

Gender Informed Principles for Homelessness services: Co-produced with women with lived experience of homelessness

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Relationships are the basis for healing. Every interaction is an opportunity to be gender and trauma informed.

Honesty and transparency, kindness and decency, warmth and humour

Offer choice and control at all times and work towards co-production with women

Understand and respond to trauma as a gendered experience: VAWG, child removal, wider societal inequalities

Avoid retraumatizing processes and co-produce strengths-based alternatives

Offer safety through women only services, spaces and relationships... but understand this is not for everyone. Have clear pathways and support offers for women in couples

Recognise and respond to how gender-based discrimination intersects with other forms of identity.

Understand impact of structural sexism and organisational trauma on service design and delivery. Recognise and respond to systemic challenges.

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Gender and trauma informed principles for women's homelessness provision: Co-produced recommendations

Relationships are the basis for healing. **Every** interaction is an opportunity to be gender and trauma informed.

“Just do it, even if they (the client) tell you to go away, you’ve got to help them. You really want someone who will stick with you, and still be kind”.

For services supporting women experiencing multiple disadvantage, traditional outcome measurements and frameworks do not always capture client journeys meaningfully, or reflect the benefits of the support received. Outcome measurement should also focus on ‘soft’, relational outcomes, captured in co-produced ways such as client interviews, client case studies, client wellbeing self-assessment tools, etc. See the [Re-thinking Outcomes Guide for services](#) for more information.

Offer choice and control at all times and work towards co-production with women

“Listen to what the women want. The women are telling you what they want.”

To counteract the feelings of powerlessness caused and perpetuated by trauma, services should offer women choice and control, in all aspects of a woman's experience of the service. This should include support planning processes, flexible engagement options including outreach approaches for building based services, and environmental factors. Services should also demonstrate a wider commitment to co-production at an organisational level, with a plan to work towards co-producing all key aspects of service design and delivery. See the [Co-Production Toolkit developed by FLIC](#) for more information.

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homelessness**

Understand and respond to trauma as a gendered experience: VAWG, child removal, wider societal inequalities

“I’ve had bad things happen... too many to name.”

Partnership service models to bridge the gap between the homelessness and VAWG sectors and organisations are highly desirable, and joint working between homelessness, VAWG and specialist women’s services is essential if women’s needs are to be understood and responded to.

Avoid re-traumatizing processes and co-produce strengths-based alternatives

“I can’t do paperwork, it makes me anxious – I was always being asked to do more paperwork”

Assessments, support plans, risk assessments, multi-agency client meetings, and all written forms of communication relating to housing services should be re-configured with women with lived experience to ensure that they work for women, do not patronise or re-traumatise women, and ensure equity of access to women. All these processes should recognise women’s strengths and protective factors, before addressing goals that remain.

Understand impact of structural sexism and organisational trauma on service design and delivery. Recognise and respond to systemic challenges.

“There were services for men, clothes for men... not for women. They would always speak to my partner, not to me.”

Gender equality in services should be a central goal, not an “added value”. Services, whether they are outreach, hostels, floating support or Housing First, have been predominantly designed for men experiencing homelessness. It is not enough to apportion more of an existing service to women. The design and delivery of all aspects of the service need to be re-imagined and re-configured with women’s experiences front and centre. Gender and trauma informed

walk-throughs of existing services can help to identify areas for development. Services also need to push back against wider systemic issues that affect the women they support. Block and barriers can be captured, collated and escalated using the Team Around Me model.

Recognise and respond to how gender-based discrimination intersects with other forms of identity.

“They always say, go to the woman’s group. But what if I don’t fit in at this woman’s group?”

Services need to recognise that gender is just one factor of women’s identities, that women’s experiences are unique, and that gender intersects with many other factors that can marginalise people, including race, sexual orientation, age, disability, class, etc. It is essential that services explore intersectionality in their support of women, and recognise that one service cannot meet the unique needs of every woman. Services should consider language, culture, physical ability etc in their service offers, strive for equity of access and experience, and broker strong partnerships with specialist ‘by and for’ services and organisations to enable women to access external support tailored to their individual needs.

Offer safety through women only services, spaces and relationships... but understand this is not for everyone. Have clear pathways and support offers for women in couples

“I could never get support when I was with a partner, never. He wouldn’t allow it.”

It is essential that woman have women’s only spaces to live in/access if that is what they want – this includes women only staff teams, including concierges and night workers. However, services also need to respond to the complex dynamics of women experiencing homelessness when they are in relationships, including where domestic abuse is present within the relationship. Women experiencing homelessness will often form relationships to keep themselves safer on the streets, and lack of provision for couples, as well as the coercive control of perpetrators, can perpetuate women’s homelessness. For examples of innovative thinking and good practice, see Standing Together’s Guidance & recommendations for supported accommodation & Housing First providers responding to perpetrators of domestic abuse accessing their services.



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*“I want someone who is kind, someone
to have a laugh with, maybe someone
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themselves...someone I can trust.”*

Services should prioritise values-based, relational practice and offer a range of relational support including 121 keywork, group work, peer support, community support. Women should have available to them clear, co-produced processes around how to request a change of keyworker. Recruitment should be co-produced, with an emphasis on relational and values-based skills and attitudes.