

April 2023

Maia

A resource for professionals supporting young women and girls

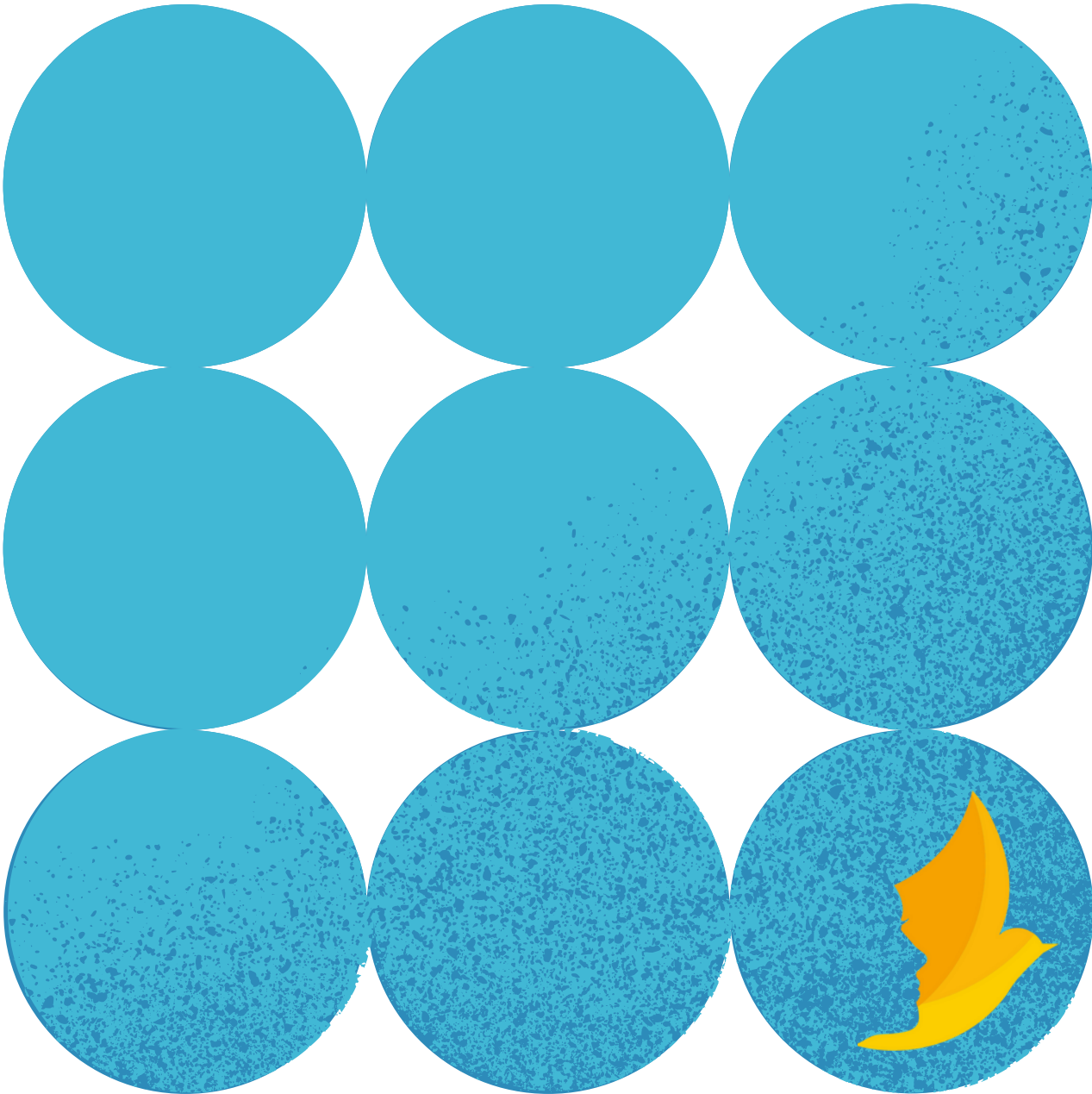


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The Maia Service

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The Maia service was developed in response to gaps in high-quality provision for young women and girls, whose needs and vulnerabilities are not being identified or addressed by existing services. Maia is part of a collaborative partnership led by Advance, alongside Chance UK (delivering the LIFT programme with a younger cohort), and specialist partners, Woman's Trust and Working Chance. The service walks alongside self-identifying young women and girls, providing safe spaces, and access to vital support at the earliest opportunity, to prevent harm or further harm.

The Maia and LIFT partnership supports young women and girls aged 9-25 who are at risk of abuse or becoming involved in crime, providing a pathway to early intervention and prevention support. Together, this partnership combines operational expertise in children's services (Chance UK), violence against women and girls (Advance), mental health (Women's Trust) and employability (Working Chance). The partnership also has experience and success in upskilling and working with a range of professionals – including the police, courts, probation, health, housing, schools, and social care – essential in engaging with and improving the whole-system response for at-risk young women and girls. The aim of this partnership is therefore twofold: to work with young women and girls to achieve positive outcomes, and to increase understanding and knowledge of best practice for working with young women and girls across all sectors.



The Maia Approach

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Maia is unique in its approach to working with young women and girls, underpinned by support which is voluntary, trauma-informed, flexible, consistent and persistent. The service provides long-term support, and operates within safe, women-only spaces.

Voluntary

Maia operates within a voluntary framework, and support is determined by willingness and readiness to engage. Young women and girls are encouraged to take agency, deciding for themselves if and how they would like to be supported.

Trauma-informed

Trauma-informed support is central to the provision of the Maia service. Young women and girls are not asked to continuously repeat their story or recall traumatising events. Information is only sought if it is needed to help keep young women and girls safe.

Flexible

The service remit does not prescribe a set way of working, and there is no requirement to collect specific and detailed information within short periods of time. Maia allows young women and girls to identify for themselves what support they are ready for and would like at that time.



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Consistent

Consistency is crucial for young people who have previously, or may currently, be experiencing trauma and instability in their lives. Maia places emphasis on providing consistent support, striving to uphold time and space for young women and girls, through periods of both engagement and non-engagement.

Persistent

Even when engagement is low, Maia aims to be a constant in the lives of young women and girls, persisting with regular contact and scheduled sessions, aiming to become a figure who can be relied upon.

Long-term

Long-term support is central to operating within a trauma informed framework. Maia goes beyond addressing individual needs to identify more pervading patterns, empowering young women and girls to put in place long-term solutions that will extend beyond their time with the service.

Women's centres

Women's Centres play a key role in the Maia experience and young women and girls are encouraged to take ownership of the space. The centres offer a relaxed space which has been built around their needs and provides an opportunity for young people to work with the Maia service in a face-to-face capacity.



The Maia Model

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The Maia model is young women and girl-led, offering one-to-one advocacy and strengths-based support from a Maia Mentor Advocate. The Maia offer also includes:

Tailored group sessions focused on empowering young women and girls to support each other and look to the future

Support from peer mentors with lived experience

Specialist group sessions on employment support for young women and girls who are 18+

Specialist group counselling for young women and girls who are 16+

Use of empowerment models to collaboratively create a safe space for young women and girls to tell their story

During sessions, Mentor Advocates will draw on different approaches such as active listening and motivational interviewing to build relationships with young women and girls. Sessions may incorporate educational or reflective elements, or Mentor Advocates may simply create an open and safe space for young people to explore what is happening in their lives at that time.



Best practice: Mobilisation

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The following strategies outline a best practice approach for setting up a service for young women and girls, drawing on Advance's learning from developing and implementing the Maia service.

01

Referral pathways

Establish clear referral pathways and make referral processes quick and easy to complete.

02

Building relationships

Build and strengthen relationships with other agencies to establish partnerships and joined up support.

03

Implementing support

Stagger the introduction of added value work to maximise uptake of service offers. Focus on fully embedding one-to-one support first.

05



Best practice: Delivery

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Tailored support for young women and girls should be:

01

Voluntary

To allow young women and girls to lead on their support, and choose their preferred format and type of sessions and contact.

02

Trauma-informed

With a focus on building trusting relationships, absent from pressure to make disclosures of current or historic abuse.

03

Flexible

To fully embed the approach of meeting young women and girls where they are at. Support should be tailored to individual needs and goals.

04

Consistent

Through holding space for each young woman and girl with the goals of facilitating long-term engagement.



Why work in a Partnership?

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An effective partnership is beneficial for:

01

Improving access

Embedding a 'no wrong door' approach improves accessibility to support for young women and girls.

02

Knowledge sharing

Delivery is improved where knowledge and learning is shared within a partnership. In turn, this betters outcomes for young women and girls.

03

Maximising reach

Partnerships can widen opportunities and pathways to support for young women and girls through the different remit and reach of their services.

04

Securing funding

Partners are able to work together to secure long-term funding and create capacity across the young women and girls sector.

