Women's spaces within homelessness settings

Setting up your service

solace

solacewomensaid.org

Solace Women's Aid is a charity registered in England & Wales. Charity Number 1082450. Company Number 3376716.

The London Community Foundation

londoncf.org.uk

The London Community Foundation is a registered charity (1091263) and company limited by guarantee (4383269). Quality accredited by UK Community Foundations to standards endorsed by the Charity Commission.

THE CONNECTION at st martin-in-the-fields

connection-at-stmartins.org.uk

The Connection at St Martin's is registered in England and Wales Company No.3852519
Registered Charity No. 1078201. Registered Office: 12 Adelaide Street, London WC2N 4HW

Contents

1. **Introduction** page 3
2. **The need for women's spaces** page 4
   a. Counting women's homelessness
   b. The relationship between women's homelessness and gender-based violence
   c. Gendered assumptions about women's homelessness
   d. Women's experiences of mixed-sex homelessness services
   e. Women-only provision
4. **Considerations for setting up a women-only provision** page 8
   a. Organisational buy-in
   b. Trauma-informed approach
   c. Co-production
   d. Accessibility
   e. Trans inclusion
   f. Partnership working
   g. Advertising and promotion
   h. Measuring outcomes
   i. What works
   j. Note on accommodation-based services

Introduction

Research indicates that women experiencing homelessness frequently feel unsafe in mixed-sex homelessness settings; they have often experienced violence and abuse at various stages of their lives, and are at heightened risk of exploitation and violence during periods of homelessness. Consequently, most, if not all, best practice guidance and toolkits produced around women's homelessness repeatedly call for the creation of women-only spaces as a means to encourage women to access services and to provide emotional and physical safety for clients when they do so.

This guidance explores the rationale behind women's spaces, the benefits of such spaces and considerations for developing women's spaces within mixed-sex homelessness settings. It is hoped that this guidance will support the sector to develop gender– and trauma-informed services to increase access to safe and supportive spaces for some of the most vulnerable women in society.

This guidance was created in collaboration with several homelessness organisations in the form of interviews, focus groups and workshops, learning from the establishment of women-only provision at The Connection at St Martin's (CSTM), existing research on women's homelessness and women only-spaces, and women with lived experience in the form of focus groups and surveys.

Women's Development Unit

This guidance was produced by the Women's Development Unit, a partnership project between The Connection at St Martin's and Solace Women's Aid. The project is working to promote best practice in and bring strategic focus to women's homelessness in London. While the project is focused on London, the research indicates that many of our findings are applicable nationally.

The Women's Development Unit is kindly funded by the Evening Standard's ESI Homeless Fund, managed by The London Community Foundation.

The need for women's spaces

Counting women's homelessness

A growing evidence base indicates that women are present in the homeless population in much greater numbers than is generally assumed and that women's homelessness has been underestimated due to methodological errors in data gathering.[1]

Whilst flaws in the methodology of official government homelessness and rough sleeping figures are well documented,[2] and the UK only began to include a gender breakdown of rough sleeper counts in 2016,[3] women are additionally excluded from such estimates for several reasons:

- There is a reliance on data gained from observing those who are bedded down or about to bed down on a given night, which fails to capture women who, for reasons of safety, are more likely to be constantly 'on the move' than men, instead utilising more hidden locations such as public transport, A&E and 24-hour food establishments, particularly at night.[4]
- Narrow conceptions of homelessness with a focus on rough sleeping as its extremity result in an overrepresentation of men and the notion that women tend to be 'hidden homeless' (i.e. living in precarious situations, sofa-surfing or staying with friends, family or partners),[5] with the associated implication that this is a less severe or damaging form of homelessness.[6]
- The distinction between domestic abuse and homelessness services results in an underrepresentation of the extent and misunderstanding of the nature of women's homelessness.[7]

The relationship between women's homelessness and gender-based violence

Research consistently highlights the link between women's experiences of homelessness and gender-based violence and trauma, noting that such experiences are 'near universal' for this group of women. Numerous studies have also highlighted the bi-directional relationship between women's homelessness and domestic abuse, given the heightened risk women face whilst homeless, which often leads to further and new experiences of violence and abuse.[8]

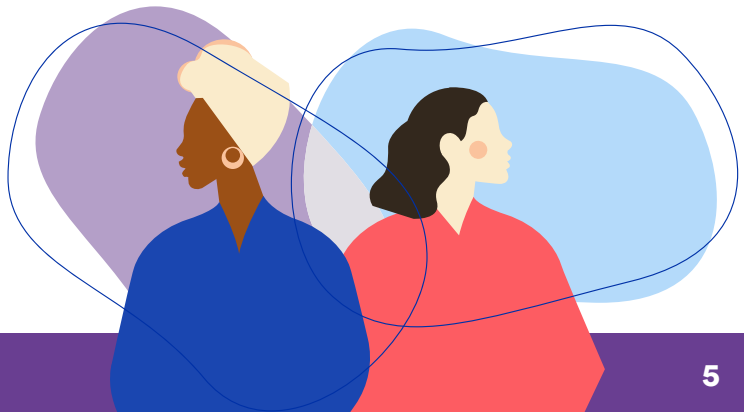
During periods of rough sleeping, women report being continually threatened, verbally abused, sexually abused, robbed and harassed for sex by male members of the public and described themselves as living with a constant fear of violence.[9] Many women believe that they have no viable option other than to enter into relationships for protection from the wider risks of living on the streets;[10] however, this often leads to further experiences of exploitation and domestic abuse. Reports of women engaging in survival sex in order to access accommodation and basic necessities are also common.[11]

Whilst experiences of violence and abuse are unfortunately common amongst people who are street homeless, irrespective of sex,[12] the gendered nature of sexual harassment, exploitation and domestic abuse cannot be ignored.[13] Homeless women report victimisation at consistently higher rates than their male counterparts. Notably, rough sleeping women express that this risk is posed not only from the general public, but also from homeless men who may seek to exploit their vulnerability.[14] Similarly, while domestic abuse can and does affect men, it is far less common in the life experience of men who become homeless.[15]

Meanwhile, domestic abuse continues to be a common cause of family homelessness, which in itself is highly gendered, disproportionately affecting lone women parents.[16] Numerous sources also highlight the many women who feel they have no option but to remain in abusive relationships in order to avoid situations of homelessness, particularly migrant women and those subject to 'no recourse to public funds' conditions.[17]

Gendered assumptions about women's homelessness

The role of stereotyping and its influence on our conceptions of women's homelessness has also been highlighted. Women are traditionally thought to be 'protected' from homelessness due to their frequent roles as primary caregivers to children, their presumed greater willingness to seek out support in comparison to men and the greater range of services available to them, such as domestic abuse agencies.[18] However, evidence does not support these assumptions: a high number of women experiencing homelessness have had children removed from their care;[19] women are less likely to seek out formal support after becoming homeless than their male counterparts;[20] and refuge provision for women with multiple or complex needs is extremely limited.[21] The assumption that women rough sleep in much lower numbers than men and that 'hidden' forms of homelessness are less severe or damaging means that a detailed analysis of the needs of women have been overlooked in service design and are given little consideration in strategy and policy.[22]



Women's experiences of mixed-sex homelessness services

Research suggests that women can often be invisible in generic, mixed-sex homelessness provision as they tend to actively avoid services that appear to be designed for and dominated by men. Some women feel vulnerable in support services where men are in the majority, particularly if they feel that adequate protections are not provided in these settings.[23] In 2006, Crisis found that day centres can be 'hostile, challenging environments which women wish to avoid'.[24] Similarly, women have described experiencing sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation within mixed-sex accommodation services.[25] Research carried out with homeless women in Camden found that 49% of women surveyed reported leaving accommodation because of experiences of violence and abuse (or risk of) and for some women this occurred numerous times.[26] Women also reported accommodation providers moving them on as the 'solution' to their experiences of violence and abuse in unsafe accommodation. For some women, mixed-sex environments are a barrier to accessing services at all and this may be particularly pronounced for the many women who have experienced male violence.[27]

Repeated studies into women's experiences of accessing homelessness services revealed that women tend to enter services at a later stage than men and are more likely to present with problems that are more entrenched or have escalated significantly. Women had often made multiple unsuccessful attempts to access services over periods of prolonged homelessness.[28] As a result, women are often less 'ready' to begin any journeys to safety, recovery and stability when they initially interact with services. Consequently, this leads to further stigmatisation and barriers to accessing services who perceive them as 'complex' or 'difficult' in comparison to male clients.[29] This continues the cycle of disadvantage, isolation and marginalisation from people and services that further increases vulnerability to exploitation, abuse and long-term housing instability.

The evidence available suggests a different approach needs to be taken when supporting homeless women, taking into account their perceptions of risk and safety, frequent

experiences of male violence and the barriers they face in accessing support. There is increasing awareness of the need to provide gender-informed support in the homelessness sector and movement away from the notion that male-dominated spaces are gender-neutral. Many organisations have begun to reflect on their service offer to female service users, establishing women-only, trauma-informed spaces as best practice.[30] Whilst this is positive, it is far from widespread or embedded within policy and practice. In 2021 the Centre for Homelessness Impact concluded that 'few generic homelessness services are truly gender-informed and thereby equipped to provide sensitive and appropriate housing and support to women'.[31] In addition, progress that had been achieved was noted to have stalled, if not reversed, during emergency responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Service providers have noted that the needs of female service users were often viewed as an 'add-on' as opposed to being interwoven into service provision[32] and The Kerslake Commission (2021) reported 'the lack of gender-informed provision continued during the Everyone In initiative, which was geared to meet the needs of people who were most familiar to services: adult men'. [33]

Women-only provision

In order to provide psychologically informed environments, it is recommended that mixed-sex organisations establish, at a minimum, women-only service provision in a separate space, at least for a few hours a week, to enable more women to access services.

Mounting evidence indicates that women experiencing homelessness and multiple disadvantage value women-only services, primarily due to perceptions of the safety such a space offers.[34] In addition, women-only spaces were found to promote:

- Emotional and physical safety
- Opportunities to connect with other women who have had similar experiences
- Opportunities to have their experiences heard and understood
- Opportunities to discuss domestic and sexual violence and the role that such experiences have played in their lives
- A reduction of feelings of shame and isolation
- A space where women can reflect on the experiences of moving through the world as a woman, the power inequalities and social expectations placed on them and the consequent impact on their wellbeing.

A recurring theme throughout the research was the importance of not only having a space or service for female service users but also that staff are women too – this is seen as intrinsic to a true women-only service.

It is, however, important to recognise that women are not a homogenous group. Not all women avoid services where men are present and some women express a preference for mixed-sex services.[35] Similarly, women experiencing homelessness may have male partners and want to access services as a couple, which requires a different approach (see footnote for resources on working with couples).[36]

While it is essential that those who do want single-sex spaces are accommodated, more must be done to ensure that services are safe spaces for women whenever they choose to access them, and to increase capacity to respond effectively to women experiencing multiple disadvantage more broadly. In practice, this means a commitment to developing gender-informed practice in all service delivery, through adherence to agreed principles and reflecting on changes to wider service provision that need to be made in order to achieve this.

Considerations for setting up a women-only provision

Organisational buy-in

Organisational buy-in from frontline staff to senior management is essential. All staff and service providers need to be aware of the relevance, importance and benefits of gender-informed approaches to working with clients, with this being interwoven with organisational ethos and approach.

In developing women's spaces there is a need to determine where the service will sit within the wider organisation; is the service held, managed and run by various teams or one specific female lead or team? Does the service naturally fit within an existing team or service? Meeting the needs of female clients may require a departure from 'business as usual' and a different approach to mixed-sex provision. Working together and fostering collaboration across the organisation to create the space can be a positive way of encouraging the organisation as a whole to think about the needs of female clients and what it means to be gender-informed. Cross-organisational collaboration also avoids women's spaces being an 'add-on' for one team or part of the service and encourages male staff who may not be staffing the service to get involved and contribute to service development. Clear roles and responsibilities and an understanding of the purpose of women-only provision is essential.

Within mixed-sex services, cultivating buy-in with staff teams can include:

- Mandatory training for all staff
- Recruiting champions and/or lead roles that focus on women to cascade and embed learning throughout the organisation
- Developing organisational strategies and fundraising plans to ensure women's experiences and support requirements are included
- Creating and/or expanding women-only provision
- Conducting assertive outreach to take the support to women.

Evidence suggests that using a range of these methods in tandem, driven by a top-down approach, is most effective for implementing a gender-informed approach.[37]

Trauma-informed approach

There is little to be gained from creating women-only spaces that are not actually guided by trauma-informed principles: to provide effective services for women, understanding must go beyond 'sex segregation' to include gender socialisation and relational theory.[38]

Trauma-informed care is defined as a 'strengths-based framework that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasises physical, psychological and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment'.[39]

Research indicates that women who experience multiple disadvantage benefit from relational-based support and that relationships with the people delivering the service are crucial to its ability to engage women. Women with lived experience value warmth, empathy, friendliness and flexibility in staff and see these as crucial components to building trust and relationships.[40] This was also echoed when exploring push and pull factors to accessing services and women's spaces with CSTM service users.

It is essential that all staff receive training on trauma-informed support and the importance of promoting emotional, as well as physical, safety. Staff should be knowledgeable about common experiences of women and their routes into homelessness, as well as gender-based violence and its impacts. This includes being aware of the individual but also relational and social contexts in which women operate, recognising the wider socio-political influences in women's lives, as well as how this intersects with other forms of discrimination and disadvantage.[41] It should not be assumed that staff inherently know how to provide this kind of support without training and support, as well as clinical supervision to enhance staff wellbeing and resilience whilst working with complexity.

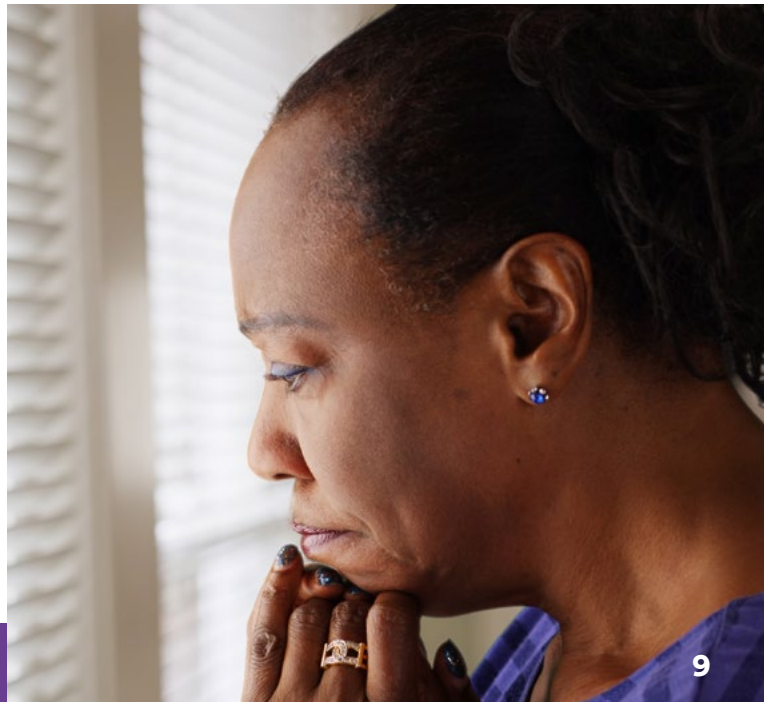
Homeless Link found that practitioners and staff teams who were supported to increase their knowledge and awareness of the specific needs of women and gender- and trauma-informed approaches demonstrated: [42]

- Increased capacity to respond effectively to women experiencing multiple disadvantage
- More compassionate attitudes towards women
- Increased capacity to understand women's circumstances
- Increased recognition of areas where women might need more support
- Good-quality referrals into appropriate support services
- Increased ability to advocate effectively for women

It is also recognised that homelessness services manage a high level of risk and complexity. While enhancing the quality of provision across all services that women access is essential, specialist services can and should be utilised.

This can take the form of:

- Commissioning training from external specialist agencies
- Cross-sector training
- Recruiting women's lead workers with backgrounds in gender- and trauma-informed work who can create opportunities within teams and organisations to focus on the needs of female clients
- Partnership working to create effective referral pathways



Co-production

For women experiencing multiple disadvantage, abuse and trauma, having choice and control become central to their recovery. As a group who are often stigmatised by services themselves, ensuring that women are listened to and communicating that their views are valued can contribute to the significant relational repair work that often goes into trauma-informed practice.

There are a variety of ways that clients can be included in the design and development of women's provision:

- Focus groups and interviews, asking women what they want from the space, what their skills are and what they can bring
- Conducting research with women
- Providing a range of options through which women can provide input e.g. creative arts projects
- Providing opportunities for women to co-design physical space and materials
- Utilising outreach teams to have conversations with rough sleeping women
- Holding regular feedback meetings
- Gathering ongoing feedback from clients attending services throughout sessions and through informal discussions

Fulfilling Lives has created guidance on co-producing with clients experiencing multiple disadvantage and provides a useful illustration as to whether such activities amount to co-production or take the form of consultation and feedback.[43] Genuine co-production with women with lived experience ensures representation in decision-making roles and can improve commissioning processes.

Consideration should also be given to appropriate compensation for service user involvement; women with lived experience are often the only people in the room unpaid for their contribution.

Compensation can encourage women to recognise the value of their opinions and ideas, increase self-esteem and articulate the employability skills they develop from such roles.[44]

Co-production should aim to be as representative as possible. Black and minoritised women and migrant women are overrepresented in homelessness figures, as are LBTQI+ people and young women (aged 25 and under). Services should also make efforts to reach out to women not already accessing homelessness services to capture their views as to what would encourage them to do so.

Accessibility

Given the shape of women's homelessness and patterns of transitioning in and out of rough sleeping, sofa-surfing, using informal support and being insecurely housed, women's spaces should avoid barriers or strict referral criteria that may exclude people, such as an emphasis on rough sleepers, which exclude those who are insecurely housed or in potentially unsafe accommodation, or restrictions on a particular geographical location. Services we consulted which had existing women-only provision reported having broad remits. Although these services primarily work with rough sleeping women, their women's spaces are open to those in various housing pathways and those who are vulnerably housed. Crucially, support should not be withdrawn simply because women are housed, given many

women report feeling unsafe in accommodation and may require support to manage transitions.

Services should also recognise that women facing multiple disadvantage may be less likely to be 'ready' to start their journey to recovery and may engage sporadically, sometimes for years before accessing formal support.[45] Services should acknowledge the reality that people's pathways of progress and recovery are different, rarely linear, and should be available for women to access as and when needed. It is essential that services acknowledge and accommodate this reality rather than punish it by excluding people, closing cases or placing unrealistic conditions on access that require women to meet the needs of services.

The importance of a safe space to 'just be' has been highlighted by women with lived experience – having an initial safe base in which women can relax, connect with others and feel valued was seen as a crucial step which allows women to start addressing other needs in their own time. Research indicates that when supporting women experiencing multiple disadvantage, there is a need to 'slow down the pace of interventions' and provide a space for women to engage with a service to the degree that they want.[46] Services should try to be as flexible as possible to allow women to build relationships with staff over time, access support at their own pace and reduce conditional access to services insofar as possible.

Women with lived experience also identified having to complete lengthy assessments as one of the most off-putting aspects of accessing services. Having informal welcome meetings with service users and asking clients what they want from the service or what they would like to achieve today can yield positive results and allows women to set the pace and communicate their priorities. Ideally, provision should include spaces with a range of options of structured and unstructured activities (including basic care), where women are not pressured to engage with assessments, casework or group work but can do so if they choose to.

Language support is also essential to ensure accessibility to all and particularly those who may face difficulties communicating their needs more broadly. Services should consider the needs of those who do not speak English when designing services, giving consideration to the range of interpreting services available and ensuring that staff are confident in their use and able to quickly draw upon such resources when the need arises.

Trans inclusion

Research on trans people's experiences of the homelessness system highlights negative perceptions within the trans community of statutory and voluntary services resulting in a tendency to avoid accessing services at all.[47] The most common reasons for avoiding services were a fear of being misunderstood, a belief that services do not have anything to offer them and a belief that services will be unable to meet their needs. Those who had accessed services reported feeling unsafe in accommodation settings. Participants in the research identified that psychological and physical safety is less likely to be compromised in services that understand and anticipate the needs of this group.

It is important that services actively advertise that they are open to anyone who identifies as a woman, not only in advertising materials for their women's spaces, but also by actively promoting the service within the LGBTQI+ community.

Organisations should ensure that LBT women are considered in the needs of women's provision, and that this should not be assumed to be delivered in wider LGBTQI+ provision.

Research indicates that staff often express a lack of confidence in supporting trans women in women's services due to a lack of specialism.[48] It is suggested that using a person-centred approach, coupled with training to improve understanding of intersecting identities and the additional barriers and discrimination trans women face (including within services themselves) will enhance the ability to provide effective support for this group of women. Partnerships should also be built with specialist LGBTQI+ services to provide such training and to identify referral pathways, so clients can easily be connected with these services if they wish to be.

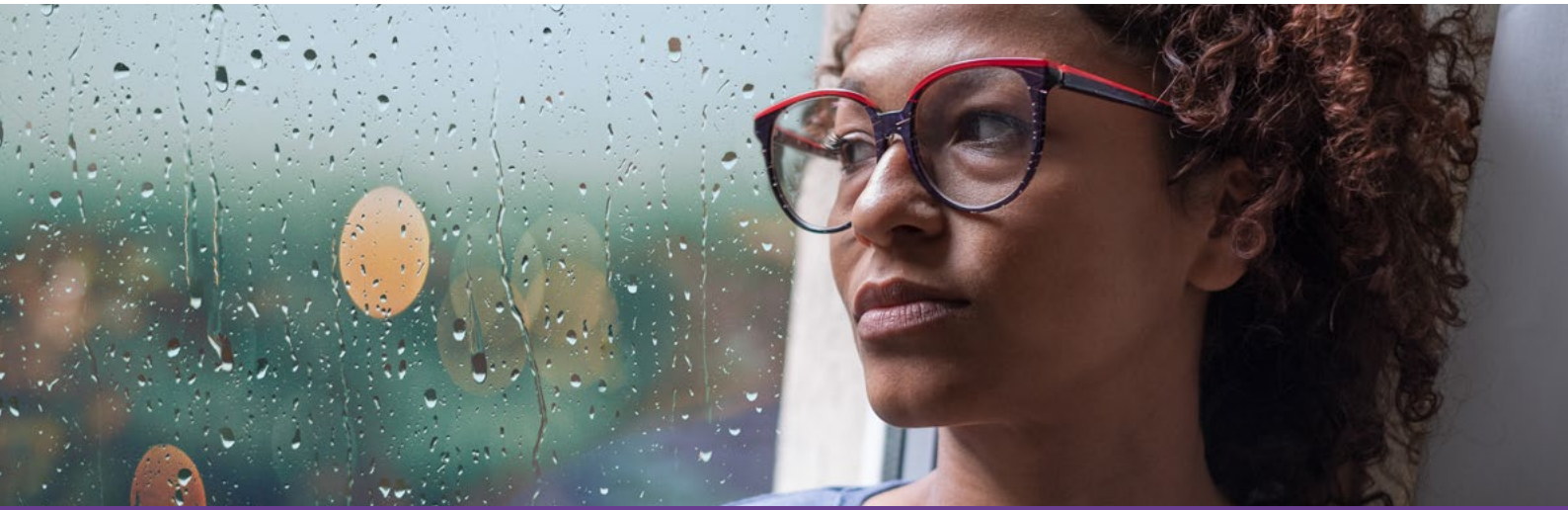
Fears that trans women will be discriminated against by other service users also appears to be a common concern amongst professionals and research with trans people supports this, noting that the majority of adverse experiences within housing and homelessness services originated from other service users.[49] However, participants noted this was often compounded by lack of proactive action by staff. Staff should have the confidence to respond to homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language every time they hear it and to challenge this appropriately, taking the opportunity to build understanding and empathy for trans people and address any questions or concerns from other service users, to maintain a safe space for all. This can be part of the organisation's wider inclusion and equality activities with staff and service users increasing awareness of other cultures, groups and identities.

Partnership working

The lack of integrated care for women experiencing multiple disadvantage has been highlighted. Women with lived experience expressed the difficulty of having to meet the needs of different services in terms of referral processes, location and timing of support, as well as having to retell their story to various professionals. Services should aim to work collaboratively to provide holistic, integrated services in order to reduce the barriers so that women can access support for multiple issues in one place.[50] In particular, women have expressed a desire for in-reach services from health, housing, domestic and sexual violence agencies, mental health and drug and alcohol services in women's spaces.

Given the overrepresentation of Black and minoritised people in homelessness figures,[51] and the lack of research into their experiences and needs specifically, consideration should be given to funding and forming partnerships with specialist 'by and for' organisations and those who specialise in supporting migrants and refugees.

Partnership working can be implemented on an operational level, including joint delivery of services, single point of access approaches or 'one-stop shops' with co-located staff or multi-disciplinary teams. It can also be achieved at a strategic level in the form of capacity building and encouraging culture change. Several examples of good practice can be found in the Ending Women's Homelessness Fund Insights and Impact report (2021) in which organisations collaborated to create (or enhance existing provision of) women's spaces, utilising both gender- and trauma-informed approaches.[52]



Such approaches were found to increase women's access to and engagement with specialist support, as well as allow the time needed to build relationships. They were also found to have brought the following benefits to organisations:

- Increased capacity in terms of specialist knowledge
- Increased ability to assess and manage risk
- Access to shared resources
- Improved referral routes
- Increased understanding and engagement with multi-agency forums
- Shared responsibility for clients experiencing multiple disadvantage

For effective partnership working, consideration should be given to the roles and responsibilities of partners and co-located staff, particularly of the lead partner, to ensure smooth service delivery.

Funders and commissioners can incorporate requirements that encourage collaboration between the homelessness and specialist women's sector to improve the service offer to women experiencing multiple disadvantage.

Advertising and promotion

Given the evidence that current practice is designed to engage rough sleeping men, and that many women experiencing homelessness are unaware of the support available to them and avoid male-dominated services, additional consideration needs to be given as to how to reach this group. Suggestions from women with lived experience for advertising women-only spaces included:

- Women's refuges
- Women's prisons
- Soup kitchens
- Hospitals
- Drug and alcohol services
- Homelessness healthcare services
- Probation services
- Libraries
- Police stations
- Partner agencies

Advertising with specialist migrant and immigration support services is also an important way of encouraging those who may have additional concerns and fears about accessing services to do so and communicating that services and safe spaces are available to them, even if statutory support may not be. Promotional materials should also be produced in a variety of languages (and local demographics can be used to inform this) so that those with no or limited English are not excluded.

Having an online presence so caseworkers or women searching online can find it and share details may also be beneficial.

Measuring outcomes

In light of the evidence on women's homelessness, further consideration needs to be given to what constitutes positive outcomes for women-only provision and how this will be recorded. Outcomes focusing on quantitative reports of women accessing accommodation, for example, leave no space for discussion of what that accommodation is and women's perceptions of their safety within it. Research has indicated the value of positive relationships between staff and service users as a key component in achieving wider outcomes (such as housing and employment) and therefore argue that building positive relationships should be viewed as an outcome in and of itself.[53] However, services using a relational model can often struggle to demonstrate their impact.[54] So-called 'softer outcomes' can be devised that adequately describe the significant work that goes into trauma-informed approaches, providing emotional safety, relationship building and empowerment.

This will depend on the type of service provided but some suggestions include:

Emotional wellbeing:

- Provision of emotional support
- Support to identify and develop healthy coping strategies
- Improved self-care
- Improved self-regulation
- Improved self-worth and confidence
- Increased sense of safety
- Improvements in managing symptoms of mental ill-health
- Increased awareness of services and support available

Relational:

- Improved relationship with staff
- Increased amount of contact with staff
- Increased engagement with staff
- Improved understanding by service of client's situation and support needs
- Improved awareness and access to other services
- Support to engage with other services
- Support to better manage relationships with others (including children)
- Improved wider support networks
- Perceptions of being valued by services and staff
- Discussions around healthy relationships
- Psycho-educational work around gender-based violence

Practical support:

- Access to food, showers, laundry
- Access to safe and suitable accommodation
- Access to healthcare
- Access to legal advice (immigration, family law, public law)
- Increased number of women accessing the service
- Increased access to practical measures for existing clients
- Risk assessment and management
- Increased safety and feelings of safety

Empowerment:

- Access to and awareness of resources
- Increased self-efficacy
- Increased control and choice
- Training, employment, skills building, increasing economic stability and independence
- Advocacy support
- Increased awareness of rights and options
- Future planning – client able to identify ambitions and goals

Qualitative data and case studies can often be more useful than quantitative data for capturing individual journeys and change. There is also a need to recognise that people's journeys can often be non-linear and therefore tracking changes and outcomes over time may be more representative than relying only on outcomes achieved at a specific 'end' point.[55]

What works?

- Environments where women are accepted, valued and respected
- Warm, friendly staff who genuinely care
- Cultural competency
- Relationship building
- Meeting women where they are – challenging our expectations of how clients should behave and engage with us and instead really listening to what they want
- Openness and flexibility
- Emphasis on no demands at the point of access
- Understanding of how trauma presents
- Flexibility in the type of services available e.g. group work, drop-in, counselling, arts and crafts, workshops, structured activities
- Importance of a space vs a group where women can 'just be' rather than feel pressured to engage
- Recognising clients can find it intimidating to access services
- Staff being present and taking part, building equality of membership of the group
- Sense of community
- Peer support

Note on accommodation-based services:

The complexity of the challenge of adapting mixed-sex accommodation into gender-informed services should be acknowledged. Whilst much of this guidance can be applied to women-only provision within accommodation settings, services we spoke to varied in perception of success of this, with several noting that women often felt that women-only sections within mixed-sex accommodation actually made them more vulnerable – they felt more visible and seen in those spaces than if they were dispersed across accommodation projects.

Further research is needed in this area to explore female service user views and what best practice would look like. What might be a starting point is for services to review placement decisions and the practice of placing women in accommodation alongside men with histories of violence, domestic abuse and sexual offending. This could highlight the need for women-only accommodation and provision for men with particular offending histories, but also go some way towards decreasing risk within mixed-sex accommodation.

[1] Bretherton, J and Pleace, N. (2021) Women's Homelessness in Camden: Improving Data, Strategy and Outcomes.

[2] UK Statistics Authority. (2015) Assessment of compliance with the code of practice for official statistics: Statistics on homelessness and rough sleeping in England.

Fitzpatrick, S., Pawson, H., Bramley, G., Wilcox, S., & Watts, B. (2016) The homelessness monitor: Great Britain 2016. London: Crisis, 14.

[3] Department for Communities and Local Government Rough Sleeping Statistics Autumn 2016, England.

[4] Reeve, K. (2011) The hidden truth about homelessness: Experiences of single homelessness in England. London: Crisis. St Mungos (2014) Rebuilding Shattered Lives: The final report. London: St Mungos

[5] Pleace, N. (2016) Exclusion by definition: The under-representation of women in European homelessness statistics. In Women's homelessness in Europe (pp. 105-126). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

[6] Raisbeck, T. (2021) Violence Under Quiet Conditions: Initial Enquiry into Women and 'Rough Sleeping' within Birmingham.

Groundswell (2020) Women, Homelessness and Health: A Peer Research Project.

[7] Baptista, I. (2010) Women and homelessness. Homelessness research in Europe, 163-186.

[8] Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2018) Women and rough sleeping: A critical review of current research methodology. York: University of York / Centre for Housing Policy.

[9] Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse (2021) Keeping us safer: An approach for supporting homeless women experiencing multiple disadvantage.

[10] Clement, S. and Green, W. (2018) Couples First? Understanding the needs of rough sleeping couples. Brighton: Brighton Women's Centre.

[11] Reeve, K., Casey, R. and Goudie, R. (2006) Homeless women: Still being failed yet striving to survive. London: Crisis.

Reeve, K. (2018) Women and homelessness: putting gender back on the agenda. People, Place and Policy Online, 11(3), 165-174.

[12] Sanders, B. & Albanese, F. (2016) "It's no life at all": Rough sleepers' experiences of violence and abuse on the streets of England and Wales. London: Crisis.

[13] World Health Organization. (2021) Violence against women prevalence estimates, 2018: global, regional and national prevalence estimates for intimate partner violence against women and global and regional prevalence estimates for non-partner sexual violence against women.

McNeish, D., & Scott, S. (2014) Women and Girls at Risk: Evidence across the life course. DMSS.co.uk.

[14] St Mungo's (2014) Rebuilding Shattered Lives: The final report. London: St Mungo's.

Mackie, P. & Thomas, I. (2014) Nations apart? Experiences of single homeless people across Great Britain. London: Crisis.

Young, L. and Hovarth, T. (2019) Promising practice from the frontline: Exploring gendered approaches to supporting women experiencing homelessness and disadvantage. London: Homeless Link.

Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse (2021) Safety by Experience.

[15] Bretherton, J. and Mayock, P. (2021) Women's Homelessness: European Evidence Review. Brussels: FEANTSA.

[16] Bretherton, J. (2017) Reconsidering gender in homelessness. European Journal of Homelessness _ Volume, 11(1).

[17] Mayock, P., Parker, S. and Sheridan, S. (2015) Women, Homelessness and Service Provision. Dublin: Simon Communities in Ireland.

Women's Aid (2020) The Domestic Abuse Report 2020: The Hidden Housing Crisis. Bristol: Women's Aid.

Solace (2019) Safe as Houses. London: Solace.

Mayock, P.,Sheridan, S. and Parker, S. (2012) Migrant Women and Homelessness: The Role of Gender-based Violence European Journal of Homelessness 6(1), pp. 59-82.

[18] Raisbeck, T. (2021) Violence Under Quiet Conditions: Initial Enquiry into Women and 'Rough Sleeping' within Birmingham.

Bretherton, J. (2017) Gender Dimensions in Conceptualisations of Homelessness: Theoretical and operational (in) visibility (Doctoral dissertation, University of York).

[19] Reeve, Kesia (2018) Women and Homelessness: putting gender back on the agenda. People Place and Policy Online, 11/3, 165-174.

[20] Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2018) Women and rough sleeping: A critical review of current research methodology. York: University of York / Centre for Housing Policy.

[21] Women's Aid 2019 Nowhere to turn: Findings from the third year of the No Woman Turned Away Project

[22] Bretherton, J and Pleace, N. (2021) Women's Homelessness in Camden: Improving Data, Strategy and Outcomes.

[23] Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2018) Women and rough sleeping: A critical review of current research methodology. York: University of York / Centre for Housing Policy.

St Mungo's (2014) Rebuilding Shattered Lives: The final report. London: St Mungo's.

Bretherton, J. and Mayock, P. (2021) Women's Homelessness: European Evidence Review. Brussels: FEANTSA.

[24] Reeve, K., Casey, R. and Goudie, R. (2006) Homeless women: Still being failed yet striving to survive. London: Crisis.

[25] St Mungo's (2014) Rebuilding Shattered Lives: The final report. London: St Mungo's.

Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse (2021) Safety by Experience.

[26] Bretherton, J and Pleace, N. (2021) Women's Homelessness in Camden: Improving Data, Strategy and Outcomes.

[27] Holly, J. (2017) Mapping the Maze: Services for women experiencing multiple disadvantage in England and Wales. London: Agenda & AVA.

[28] Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2018) Women and rough sleeping: A critical review of current research methodology. York: University of York / Centre for Housing Policy.

Bretherton, J and Pleace, N. (2021) Women's Homelessness in Camden: Improving Data, Strategy and Outcomes.

[29] St Mungo's (2014) Rebuilding Shattered Lives: The final report. London: St Mungo's.

Sharpen, J. (2018) Jumping through hoops: How are coordinated responses to multiple disadvantage meeting the needs of women? London: AVA, MEAM, Agenda and St Mungo's.

[30] Young, L. and Horvath, T. (2019) Promising practice from the front line: Supporting women who experience homelessness and multiple disadvantage. Homeless Link and Women's Resource Centre (WRC).

[31] Bimpson, E., Green, H. and Reeve (2021) Women, homelessness and violence: what works? Centre for Homelessness Impact.

[32] Homeless Link (2020) Learning from the Ending Women's Homelessness Fund Case Studies. London: Homeless Link.

[33] The Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2021.

[34] PIE4shelters (2018) - Making Shelters Psychologically-and Trauma-Informed;

Sharpen, J. (2018) Jumping through hoops: How are coordinated responses to multiple disadvantage meeting the needs of women? London: AVA, MEAM, Agenda and St Mungo's;

Holly, J. (2017) Mapping the Maze: Services for women experiencing multiple disadvantage in England and Wales. London: Agenda & AVA;

St Mungo's (2014) Rebuilding Shattered Lives: The final report. London: St Mungo's;

Women's Resource Centre (2007) Why women-only? The value and benefits of by women, for women services;

Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse (2021) Safety by Experience;

Porchlight (2019) Seeing the unseen: Meeting the needs of women sleeping rough in Kent;

Agenda (2019) A Sense of Safety: Trauma Informed Approaches for Women;

Moss, K. (2018) A study of women rough sleepers in four European countries. Wolverhampton Law Journal, 1(1);

Ava & Agenda (2017) The core components of a gender sensitive service for women experiencing multiple disadvantage. London: AVA & Agenda.

[35] Jones, A. (1999) Out of Sight, Out of Mind: The Experiences of Homeless Women, London: Crisis.

[36] Clement, S., Green, W., (2018) Couples First? Understanding the needs of rough sleeping couples. Brighton: Brighton Women's Centre.

St Mungo's (2020) Homeless Couples and Relationships Toolkit. London: St Mungo's.

[37] Horvath, T. and Young, L. (2021) Insights and Impact from the Ending Women's Homelessness Fund. Homeless Link.

[38] Agenda (2019) A Sense of Safety: Trauma Informed Approaches for Women.

[39] Hopper, E.K., E.L. Bassuk, and Olivet, J. (2010) Shelter from the storm: Trauma-informed care in homelessness services settings. The Open Health Services and Policy Journal, 3, pp 80-100.

[40] Holly, J. (2017). Mapping the Maze: Services for women experiencing multiple disadvantage in England and Wales. London: Agenda & AVA.

Sharpen, J. (2018) Jumping through hoops: How are coordinated responses to multiple disadvantage meeting the needs of women? London: AVA, MEAM, Agenda and St Mungo's.

[41] Holly, J. (2017) Mapping the Maze: Services for women experiencing multiple disadvantage in England and Wales. London: Agenda & AVA.

[42] Horvath, T. and Young, L. (2021) Insights and Impact from the Ending Women's Homelessness Fund. Homeless Link.

[43] Fulfilling Lives Lambeth Southwark Lewisham (2021) Embedding Co-production Part 1: Learning and insights.

[44] Horvath, T. and Young, L. (2021) Insights and Impact from the Ending Women's Homelessness Fund. Homeless Link.

[45] Holly, J. (2017) Mapping the Maze: Services for women experiencing multiple disadvantage in England and Wales. London: Agenda & AVA.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Shelter Cymru (2019) Homelessness among trans people in Wales. Swansea: Shelter Cymru.

[48] Stonewall (2018) Supporting trans women in domestic and sexual violence services: Interviews with professionals in the sector.

[49] Shelter Cymru (2019) Homelessness among trans people in Wales. Swansea: Shelter Cymru.

[50] Bretherton, J and Pleace, N. (2021) Women's Homelessness in Camden: Improving Data, Strategy and Outcomes.

Sharpen, J. (2018) Jumping through hoops: How are coordinated responses to multiple disadvantage meeting the needs of women? London: AVA, MEAM, Agenda and St Mungo's.

McNeish, D., & Scott, S. (2014) Women and Girls at Risk: Evidence across the life course. DMSS.co.uk.

Agenda (2019) A Sense of Safety: Trauma Informed Approaches for Women.

[51] Shelter (2020) Black people are more than three times as likely to experience homelessness. Published online:https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/black_people_are_more_than_three_times_as_likely_to_experience_homelessness.

[52] Horvath, T. and Young, L. (2021) Insights and Impact from the Ending Women's Homelessness Fund. Homeless Link.

[53] McCarthy, L., Parr, S., Green, S., & Reeve, K. (2020) Understanding Models of Support for People Facing Multiple Disadvantage: A Literature Review.

[54] Fulfilling Lives LSL (2021) Re-thinking Outcomes: A practical guide for services designed for people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

[55] Ibid.

Thanks and acknowledgements

Thank you to the Evening Standard's ESI Homeless Fund and the London Community Foundation for their support of the Women's Development Unit which has enabled us to produce this guidance.

With particular thanks to Niamh Kehoe, Women's Development Unit, The Connection at St Martin's.

With thanks and acknowledgements to the women with lived experience and colleagues at The Connection at St Martin's and Solace who contributed to these findings and planning and piloting of the new women's space at The Connection at St Martin's.

With thanks to the organisations who kindly contributed to best practice exploration meetings which contributed to this guidance, including:

Change, Grow, Live
The Connection at St Martin's
Fulfilling Lives Islington and Camden
Glass Door
Homeless Link
London City Mission
Micro Rainbow
New Horizons Youth Centre
The Passage
St Mungo's
Single Homeless Project
Standing Together Against Domestic Violence

With additional thanks to the numerous organisations whose research and interviews with the Women's Development Unit continue to inform and support our work.

Solace

Solace is a leading specialist charity in the UK supporting women and children experiencing domestic abuse and sexual violence. Whatever form violence comes in, from rape to trafficking to relationships based on psychological or financial control, we work to end it. We know that escaping the effects of violence can be the hardest thing to ever do. That's why the lifesaving support that Solace provides to more than 23,000 women, children and young people each year is so important.

Website | www.solacewomensaid.org
Twitter | @SolaceWomensAid
Facebook | /SolaceWomensAid

Media contacts: media@solacewomensaid.org

Fundraising contacts:
fundraising@solacewomensaid.org

Solace Women's Aid is a charity registered in England & Wales. Charity number 1082450. Company number 3376716.

The Connection at St Martin's

The Connection at St Martin's works with people who are rough sleeping to move away from, and stay off, the streets of London. We're alongside people as they recover from life on the streets and move towards a meaningful, fulfilling future. We do this by tackling the underlying causes of rough sleeping as well as offering practical help and support to get into accommodation.

Website | www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk
Twitter | @homelesslondon
Facebook | /TheConnectionAtStMartins

Media contacts: media@cstm.org.uk

Fundraising contacts:
fundraising@cstm.org.uk

The Connection at St Martin's is a charity registered in England & Wales. Charity number 1078201. Company number 3852519.

February 2022