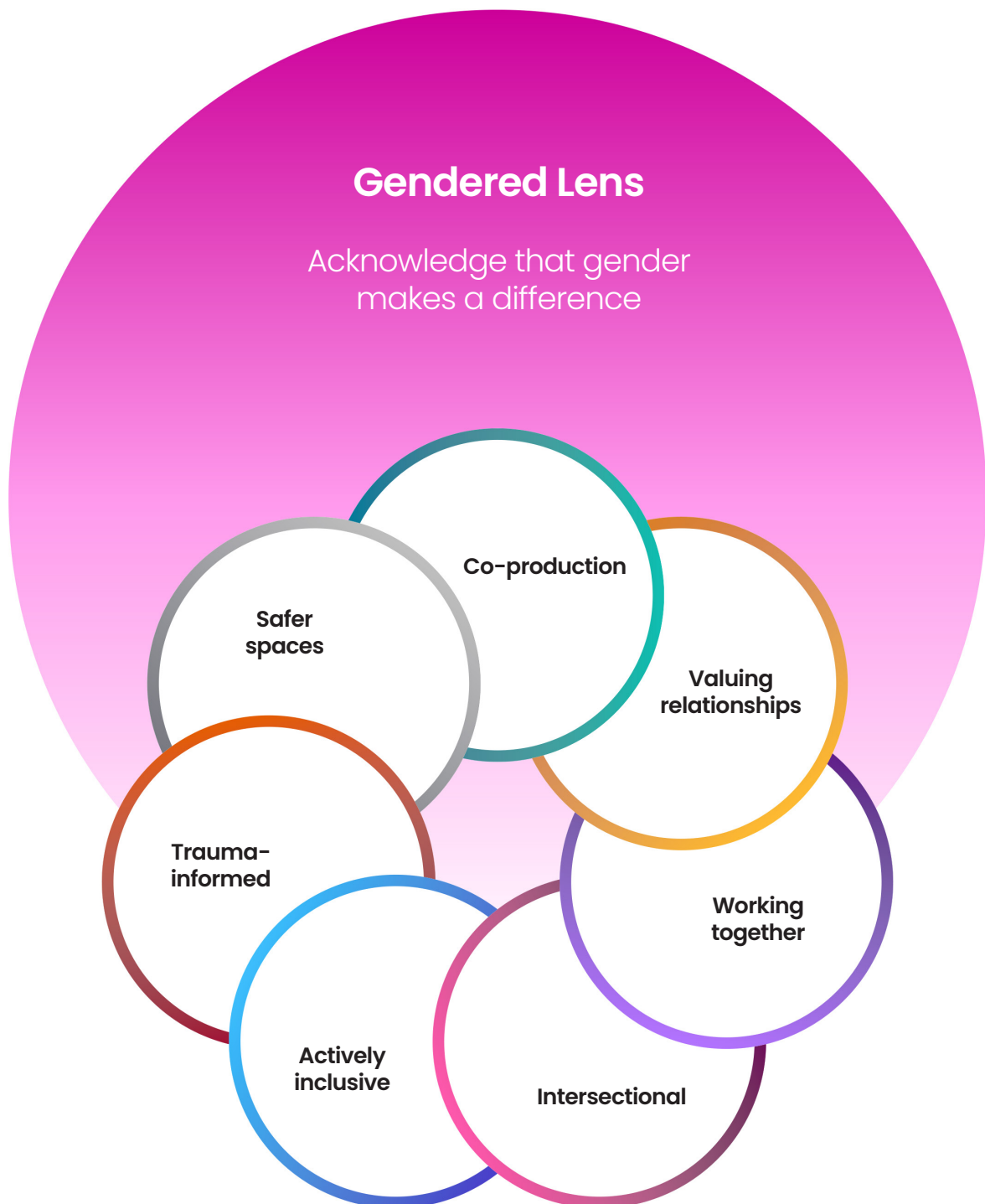


The Gendered Lens Framework: explanation and top tips

This is an extract from the document 'embedding a gendered lens in homelessness services: a framework for design and delivery'. It contains the explanation and top tips for embedding a gendered lens and delivering the seven associated approaches. Please refer to the full document for guidance on why and how to implement the gendered lens framework.



Gendered lens: acknowledge that gender makes a difference

What does this mean?

- The service understands the experiences and needs that predominantly or disproportionately affect women, such as all forms of gender-based violence (including domestic abuse, sexual violence, grooming and exploitation and harassment), selling or exchanging sex and child removal.
- The service understands and responds to the gender inequalities which impact routes into and experiences of homelessness, such as lower wages, vulnerability to welfare cuts, gendered discrimination and stigmatisation.
- There is acknowledgement and understanding of the impact of gender on a person's relationship to services. This includes barriers to support resulting from systems within which the service is embedded that privilege men, for example, strict verification requirements that do not reflect that women are more likely to experience transitory patterns of homelessness.
- The service recognises the opportunities for creativity, innovation and community that are available when an understanding of gender inequalities and a strengths- based approach are embedded.
- The service acknowledges that gender makes a difference to all those who operate within it, including all staff.

Top tips for delivery

- Ensure all staff within the service have training on gendered needs, including but not limited to: gender-based violence, domestic abuse, health needs, and child removal. Consider procuring training from local specialist services and exchanging training to reduce costs.
- Ensure organisational policies are in place, which respond to gendered needs including, but not limited to: domestic abuse, sexual violence, harassment, and women's health.
- Recognise and take steps to work effectively with perpetrators of domestic abuse as well as survivors.
- Review existing policies with the goal of addressing the disproportionate impact on women. For example, review and reevaluate eviction policies to account for gendered reasons for absences e.g., sex work and caring responsibilities.
- Create regular reflective spaces for staff - from commissioners to frontline workers - to consider the extent to which the service has adopted a gendered lens.
- Disaggregate and analyse all data by gender. Use this to inform the development of future strategy, for example, the development of bids for future contracts.
- Recruit or appoint a specialist women's or violence against women lead to maintain focus on women's needs and safety within services.

Co-production

What does this mean?

- There is an organisational commitment to ensuring that at all levels they are informed by those who use their services and those for whom the service is intended. Those who are involved in this process are adequately compensated and respected for their time and contribution.
- There is a recognition that if people who use the service are listened to regarding all aspects of the service, then it is more likely to meet their needs. This includes, but is not limited to, matters related to the design of the service, policies and procedures, recruitment and training of staff.
- The service seeks to amplify the voices of the people who use their services, externally as well as internally.
- This work is integrated and ongoing, incorporated into the service's reflection and development.

Top tips for delivery

- Consider steps to ensure proportionate representation of gender in existing co-production groups and/or establish a co-production group for women.
- Using a gendered lens, collaborate with people who use the service to review and redesign the policies and procedures followed by frontline staff; this includes personal assessments, support plans, and multi-agency meetings.
- Ensure the complaints procedure is fit for purpose, familiar, and accessible to all those who use the service.
- Ensure that outcome measurement is focused on relational outcomes, often referred to as 'gendered' outcomes. These outcomes can be captured in co-produced ways such as interviews with women, case studies and well-being self-assessment tools.
- Collaborate with people who use the service to review, co-design and decorate physical spaces.
- Involve people who use the service in the recruitment process

Valuing relationships

What does this mean?

- The importance of good quality relationships is recognised. These are relationships which may display qualities such as honesty, transparency, kindness, decency, warmth and humour.
- There is an understanding that relationships of trust between frontline practitioners and individuals are important and take time to be built; processes are designed to enable the building of relationships.
- Healthy connections to friends, family, significant others, and the wider community are promoted and supported.
- The service recognises that a women may wish to reconnect with a child that has been removed from their care, and is designed to enable this where it is possible.
- Peer relationships are valued and supported to develop the creation of mutual empowerment and support.

Top tips for delivery

- Recognise the potential negative impact of staff being responsible for both administering punitive policies and procedures and sustaining and building relationships. This could be avoided by ensuring one staff member does not hold both roles.
- Adopt an approach that aims to rebuild relationships, following incidents that might damage relationships between service users and staff.
- Consider how the design of the service may facilitate contact with children or other significant family members e.g., flexible visiting hours and arranging phone calls/ internet access to contact family members.
- Organise healthy relationship workshops/training for all those who use the service, including men.
- Create opportunities to strengthen community within the service for example by organising events on festive occasions.
- Create opportunities for women to build connections with communities outside the service, for example, by running activities in local community spaces that are open to the public.
- Do not adopt a risk-adverse approach when supporting couples. Engage with the resources available on how to improve the support for women in relationships.

Working together

What does this mean?

- Multiple agencies collaborate to ensure the person has access to the most appropriate support for their wishes and needs, which may be gendered.
- The knowledge and contribution of the women's sector is valued.
- Where a person's support is provided by multiple agencies, there is clarity of roles and responsibilities to avoid them having to repeat unnecessary information and to prevent work from being duplicated or neglected.
- Multi-agency working is done in collaboration with the person being supported, seeking to maximise their choice and control in the development of their support. This includes understanding where a person might not want to engage with an agency.
- It is understood that providing a single point of access for support from multiple agencies can improve the services' accessibility, helping overcome complexity and practical barriers as well as enabling the choice and control of a person.
- The service understands the limits of its provision and is aware of the resources and referral provision that can provide appropriate support based on a person's needs and wishes.
- Multiple agencies build and maintain strong relationships with each other, and create spaces for effective communication, reflection, peer learning and best practice.

Top tips for delivery

- Identify and build relationships with local services that can support service users on key gendered and specific needs, including but not limited to, immigration advocacy, refugee and asylum support, debt advisory services, domestic and sexual abuse services, sex work advocacy, child removal advocacy and support and LGBTIQ+ advocacy.
- Identify opportunities with partners for resource and knowledge sharing. This could include peer training, shadowing each other's services, or using each other's buildings.
- Develop a clear partnership agreement, which sets out the roles and responsibilities of all participating agencies.
- Co-locate with other services. Consider developing a multi-agency drop-in service or 'one stop shop'.
- Attend and/or coordinate local forums, meetings and events, which consider how to improve support for women experiencing homelessness.
- When multiple agencies are working with one woman, consider appointing a lead practitioner to provide consistency. Consult with the person as to whom they have the strongest relationship with to inform the decision.

Intersectional

What does this mean?

- There is an understanding of the interconnected nature of gender and other forms of structural disadvantage such as race, disability, sexuality, gender identity. It is recognised that the intersection of these identities may negatively impact the associated biases, assumptions, and challenges a person faces.
- There is understanding of the impact of the broader context of structural inequality on policy, commissioning, language, attitudes and behaviours and personal experience.
- There is recognition of the importance of specialist provision – also known as ‘by and for’ organisations – and there is commitment to supporting their continued existence and growth.
- The service recognises that power dynamics between itself, other agencies and people who use their service are also affected by the broader context of structural inequality.

Top tips for delivery

- Ensure all staff adopt a tailored, person-centred approach to developing support plans, which considers the range of intersecting needs a person may have. Aspects of a support plan that consider safety planning and risk management, should recognise and respond to the person’s particular needs and risks.
- Review all policies and practices on data collection and sharing to ensure the needs and wishes of all women are considered and respected, for example, the impact of sharing information with public bodies on a person’s immigration status.
- Develop and review policies to promote the inclusion of marginalised women and to protect staff from discriminatory attitudes and behaviours.
- Provide staff with training on understanding different women’s needs, for example, training on supporting women to overcome cultural and language barriers.
- Disaggregate and analyse all data by all protected characteristics and ethnicities. Use this to inform the development of future strategy and practice, for example, which languages to translate documents into.
- Seek to build equitable relationships with specialist services in the local area. Recognise their expertise, share resources, and create spaces for peer learning.

Actively inclusive

What does this mean?

- The service understands and is designed to address the gendered and multiple unmet needs of the women they seek to support.
- The service is flexible in its approach, recognising and being responsive to the needs and circumstances of the people who wish to access its service.
- The service provides information and support in an accessible way.
- The service challenges local systems and services which impose onerous access requirements that prevent women from receiving support.
- There is consideration for how the service can meet the practical needs of all women.
- The service understands that women who face additional access barriers may need more support to navigate complex systems than their counterparts.
- The service demonstrates culturally informed practice that acknowledges, respects, and integrates women's cultural values, beliefs, and practices. This includes practice which is sensitive to women's specific circumstances related to race and ethnicity as well as faith/religion.

Top tips for delivery

- Ensure the service's location is safe and accessible to the women who need it.
- Provide support to women in times or locations that are safe and accessible to them; this might include adopting assertive outreach practices, using other service's building, altering the service opening hours.
- Ensure staff have access to language translation services and all written information advertising and explaining the service is available in multiple languages and in accessible formats for those with disabilities.
- Ensure women can practice their faith by providing the physical space and articles necessary to do so.
- Accommodate for additional caring responsibilities, for example provide a nursery within the service or deliver support to the person where they're at.
- Provide a wellbeing pack including practical items to address health and care needs, i.e., toiletries, makeup, clothes, sanitary products.
- Seek to understand why a person may have difficulty accessing the service rather than adopting a punitive approach when they fail to do so (attending appointments).
- Provide additional financial support to help women access the service, i.e., phone credit or transport costs.

Trauma-informed

What does this mean?

- The service design and delivery recognise the impact of trauma in the lives of women.
- It is understood that while trauma is personal there is also a relationship between gender and trauma. This includes the impact of interpersonal trauma on women such as experiences of violence and child removal.
- The additional impact of stereotyping and stigma a woman may face for being at risk of and experiencing homelessness is recognised.
- The service recognises and is designed to reduce the risk of re-traumatisation.
- The importance of transparency, communication and consistency to people who use the service is recognised.
- It is understood that the impact of traumatic events is long-term, does not have a quick fix and requires long-term, flexible support.
- The service understands the impact of vicarious and direct trauma on staff and takes responsibility for staff wellbeing and support.

Top tips for delivery

- Ensure staff have training on being trauma-informed, which includes the interaction of gender and trauma.
- Adopt a strengths-based approach that validates the experiences of people being supported and empowers them to make positive changes in their lives.
- Provide support in a non-judgmental way and cultivate a practice of doing 'with' rather than 'for' or 'to' the person.
- Review assessment and triaging processes to consider how much information it is necessary to take. Take steps to empower the person accessing the service to make further disclosures on their own terms.
- Ensure policies and processes on engagement are flexible, enabling a person to access support when they are ready.
- Ensure caseloads are small and case management practice is flexible, enabling the person to be supported at their own pace.
- Show sensitivity to staff's own histories of trauma. Be aware of and provide support for symptoms of burn-out, compassion fatigue and vicarious and direct trauma. This may include reflective practice supervision and access to further support schemes.
- Ensure outcome measurement supports the flexible long-term approach to case management, rather an expectation of a 'quick fix'.

Safer Spaces

What does this mean?

- A safer space is created, designed for the needs and wishes of women. Safer spaces aim to facilitate the physical and emotional safety of all those who wish to access it.
- The location and physical design of the environment, as well as the policies and procedures put in place, consider the safety of those who wish to access it.
- People who access the environment are offered a space to 'just be', receiving support from practitioners as well as their peers.
- The environment has opportunities for individuals to build collective skills, knowledge, and confidence.
- Safer environments may be single-gender and exclude men.
- Safer spaces that exclude men are made available to all those who want them, but it is understood that it will not be the right solution for everyone. Individuals are given choice and control over whether it is a suitable option for them.

Top tips for delivery

- Designate an area or environment with the aim of it being a safer space. This might be the entire service, a floor in a hostel, a room in the service and/or a day of the week or time in the day.
- If it is promoted as a service which excludes men, then ensure this is reflected in the staff.
- Review existing environments to make them safer for all those accessing them (see Your Place gendered walk-through template).
- Consider how to make the environment psychologically informed by using available resources.
- Ensure all staff on the premises, including those responsible for security, take seriously all disclosures of gender-based violence, responding sensitively and in accordance with the service's policies and local safeguarding procedures.
- Create a timetable of activities that support the development of relationships and collective skills of those using the safer space. This might include workshops on healthy relationships, confidence-building workshops, or art workshops (see template). You can also include more therapeutic activities such as haircuts, yoga etc.
- Create a peer support or mentoring programme. Work with those who will be participating in the activities to develop the programme.
- Ensure the confidentiality and privacy of discussions that are held within the space.