



WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE OUR VISION A REALITY
and the Birmingham Girls Empowerment Team #GET



Walsall Council



BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST



Sandwell
Children's Trust

Top Tips for working with Girls

Why do we need to do things differently?

We live in a society where girls and boys have different home and social experiences and expectations, and it's important to recognise that this means girls can face some significantly different barriers and events to boys. For example, research shows that girls routinely report higher levels of sexual and /or domestic abuse than boys.¹

Because of the specific experiences they face girls are more likely to demonstrate symptoms of coping with trauma– for example experiencing mental health issues or substance misuse.

Girls are more likely than boys to have been in care or experienced poverty, or to have to adapt to being a young parent.

It's important to consider the additional needs of girls from minoritised communities as they are likely to have faced additional disadvantages. Girls from these communities may have faced additional discrimination and abuse simply for being who they are.



Why do we need to do things differently?

- ▶ Believe girls when they tell you about what they have experienced – you might be the first person that has
- ▶ Work relationally with them, build a trusting relationship and recognise that girls may have been groomed and/or abused in the past which can make new relationships feel unsafe at first
- ▶ Don't focus on the reason they are with you (after your Asset interview is complete). Ask them about how they are seeing the world, understand their challenges and support them around what they would like to be different
- ▶ Recognise that girls internalise more than boys; be prepared to talk less about what happened and more about why they did

- ▶ Create a safe, friendly space where you can talk together uninterrupted and with trust
- ▶ Think creatively about how you might need to support them in feeling able to tell you difficult things – provide snacks and drinks at every appointment to show you are invested in their wellbeing



¹ <https://weareagenda.org/falling-through-the-gaps/> (2021)

In a paper by CYP Now there is a clear message around the benefit of collaboration between youth justice and third sector agencies. Working together to empower girls is critical, and the Alliance for Youth Justice research indicated that girls and young women

“ want to see this too and tell us how much they value this kind of support where it is available ². ”

What can I do to improve how I work with girls?

▶ Be honest and open, show that you can be trusted

▶ Be consistent – always show up, on time, no matter what

▶ Be humanistic – share a little bit of yourself with girls you're working with such as information about a pet, or a hobby

▶ Always finish a difficult session on a positive – 10 minutes before the end play a game such as 'two truths and a lie' to make sure girls leave your appointments feeling good

▶ After a difficult appointment ask if you can share information with their parent or carer to make sure they are looked after at home – if no, call to check in with the girl later that day

▶ Keep in touch between appointments, call to say hi, or send a text or WhatsApp message – remind them that you are there for them

And if I get really stuck?

▶ Talk to your team and listen to any ideas they have

▶ Get creative! Use stress balls, adult colouring books, or bring a pack of cards to appointments!

▶ Find out what is available for girls in your area – are there any girl specific groups or activities you could both go along to?

▶ And most importantly – ask the girls what she needs from you – make time for this in your work plans with girls to show you are hearing them and respect them



The justice system was not built to understand and respond to the needs of girls, and so we need to use the power and flexibility we have as practitioners to create the best opportunity for them to get what they need from their time with us. We have a unique opportunity to positively impact the future of a number of girls and young women – let's use it.

² <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/analysis/article/how-justice-system-fails-girls> (2021)

