

GINA: women-only services, support & spaces.

Supporting women.

At GINA, we recognise that while all individuals are subjected to sexual violence & abuse, we support & acknowledge the evidence demonstrating that women & girls are disproportionately subjected to sexual violence & abuse, which is influenced by the oppression, sexism & misogyny present in our society.

GINA works to feminist principles, possessing specialisms that support women as a women-led team with lived experience. We believe in this importance of offering 'by & for' services in order to be reflective of the community we serve & better respond to the needs of women. We recognise the need for support, created by & for women, that offers spaces free from males for safety, healing, mutual support & solidarity (where single sex spaces can reduce their distress & trauma); especially in light of their experiences, often of male violence, oppression & trauma.

Honouring our values & origins.

Offering women-only services, support & spaces honours our organisational feminist values, while offering us greater opportunity to focus on challenging the root causes of sexual violence & abuse, challenging/addressing violence against women & girls & exploring women's experiences of intersecting & overlapping systems of oppression. Supporting women enables us to live into our organisational values surrounding the importance of supporting women & girls, working under a feminist framework, challenging the objectification & sexualisation of women & girls, acknowledging sexual harassment, violence & abuse & advocating for pro-choice.

Honouring our organisational origins, supporting women enables us to continue building upon the legacy of Nana Gina to continue offering support & opportunities for women like her, in order to continue working towards creating a world where no woman feels unable to disclose, access support, report & seek justice surrounding sexual violence & abuse.

Sex + gender definitions.

GINA defines women-only services, support & spaces on the basis of single-sex (biological sex).

Organisations may decide to define women-only services as single-gender (services provided to anyone who identifies as a woman or that women's services are for them) or single-sex services (services being provided to women on the basis of biological sex). Evolving theories & debates surrounding sex & gender can impact the existence of single-sex women-only service provision (which is already threatened by funding cuts & gender-neutral policies) & the historical hard-fought legislation surrounding sex-based rights (for instance, access to legal safe abortion & the criminalisation of rape within marriage).

GINA maintains that there is a difference between sex & gender – with sex being a biological fact of having certain chromosomes & bodily organs, upon which gender is inscribed. Replacing sex as a legal category with gender identify erases the biological differences that are the basis of a lot of sexist practices; therefore undermining our ability to talk about women's particular experiences (for instance, women are disproportionately impacted by sex-selective abortion, female genital mutilation, & child marriage). Sexual harassment, violence, abuse, exploitation, discrimination & trauma affects women in particular ways & we need to be able to discuss issues on our own terms, without censure.

The issues of women-only spaces, sex-based rights & the sex/gender question has polarised feminist & LGBT movements. We recognise that balancing the rights of different individuals can be challenging & we call for a respectful discourse surrounding how we can develop & deliver effective services to meet the needs of all individuals. As part of this, we recognise that our understanding & ability to meet the needs of trans women is limited as we do not possess the specialism to best respond to such needs. Therefore, we will continue to support trans women who approach GINA through signposting to specialist services that can better respond to specific needs & circumstances as appropriate. We believe trans individuals should unequivocally be able to access specialist services that meet their needs. Therefore, where the protected characteristics of sex & gender reassignment conflict, another space/service is needed & better placed to support, with an ethos of 'led by & for' to meet the distinct needs of each protected group without violating the rights of either group.

Women-only spaces.

It is still widely acknowledged by expert service providers that single-sex, trauma informed spaces are crucial in providing safe spaces for healing from violence & abuse for women. However, there is a trend towards gender neutral commissioning of services & consequently, woman-led single sex services are losing funding, which results in local communities losing the deep expertise & decades of experience these services provide.

On the basis that the Equality Act, however imperfectly, does cover the rights of women's organisations to remain single-sex (through the single-sex exceptions), we believe it is important to defend the principle of single-sex spaces, which is inherently exclusionary of half of the human population, as it is based on sex characteristics. Males (characterised as having certain physical/biological attributes), generally have a physical strength & social power as a sex group that is denied to most women in a similar situation; with all statistics demonstrating that men in general perpetrate violence against women at very high levels. This is why women developed & need their own spaces, to heal - away from all men, regardless of individual culpability.

Signposting to support.

We acknowledge that males are subjected to sexual violence & abuse. We believe it is important to offer choices for males for specialist service provision, from organisations who possess specialisms enabling them to better meet & respond to the needs of males to a higher level than we are able to at GINA. We value the specialisms that organisations represent & can signpost/direct males accordingly dependent upon their support needs & wishes.

We understand that sexual trauma & a lack of access to support is compounded by racism, homophobia & disability. We advocate for dedicated spaces for ethnically minoritized women, LBT women, neurodivergent women & disabled women, both inside & outside of GINA, although we do understand & acknowledge that some individuals may find specialist services from other providers that are more appropriate in meeting their needs.