

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2

INFORMED BY EVIDENCE, PRACTICE EXPERTISE AND LIVED EXPERIENCE

It is widely accepted that practice and policy should be informed by up to date evidence and not simply be based on instinct, opinion or ideology.

Evidence-based practice refers to models, approaches or practices found to be effective through research. Traditionally, approaches to research and evidence-building have tended to privilege objectivity, with meta-analyses, systematic reviews and randomised controlled trials considered to be more scientifically rigorous and therefore the strongest forms of or 'gold standard' evidence. However, this evidence hierarchy downplays the ways that empirical knowledge intersects with politics, theory and values in decision-making around policy and practice. Feminist critiques recognise that decision-making is never objective and acknowledge the contexts – specifically the gendered contexts – in which knowledge is produced, shared and translated into policy and practice, which the traditional evidence hierarchy ignores.¹

A feminist approach and gender lens is critical when interpreting evidence to address violence against women. This means considering who designed, conducted and published the research, which viewpoints and voices are included, and which are not. It also means examining the metrics, tools, and methodologies used – which can reflect and reinforce social structures and inequalities.

Women's and other diverse voices and experiences have historically been left out of what is considered relevant as evidence, and DVRCV's commitment to feminism and intersectionality recognises that these voices – of women who have experienced violence, of women with diverse experiences of gender and of practitioners who work to prevent and respond to violence – must be central in our approach to addressing violence against women. Similarly, valuable knowledge, skills and insight gained by professionals through experience preventing and responding to violence against women cannot always be captured or transferred through traditional research methods. Therefore, it is important to state explicitly that our work is informed not only by an evidence base, but also by the skills and knowledge developed and strengthened through

direct prevention and response practice, and by women's lived experiences of gender, power, discrimination and violence. This combined knowledge informs our understanding and analysis of research and evidence as it applies to violence against women.

Our work to address violence against women is informed by:

- **Evidence** – published information, including academic research as well as organisational reports, program evaluations, policy papers, submissions and grey literature.
- **Practice expertise** – knowledge and evidence gained through direct experience working with women and children who have experienced violence and/or designing and implementing primary prevention activities.
- **Lived experience** – women's lived experiences of gender, discrimination, harassment, oppression and violence, and their lived experiences of the service systems they interact with.

This means we use a balance of these different kinds of knowledge to inform our work in capability development, policy, advocacy and primary prevention.

EVIDENCE-INFORMED AND EVIDENCE INFORMING

Ensuring our work is informed by up to date evidence, practice expertise and lived experience means being flexible and responsive, keeping track of new and emerging knowledge, and adapting to align with this. Our work also contributes to expanding and strengthening the evidence base, through capturing and sharing insights from our own activity, as well as supporting and participating in broader research and evidence-building work.

NOTES:

1. **What can policymakers learn from feminist strategies to combine contextualised evidence with advocacy?** (Malbon, E., Carson, L. & Yates, S., 2018)