



We - Dorothy Hodgkinson, Tayba Azim, and Erene Hadjiioannou - became a steering group via IWC in 2019. Our aim is to challenge the issues posed by the Crown Prosecution Service guidelines on 'pre-trial therapy'. The guidelines apply to victims of any crime who have an active report, investigation, or trial and are accessing talking therapy at the same time.

Our working experience made us see how the guidelines disproportionately affect survivors of sexual and domestic violence.

In practice the guidelines state a victim of a crime cannot talk about the details of what happened as this is their oral evidence, which must be protected. Additionally legal requests for therapy notes can happen as a form of collecting evidence.

There is no standardised nor mandatory training for therapists in working pre-trial, making adequate service provision sparse or potentially inadequate. Simply put, survivors cannot speak freely in therapy as they would expect to and the confidential nature usually inherent in receiving therapeutic support is jeopardised. Therefore, there are many gaps for survivors to fall through at a very vulnerable point in their lives.

So far, we have liaised with legal professionals, therapists, and survivors to push back against the issues caused by the guidelines. We contributed a report to a public Crown Prosecution Service consultation in November 2020 as part of this.

Although the guidelines are due to be updated, perhaps with the above clauses removed, access to justice and talking therapy simultaneously remains a problematic issue for many survivors. As such, our work continues.

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Dorothy Hodgkinson is a freelance strategy and development consultant to the voluntary sector with over a decade's experience as an Independent Advocate. She has supported many clients through challenging circumstances, including the use of past or current domestic/sexual abuse within legal hearings on parental capabilities.

Erene Hadjiioannou is an Integrative Psychotherapist, author, speaker, trainer, and activist. She holds specialist skills in supporting survivors of sexual violence of any gender.

Tayba Azim is an Integrative Psychotherapist and Mizan Practitioner (traditional reproductive healing). She specialises in supporting individuals who have experienced trauma and possesses a wealth of knowledge on women's rights in Islam, separating culture and spiritual abuse to what the Quran states.