Yes	Yes	
<b>Grant Summary</b>			
Through a programme of one-to-one support and systems change consultancy, we will empower young women and girls to recognise and resist criminal exploitation, effectively access necessary services, and make significant progress toward their personal hopes, ultimately reducing their risk of offending.			
<b>Please describe the specific needs of the young women and girls you work with that this project will address</b>			
<p>Who we help Abianda works with young women and girls (YW&amp;G) aged 10- 25 who have been affected by criminal exploitation and violence. Their lived experiences are highly complex and include being trafficked for sexual or criminal exploitation, and/or experience of abuse and violence including threats against the young woman and her family and/or associates.</p> <p>YW&amp;G are affected in different ways and are not a homogenous group, with different cultures, ethnicities, religions, and social and economic life experiences (some are parents themselves). Because of this, we define 'who' Abianda works with through their shared experience of trauma and exploitation. They are likely to have had experience of domestic violence, direct attempts on their lives involving firearms and knives, alongside ongoing mental health concerns. A high proportion of the YW&amp;G Abianda works with have experienced being cuckooed (where a vulnerable person's address is taken over for the purpose of drug supply). These addresses (referred to as 'trap houses' or bandos) are where young women suffer a range of traumatic experiences including rape, being branded, violent intimidation and witnessing a range of violent and abusive behaviour.</p> <p>Increased risks Over the last decade the way that young people have been involved with crime has evolved and there has also been a significant shift in the nature of 'gangs' and what is understood by that term. Rather than place-based enterprising groups, crime has become a business, heavily involved in criminal and sexual exploitation, grooming and</p>			

an increase in entrapment and modern slavery - all alongside increased involvement of YW&G in these activities.

This involvement comes at a cost as YW&G are increasingly exposed to violence and sexual exploitation as they fulfil a range of key roles at considerable risk to themselves. Over a third of police forces reported some evidence of sexual exploitation in relation to county lines activities (NCA, 2017). The emergence of county lines has also directly impacted YW&G - and yet in the 2023 Home Office guidance, there is no mention of YW&G, or recognition of the differences of their experience of criminal exploitation. It does however explicitly note that criminal exploitation is a form of modern day slavery.

What YW&G need

The YW&G we support tell us that they want gender-responsive or gendered services that meet their needs covering practical support, advocacy and safe spaces in which to recover and grow - and yet they are rarely available (findings show that 60% of Local Authorities have no gender specific services for YW&G (Young Women's Justice Project, 2023)).

This is in part due to a lack of understanding or appreciation for the scale of the need for YW&G who are affected by criminal exploitation, in that their involvement is widely considered to be hugely underreported. From gang association to county lines and violence, the underreporting means less investment in support services and interventions, which in turn means less understanding and prevention. The result is that YW&G are 'falling through the gaps' in relation to other services - which are either universal (and in being so, are often dominated by young men and boys), or are 'under the radar' and YW&G aren't even aware of them - and they aren't being signposted to them as there is no recognition of the need to do so.

YW&G who engage with Abianda therefore, have a significant need for rights-based help to support them to access appropriate services, and potentially navigate their way to a return to education or employment. They also need a structured programme of work designed to help them grow their critical thinking. By asking YW&G the right questions and offering an equal, trusting, and transparent relationship we help them to discover their own resilience and competence, and to develop the tools to make positive changes in their lives.

**What are the key outcomes that you will be seeking to achieve for young women and girls either at risk of offending or who are already caught up in the criminal justice system?**

Our work has participatory principles at its heart, and as such outcomes are rooted in YW&G best hopes and the change she wants to see in her life. We have set out 3 outcomes which we believe will contribute to reduced criminal involvement for YW&G; 1) 100% of participants increase their understanding of how YW&G are affected by criminal exploitation and violence.

If we reduce the risk of exploitation, we will in turn reduce the risk of offending for those already involved in criminal activity or at risk of becoming so. Key to reducing the chance of exploitation is working alongside YW&G to build and develop their understanding of what exploitation is and how it can impact their lives. We believe that this can support them to develop a sense of agency, as well as the skills and confidence to take control over their lives.

As such, our focus is on supporting YW&G to develop their critical and consequential thinking. Our work aims to increase self-esteem and self-worth as well as provide practical support to address the often complex issues within their lives. By exploring underlying complex needs related to trauma, mental ill health, and reducing substance misuse as well as providing advocacy to ensure that the necessary support is available to them, young women will be in a position to making positive choices such as engaging with positive peer groups and moving away from pro-criminal peers; in turn

directly contribute to a reduction in offending.

2) 90% of YW&G increase their understanding of healthy relationships

A wide body of research tells us that understanding and developing healthy relationships is essential to the prevention of offending/reoffending, particularly in YW&G. We know that YW&G are more likely to be drawn into offending behaviour by the relationships they have, particularly those with men and boys and/or those involved in the criminal justice system. We are clear that by building YW&G's skills, confidence and understanding of what healthy relationships are, and how unhealthy relationships can impact them negatively, we can reduce the likelihood of offending.

3) 90% of YW&G affected by criminal exploitation are more able to get what they need from systems and services

Many of the YW&G we work with have had negative experiences of those meant to support them, with poor relationships underpinned by a lack of trust. By building agency and supporting YW&G with advocacy and improving the relationships, we will increase their access to positive activities including education, employment, and training, which in turn will maximise legitimate income opportunities and support them to stay away from offending behaviour.

Key to the success of this outcome will also be our work with the professionals and agencies that YW&G need, or want, to engage with. We see the process of connection as two-way, and both professionals and YW&G need the support we offer in order to find a way of working which meets their needs

**What are the key activities you will undertake with this funding to achieve this?**

Two interrelated activities will enable us to achieve these outcomes;

1) One to one support for 30 young women aged 10-25 each year

Young women follow a structured programme of topics that are designed to help them grow their critical thinking. Using Abianda's unique model of practice, a bespoke programme is co-created for each young woman, led by her needs and desired outcomes. Topics covered include; healthy and unhealthy relationships; sexual violence, exploitation and other violence against women and girls (VAWG) issues in the context of 'gangs'; anger, power and harm; trauma; risks associated with criminal exploitation and violence; and safety planning.

We create safe spaces and support them to achieve the changes young women want in their lives and develop skills and strategies to navigate risk and make better use of the services and systems around them. By keeping our work solution- and future-focused, we keep our spaces safe for young women. They know we will not ask them to share information about their past or their associates, because this could create significant risks for them, and could re-traumatise them.

On referral to our service, a young woman is allocated a Practitioner. This relationship is an essential part of our programme, and participants meet their Abianda Practitioner once a week for 1-2 hours. Sessions are flexible in their delivery, allowing for creative and bespoke approaches which align with participants' needs and interests. Session locations are identified by young women as places they feel safe in, and are risk assessed by the Practitioner alongside the young woman. Young women engage with the project for as long as is required - we don't set time limits, and recognise that engagement may pause or intensify in line with needs and circumstances. If their capacity to engage is limited, they don't have to - and can return at any time to access support.

2) Systems change consultancy around contextual safeguarding and gender specific approaches

Our approach recognises that we can only change things for young women and girls if we also influence and change the systems and services around them to make this possible. As such, alongside direct services, we will deliver a range of consultancy-style support to professionals within the local authority where we are working. This will include undertaking location based contextual safeguarding reviews; delivering case

consultations alongside professionals to support them with gender-specific approaches which meet the needs of young girls and women; and supporting the co-production of services using Abianda's network of young women and girls through our (externally funded) participation programme.

**Does your proposed project already exist or is this a new piece of work?**

Abianda has evolved our structured programme of work, known as the STAR programme, over ten years using a combination of experiential practice and co-production with young women. This programme is currently running in the London Borough of Islington, funded by the Home Office Young Women and Girls Fund and the borough itself until March 2025. Funding provides for an Abianda practitioner to be co-located within Islington Councils' Integrated Gangs Team (I-CAN). Working with up to 24 Islington young women aged 16-24 p/a through one to one case work and who are at risk of being affected by 'gangs' and county line activity. The project also allows for staff time to deliver training sessions to professionals within Islington.

In February 2024, we launched Abianda's new strategy for the period 2024 - 2027 which sees us prioritise our systems change work alongside direct service delivery to young women and girls. A core element of year one of this plan is to review, refine and re-launch our model of practice (and within this the STAR programme), ensuring that we increase the quality of Abianda's focused support to girls and young women, as well as improve the sustainability of the organisation as a whole.

As such, whilst a version of the proposed project is already operating, we are committed to developing this in line with our strategic aims and revised theory of change, which sees us put young women and girls in the context of their own lives, as well as the systems and services around them. Funding for this work would therefore support a revised version of the STAR programme, which also draws upon our contextual safeguarding approach and commitment to systems change and embeds our work within a wider context. Alongside direct delivery, Abianda staff will also work closely with professionals (including service delivery staff, managers and commissioners) to look at how they can embed more effective ways of working with young women and girls affected by criminal exploitation and violence. Our belief is that only change can only be effective and lasting if we look to influence and change places and spaces, services and systems alongside our direct work with young women.

A grant from Triangle Trust will allow us to pilot the new, holistic, practice framework with one local authority and evaluate its impact and effectiveness in partnership with both the local authority and with young women and girls.

**What expertise and track record do you have to be able to deliver this work successfully?**

Abianda was founded to address the barriers that stop girls and young women from seeking support. We believe young women are the experts on their own lives and that each young woman has the innate resources, competence and resilience required to move towards their stated ambitions.

We are one of the only organisations in the country that focuses solely on working with young women and girls around experiences of criminal exploitation; whilst we are based in London, and most direct delivery takes place in the Capital, we also work nationally across England through delivery of training and consultancy - both face to face and online.

From 2014 - 2023, Abianda grew from a sole trader entity with a revenue of £17,000 to a social enterprise with a team of 20 staff and a revenue of £820,000. Always focused on supporting young women and girls who were affected by criminal exploitation and violence, the organisation has always offered both direct service delivery in London alongside training to a national audience and involvement in systems and policy change conversations at a local and national level - punching well above our weight and recognised as experts in our field. This has included shared delivery of the six-

year, pan-London, MOPAC-funded 'Rescue and Response' service, working to support young women impacted by county lines alongside Safer London and St Giles Trust, as well as work in a number of London Boroughs to deliver our structured programme of support to young women and girls.

Abianda's approach to trauma-informed and responsive services is underpinned by five values; safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment. We never put pressure on young women to disclose, we provide explanations of what we are doing and why and we are consistent in our approach - always doing the right thing what we say we are going to do. Staff are transparent in how they use and share young women's information, and we continually seek the young women's consent. Our services are shaped with the young women, and we work shoulder-to-shoulder and in partnership with them to create spaces where young women take power and control. By asking young women the right questions and offering an equal, transparent relationship we help them to discover their own resilience and competence, and to develop the power to change their situation.

**Explain how the grant will be spent**

**Who will be responsible for overseeing and delivering this work?**

Delivery of direct services (one to one support to young women and girls) will be delivered by our Young Women's Practitioner (Tijen Hassan) who has extensive experience in youth work, safeguarding and direct service delivery for young women. The Practitioner will work closely with referral organisations in our Islington, and across London to support young women.

Our Practitioner will be line-managed by our Interim Head of Safeguarding and Services (Fee Stocker), who will also take on the responsibility of project management. The Interim Head of Safeguarding and Services will also have responsibility for ensuring the broader support within the practice framework is delivered, including systems change consultancy around contextual safeguarding and advice on gender specific approaches. She will work alongside the Practitioner to do this in the most appropriate way with services and other practitioners in Islington, and where required, across London.

The overall development and quality assurance of the design and implementation of the practice framework will be overseen by the CEO (Abi Billingham), who in turn is responsible for reporting to the board. The board meets quarterly and reviews all project delivery and activity, including considering risks and delivery against agreed outcomes.

**How do you plan to continue this work once the grant ends?**

This project will be an opportunity for Abianda to pilot our new practice framework and collect evidence as to its impact which can be used to attract funding from both local authorities and other grant makers, allowing us to roll out delivering into more areas. We are in the process of seeking charitable registration, and are hopeful that this will open up some new opportunities for grant funding alongside our strong existing relationships with a number of grant makers.

Additionally, we are in the process of securing investment to further develop and grow our commercial training and consultancy offer. By the end of this project, our business model would mean that we would be generating significant unrestricted funds which we are able to use to match fund our practice framework delivery, offering other funders real value for money and allowing us to reach more young women and girls in London, and beyond.

**Does your organisation only work with women and girls?**

<p>All of Abianda's work is around young women and girls, and all of our direct services are only delivered to them. Abianda welcomes all young women and girls to our services. For the avoidance of all doubt, this includes trans women and girls. We also welcome non-binary people if they feel that they have lived experience that aligns with that of women and girls.</p> <p>As an organisation we deliver training to professionals across a range of settings and sectors, including youth workers, the police, social and health care and education. This will include some professionals who are men, however the training offer we present is exclusively about how to work with young women and girls.</p>	
<p><b>Does your organisation have existing knowledge and expertise working across the criminal justice system?</b></p>	
<p>Over the last ten years, Abianda's work with young women and girls has necessarily spanned a range of sectors, including the criminal justice sector/system, social services and education. We have always worked closely with local authorities, including being co-located with youth justice and youth offending services over this time period - and as such have developed both a robust understanding of, and key relationships within the criminal justice system. This includes youth justice services, youth offending teams, the police and probation services. For example, we regularly work with the police and young women who have been identified as at risk of offending, who have been arrested or held in custody - with a view to supporting them to develop the resilience to stay away from crime.</p> <p>Our work means we support young women who are impacted by crime in a range of ways - as victims, witnesses and/or offenders. As such we have developed a robust understanding of legislation and how to support young women and girls to navigate the system, advocating alongside them as required. We have an in depth and intricate knowledge of the National Referral Mechanism, and whilst this sits within the Home Office, there are strong ties to the police</p> <p>Our knowledge, alongside our integrated model of working means we have a strong understanding of the way in which systems work, and the various lines of reporting for example. This all means that we can work alongside systems and services to improve outcomes for young women we support.</p>	
<p><b>Will you be receiving funding from any other sources for this project?</b></p>	
<p>Yes - grant funding and/or unrestricted income generated from sales of training and consultancy</p>	
<p><b>Do all staff have enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks? If no please state why.</b></p>	
<p>No</p>	
<p><b>Reason why not all staff have DBS checks.</b></p>	
<p>All staff are subject to DBS checks - but not all staff are subject to "Enhanced" DBS checks.</p> <p>All Abianda job roles are assessed against the legislative eligibility criteria to establish whether, within the law, a DBS application can be submitted and to what level. DBS checks are not mandatory unless there is specific legislation in place relating to the position being offered that makes a check a legal requirement.</p> <p>As such, only roles which include the possibility of doing one to one work with young women under the age 18 are subject to Enhanced checks. All other staff are required to have a standard/basic DBS check completed.</p>	
<p><b>Total funding requested in this application (£10,000 to £80,000 with a maximum of £40,000 in one year)</b></p>	
<p>£80000</p>	
<p><b>Proposed grant start date</b></p>	<p><b>Proposed grant duration in months</b></p>

3/1/2025	24
<b>How much funding is required each year?</b>	
<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>
£40000	£40000
<b>What was your organisation's expenditure in the most recent financial year?</b>	<b>What was your organisation's annual income in the most recent financial year?</b>
£829621	£850294
<b>What value of unrestricted reserves did your organisation have at the end of the most recent financial year?</b>	
£101440	