



Homeless Link



Insights and Impact from the Ending Women's Homelessness Fund Led by Homeless Link

Contents

Produced by

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Executive Summary

The Ending Women's Homelessness Fund (EWHF) was established by Homeless Link to fund grantees to develop new initiatives or enhance their existing work to improve support for women experiencing homelessness and multiple disadvantage. Homeless Link administered funds received from the Tampon Tax Fund totalling £1.85m to twenty-nine projects. The 29 grantees spanned the homelessness and women's sector and beyond including front-line services and some second-tier organisations. Some were women-only projects and others were mixed services that recognised the need to enhance provision for women. Grantees included a mix of mainstream and specialist services for Black and minoritised women, women involved in prostitution and LGBT women.

This research was commissioned by Homeless Link to explore insights and examples of impact across the Fund. In particular, this research explores four key themes which were identified in previous research as important for effective support for women experiencing multiple disadvantage:¹ gender and trauma informed working, cross-sector partnership working, co-production and staff wellbeing.

Beneficiaries supported through the Fund

2285 new beneficiaries² were recorded by the grantees over the funding period as well as 1767 training delegates.³ In addition to this, the EWHF also supported children, staff from external agencies, and staff from grantees and funded partners.⁴

Women received a combination of women focussed and trauma informed front-line practical and emotional support, housing, advice, advocacy, case coordination, and onward referrals to specialist services.

Children received support for basic needs, referrals to specialist services, safeguarding support and liaison with other voluntary and statutory services.

Training delegates received training which included gender and trauma informed practice as well as training relating to specific groups of women or circumstances that they may experience such as no recourse to public funds (NRPF), immigration, trafficking and exploitation, mental health and experiences of violence against women and girls (VAWG).

Staff from external agencies received information, advice and signposting, improved referral pathways.

Staff from grantees and funded partners developed their knowledge and awareness and strengthened their approach to supporting women.

Reported outcomes achieved

Outcomes for women and children

A significant success of the programme is that women had increased and improved access to safe and appropriate housing options alongside

increased availability and quality of women-only support for a range of practical and emotional circumstances. Women reported improved feelings of safety, wellbeing and hope for the future as a result of engaging with the options available to them through the EWHF and some had been able to resume contact with children no longer in their care.

Outcomes for practitioners and services

Across the homelessness sector in particular, practitioners and staff teams benefited from increased knowledge and awareness of the specific needs and approaches needed to support women; increased staff capacity to respond effectively to women experiencing multiple disadvantage; and demonstrated more compassionate attitudes towards women. Improved practice was also evidenced through women's lead workers and women-only focussed time, space and interventions as well as enhanced partnership approaches to prevent women falling through the gaps in support. Services were also improved from co-producing services and interventions with women with lived experience.

Women-only services which already incorporated these elements were able to strengthen and deepen their existing provision, especially in relation to housing, and test and learn from new approaches to supporting women, stemming from existing organisational commitment and women focussed ethos.

1. 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).
2. This figure is from the quarterly monitoring reports and is not thought to include any existing beneficiaries that the grantees were already working with. This figure does not include data from the final reports due to inconsistencies in the interpretation of the questions. In addition, some grantees were continuing to deliver activities beyond this research period. Therefore, this figure is indicative only. It is unknown whether this refers to

women beneficiaries only or if others are included. See methodology for limitations in the data collected.
3. It is unknown whether any double counting has occurred in the monitoring reports to reach this figure. As it is unlikely that training delegates would engage for more than one quarter, double counting seems less likely.
4. The exact figures are unknown due to inconsistencies in how the data was collected and double counting in the monitoring reports. See methodology for limitations in the data collected.

A unique delivery context

The start of the funded period coincided with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK. This had significant impacts on the grantees, creating a need to respond to the changing circumstances women were facing and changes in local delivery landscapes alongside a need to pause to review their EWHF project delivery plans and adapt. Adaptations made by grantees included: re-aligning mission to respond to the changes in women's circumstances; developing digital inclusion for women; re-designing support to remote delivery; adapting face-to-face delivery in-line with restrictions of the pandemic; and adapting training to online delivery. Some grantees played a significant role advocating for and supporting women into safe and appropriate accommodation during the 'Everyone In' campaign. The grantees' adaptability and ability to support women during the pandemic is a significant achievement.

Gender and trauma informed practice - key insights

Various examples were provided of grantees improving their approaches to working with women. Within mixed services, these included: cultivating buy-in with management teams and board members and developing organisational strategies and fundraising plans to ensure women's experiences and support requirements are included. Some introduced mandatory training for all staff; recruited champions and lead roles to focus on women, cascade and embed learning; and developed guidance and toolkits to accompany training. Evidence suggests that using a range of these methods in tandem, driven by senior managers, is most effective for implementing a gender informed approach.

Both mixed sex services and women-only services improved service design and delivery to women by creating and/or expanding their women-only provision; providing safe spaces where women are not required to repeat their traumatic experiences again and again; conducting assertive outreach to take the support to women; tailoring support to respond to circumstances and needs of particular groups of women; incorporating working with nature through 'talk and walk' sessions; and delivering asset-based and empathic approaches to support.

Some of the ways that grantees engaged with Black and minoritised women included providing services in community languages and/or access to interpreters; training staff to understand forced marriage, honour-based violence and FGM, ensuring services accommodate religious and cultural requirements, and establishing links with specialist services. For women with no recourse to public funds, crisis grants alongside specialist immigration advice were deemed essential.

Cross-sector partnership working - key insights

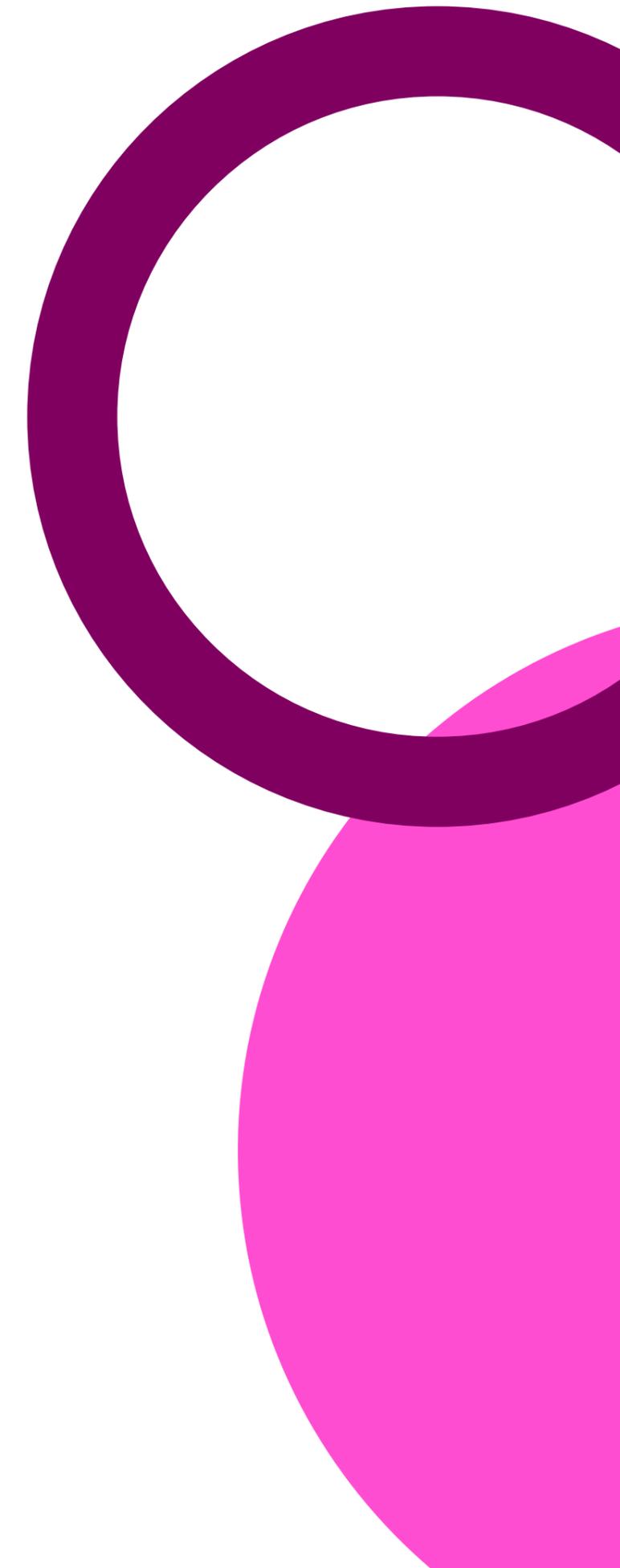
The types of partnership funded through the programme included both formal strategic partnerships between women's centres, domestic abuse services, homelessness services and mental health services to enhance the connections and support pathways, as well as capacity building to enhance informal partnership working approaches.

Benefits and outcomes from the partnership approaches include: breaking down barriers between services; pooling resources which increases organisational capacity; sharing responsibility to reduce the chances of women falling through gaps in services; effective risk management; and increased cross-sector skills and knowledge. The partnership approaches have provided women with increased and faster access to a range of support and increased flexibility in how support is provided.

At the end of the funding period, some projects have chosen to continue to work together due to the difference this has made to the delivery of support and positive outcomes for women.

Co-production - key insights

Co-production activities delivered include developing peer support groups; conducting research with women; holding regular feedback meetings; providing a range of options for women to input including creative arts projects; providing opportunities for women to co-design physical space and materials; and ensuring representation of women with lived experience in staff and decision-making roles. There is evidence from the EWHF that engaging in co-production has enhanced the quality and availability of support, improved commissioning processes, helped women develop their confidence and recognise the



value of their own voice, developed employability skills and helped women secure employment in helping others.

Staff wellbeing – key insights

The COVID-19 pandemic created a whole new landscape and increased pressures for staff and services including increased reports of VAWG, highly emotional and challenging work undertaken from home whilst being expected to deal with isolation, a lack of childcare, home schooling and heightened anxiety about the situation overall. In an attempt to mitigate some of these challenges, grantees introduced new measures to support staff wellbeing. These included: increasing access to clinical supervision; supporting staff to establish boundaries when working from home; providing flexibility in working patterns and hours; providing wellbeing activities and social spaces online to support team bonding; and offering counselling for family members. Some mixed sex homelessness services introduced reflective practice and clinical supervision across their organisation for the first time.

These strategies increased a sense of support available; helped teams to recognise and process emotional impacts of the role and de-personalise challenging situations; and increased empowerment of staff to take wellbeing seriously. In turn, these outcomes helped to increase staff capacity to support women effectively.

Challenges experienced by grantees

As noted in previous research,⁵ grantees reported that there remains a significant lack of understanding in statutory sector services and some voluntary sector services of the specific circumstances of women and the need for a specific focus on women's support requirements. Occasionally this is due to misconstrued attempts to achieve equality by delivering services from a gender-neutral perspective, when this does little to acknowledge the differences in the experiences between men and women or the effective support or approach required.

A number of ongoing systemic challenges in supporting women effectively were also reported, including lack of funding; funding structures which do not support gender informed working; lack of political will and coordinated approaches at both national and

local levels; plus a lack of representation in decision making roles. Government policy on immigration also continues to present multiple challenges and barriers for women who are seeking asylum in the UK and accommodation and support for women with NRPF is also scarce. Barriers to accessing services for Black and minoritised women and a need to embed culturally informed practice across services was advocated.

Programme learning

As well as the learning gleaned from the operational delivery of the EWHF, it is also important to acknowledge the programme level learning. The key aspects include:

- By firstly undertaking research into this topic to use as an evidence base, then recruiting an all-female grants panel to guide the programme and assess applications, the decisions were grounded in an understanding of what works for women and the realities of service provision.
- The programme provided one-to-one support to grantees, facilitated learning events, training and webinars which contributed to building their capacity, confidence and empowerment as well as strengthening networks amongst grantees to work towards a shared vision.
- The programme galvanised support amongst a network of practitioners, services and women with lived experiences to speak up for women and influence decision makers to make progress towards ending women's homelessness.
- While the monitoring data framework developed and administered by Homeless Link generated learning across the programme regarding the progress and challenges experienced by grantees, there were some challenges and gaps in the approach to quantitative data collection which impacted on the usability and robustness of the numbers and types of beneficiaries reached and details of their circumstances.

5. 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).

Conclusion

The EWHF was an ambitious programme that in the midst of a global pandemic has succeeded in supporting women to improve their housing circumstances and personal situations, share knowledge and skills across sectors, develop partnership approaches to supporting women, enhance the quality and availability of support for women and encourage more people to advocate for women on a local and national scale. Overall, the effort and resilience shown by the grantees and the women they support throughout the life of the EWHF cannot be underestimated. The Fund helped to establish a network and community of people and organisations to work towards ending women's homelessness that hopefully can be expanded and strengthened in the future to meet this shared goal.



Recommendations

The following key recommendations are based on findings from the research. For a full list of recommendations please see the full report.

Policy makers

- Government should develop an evidence-led national strategy that ensures the specific needs of all women experiencing homelessness are met across wider strategies to ending rough sleeping and homelessness.
- Government must incorporate a gendered focus into rough sleeping strategies to ensure that the extent of women's homelessness is effectively counted and recognised.
- Encourage and provide funding for gender and trauma informed training for all statutory staff working in housing and homelessness services that come into contact with women experiencing multiple disadvantage.
- Ensure local authorities develop coordinated strategies to support women experiencing multiple disadvantage, embed gender and trauma informed working across all services, develop coordinated approaches to support, guided by the evidence base, practitioner expertise and experts by experience.
- Enable all migrant women who do not yet have leave to remain to access public funds to access safe and secure housing and prevent human rights violations including destitution, experiences of extreme hardship and risks of abuse and exploitation.

Funders and commissioners

- Fund approaches to ending women's homelessness that are

delivered by women's sector specialist services which are underpinned by an ethos and understanding of women's lived experiences of inequality.

- Ring fence funding in the Rough Sleeper Initiative and other grants programmes for gender specific, women-only emergency accommodation and specialist services for women.
- Fund strategic cross-sector partnership approaches to supporting women as these have the benefit of shared aims and objectives, pooled resources and shared responsibility which ultimately facilitates well-coordinated, accessible support for women.
- Develop decision making processes based on robust research and input from women with lived experience and service delivery practitioners experienced in supporting women experiencing multiple disadvantage.
- Embed good quality data collection frameworks and processes into fund design, working with experienced researchers, to help programmes capture relevant data and measure what matters to evidence the outcomes, impact and effectiveness of their initiatives.

Services supporting women

- Embed co-production throughout delivery to create a learning cycle based on women's lived experiences, providing a wide range of options for women to contribute on an on-going basis. Ensure women with lived experience are in decision making roles.
- Where possible form strategic partnerships between women's sector services, homelessness services and other specialist agencies to develop a coordinated approach to support based on shared aims and objectives and pooled resources.
- Organisations to take the lead responsibility for staff wellbeing; create a culture and ethos where staff wellbeing can be discussed

and supported; and dedicate budget to this area.

- Develop culture informed practice to overcome barriers to accessing services for Black and minoritised women. This includes: providing language support; considering women's cultural and religious requirements and how to appropriately meet these; increasing staff knowledge and capacity to support women who have experienced forced marriage; honour-based violence and FGM - and make links with specialist services to provide women options of support.

Specific recommendations for mainstream mixed sex services

- Ensure that there is a commitment to working from an understanding of women's lived experiences at the strategic level, through management and Board understanding and buy-in to this approach, and the development of strategic plans to support women effectively.
- Incorporate elements of women-only provision in service design to help women feel safer and engage with support.
- Embed roles that are women-specific and held by staff with skills and experience in gender informed working to continue to drive a gender informed approach in the organisation.
- Deliver mandatory training to all staff on gender and trauma informed working alongside training on specialist areas of support need.
- Collaborate with women's specialist services to enhance support and provide options for women.

1. Introduction

Following the conclusion of the Ending Women's Homelessness Fund (EWHF) led by Homeless Link, this report documents key insights, impacts and learning from the work to support women experiencing homelessness and multiple disadvantage conducted between November 2019 and June 2021.

Context

In 2019, Homeless Link and Women's Resource Centre (WRC) published Promising Practice from the Frontline - research documenting the different forms of support available for women experiencing homelessness and multiple disadvantage across England.⁶ The aim of that research was to improve policy and practice in this area. An overarching finding was that the type and availability of support differed greatly from project to project. Examples of promising practice were documented which shared some key aspects and characteristics which included:

- An organisational/service commitment to understanding and addressing women's inequality and multiple disadvantage and the impact of violence and abuse.
- Providing women-only, trauma informed, relationship based, flexible support.
- Skilled, qualified, and empathic staff teams trained to work with women who have experienced violence against women and girls (VAWG), trauma, and multiple disadvantage.

The findings and recommendations from this research, coupled with support galvanised during the Homeless Link conference in 2018, led to

the development of the Ending Women's Homelessness Fund (EWHF). In 2019, the EWHF awarded grants from the Tampon Tax Fund totalling £1.85m to twenty-nine projects to develop new initiatives or enhance their existing work in supporting women throughout 2019/2020 by building on those characteristics identified in the Promising Practice report (2019).

As the EWHF draws to a close, researchers were commissioned in March 2021 to draw out key insights and learning from this programme of work.

Research aims and objectives

The main aims of this research were to:

- Document some key insights and impacts from across the programme of work
- Illustrate examples of good practice and learning from the work of the grantees
- Provide key recommendations for carrying out further work in this area

Methodology

This research project was conducted between April and July 2021 including qualitative methods and analysing existing quantitative data collected over the EWHF. Methods included interviews and focus groups with stakeholders and women accessing support, analysis of quarterly monitoring data and a document review. Please see the appendices for the full methodology.

Report structure

This report firstly provides an overview of the Fund, the beneficiaries supported, and outcomes achieved by beneficiaries. The following chapter set out the impact and insights for the four key thematic areas supported by the Fund: gender and trauma informed working, partnerships, co-production and staff wellbeing. This is followed by a summary of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on delivery of the projects and delivery challenges. The final chapters provide programme learning followed by overall conclusions from the Fund and recommendations for Homeless Link, services and policy makers.

6. Young, L. and Horvath, T. (2019). Promising practice from the front line: Homeless Link and Women's Resource Centre.

2. About the Fund

This section of the report provides an overview of the grantees and initiatives funded. A full list of the grantees is included as appendix 2 to this report.

The grantees

The 29 grantees⁷ spanned the homelessness and women's sector and beyond including front line services and some second-tier organisations. The areas of specialism of the grantees included: homelessness support, support for women experiencing violence, involvement in and exploitation through prostitution⁸, substance use, criminal justice, no recourse to public funds (NRPF), legal advice and a range of other advocacy and support projects. Some were already women-only projects and others were mixed services that recognised the need to create women-only space, time, and interventions.

The initiatives funded by the Ending Women's Homelessness Fund

As the Promising Practice research (2019) documented, there was a clear need for an increase in the availability and the quality of specific and gendered support for homeless women experiencing multiple disadvantage. This was required between both the homelessness and women's sector as well as throughout the strategic and operational delivery of services. Therefore, the EWHF supported a broad range and depth of initiatives. This included:

- Developing and embedding training and learning about trauma and violence against women and girls across teams and different sector organisations.
- Forging new service partnerships between different sectors.
- Designing new gender and trauma informed projects and interventions to better support women and provide women-only options of support and further develop existing work and examples of promising practice.
- Piloting targeted interventions for under-represented groups; such as LGBTQI+ women, Black and minoritised women, young women and women with no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

Themes of the Fund

Based on research and input from a cross-sector, all-female grants panel, the EWHF identified four key themes to support through the Fund, selecting grantees based on their ability to achieve outcomes across these themes:

- Gender and trauma informed working
- Cross-sector partnership approaches
- Co-production
- Staff wellbeing

7. See appendix 2 for a full list of grantees.

8. For this report the researchers use the term 'women involved in prostitution'. It is acknowledged, however, that some of the grantees use other terms such as 'sex work'.

This graphic illustrates the diverse provision of support across the EWHF:⁹



2. About the Fund

9. Figures reported are for illustration only. Data based on analysis of qualitative descriptions of grantees' projects. Some projects are double counted where they supported more than one specific group.

3. About the beneficiaries

2285 new beneficiaries¹⁰ were recorded by the grantees over the funding period as well as 1767 training delegates.¹¹ In addition to this, the EWHF also supported children, staff from external agencies, and staff from grantees and funded partners.¹²

Women received a combination of gender and trauma informed front-line practical and emotional support, housing, advice, advocacy, case coordination, and onward referrals to specialist services.

Children received support for basic needs, referrals to specialist services, safeguarding support and liaison with other voluntary and statutory services.

Training delegates received training which included gender and trauma informed practice as well as training relating to specific groups of women or circumstances that they may experience such as NRPF, immigration, trafficking and exploitation, mental health and experiences of VAWG.

Staff from external agencies received information, advice and signposting, improved referral pathways.

Staff from grantees and funded partners developed their knowledge and awareness and strengthened their approach to supporting women.

Circumstances and demographics of women that received support

Ethnicity of the women was not recorded on the monitoring forms, but the data relating to nationality demonstrates that the majority of the women were recorded as British Nationals, with EEA nationals and women from countries in the rest of the world also represented.¹³ Women with NRPF were also reported to have been supported by the EWHF as well as older women¹⁴ and younger women¹⁵ represented in the group of beneficiaries.¹⁶

The type of homelessness most frequently recorded by grantees was women living in a refuge or supported hostel.¹⁷ Women at risk of homelessness and women who were 'vulnerably housed' and living in local authority homelessness accommodation were also recorded by the grantees.¹⁸

10. This figure is from the monitoring reports and is not thought to include any existing beneficiaries that the grantees were already working with. This figure also does not include data from the final reports due to inconsistencies noted in the interpretation of the questions. In addition, some grantees were continuing to deliver activities beyond this research period. Therefore, this figure is indicative only. It is unknown whether this refers to only women beneficiaries or others as well. See methodology for limitations in the data collected.
11. It is unknown whether any double counting occurred in the monitoring reports to reach this figure - but as training delegates are unlikely to remain engaged for more than one quarter, it is less likely to be double counted.
12. The accurate total figures are unknown due to inconsistencies in how the data was collected and double counting noted in the monitoring reports. See methodology for limitations in the data collected.
13. Due to double counting noted in the monitoring forms, accurate numbers and proportions are not known. See methodology for limitations of the data collected.
14. Over the age of 55.
15. Aged 16-25.
16. The figures were noted to contain examples of double counting if women engaged with grantees for more than one quarter - so the number of individual women beneficiaries is unknown. See methodology for limitations in the data collection.
17. Due to double counting noted in the monitoring reports, where women engaged for more than one quarter, accurate figures and proportions are not known. Please see the limitations in the methodology.
18. Due to double counting noted in the monitoring reports, where women engaged for more than one quarter, accurate figures and proportions are not known. Please see the limitations in the methodology.



4. Summary of outcomes for beneficiaries of the Ending Women's Homelessness Fund

| Beneficiary | Types of outcomes identified | Examples |
|--|--|--|
| Women | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain or secure safe and appropriate housing Improvements in safety, wellbeing and hope Contact with their children Access to specialist legal advice for immigration Access to physical/mental health and social care Access to increased provision of women-only space Access to gender and trauma informed support Increased confidence and sense of self-worth | <p>"I have a roof over my head and for the first time in more than 3 years, I have a place to call home." (Woman accessing support)</p> <p>"You pulled out all the stops to get me out of that very unsafe situation and into a safe place." (Woman accessing support)</p> <p>"I am very confident now. Before I was ashamed and shy to talk. Now I can speak up." (Woman accessing support)</p> |
| Children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe housing Improved safety and safeguarding away from violence Increased parenting capacity Increased contact between mothers and children including letter-box contact | <p>"We've had a huge increase in women re-establishing and maintaining letterbox contact with children" (Mixed homelessness service)</p> <p>"She's getting a beneficial mum now rather than an addict mum." (Woman accessing support)</p> |
| Training delegates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved awareness/understanding of women's experience of homelessness and multiple disadvantage Improved knowledge about where to signpost and refer women to for specialist support Increased confidence/ability to provide effective support to women from a gendered or trauma lens | <p>"I think the knowledge gained would then empower them to support the women when they come across these women." (Domestic abuse service)</p> <p>"It's given staff the tools and motivation to recognise how they can implement it in their service" (Mixed homelessness service)</p> |
| Staff of grantees and funded partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved knowledge about the need for gender specific and gender informed approaches to support Improved practice / new aspects of support for women Improved capacity and relationships between services | <p>"I think the knowledge gained would then empower them to support the women when they come across these women." (Domestic abuse service)</p> <p>"It's given staff the tools and motivation to recognise how they can implement it in their service" (Mixed homelessness service)</p> |
| Staff from external agencies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved referral pathways to appropriate services Increased provision for women specific support. | <p>"I've also had referrals come from MARAC, so one of the things that I've done is establish relationships with the MARAC coordinator" (Mixed homelessness service)</p> |

5. Insights and Impact

This section describes the projects delivered by the grantees, how they were implemented, learning of what worked well and the outcomes achieved. It is divided into the four thematic areas that Homeless Link used as the basis of the Fund: Gender and trauma informed practice; partnership working; co-production and staff wellbeing.

5.1 Theme 1: Gender and trauma informed practice

The key aim of the Ending Women's Homelessness Fund was to support frontline services to strengthen their support to women experiencing homelessness and multiple disadvantage, through gender and trauma informed practice. Grantees developed or improved gender informed services in a wide variety of ways, depending on their particular practice setting. The key factors previously identified in research¹⁹ as crucial for effective support for women experiencing homelessness and multiple disadvantage, include:

- **Organisational commitment** at the strategic level to work from an understanding of women's lived experience of inequality
- **Organisational structures:** policies, staff recruitment, training and support
- **Service design** which incorporates gendered approaches that are trauma informed

Evidence from this research about how grantees made progress in these three areas, and the benefit that this had for the women, grantees and other beneficiaries of the EWHF is set out below.

5.1.1 Developing organisational commitment

Summary of key findings

- Evidence suggests that commitment to working from an understanding of women's lived experience of inequality was strengthened in mixed sex settings, including homelessness services and local authorities.
- Grantees strengthened their commitment through cultivating buy-in to a gender informed approach with management teams and board members and through developing organisational strategies and fundraising plans to improve support for women.

The evidence in this research suggests that several projects funded through the EWHF either had a strong commitment at the strategic level to work from an understanding of women's lived experience of inequality or were able to strengthen this aspect. In some cases, this explicitly included recognising the intersectional nature of inequality for women, depending on characteristics. The projects that explicitly focussed on using the funding to develop internal organisational commitment tended to be mixed sex homelessness services which wanted to improve their support for women.

Examples of the ways in which grantees developed organisational commitment include working to get buy-in and understanding of the need for this aspect of the approach at a strategic level, and developing strategic and fundraising plans.

Getting buy-in at the strategic level

Some grantees held meetings and delivered presentations or training to board members, CEOs and management teams in order to get 'buy-in' from the highest level from within their organisations regarding the need to work from a gender informed approach at the strategic level. In some cases, projects worked as cross-sector partnerships to undertake strategic work with organizational management teams or local authorities to raise awareness, advocate and develop buy-in to a gendered approach.

A grantee describes how developing the awareness and buy-in from the trustees, helps the organisation to respond to circumstances of women accessing support:

"It's really important for me that [the trustees] understand that, so that when I go in for bids on specific projects, or when I'm talking about why we need staff in certain areas, that they really understand."
(Mixed homelessness service)

19. Young, L. and Horvath, T. (2019). Promising practice from the front line. Homeless Link and Women's Resource Centre.

Developing strategic plans

Some grantees also developed strategic plans for their organisation to explicitly commit to taking a gender informed approach to supporting women. As a result, one grantee described re-focusing the fundraising strategy within the organisation:

“It’s definitely part of my strategy to grow that piece of work...That’s one of the reasons I’ve been looking and putting in lots of bids and applications for different funding that can help us grow that area of work”
(Mixed homelessness service)

In some cases, these activities created a significant shift in the organisational commitment and ethos in relation to supporting women experiencing multiple disadvantage, catalysing change across the organisation in how services are designed and delivered for women. For example, leading to a strategic focus to develop women-only spaces and services within mixed services and to develop more strategic partnerships with gender specific services. There are examples of these shifts occurring in both mixed sex homelessness setting as well as local authority departments.

“In terms of [our] strategy going forward, really developing that women’s work is really high on my agenda for the organisation now”.
(Mixed homelessness service)

5.1.2 Developing organisational structures and capacity to support women effectively

Summary of key findings

- Methods used to embed structures to support a gender informed approach include: introducing mandatory training for all staff, recruiting champions and leads within teams to cascade and embed learning, and developing guidance and toolkits to accompany training. Evidence suggests that using a range of these methods in tandem, driven by senior managers, is most effective for implementing a gender informed approach.
- Design and delivery of training on gender and trauma informed working, including training of specialist areas of support for women, was a significant aspect of the work of grantees. 1767 training delegates²⁰ were recorded as being supported through the EWHF.
- There are examples to suggest that implementation of training and guidance led to outcomes for staff including increased understanding, knowledge and awareness of women’s experiences; more empathetic attitudes towards women; increased confidence to support women across a range of needs; and changes in assessments practices.

The need for effective internal organisational structures to deliver effective support for women was documented in the Promising Practice research (2019). This includes incorporating a gendered lens throughout staff recruitment processes, staff training and policies and frameworks to support organisational wide gender informed approach.

Through the EWHF, many of the grantees achieved this within their own organisations by developing and delivering training; cascading learning internally through ‘champions’ and project leads; creating new women specific job roles; recruiting women with lived experience; and creating guidance, frameworks and toolkits to embed good practice. In addition, some grantees used their existing expertise and experience in this area to support funded partners or external organisations to make progress in this area.

Training

There are many examples of organisations designing and delivering training on gender and trauma informed practice, especially in mixed sex homelessness services and mainstream service settings. In some cases, this was designed and delivered in-house whereas in other examples, it was delivered through partnership working with specialist organisations. There is also evidence that grantees also designed and delivered training for practitioners on broader or more specialist topics that also affect women experiencing multiple disadvantage including: women with no recourse to public funds, women with children, and women involved in prostitution. Some organisations also undertook a comprehensive review of all their training to embed a gender lens across all training. In total 1767 training delegates were recorded as being supported through the Fund.

What worked well

Some grantees made the training mandatory for their staff teams as a means to ensure the learning reached all staff members and not only those that had an existing interest in the topic.

“Part of our induction process now is staff have to attend a training... on supporting women with complex needs and understanding the differences. It covers everything and its mandatory training so straight away new staff have an understanding.”
(Mixed homelessness service)

To share learning, some grantees developed cascade learning models. These included empowering ‘champions’ or project leads to deliver training to their teams as well as delivering ongoing one-to-one coaching support from a specialist staff member. These mechanisms were perceived to be an effective way to ensure that learning becomes embedded in practice.

20. It is unknown whether any double counting occurred in the monitoring reports to reach this figure.

Key elements of the gender and trauma informed training

Grantees included the following elements in gender and trauma informed training:

Gender informed training

- Understanding of women's lived experience of gender inequality and multiple disadvantage, including how homeless women have been stigmatised and judged in society, as well as the inherent risks homeless women face.
- Understanding of all forms of VAWG, how they interrelate and links with gender inequality and adverse childhood experiences and homelessness or risk of homelessness.
- Understanding of women's routes into homelessness, the differences in women's experiences of homelessness to men's and barriers to accessing services.
- Use of evidence-based risk assessment processes for women to support safeguarding.
- Skills to routinely inquire about VAWG, recognise the signs and understanding the barriers to women disclosing violence or abuse.
- Skills to provide a strengths-based, relational and informal approach to supporting women which empowers women to have choice and control.
- Awareness of other relevant support services available in the local area for women and referral pathways.

Trauma informed training

- Understanding of what trauma is, including the connections to adverse childhood experiences and experiences of male violence and abuse over the life course.
- Understanding of how trauma affects women both physically and emotionally.
- Awareness of how trauma impacts on behaviour and decision making and good practice practitioner responses.
- The importance of establishing physical and emotional safety as a first step to recovery from trauma and how to support women to achieve this.
- Skills and strategies to avoid re-traumatising women.
- Understanding each person's experience of trauma as unique.
- Developing information sharing systems with partner agencies so women can avoid re-telling their stories of violence and abuse to services.
- Understanding processes of recovery from trauma and the different types of physical, emotional and psychological therapies available to help women recover.

Impacts of training

Broadening understanding and changing practice

Evidence from this research suggests that training delivered through the EWHF enhanced awareness, knowledge and understanding amongst frontline staff in relation to women's lived experiences of multiple disadvantage and links with homelessness. Grantees that delivered training perceived it to result in attitudinal shifts towards women as well as changes in practice regarding how staff members assess the circumstances and risks to the women they support and reflect on what they might need to do differently as practitioners when working with women.

*"They said that the training had helped change attitudes and helped them to think differently about women's experiences and how they were different. And how they need to be."
(Second-tier VAWG service)*

Recognising trauma responses

Some grantees that already specialise in working with women also reported a shift in their own understanding as a result of the training and learning they had taken part in as part of the programme.

*"I think it dawned on me this year and I've worked in domestic abuse for about 15 years now that the aggression is coming from a trauma response rather than actually I'm choosing to be like this."
(Specialist VAWG service)*

Helping women access tailored support for their circumstances

Training on specific topics also developed staff capacity to respond effectively in these areas. For example:

- Training about women's experiences of being involved in prostitution was reported to support staff to recognise the indicators earlier, be able to enquire sensitively whether women need any additional or specialist support with their circumstances and to safety plan with women.
- Training on NRPF was reported to support women's sector organisations to make more accurate assessments as to women's entitlements and to successfully advocate for women.
- Training on women who have had their children removed was reported to ensure that these support needs were being routinely considered across the service.

Policies, guidance and frameworks

Alongside training, some of the grantees developed, tested and implemented new policies, guidance and frameworks to embed gender informed approaches within mixed sex settings to maintain a focus on how women's experiences and support requirements differ to men's.

Guidance and toolkits provided a resource for staff members to refer to on an ongoing basis.

What worked well

Grantees reported that the most effective way to implement guidance was to ensure that there is interactive training about how to use the tools and that resources are practical and designed for dipping in and out of as required. There are also examples of guidance being co-produced with women with lived experience in order to ensure it is based on the realities of women's lives and the type of support women want.

"Their feedback is the crux of the project really. We tried to listen to what they had said and create something in response to that."

(Second-tier VAWG service)

Impacts of guidance

Grantees gave examples of guidance supporting increased staff knowledge and understanding as well as changes in their practice such as amending assessment processes for women:

"The outreach team... has actually used some of the guidance to...make their assessments better gender informed and better for women."

(Second-tier VAWG service)

Job roles and recruitment

More evidence of grantees developing their organisational structures to be more women focussed was found in how grantees developed new job roles to increase capacity to support women effectively including new specific women's worker roles and roles focused on a specific area of women's experiences, thereby, increasing specialist knowledge amongst teams, retaining a focus on women's circumstances and increasing the capacity of support available for women.

In addition, several grantees reported that they had developed more ways for women with lived experience to have roles within the organisation. This has had the dual impact of supporting employability outcomes for those women and increasing their skills and confidence, alongside contributing to increased knowledge and a different perspective throughout staff teams about the realities of women's circumstances and how to tailor support effectively.

"It does have a massive effect...I think what we've tried to do is to really empower those women and say lived experience is as important as somebody that might've been through a different route to employment".

(Mixed homelessness service)

Good practice example: Society of St James (SSJ)

The Society of St James is a mixed sex homelessness service operating a wide range of services across Hampshire. SSJ developed their organisational commitment and internal structures to improve access to support and outcomes for women. The approach included:

- Implementing organisational commitment at the strategic level and achieving board member buy-in through training
- SSJ partnered with specialist VAWG agencies to deliver gender and trauma informed training to staff. Additional training was delivered in-house by a women's lead practitioner.
- Gender and trauma informed training were embedded as a mandatory part of the staff induction process
- A gendered lens was incorporated in all other aspects of internal training that staff receive
- Champions were recruited for each service to share knowledge and drive the approach to maintain a focus on women
- A new gender quality framework was developed to monitor delivery of support to women



5.1.3 Service design and delivery

Summary of key findings

- Grantees improved service design and delivery to women by: developing coordinated support models which address multiple forms of disadvantage; creating and expanding women-only provision; implementing or strengthening a trauma informed approach; developing assertive outreach; and tailoring support to respond to circumstances of particular groups of women.
- These areas of delivery supported a wide range of outcomes for women accessing the services. Examples captured in this research include increased engagement in services; access to appropriate, safe housing; access to a range of services to meet circumstances; improved mental health, wellbeing, confidence and sense of worth; increased safety through ending of abusive relationships; reduced social isolation; increased capacity to plan for the future; reduced substance use; increased knowledge and awareness of domestic violence; increased access to statutory entitlements; achievement of settled status in the UK (for some asylum seeking women) and access to education and employment opportunities.
- As well as broadening knowledge and understanding across staff teams about the indicators and impacts of trauma, grantees developed other aspects of their work in line with what is considered to be trauma informed practice. This included: enabling access to safe and psychologically informed spaces for women and specialist mental health support; working with nature; developing strategies so that women don't have to repeat their stories of violence and abuse and adopting asset-based and empathic approaches to support.
- Methods to facilitate access to services for Black and minoritised women include providing services in community languages and/or access to interpreters; training staff understand forced marriage, honour-based violence and FGM; ensuring services accommodate religious and cultural requirements; and establishing links with specialist services. For women with no recourse to public funds, crisis grants alongside specialist immigration advice were deemed essential.

In line with evidence from previous research²¹, the EWHF enabled grantees to design their services and interventions to be focussed on and appropriate for women who experience homelessness and multiple disadvantage. Grantees built on existing provision as well as engaging in further testing and learning about what works for women. Through these interventions and support models, evidence of positive outcomes for women were identified in terms of the level of engagement, feelings of safety and improvements in personal circumstances and wellbeing.

The grantees incorporated the following into their provision:

- Case coordination and support provided by a trusted key worker
- Women-only provision
- Trauma informed practice
- Assertive outreach
- Tailoring support to respond to circumstances and needs of Black and minoritised women; women with no recourse to public funds; women with children; and women involved in prostitution.

The following section sets out how the ways that these aspects have worked well for women.

21. Young, L. and Horvath, T. (2019). Promising practice from the front line: Homeless Link and Women's Resource Centre.

Case coordination and support provided a by trusted key worker

A coordinated approach to support is frequently cited as beneficial in promoting engagement by women. Many grantees developed this approach, working in partnership with others to provide support coordinated by a key worker who builds a relationship of trust with the women they support. In doing this, the grantees facilitated access to a wide range of support for women including specialist mental health and counselling services; one-to-one and group support on violence against women and girls; peer support groups; sexual health services; and immigration advice.

In turn this supported a range of outcomes for women including improved mental health and wellbeing, increased awareness of domestic violence and enhanced support networks and knowledge about support options for women.

“The way the place is really good especially for someone like me with complex needs because I’ve come from addiction and domestic violence and mental health. It’s helping all of that in one go.”
(Woman accessing support)

Creating and increasing women-only spaces and service provision

Evidence and good practice show the benefits of women-only spaces²²: Women feel safer and better supported, confident to speak up, and are more able to engage effectively in support to recover from their experiences which often include male violence. A key aim of the EWHF, therefore, was to develop more women-only provision and safe space.

Creating women-only provision within mixed sex service settings

Within mixed sex settings, many grantees developed or enhanced an aspect of women-only provision. These included: developing new women-only accommodation options; creating women-only support sessions; and creating women-only spaces and times in day centres. Project staff noted that creating these spaces led to increased frequency and level of engagement by women which in turn encouraged women to begin to trust the service and feel confident to access a range of other support options.

“They were able to access...support, knowing that they were going to be safe and away from males who mostly in our cases were the perpetrators.”
(Specialist VAWG service)

Some grantees also used the funding to introduce a specific women’s worker within a mixed sex service who provided a specialist service for women based on gender informed principles. This role also helped to implement a more gender informed approach within the wider organisation by retaining a focus on women. Again, grantees noted that this approach led to an increase in engagement from women due to increased feelings of safety.

“What we realise is that when women know that this is a specific service for them, they also reach out and self-refer, but they have to know that this service is there and it’s specifically for them. And it’s a safe space for them to reach out for support.”
(Specialist LGBT service)

Some challenges were also noted in introducing women-only provision in mixed service settings which are explored in section seven of the report.

Gender specific service settings

For grantees that were already providing gender specific, women-only provision, the fund was used to develop new aspects, such as specialist refuge and bed spaces for women experiencing different forms of multiple disadvantage. This provided the opportunity to test new models and build the case for further investment in women-only accommodation for women.

Elements that women highlighted as particularly valuable in these settings included: providing an accommodation space where they could access a range of support including specialised mental health support; provision of 24-hour staffing; cleanliness and homeliness; and ensuring the refuge/centre is in a safe location.

Women accessing this type of support reported a number of benefits including feeling safe and developing supportive relationships with peers.

“Women-only is very, very important. Male presence would really not be ideal. We’ve all gone through different experiences with men. Women you grow bonds with, get to know each other”
(Woman accessing support).

Good practice example: Wearside Women in Need (WWiN)

WWiN is a feminist organisation providing community-based services to women and children at risk of, or suffering, abuse. WWiN used funding from the EWHF to develop a new therapeutic recovery centre for women experiencing multiple disadvantage. Key elements which supported women’s safety and recovery included:

- Women-only accommodation and recovery space in a safe location
- 24-hour staffing
- Provision of specialist trauma-informed counselling service for women at the centre
- Provision of a structured programme of workshops and activities for women to choose from
- Regular input from women and support for women to take ownership of the space
- A skilled and experienced team, with a strong learning culture

See Appendix 1 for full case study of WWiN.

22. Corry, D. (2018). Hearing Women’s Voices: Why Women. Women’s Resource Centre (WRC.) <https://www.wrc.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=66c03dc1-5c2a-450b-af30-67e16d9711a8>

"I'm more than safe but I feel it too and staff are amazing at making you feel welcome."

(Woman accessing support)

Trauma informed practice

As well as broadening knowledge and understanding across staff teams about trauma, the EWHF also enabled the grantees to develop other aspects of their work in line with what is considered to be good practice. This included: Enabling access to safe and psychologically informed spaces for women; working with nature; joined-up working to avoid the need to share experiences with multiple professionals; and adopting asset-based and empathic approaches.

Access to safe and psychologically informed spaces

Grantees created access to safe recovery spaces to provide stability as the first aspect of a trauma informed approach²³. This included provision of women-only recovery spaces as highlighted above as well as support and advocacy to access other forms of appropriate housing including accommodation through the local authority.

Facilitating access to specialist mental health support

From the basis of a safe environment, grantees were then able to facilitate access to specialist mental health support for women as the second stage in a trauma recovery model.²⁴ They did this by providing in-house counselling and creating new partnerships with appropriate mental health providers.

"And we've started exploring partnership work with other agencies around just creating those trauma pathways, so that women can access treatment for that."

(Mixed homelessness service)

Access to this type of support has supported positive mental health outcomes for women:

"My mental health is so much better and my bipolar is under control. I am a lot more confident within myself and my anger is most definitely under control."

(Woman accessing support)

Working with nature

One grantee found an unexpected benefit of COVID-19 restrictions in relation to trauma informed working. The necessity to meet women in outdoor locations led to delivery of 'walk and talk' support, as opposed to meeting women in indoor locations. Staff found that working alongside the natural environment supported women to engage in one-to-one support due to the calming impacts of the environment.

"Because you're outside, if the woman is presenting in an escalated way, we're able to use some de-escalation skills outside, using focus with nature really helps to de-escalate and helps to keep women in a safe place."

(Specialist women's service)

Avoiding re-traumatisation through re-telling experiences of abuse

Grantees provided support to women that was designed to ensure that women don't have to repeat their experiences of abuse and violence to multiple agencies, risking re-traumatisation. Grantees achieved this by delivering coordinated support through a key worker; implementing information sharing protocols between agencies; and working with women to identify ways to share relevant information without re-telling experiences. A particularly positive benefit of this approach was noted

for women who were being supported with their immigration status:

"She went through horrific violence...So rather than having to explain that again to the housing people, to the refugee services, to other people, I was like, 'you don't need to do any of that. I know what's happened. And we will just send these reports that we have'."

(Specialist service for migrant women)

Asset-based and empathic approach to support

The EWHF achieved positive outcomes for women through designing and delivering asset-based support models. Grantees provided support which is non-judgemental, understanding, consistent, and caring, validating women's experiences and affirming their sense of self-worth. Grantees also report giving women choice and control over their support and helping women to identify and build on their strengths and positive attributes. Women accessing services reported that this resulted in improved motivation and ability to engage in support, feelings of increased safety within a service setting and that they were able to develop trusting relationships with staff members and build their self-confidence.

"It was just because there was someone that wanted to help and they were caring and supportive. That's all I ever wanted."

(Woman accessing support).

"I'm more than safe but I feel it too and staff are amazing at making you feel welcome."

(Woman accessing support)

23. Herman, Judith Lewis (1992). Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence. New York: Basic Books.

24. Ibid.

Implementing assertive outreach approaches

As an attempt to make support more accessible to women, grantees developed their outreach approaches to reach more women and to wider groups of women. Activities included promoting services in a wide range of settings; networking with partner agencies to promote awareness of the service and improve referral pathways; and delivering outreach support to women in the community by physically going to women's houses and community spaces to meet women. For some services, these approaches, alongside other elements of service design tailored to women, led to significant increase in referrals. Assertive outreach approaches were especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic, as explored in section six below.

"I think we've done an incredible job of reaching women who we hadn't before reached...the referral organizations now know that we can provide support for LBTQ women."
(Specialist LGBT service)

Tailoring support to different groups of women

The EWHF enabled grantees to expand and create tailored support to meet the needs of specific groups of women and women with a broad range of backgrounds and experiences such as women from Black and minoritised communities, women who are asylum seeking, refugees and migrants; women involved in prostitution; LGBT women; and women who have had children removed from their care. Some of the grantees focused explicitly on supporting one of these groups and others designed or implemented tailored aspects of support for specific groups of women as part of their broader service delivery. Some of the key examples are provided below.

Black and minoritised women

Five projects were designed specifically to work with Black and minoritised women. Examples of culturally informed practice²⁵ to support Black and minoritised women delivered by grantees include offering language provision such as interpreters to overcome language barriers for women with limited English language skills as well as recruiting staff and volunteers with language skills; and establishing links with culture specific services for women and developed referral pathways to facilitate access.

"We have an organisation...They do culturally appropriate counselling and wellbeing groups...I often refer them to that service as well" (Mixed homelessness service)

In some cases, this expansion of provision was in addition to other areas of culturally informed practice that grantees were already delivering including ensuring space and time for religious practices within service settings; and embedding support on honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM).

Good practice example: Independent Choices Greater Manchester (ICGM)

ICGM's helpline services for women fleeing domestic violence are especially accessible to Black and minoritised women due to the following key features:

- Services are available in community languages including Urdu and Panjabi and ICGM also works with interpreters. Services are also promoted in community languages.
- Staff have knowledge of the specific cultural barriers and challenges facing women who have experienced forced marriage, honour-based violence and FGM and of barriers facing migrant women in leaving abusive relationships and accessing services.
- Links with other services to support women into options which can meet their needs and advocating for women with other services as well as religious institutions.

Women with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)

Women with NRPF were supported through the EWHF and this was a key area of learning and development for many of the grantees.

Specialist organisations supporting asylum seeking women used funding to enhance provision to women with NRPF. One grantee partnered with a specialist NRPF support service to offer and administer crisis grants for women. In the absence of other support, this resulted in women being able to access accommodation and basic needs who otherwise would have been destitute.

"So, this pot of money meant that if we had a call from a woman who couldn't access public benefits, we could then sign-post them to our partner agency...She'd put them up in a B&B. She would advocate with them".

(Specialist VAWG service)

Other grantees prevented women being street homeless by providing bed spaces for women with NRPF alongside specialist immigration advice, casework and housing advice and support to enable women to access their rights and entitlements through the Immigration and Asylum Act (1999).

Women who have had children removed from their care

Support for women who have children has been identified as a key area of need for women experiencing multiple disadvantage.²⁶ In the EWHF one project in particular explicitly set out to improve support to women who have had their children removed, as illustrated in the following good practice example.

Good practice example: Julian House

Julian House partnered with Footprints, a service delivered by Children's Social Care, to improve support for women who have had children removed from their care. A Specialist Female Casework Coordinator was recruited and partly seconded to Footprints. Key elements of the partnership approach included:

- Incorporating children into needs assessments with women
- Increasing awareness within Julian House and external agencies of the trauma women experience in relation to having their children removed from their care and the impacts of this
- Facilitating access to letter-box contact for women who had children no longer in their care.
- Providing tailored support to women in relation to pregnancy and children
- Improving access to relevant services for women including sexual health services

25. See terms of reference for definition of 'culturally informed practice'.

26. Young, L. and Horvath, T. (2019). Promising practice from the front line: Homeless Link and Women's Resource Centre.

Women involved in prostitution

Three projects were designed to work specifically with women involved in prostitution and the EWHF had enabled projects to develop or expand support and interventions for this group. Their work involves providing harm reduction, advice, advocacy, support and referral to other specialist services, enabling women to access safe housing, benefits, substance use and mental health support, and specialist services for women who experience violence and trauma.

The work funded by the EWHF across these services included improving homelessness pathways for women, providing more bed spaces for women and advocating for women through strategic forums. For example, one organisation improved support in relation to housing by being more proactive in exploring women's circumstances and needs more directly and then using the information to advocate for women locally to receive the help they are entitled to.

*"We've had more direct open questions with the women to better understand what the need and demand looks like around housing for them. We've also been able to be a lot clearer on our ask – what's the change we want to bring about here."
(Specialist women's service).*

In addition, some homelessness services reported supporting a high proportion of women involved in prostitution and developed their practice in this area. One grantee supported staff to recognise the indicators and sensitively inquire about women's circumstances; introduce safety planning and welfare checks; and refer women to specialist therapeutic recovery services for those who are in the process of or have exited prostitution and require ongoing help:

*"So often women that do sex work, it can be 10, 12, 15 years later and they're still in recovery. The long-term impact that it has. And with some psychologists, [partner agency] has written a programme and we've been able to get some of the women onto this programme."
(Mixed homelessness service)*

Through carrying out this work with women, this grantee recognised the harsh realities that women face and advocated for a strategic and coordinated approach to supporting women involved in prostitution in their locality, in line with good practice²⁷.

Principles of a gender and trauma informed approach

Findings from this research demonstrate that the following principles help to implement women specific support and trauma informed practice that recognises women's lived experience into service provision:

- Organisational commitment to understanding women's lived experience of gender inequality and multiple disadvantage requires buy-in from all levels of the organisation including the board and trustees as well as inclusion in strategic organisational plans.
- It is important that organisations supporting women experiencing multiple disadvantage have an understanding of intersectionality and the ways that different forms of social disadvantage interact with gender inequality, enabling services to help women with varied backgrounds overcome specific barriers they face.
- Women's lived experience can be incorporated across different levels of the organisation from the board of trustees to shape strategy, the design and delivery of services as well as to gather feedback on the quality of support.
- In mixed sex settings and mainstream services, women specific roles and women's leads can help to retain a focus on what works for women by advocating that women are considered across all aspects of strategy and delivery.
- Effective support for women means tailoring it to their specific circumstances and experiences, taking services to where women are and allowing time to build trust with a worker who can coordinate their support.
- Women-only spaces and specialist women centred support helps those who have experienced violence and trauma to feel safer and gives them a chance to regain control over their circumstances.
- Incorporating learning from women with lived experience through co-production activities ensures that women's realities are centred in how support is delivered.

27. Approach implemented in Ipswich, as evidenced here: All-Party Parliamentary Group on Prostitution and the Global Sex Trade (2014) Shifting the Burden: Inquiry to assess the operation of the current legal settlement on prostitution in England and Wales.

5.2 Theme 2: Partnerships

Summary of key findings

- The types of partnership funded through the programme included both formal strategic partnerships between two or more projects and funding grantees to develop informal partnership working approaches in their locality. Both types of partnership working aimed to increase joint delivery of new initiatives and knowledge transfer between organisations. Some formal strategic partnerships between homelessness and women's sector services also aimed to bring about culture change within mixed sex service settings.
- There have been a number of benefits and outcomes from the partnership approaches taken by grantees, including: breaking down barriers between services for more effective joint working; pooling resources which increases organisational capacity; sharing responsibility which reduces the chances of women falling through gaps in services and supports effective risk management; and increased cross-sector skills and knowledge.
- At the end of the funding period, some projects have chosen to continue to work together due to the difference this has made to the delivery of support and positive outcomes for women.
- The partnership approaches have supported outcomes for women including: increased and faster access to a range of support; increased flexibility in how support is provided to meet women's needs; and support from a broad range of services that have the skills and knowledge to support women effectively.
- Strategically funded partnerships have been especially effective at establishing positive working relationships and working well together, due to the strategic commitment and service design to work collaboratively.
- There is evidence that some homelessness and mixed sex services have increased their engagement in multi-agency forums as a way to provide coordinated support to women. This includes increased understanding of the role of these forums, attendance and input and advocating for women alongside women's sector specialists at these forums.

The value of partnership working and collaboration between the homelessness and women's sectors as well as other relevant voluntary and statutory organisations at both a strategic and operational level were well documented in the Promising Practice research²⁸. As such, a key aim of the Ending Women's Homelessness Fund was to encourage and support this style of work within and between projects to support women and prevent them falling through the gaps in provision. The EWHF funded formal partnerships between different organisations, and evidence of informal collaboration and improved joint working was also noted to be a positive outcome from the EWHF, due to the enhanced resource and capacity to support this style of work.

The following table below illustrates the types of partnership working funded through the EWHF:

28. Young, L. and Horvath, T. (2019). Promising practice from the front line: Homeless Link and Women's Resource Centre



| Type of partnership | Description | Example |
|--|---|--|
| Formally funded strategic partnerships | Joint delivery of a new initiative: Two or more organisations collaborating strategically as a consortium to offer joint services to women under one project umbrella. These partnerships supported women across multiple themes through a single point of contact approach. | A collaboration between a homelessness charity, domestic abuse charity and a mental health charity to deliver coordinated one-to-one and group support to women. |
| | Culture change: Funded partnerships between women's sector and homelessness sector (including voluntary and statutory services) to test and embed gender informed working in homelessness/housing settings. | A collaboration between a second-tier women's sector organisation and a local authority to develop co-production in the borough and improve services for women. |
| | Knowledge transfer: Partnerships between services where capacity building and knowledge transfer took place between the projects. | A collaboration between a domestic abuse charity and a specialist organisation supporting women with no recourse to public funds to deliver training and enhance knowledge. |
| Grantee funded to develop and improve partnership working | Joint delivery of new initiatives: Grantees used the funding to build links with local partner services to enhance joint working, offer co-located services, coordinate delivery, and improve referral routes. | One specialist service for LGBT migrant women developed new relationships with services to improve awareness of the organisation, increased referrals and provide coordinated support for women. |
| | Knowledge transfer: Grantees developing and delivering training to local partners to build skills and capacity across sectors and services. | One specialist service for women who are migrants, refugees and asylum seekers designed and delivered training to voluntary and statutory agencies to build capacity and knowledge. |
| Multi-agency forum participation | Several grantees also took part in multi-agency forums, sharing their expertise and advocating for women locally. | One project established a new relationship with their local MARAC coordinator, attending meetings and developing guidance to share with agencies |

What was achieved through partnership working?

There have been many successful aspects of partnership working, leading to improved understanding and appreciation for the work of different organisations across sectors, improved partner relationships, increased flexibility in the provision and with referrals and ultimately easier access to support for women and improved outcomes.

Barriers broken down between services

Grantees described that the partnership working approaches have helped to break down barriers between services by improving stakeholder relationships; increasing understanding of roles and ways of working; improving referral routes and creating flexibility in the system. While this was an outcome for both formally funded partnerships and for grantees that had used the funds to build their links with other agencies, strategically funded partnerships were able to achieve this outcome quicker as a commitment to joint working had already been made.

Working more closely together, either formally or informally has created better relationships between practitioners leading to faster access and more flexible support for women:

“We’ve got sexual health services willing now to come on outreach with us, and happy for us to phone them and say, we’ve got a lady, we need to come and see you. And we will get a same-day appointment, which never ever happened before”.
(Mixed homelessness service)

Pooled resources

Through strategic funded partnerships services share pooled resources to deliver the objectives set out in the partnership agreement. From the examples of this in the EWHF, this has the benefit of creating a shared vision of the project from the outset and a framework for how the work will be carried out. Evidence from the EWHF suggests that this model can also succeed in building capacity across the partnership organisations.

“So, we’ve pooled each other’s resources. [Partner A] has been able to support us with their fundraising officer to come and help. [Partner B] has been able to say, actually, there’s some statutory funding and we

think that we should be sharing it.”
(Mixed homelessness service)

There are also examples of resources being pooled through informal partnership working and relationships developed by grantees. For example, organisations joined together to deliver outreach which usually requires at least two practitioners from a service to conduct each session for safety reasons. Delivering this jointly in partnership with another project then only needs one person from each team creating capacity in each team to cover other interventions. In addition, this approach benefited women through providing support across a range of topics within any one meeting.

Being able to pool resources was reported to become even more important during the COVID-19 pandemic due to an increase in the complexity of circumstances that women might present with.

Shared responsibility

Partnership approaches also led to an increased sense of shared responsibility between organisations. This was most apparent in formal consortium approaches and led to each partner being invested and committed to jointly deliver the aims and objectives of the project. This approach also ensured that risk was managed across organisations through collaborative working, minimising the sense of burden for one organisation and also ensuring accountability towards one another to provide support. Examples of shared responsibility were also evident through informal partnerships where services developed joint working approaches, collaborating to provide support for women.

“And that shared responsibility has been what’s worked on the ground, that they all feel responsible and it’s not just all on one person...We all are invested in it and we will all share that task and that responsibility as we go forward together”.
(Mixed homelessness service)

Through sharing responsibility, grantees report being better equipped to support women and that the likelihood of women falling through the gaps in support where services do not communicate can be reduced. Grantees note that clarity of roles and responsibilities remains important and that women benefit from one key worker to coordinate their support.

Enhanced knowledge across teams and sectors

Grantees also reported enhanced knowledge and skills across thematic areas of support. This empowered practitioners to be better equipped to understand women’s circumstances, recognise areas where women might need more support, make good quality referrals into appropriate support, and to advocate effectively for women. Enhanced knowledge across teams was evident for strategic consortium approaches, informal approaches as well as from the grantees which explicitly focused on skills and knowledge sharing through cross-sector training.

“The sharing of the knowledge and being able to sort of update each other around different areas of say domestic violence, law, housing law, that kind of stuff, to be able to be a really powerful joint voice, if you like on behalf of the clients”.

(Mixed homelessness service)

Good practice example: Encompass South West: Women’s First Partnership

Encompass South West, North Devon Against Domestic Abuse (NDADA) and MIND developed a formal consortium to deliver coordinated support for women who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The partners provided specialist mental health, housing and IDVA support for women. Partnership working has enabled pooling resources and shared responsibility, increasing capacity and facilitating a coordinated response for women. Key elements for success include: transparency between organisations; shared ethos and goals; regular meetings; creating a name for the partnership project and a unique email address for all three partners; and a collaborative attitude at management level.

For a case study of the Women First project please see Appendix 1.



Increased participation in multi-agency working

As well as formal and informal partnerships delivered throughout the EWHF, many of the grantees also regularly participated in multi-agency forums in their local areas such as Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) to address domestic abuse by supporting victims and holding perpetrators to account. These forums often included representatives from both statutory and voluntary sector services coming together to share information, assess risk to individuals, formulate action plans and support packages for victims of abuse and/or exploitation.

Some grantees took a more active role in participating in multi-agency forums than they had done previously.

“There are now people in teams who understand MARAC process and when to refer and how to do it, and what a meeting is like. Whereas when I first started, everyone was like, ‘What’s MARAC?’”
(Mixed homelessness service)

Grantees also influenced proceedings at MARACs, advocating for women and sharing knowledge and information in relation to women experiencing homelessness and multiple disadvantage. For example,

one homelessness service recruited a specialist women’s worker who made links with their local MARAC coordinator and created guidance for the forum.

“I’ve also had referrals come from MARAC, so one of the things that I’ve done is establish relationships with the MARAC coordinator...we’re putting together some resources, so that they have a guide that they can refer to”.
(Mixed homelessness service)

There are also examples of grantees contributing to new multi-agency forums being set up specifically on supporting women involved in prostitution. Grantees report being more equipped at these forums to advocate for women in relation to homelessness and housing at these forums.

“We’ve set up as well other partnership meetings, a group of local delivery partners who are solely focused around sex work and sexual exploitation and there hasn’t been any other focused group in [this area] with that focus...In those forums we’re able to share some of the learning from Homeless Link”.
(Specialist women’s service)

Principles of effective partnership working

An openness to the benefits and opportunities of joint working such as building capacity, skills and knowledge for the benefit of women accessing support are a positive foundation to build joint initiatives from.

- Strategically funded partnerships can set out a shared vision and set of objectives early on whereas informal partnerships may take longer to get buy-in and or develop clarity and cohesion.
- Women can benefit from partnership working by having access to a broad range of information from a single point of contact via specialist services that operate in partnership with other organisations.
- Partnership working helps to share responsibility and risk, however, clarity of roles and responsibilities is essential and often one practitioner will need to assume a lead role so that women do not fall through the gaps in support.
- Where the approach to joint working is informal, clear communication, and specified roles and responsibilities are required.

5.3 Theme 3: Co-production

Summary of key findings

- Co-production is an essential element of a gender and trauma informed approach, ensuring that women are listened to and valued, helping to avoid unequal power dynamics between service provider and service user and that services are genuinely meeting the needs of women.
- Co-production activities delivered by the grantees include developing peer support groups; conducting research with women; holding regular feedback meetings; providing a range of options for women to input; providing opportunities for women to co-design physical space and materials; co-designing creative arts projects; and ensuring representation of women with lived experience in staff and decision-making roles.
- There is evidence from the EWHF that engaging in co-production has enhanced the quality and availability of support; improved commissioning processes; helped women develop their confidence and recognise the value of their own voice; and developed employability skills and outcomes for women.

Support and interventions designed specifically by and for women is a concept that has long been part of the specialist women's sector. A key aim of the EWHF was to support projects that had a strong emphasis on co-production to ensure that the interventions are delivered in line with what women want from support. Research²⁹ highlights the importance of co-production as a means to empower women accessing support, reduce the hierarchical nature of support work and to give women voice, choice and control which has often been denied them in both their personal relationships and some previous relationships with services.

The evidence suggested a strong consensus across the grantees regarding the importance of co-production and most of the grantees incorporated some aspects of co-production within their project with some having developed specific co-production approaches to design and implement new ways of working.

29. Young, L. and Horvath, T. (2019). Promising practice from the front line: Homeless Link and Women's Resource Centre.



Co-production activities implemented by grantees

Grantees developed and implemented co-production in a variety of ways. These included developing peer support groups; conducting research with women; holding regular feedback meetings; providing a range of innovative and creative options for women to input; providing opportunities for women to co-design physical space and materials; co-designing creative arts projects; and recruiting women with lived experience into decision making roles.

Peer support groups and group facilitation opportunities

Several grantees developed peer groups as a way to both provide support and connection for women; input into service design and delivery through discussion; and to provide opportunities for women to facilitate the groups. In some cases, these groups were also a platform for providing further input into how services are designed and run for women:

"We managed online to train up eight women...and they're now running peer support groups in the borough every week for women who've come out of that crisis space. And we've now linked in some of those facilitators with staff at the local authority. So, they're now feeding into the commissioning process"
(Second-tier VAWG service)

Conducting research with women

Some grantees conducted research with women to understand more about the type of support women want to feed into the design of new projects, through the development of new guidance for homelessness services and developing new services within a local authority:

"The idea was to use those ideas and feedback to shape this guidance".
(Second-tier VAWG service)

Ensuring representation in decision making roles

A number of grantees reported that they ensure women with lived experience are represented in decision making roles in the organisation such as in steering groups, trustee boards, interview panels and staffing. While some organisations already incorporated this prior to the EWHF, others developed this aspect during the project as a means for the service to become more survivor-led and some planned to embed

this further in the future as a result of learning developed through being a part of the EWHF. These aspects helped to ensure that all aspects of service design are being shaped by women with lived experience.

"Our steering group, for example, is made up of people with lived experience. I'd say 90%. So, we're kind of taking advice from them every three months about how the project's going, any ideas on it, what we want to do"
(Specialist service for migrant women)

Incorporating co-production into the delivery, test and learn cycle

Some grantees incorporated co-production into their project learning cycle by holding regular meetings with women to hear their thoughts and suggestions about the service, while at the same time, sharing information about the difference their contribution makes in practice. This strategy enabled the service to keep abreast of the circumstances women were facing and to respond in a timely manner.

"I would ask people, how do you feel about the project, what do you want to see more of? How could we improve?"
(Specialist service for migrant women)

Opportunities to co-design physical space, project materials and resources

In other examples, women were invited to input into the design of accommodation spaces by assessing the safety and appropriateness of a space and designing and decorating interiors. These activities helped to ensure that spaces are fit for purpose and to develop a sense of ownership of the space among women and to empower women through encouraging decision-making which is important for women who have not had that in other areas of their life.

"When we opened our female accommodation...having women come in from the outset and looking at it and going, 'how does this space feel? Does it feel safe? What do we need to do to make it feel like home? Is this the right place?' So really involving them from the outset."
(Mixed homelessness service)

Women also fed into the design of resources and materials used by the services including the development of guidance and toolkits and publicity information. The process often involved women at different

stages of the design process, from the start to reviewing the end result. Again, providing opportunities for them to have a voice and make decisions and build positive relationships.

"It's been really important to have them involved, to get their feedback and also to keep those relationships going."
(Second-tier VAWG service)

Providing a range of options for women to input

Another grantee provided a wide range of options for women to feed into service design and delivery, including discussion groups, using artwork and other informal creative activities which helped women to engage in a way that worked well for them.

"It's about looking at all sorts of different options, using art and music, emojis and smiley faces to evaluate, having some open discussion groups where people feel that's okay. It's about providing a number of different options to enable the women to share their lived experience"
(Specialist women's service)

Other grantees used photography, poetry and art as a means for women to express themselves and to amplify women's voices in the local community and among decision makers.

Outcomes and benefits of co-production

Evidence suggests that for many services, the EWHF has helped to embed or strengthen co-production with women into their service design, leading to a shift in how the organisations make decisions and design services, ultimately improving support available to women by tailoring it according to their preferences.

Some outcomes and benefits of the co-production activities for women include:

- Bringing services to life that realistically reflect women's circumstances that are delivered in a way that works for them rather than what works for the organisation.
- Creating opportunities for women to develop their own skills and knowledge, peer support pathways, as well as future education, training and employment opportunities.
- Women seeing the results of their contribution, recognising the value of their own voice and increasing their confidence.
- Women developing a sense of ownership and agency within services, creating a sense of equal power between staff and women accessing support. This was reported to increase women's engagement in the service.

Good practice example: Against Violence and Abuse (AVA)

AVA partnered with Haringey Council, IMECE, and Solace Women's Aid to develop a survivor-led, gender-informed approach across the Council's services for women experiencing domestic abuse and homelessness. The project was successful in embedding co-production as a vital element in the design and delivery of services that meet the needs of women survivors.

Key elements included:

- A peer research project to feed into the design of services in the borough
- Peer support groups for women, facilitated by women with lived experience of domestic abuse
- Building in co-production into commissioning processes
- Offering women time and flexibility to engage in co-production activities in a way that worked for them
- Providing payment to the women as experts by experience as a way to value their time and expertise
- Using art and poetry as an additional way for women to communicate their experiences

Principles of co-production

- Taking co-production seriously means involving women with lived experience throughout all levels of the service.
- Embedding women's contributions about the realities of their situation helps to ensure that services operate for women in a way that works best for them.
- Women's circumstances and the landscape that services operate in change over time, and incorporating co-production as a continuous learning cycle, rather than a one-off event, helps to ensure the interventions and the quality of support is responsive and suits women's requirements.
- Providing appropriate compensation and payment to women for their time as well as timely feedback about the ways in which their contributions have led to changes across the service demonstrates that women's time and opinions are valuable. This can empower women, contribute to increases in confidence and help women find their voice.

“Then I got this job, so now I work in supported housing for people who have been homeless and also I run the pattern changing course. We do an in-house pattern changing for the women in all our properties. So, it's like full circle. In the space of a year”.

(Woman accessing support)

5.4 Theme 4: Staff wellbeing

Summary of key findings

- The COVID-19 pandemic created a whole new landscape and increased pressures for staff and services including increased reports of VAWG, as well as conducting highly emotional and challenging work from home and dealing with being in isolation. As a result, grantees introduced new measures to support staff wellbeing including: increasing access to clinical supervision, supporting staff to establish boundaries when working from home; providing flexibility to staff in relation to working patterns and hours; providing wellbeing activities and social spaces online to support team bonding; and offering counselling for family members.
- Some mixed sex homelessness services introduced reflective practice and clinical supervision across their organisation for the first time, significantly strengthening the support available for staff.
- Activities to support staff wellbeing had a range of reported benefits including increased sense of support; ability to recognise and process emotional impacts of the role; ability to de-personalise challenging situations; and increased empowerment. In turn, these outcomes helped to increase staff capacity to support women effectively.

The potential impacts on staff of supporting women who have experienced multiple disadvantage (including vicarious trauma and burnout) are well documented. Previous research recommends that staff teams working in front line social care roles have access to comprehensive support to prevent and manage impacts on their wellbeing³⁰. As such, the EWHF was keen to support projects that have a strong emphasis on staff wellbeing, using a whole system approach to enhance the effectiveness of support for women through strong and supported foundations within staff teams.

A unique context

An important point to note is that the EWHF took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was a global crisis that not only transformed how many of the grantees carried out their service delivery but created unique challenges for staff teams supporting women experiencing trauma and multiple disadvantage at the same time as managing their own responses to the pandemic. Practitioners have been required to respond to increased reports of VAWG, heightened levels of abuse and sexual violence as well as working from home whilst dealing with the personal impacts related to COVID such as ill health, isolation, childcare challenges and staff shortages.

Approaches to supporting staff wellbeing

Throughout the EWHF, a range of strategies for addressing and supporting staff wellbeing and preventing burnout and the impacts of vicarious trauma were evidenced. These included: reflective practice; regular clinical supervision; access to wellbeing activities; support to manage boundaries; training to recognise signs of vicarious trauma; trusting staff and offering flexibility to work from home; and providing incentives.

Introducing and expanding reflective practice and clinical supervision

Some grantees, especially those who were using the funds to adopt a gender informed approach in a mixed homelessness service, brought in reflective practice for the first time and found this to make a significant difference to staff wellbeing. Reflective practice was found to support staff to share questions, concerns, learnings and experiences. This enabled them to support one another better and problem solve and enhance team cohesion. It also helped staff to reflect on and de-personalise challenging situations which improved wellbeing and helped teams feel equipped to support women.

Grantees frequently reported providing clinical supervision with trained psychotherapists with some increasing access to this during

the pandemic. Staff report finding this aspect extremely valuable for discussing and processing issues arising through the role:

“[It] is absolutely great, just to have space, my own space, to talk to somebody about what’s going on and how I’m handling things. I’ve felt really held and supported through all of it.”
(Mixed homelessness service)

Another grantee also acknowledged that there can be impacts for the families of workers, especially during COVID-19 where staff were more likely to be working from home. As such, they introduced access to counselling for family members.

Wellbeing activities

Grantees also implemented a range of wellbeing activities such as team social activities, access to online wellbeing workshops and budgets to spend on individual wellbeing activities chosen by staff. Time and space for staff to connect informally online and socialise, to build connections and support within teams and try to boost morale and support when this was not possible in person. These strategies were reported to have a positive impact on teams.

30. Young, L. and Horvath, T. (2019). Promising practice from the front line, Homeless Link and Women's Resource Centre.

"I think it helps people meet up and kind of share a happy space together. We're working in a really busy environment. So that's nice. And it just gives people the head space to think about themselves."
(Specialist service for migrant women)

Support to manage boundaries

While establishing and maintaining effective boundaries between work life and home life and between practitioner and women accessing support were understood to be important at all times, grantees paid special attention to these issues during the pandemic. Some projects introduced additional training, group and one-and-one support to discuss how to set and maintain boundaries in the new working conditions.

"We've also recently had more training and more discussions about the boundaries of our work and how we can do our jobs really well, but also look after ourselves as well."
(Specialist LGBT service)

Others supported staff to establish boundaries when working from home by encouraging staff to build in regular breaks from work. This was perceived to have been effective in helping staff to manage the challenges of the pandemic and to feel supported and empowered in their work.

Training to recognise signs of vicarious trauma

Some grantees also delivered training on vicarious trauma for staff to support staff to acknowledge the risks to their wellbeing when

working on issues such as domestic and sexual violence; the aim was to help people to recognise the signs and also to understand the need for an organisation wide approach to supporting staff wellbeing and preventing vicarious trauma.

"We did a session on vicarious trauma and just reassuring staff that it's not their responsibility on their own to be okay. [Organisations] should acknowledge that...working around domestic abuse and sexual violence can be incredibly triggering for staff."
(Second-tier VAWG service)

Flexibility and empowering teams

Grantees also report providing increased flexibility to teams and individuals to decide how they want to work during the pandemic and to manage their time effectively, taking into account additional pressures and responsibilities. This was perceived to be effective in empowering teams to feel in control of their work and to do what they needed to do to stay well, with positive impacts on their ability to support women effectively.

"We've said to the services that they can decide what the arrangements look like, so they feel really empowered and supported and in control."
(Specialist women's service)

Incentives

Paying staff appropriately was also highlighted by grantees as a crucial way to ensure that staff feel valued and motivated.

Principles of staff wellbeing

- When working with women who have experienced violence and trauma, it is important that organisations recognise the risks of vicarious trauma and burnout, take responsibility for prioritising and promoting staff wellbeing and create a culture of care and support so that people can ask for support and tell someone when they are struggling to cope.
- Providing a range of options to staff so that they can access support and wellbeing initiatives that work for them increases take up engagement.
- Being part of a supportive team is essential for staff wellbeing. Promoting open, honest learning cultures, supported by strong leadership, can help to build team trust, rapport and sense of support, resulting in increased confidence and capacity to support women.



6. The COVID-19 pandemic: Impacts, adaptations and outcomes

Summary of key findings

- The start of the funded period coincided with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK. This had significant impacts on the grantees, creating a need to respond to the changing circumstances women were facing and changes in local delivery landscapes alongside a need to pause to review EWHF project delivery plans and adapt accordingly.
- Adaptation made by grantees included: re-aligning project missions to respond to the changes in women's circumstances, developing digital inclusion for women, re-designing support to remote delivery; adapting face-to-face delivery in-line with restrictions of the pandemic; and adapting training to online delivery.
- Some grantees played a significant role advocating for and supporting women into safe and appropriate accommodation during the 'Everyone In' campaign.
- While there were challenges associated with supporting women remotely and mixed results, there were a number of unexpected benefits and learnings from developing new ways of working. These included: a preference among some women of telephone support during the initial stages of support; the ability of training to reach a wider cohort of participants; the effectiveness of outreach and support in outdoor locations; and some examples of transformation of local practice to better support women.

The start of the funded period coincided with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK and the first national lockdown, creating a new set of challenges and conditions for the grantees. This section outlines the impacts of the pandemic on the grantees, the ways they adapted delivery and the outcomes of these adaptations.



Impacts of the pandemic

The pandemic had significant impacts both on women experiencing multiple disadvantage, the grantees and wider service provision.

Impacts on women

The outbreak of the pandemic created new conditions and circumstances for women experiencing homelessness and multiple disadvantage. Reports of domestic and sexual violence were reported to increase during the lockdown, and this resulted in more women fleeing their homes and becoming homeless or at risk of homelessness. In addition, women faced increases in health risks from the virus alongside increased anxiety about the situation as a whole. There were also changes to the availability and models of support that women may have been accessing due to restrictions, including reports of Housing Options service moving online. Unmet needs for women were also reported in relation to the 'Everyone In' campaign³¹ in some locations, with women's specific circumstances and needs not being taken into account when placing women and a lack of women-only provision.

Impacts on grantees

The pandemic had a significant impact on grantees, creating a need to rethink and adapt their EWHF delivery plans in order to respond to women's needs, operate in a changed and restricted local delivery landscape, adapt provision to be accessible for beneficiaries in the confines of the pandemic and new legislation, and adapt to working remotely - all whilst managing their own personal circumstances. For most of the grantees this caused delays in the planned time frames for delivering projects and questions over what their projects could realistically achieve in comparison to what they had hoped.

In particular, some aspects of partnership working such as delivering groups for women and stakeholders and physical co-location of services could not go ahead.

Impacts on local delivery landscape

There was a large consensus amongst grantees that most services and systems that they normally operate within changed dramatically in the early stages of the pandemic restrictions. Understandably, the main reaction for many was confusion and fear with a lack of clarity about if

or how services would be able to open or operate at all. Consequently, many stopped face-to-face provision and some reduced or closed operations in the early stages of the pandemic. Particular challenges were noted in relation to immigration advice where a lack of access to face-to-face support impacted on the quality and amount of support for women who might otherwise be destitute. There were also fewer multi-agency forums operating and cross sector working particularly until online solutions had been found and organisations had been able to focus on what changes they needed to make internally first.

Once organisations had been able to establish the parameters to what they could offer and transformed their systems and models accordingly, a huge willingness to work in partnership to address the visible crisis unfolding before them with regards to women's homelessness and the risks to them in the pandemic was noted. An increased openness among local agencies to rapidly transform, connect and do whatever was necessary was reported and this was supported by increased Government investment to help rough sleepers through the 'Everyone In campaign'.

31. McCulloch, L. (2021) When we work together - learning the lessons: The Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping.

Adaptations made by grantees

The grantees made the following adaptations to the delivery of their projects:

- Re-aligned their mission to meet the immediate demands of the pandemic and focus on supporting women as effectively as possible through the crisis, advocating for women during the 'Everyone In' campaign and helping women to access safe, appropriate accommodation.
- Supporting women with digital inclusion, providing access to equipment and data to enable them to access services remotely.
- Prioritising and using resources effectively including postponing group work or drop-ins and redirecting resources into other areas of provision to go out and meet women where they are and focus on meeting their basic needs.
- Re-designing frontline services to fully remote methods of delivery, including providing online and telephone support which was particularly helpful for women who were experiencing domestic violence during the restrictions.
- Continued face-to-face support but adapting to meet women at outdoor locations and in well ventilated spaces and taking on roles as coordinating support for women to fill in the gaps when other services had stopped frontline work.
- Adapting training to staff and partner agencies to online formats to continue the sharing of knowledge and skills.

Learning and outcomes from these adaptations

Delivery of services and training

Grantees had mixed experiences of the effectiveness of delivering support to women through remote methods such as online and over the phone. Some found that reduced face-to-face contact with women had an impact on practitioners' ability to connect, establish rapport and build trust and some women also found this type of support to be less accessible for them.

"There's nothing better than a face-to-face meeting sometimes, especially if you're working with complex women. It's not just the voice, it's the body language, it's all of those things".
(Mixed homelessness service)

Others, however, found some unexpected benefits of delivering support remotely, including a preference among some women for telephone support due to the level of anonymisation it provides. Women who have been through incredibly difficult circumstances and trauma often experience a high degree of shame, lack of confidence and self-esteem. Whilst women test out whether they feel they can trust a service or a support worker or feel ready to cross the threshold of a service, they could well prefer the anonymisation that telephone support can provide:

"They were more comfortable accessing it on the phone. It was one-to-one and it was to a level to a degree anonymized... It certainly wouldn't have occurred to me beforehand, but it really informed how I've worked since."

(Mixed homelessness service)

Similarly, grantees that adapted training to online formats experienced mixed results. On the one hand, grantees reported challenges in establishing rapport and holding participants' attention. On the other hand, grantees were able to reach a wider cohort of participants due to the accessibility of online training. Some also reported learning new skills in online training delivery and developing good quality, interactive training programmes which they will continue to deliver online in the future.

"Learning to develop training online has been a huge challenge, but I think it will have long-term positive benefits for so many of us really".
(Specialist VAWG service)

For grantees that adapted outreach and one-to-one support to outdoor modes of delivery, some benefits were noted including the introduction of 'walk and talk' support which was reported to be an effective way to provide one-to-one support due to the reduced intensity associated with being in an outdoor environment. This method is also more assertive, taking support to women to meet them where they are at rather than expecting them to access a service that they might not always feel comfortable doing.

Local delivery practice

Whilst the changes to the local service delivery landscape created challenges and pressure for the grantees to develop effective

partnership working and meet needs, it also brought some benefits. The openness to new ways of working, the ability to transform services and systems at high speed, and the level of focus on honing in on the priorities, helped to create more coordinated and faster support for women in some cases.

"We were urine testing clients to get them scripts, and we were checking up on clients for probation, because these workers were all working from home. It was a negative, but it was also a positive, because born out of it are these new working practices, where we can actually get people scripts a lot quicker than we could".

(Mixed homelessness service)

Supporting women through the crisis

Positive outcomes were reported in relation to the support grantees provided to women during the crisis. The re-alignment of mission to advocate for and support women during the 'Everyone In' campaign helped women have access to safe and appropriate housing options during the pandemic, such as women-only housing options.

"I think having gender specific workers on the frontline, it influenced how a lot of women were housed".

(Mixed sex homelessness service)

The process of responding to women's needs during the pandemic has also been confidence building for organisations and affirmed the existing expertise and value of the specialist women's sector in understanding women's circumstances and delivering effectively for women.

"Whilst there has been that anxiety, we've also learned actually just how flexible and resourceful and resilient we are. And I think that's given us as a team and an organization and maybe a sector...a certain confidence that we didn't have before."

(Specialist VAWG service)

7. Delivery challenges and unmet need

Summary of key findings

- Grantees reported that there remains a significant lack of understanding in statutory sector services and some voluntary sector services of the specific circumstances of women and the need for a gendered approach. Occasionally this is due to misconstrued attempts to achieve equality by delivering services from a gender-neutral perspective, when this does little to acknowledge the differences in the experiences between men and women or the effective support or approach required.
- Grantees also reported systemic challenges in supporting women effectively, including lack of sustainable funding; funding structures which do not support gender informed working; lack of political will and a coordinated approach at both national and local levels; and lack of representation in decision making roles.
- Practical delivery challenges were noted in relation to partnership and multi-agency working including challenges of establishing information sharing protocols and processes and lack of role clarity.
- There remain additional barriers to accessing services for Black and minoritised women and a need to embed culturally informed practice across services.
- Government policy on immigration continues to present multiple challenges and barriers for women who are seeking asylum in the UK. There is an ongoing challenge to fund accommodation and support for this group of women with no recourse to public funds.

This section of the report details some of the challenges that spanned the programme delivery, and some of the areas of unmet need that were identified by grantees that require changes at a strategic level for the benefit of women. The areas set out in this section are in addition to areas of unmet need outlined above in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Lack of effective gender informed working at the local level

Grantees noted that a lack of understanding within Local Authorities and statutory services of the specific experiences and needs of women experiencing multiple disadvantage created several challenges for women in accessing the support they need. This plays out in a lack of coordinated approach to supporting women; a lack of safe, women-only, appropriate long-term housing options for women; and sometimes an approach from staff which risks re-traumatising women.

“Where the women are placed is really critical. It is shocking. Some of the most vulnerable in our communities are placed in the most vulnerable accommodation in unsuitable areas. And then we act surprised when we don't see the changes we expect.”
(Specialist women's service)

Funded projects frequently advocated in-depth training for all decision makers as well as frontline statutory professionals in order to enhance understanding. It was commented that such training needs to be driven politically at a national scale to implement a consistently effective approach across localities.

“I think there does need to be training, but I think it also needs to be an initiative that's owned politically. Some areas will get better training than others, but actually it needs to be almost like an obligation that that training is taken up by those agencies”.
(Specialist VAWG service)

Systemic barriers

In line with the findings from Promising Practice (2019), multiple systemic barriers to effecting change for women experiencing homelessness and multiple disadvantage were acknowledged by grantees from this programme. These include:

- A lack of coordinated national approach to address women's homelessness
- A lack of funding available to local authorities due to Government public sector spending cuts
- Commissioning models that encourage short-term projects rather than secure and sustainable funding for the longer-term relational support often required for women experiencing multiple disadvantage
- A lack of representation among decision makers
- A lack of time, capacity and political will to consult with women experiencing multiple disadvantage and develop co-production models
- Bureaucratic 'box ticking' processes offering options to women which fail to consider the reality of their circumstances and taking a punitive approach by discharging women from support when they don't engage
- A lack of understanding about the value and potential cost effectiveness of services for women experiencing multiple disadvantage
- A lack of coordinated approaches nationally and locally to supporting women involved in and/or attempting to leave prostitution

As well as the systemic barriers noted above, COVID-19 also brought a new set of systemic challenges for services and women to contend with. These are discussed in section six of this report.

“It's so difficult with services constantly being retendered and changing all the time. That consistent support for women just isn't there. You can put something like this in but how long it will actually last...It's difficult to embed in a constantly shifting landscape.”

(Second-tier VAWG service)

Challenges for partnership and multi-agency working

While the grantees experienced lots of successes in relation to partnership and multi-agency working, challenges were also noted. In many localities there remains a lack of multi-agency working and challenges to embed gender informed working in a coordinated way across sectors and services. Some grantees described a defensive attitude among some local agencies in relation to changing practice; having to negotiate competing priorities and objectives; and challenges implementing information sharing practices and protocols which are essential for providing coordinated support.

"It's just about how we go about sharing the information with all of the agencies that come into contact with the women that we work with and then working in a non-defensive way so that they listen and adapt their practices."

(Mixed homelessness service)

Grantees also reported some challenges in relation to the formal partnerships they had developed. In some cases, a lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities was reported to sometimes cause confusion which risks women falling through the gaps in support. There were also challenges related to working across different organisational structures and approaches to governance and management which could take time to smooth out.

Resistance to gender informed approach in mixed sex services

Some projects met with resistance to taking a gender informed approach, including introducing a women-only element of the service or a women specific worker. These tended to be mixed sex homelessness services that were looking to create an organisational culture and service design change. This is often related to a lack of understanding in the organisation of the specific circumstances and needs of women compared with men or occasionally due to misconstrued attempts to achieve equality by delivering services from a gender-neutral perspective, when this does little to acknowledge the differences in the experiences between men and women or the effective support or approach required. It was noted by some grantees that some staff members in partner agencies mistakenly perceive the introduction of a gender informed approach and tailored support for women as having negative consequences for support for men. Grantees noted that awareness raising and training was the most effective way to overcome this challenge.

"I think for me [the biggest challenge] was the initial reluctance from some managers...I had to have the buy-in from the leads in the first instance and build those relationships so that it could be disseminated down."

(Mixed homelessness service)

Sustainability

The challenges in ensuring the sustainability of their services for women were voiced by grantees as an ongoing challenge.

"I think probably the challenge for us is to ensure that we always have funding to continue this work."

(Specialist LGBT service)

Barriers for Black and minoritised women in accessing services

Black and minoritised women are especially marginalised from mainstream services and some of the grantees also reflected that they would like to increase the diversity of the cohort of women they support. The barriers to women accessing services highlighted in this research included lack of language support, lack of consideration of diverse cultural and religious needs, and lack of understanding of the specific ways that women from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds are affected by VAWG.

"In terms of policies and procedures I don't feel like refuges have a set of policies and procedures when it comes to women with other languages. A lot of them sometimes turn them down because they say they haven't got funding or they can't accept them all or they'll feel isolated here."

(Specialist VAWG service)

Immigration policy

Government policy on immigration continues to present multiple challenges and barriers for women who are seeking asylum in the UK. While the EWHF supported grantees to develop and deliver support for women with NRPF, there is an ongoing challenge to fund accommodation and support for this group of women, including access to immigration advice. The accommodation and subsistence options for people seeking or refused asylum who are destitute are inadequate and often fail to keep women safe. Furthermore, one grantee noted that these limited options are currently under government consultation and therefore under threat. Supporting women who have not been granted the right to remain and do not have access to public funds therefore remains a significant challenge. The recent Domestic Abuse Act 2021 also fails to adequately protect women with NRPF.

"If immigration policy would give people the right to remain you wouldn't have such a bad homeless problem among the women that we help".

(Specialist service for migrant women)

8. Programme learning

Summary of key findings

- The strategy of the Fund to focus on embedding change through developing partnership working and cross sector knowledge transfer and to test and embed new models and ways of working has been successful, creating learning, providing a platform to attract further funding and leading to culture change and new working practices in mixed sex settings. Sustainability of projects remains a challenge, however.
- The Fund provides an example of effective decision making based on evidence and the input of cross-sector experts including women with lived experience. Through firstly developing the research base, then recruiting an all-female grants panel to guide the programme and undertake the application decision making process, decisions were grounded in the realities of what works for women and service provision.
- The Fund provided a comprehensive range of support to grantees which contributed to building their capacity, confidence and empowerment as well as strengthening networks and peer support. The activities contributing to these outcomes include tailored one-to-one support; and access to facilitated learning events, training and webinars.
- A significant outcome of the Fund is the establishment of a network and community. This is a legacy of the Fund that grantees hope will be built upon to support further learning and support for organisations and as a basis for influencing decision makers.
- While the monitoring data framework developed and administered by Homeless Link generated learning across the programme regarding the progress and challenges experienced by grantees, there were some challenges and gaps in the approach which impacted on the usability and robustness of the data.

This section of the report documents the strategic learning from the EWHF based on the findings related to the overall programme delivery, programme management and data collection.

Creating sustainable changes

The funding provided by DCMS through the Tampon Tax Fund enabled Homeless Link to fund grantees for a period of up to 18 months. The challenges around sustainability from short-term funding are well documented and so unsurprisingly, this created a limitation in terms of what could be achieved over the timeframe. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this situation as some projects were delayed as a result and had to adapt their plans which was particularly challenging to creating sustainable changes.³² To mitigate the risks associated with short term funding, Homeless Link had sought to incorporate aspects that would embed sustainable changes in existing systems and organisations beyond the funded period.

"We knew the limitations in terms of timescales because it's at most an 18 months fund or for most people it's just been a year. So, we were really always from the start focused on what the legacy could be."
(Homeless Link Programme staff)

The limited timeframe encouraged grantees to develop ideas, take a test and learn approach, share knowledge and drive changes in how women are supported both within and across organisations that could be sustained beyond the end of the programme. Six grantees (of the 11 that completed a final report) reported that they had found continuation funding at the end of the programme and some also reported that there had been valuable learning in what they had been able to deliver and test:

"I think there's been some learning from this project which leaves a real legacy. I hope that we'll keep developing it. It was always a learning

project and it absolutely nailed that." (Specialist VAWG service)

For some grantees, however, the short-term funding presented a challenge frequently experienced by front-line support services, where new initiatives are set up to support women and then withdrawn a short time after, often leaving women let down with nowhere to go:

"I would say we need to be looking at longer-term sustainable funding. Because...it wasn't an option of we've done this amazing work for females and, all of a sudden, we drop it and suddenly, they're all back into the mixed accommodation, not accessing services, and we've got hidden homelessness again, around female homelessness." (Mixed homelessness service)

Evidence-based and representative grant making process

The approach of the EWHF was informed by research into the experiences of women experiencing homelessness and multiple disadvantage³³. The setup of the EWHF and process for grant giving involved input from an all-female grants panel made up of women with lived experience and representatives from the women's and homelessness sector. Both the research and the grants panel informed the key themes and criteria of the Fund.

This approach enabled the EWHF programme team to make decisions informed by in-depth understanding of the lived experience of women and experience of service delivery and to ensure that the objectives of each grantee were grounded in these realities. This also led to the Fund supporting grantees to set realistic objectives.

"We knew we were listening to people, to the women who were both experiencing the services, but also who were delivering them".
(Homeless Link programme staff)

Grant management and support

Homeless Link has provided one-to-one support to grantees, liaising with them about all aspects of the grant. This included providing support around monitoring, responding to queries, meeting grantees and having catch-up calls to discuss progress and any challenges arising as well as flexing with the circumstances. At the start of the Fund, during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, this involved liaising with and supporting all the grantees and advising on adaptations or formulating new plans and managing any implications for delivery and timelines.

The grant managers have also provided additional advice and support to grantees such as making introductions to other grantees, broadening out the networks of services, creating environments and opportunities for sharing learning, advising about other funding available, creating opportunities for grantees to present at conferences and providing support to influence local decision makers.

Overall, grantees had very positive experiences of these aspects of support. Grantees reported finding the one-to-one support they have received to be responsive, flexible, helpful, timely, warm and encouraging. The flexibility and support offered to grantees during the pandemic was especially appreciated in the unprecedented circumstances that each of the grantees and all of the women being supported were experiencing.

"I think there's been some learning from this project which leaves a real legacy. I hope that we'll keep developing it. It was always a learning project and it absolutely nailed that."

(Specialist VAWG service)

32. The challenges relating to COVID-19 are discussed in more detail in section six of this report.

33. Young, L. and Horvath, T. (2019). Promising practice from the front line: Homeless Link and Women's Resource Centre.

“It enabled us to strengthen our ability to influence because we were connected to so many other practitioners, so we were able to have the benefit of some of their learning as well”.

(Specialist women's service)

“She was really approachable, really knew her business and understood the projects really well. If you had a bit of a problem you could speak to her about it. There was flexibility, latitude. Couldn't ask for more really.”
(Specialist women's service)

Sharing learning and developing a sense of community amongst grantees

In addition to funding the projects and interventions and providing one-to-one support, Homeless Link provided an additional layer of support to grantees including learning events, training and webinars. This created numerous opportunities for grantees to come together, share their experiences and create a sense of community and shared vision across the EWHF. The webinars and blogs were also available to other services and decision makers to raise awareness of the Fund and the work of the grantees and share valuable learning.

The strategies used by Homeless Link include:

Capacity building through sharing learning

Grantees found the learning events a particularly beneficial aspect of the programme. The training and webinars offered by Homeless Link helped to upskill grantees and refresh knowledge and provide impetus to keep up their efforts:

“I did really like the whole training and it was sort of enhancing some of the practical work that we do and giving us more...retraining I guess and reminding us that we need to also continue to work in a trauma informed way”.
(Specialist LGBT service)

Through coming together to share learning, grantees report feeling validated in their approach and less isolated, helping to build confidence and motivation. Peer networking has also facilitated shared learning to strengthen provision and forge new contacts across the country.

“I have contact now with women across the country that also benefited within their services from this funding, and we email and exchange ideas and talk about what we're doing, so the impact of it is long term”.
(Mixed homelessness service)

Influencing decision makers and galvanising support nationally to advocate for women

Accessing the events and networking opportunities also strengthened the capacity of organisations to influence decision making locally about the importance of delivering for women.

“It enabled us to strengthen our ability to influence because we were connected to so many other practitioners, so we were able to have the benefit of some of their learning as well”.
(Specialist women's service)

The webinars, conferences and blogs also helped share knowledge and learning about the Fund with a wider audience. Three webinars were held and at least six blogs published. In total, 1065 people read the blogs, 2515 watched the webinars and at least 358 people have attended conferences and events (including a national women's homelessness conference attended by 250 people).³⁴

EWHF staff report that these opportunities provided a platform for grantees to share their work and learning and to generate interest from decision makers and other services looking to improve their support

for women experiencing homelessness and multiple disadvantage. Thereby, expanding the impact of the programme beyond that of the grantees and immediate beneficiaries.

“I think that we've been really visible and vocal throughout the whole programme. And I think that not only has that got the messages out and the learning out, but it's helped other people come forward who want to do something in this arena”.
(Homeless Link Programme staff)

Building a network

The combination of the learning events, webinars and training, as well as the one-to-one support has contributed to development of a supportive network consisting of organisations, staff teams, practitioners, women with lived experience, and other stakeholders. This has supported greater recognition about the realities for many women and awareness of the type of support and resources required, with the aim of providing better quality and increased provision of support to help women move forward and recover from their experiences of homelessness and multiple disadvantage. This is a valuable legacy of the programme and grantees hope that it will continue.

“I think it would be a shame to lose the network because the project's ended and that if there was a way of even a forum being set up of all the stakeholders that have been involved in the project, that would be great because it's so resourceful.”
(Mixed homelessness service)

34. From data recorded and shared by Homeless Link.

Data collection

Monitoring tools and processes

The data collection and monitoring system for the EWHF designed by Homeless Link included an initial monitoring report at the start of the grant, consecutive quarterly monitoring reports for the delivery period to capture numbers and types of beneficiaries supported, and a final report at the end to capture final figures and reflections, successes, challenges and learning over the programme including the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on their work.

Guidance was written and disseminated to help projects to understand the processes and requirements and to standardise the data collection as much as possible.

Grantee feedback about the monitoring and reporting process

Reports about the monitoring requirements were mixed. Some grantees reported finding the process straight-forwards whereas others reported that they experienced practical challenges using the portal system and suggested the process could be time consuming, as described by this grantee:

“What I found difficult was when I was doing the quarterly report, I couldn't see previous reports on the portal so I think if I had access to all the previous ones, it would make it easier for me because then I could follow the trend. And if I did a table in Word, I couldn't translate that back into the portal. It took it all away so I had to do it again manually”.

(Specialist VAWG service)

What worked well

Grantees engaged well with the commitment to and the requirements of the monitoring process and overall a great deal of qualitative reports were collected about the programme throughout the delivery period. This is testament not only to the commitment of the grantees but also to the positive relationships that had been built between the grantees and the programme team at Homeless Link and the support and understanding about the need to be flexible during a crisis.

Quarterly monitoring data was also used by Homeless Link to learn about the issues grantees were facing and tailor grantee learning events

and webinars to these themes to provide opportunities to discuss these themes and share examples of practice.

Challenges identified

During the analysis of the monitoring data, some challenges with the data collection tools and processes were identified.³⁵ The challenges included a lack of clarity and standardisation in the questions and monitoring tools contributing to differences in the interpretation and responses from grantees. There were cases of double counting in the monitoring reports where beneficiaries may have continued to engage beyond one quarter, as well as gaps in the monitoring tools of demographics such as race and ethnicity of beneficiaries. In addition, shared measures were not used across the programme to track progress towards specific outcomes aligned with the programme objectives which makes it challenging to effectively assess the difference the programme makes to beneficiaries over time. These challenges limited the reliability of the data and meant that it was not possible to accurately report on the total number of beneficiaries reached overall or describe the characteristics of the beneficiaries. For a more comprehensive discussion of the limitations of the data, please see the methodology in the appendix.

35. A description of the limitations of the data used in this report can be found in the methodology section in the appendix.



9. Conclusion

The EWHF was an ambitious programme to end women's homelessness by building on an existing evidence base, to further develop and expand promising practice provision for women experiencing homelessness and multiple disadvantage.

Based on the evidence from the Promising Practice report (2019), and with the aim of enhancing the availability and quality of support available to women, The EWHF awarded £1.85m of Tampon Tax Funding to 29 grantees across England. The objective was for the grantees to develop, test and learn from new initiatives, expand existing areas of work, develop new partnerships, and increase knowledge and skills to support women effectively across the women's and homelessness sectors in line with good practice in this area.

A rapidly fluctuating context

The context of the EWHF changed dramatically in the early stages due to the COVID-19 pandemic leading to significant disruption and changes across the whole programme. Despite some delays and some adaptations to the plans and provision all the grantees proceeded with their projects during unprecedented circumstances with passion and commitment that must be recognised and commended.

Programme activity

The EWHF provided the following types of activity and interventions to a reach a wide range of beneficiaries:

2285 new beneficiaries³⁶ were recorded by the grantees over the funding period as well as 1767 training delegates.³⁷ In addition to this, the EWHF also supported children, staff from external agencies, and staff from grantees and funded partners.³⁸

Women received a combination of gender and trauma informed front-line practical and emotional support, housing, advice, advocacy, case coordination, and onward referrals to specialist services.

Children received support for basic needs, referrals to specialist services, safeguarding support and liaison with other voluntary and statutory services.

Training delegates received training which included gender and trauma informed practice as well as training relating to specific groups of women or circumstances that they may experience such as NRPF, immigration, trafficking and exploitation, mental health and experiences of VAWG.

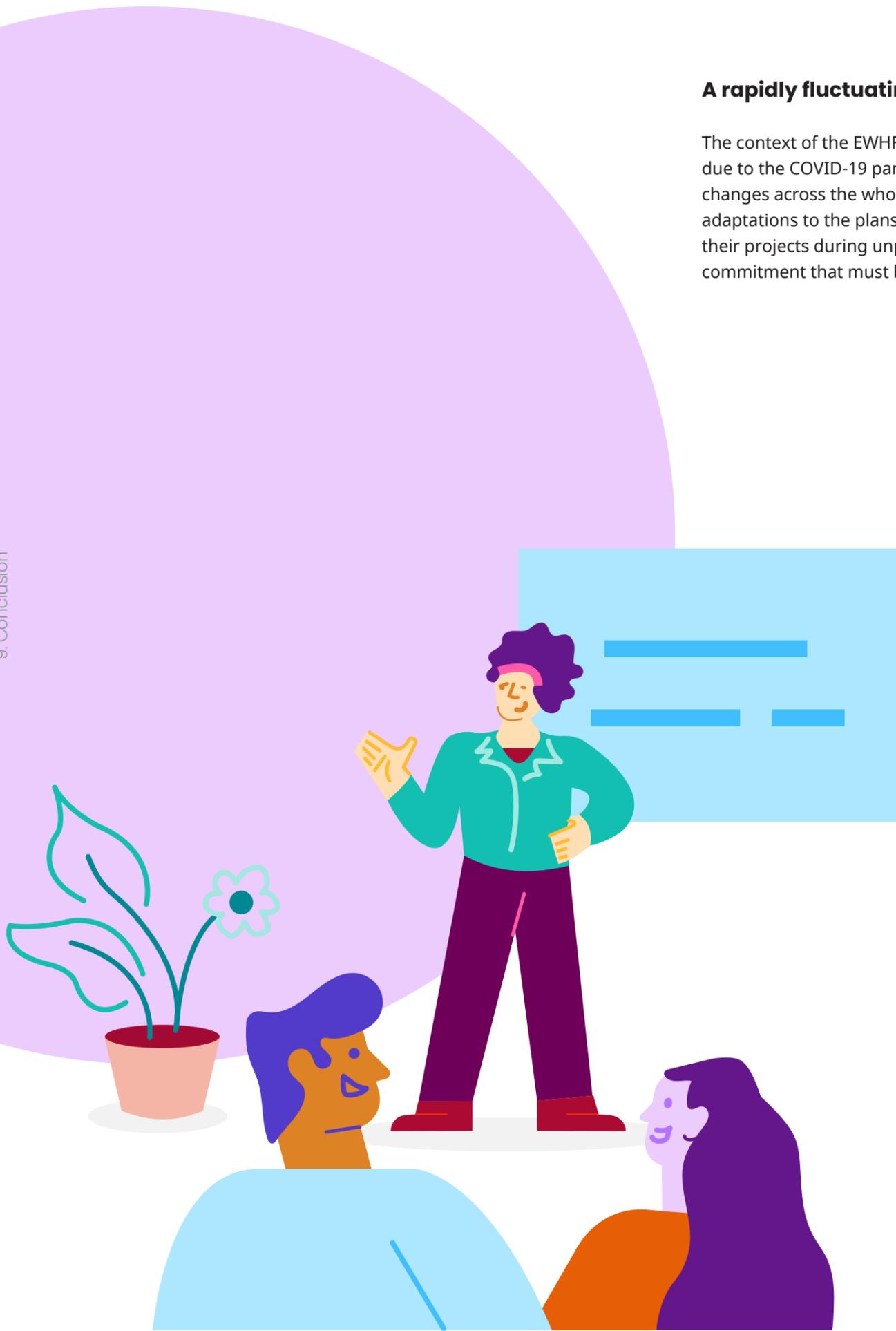
Staff from external agencies received information, advice and signposting, improved referral pathways.

Staff from grantees and funded partners developed their knowledge and awareness and strengthened their approach to supporting women.

36. This figure is from the monitoring reports and is not thought to include any existing beneficiaries that the grantees were already working with. This figure does not include data from the final reports due to inconsistencies in the interpretation of the questions. In addition, some grantees were continuing to deliver activities beyond this research period. Therefore, this figure is indicative only. It is unknown whether this refers to only women beneficiaries or others as well. See methodology for limitations in the data collected.

37. It is unknown whether double counting occurred in the monitoring reports when recording training delegates, but as they are less likely to engage for more than one quarter, it is less likely they would be counted more than once.

38. The exact figures are unknown due to inconsistencies in how the data was collected and double counting in the monitoring reports. See methodology for limitations in the data collected.



Outcomes achieved for beneficiaries

Quantitative data relating to the outcomes and impact for beneficiaries were not captured by the programme, making it difficult to establish which beneficiaries benefited from the EWHF in what way, and to what extent. However, the qualitative data suggests that the following types of outcomes were achieved amongst each beneficiary group.

Outcomes for women and children

A significant success of the programme is that women had increased and improved access to safe and appropriate housing options alongside increased availability and quality of women-only support for a range of practical and emotional circumstances. Women reported improved feelings of safety, wellbeing and hope for the future as a result of engaging with the options available to them through the EWHF and some had been able to resume contact with children no longer in their care which made a huge difference. In addition, there are examples of women benefiting from being able to access specialist services equipped to provide tailored support with their specific circumstances such as legal advice for women with NRPF, and therapeutic recovery support for women involved in prostitution.

Outcomes for training delegates

Training delegates were found to benefit from enhanced knowledge, skills, and confidence to work with women who experienced homelessness, violence, trauma and multiple disadvantage. They also learned improved strategies for supporting women effectively by working from a trauma informed lens and became more aware of the support options available to women, improving the quality of referrals. Evidencing the changes in practice as a result of training is a more challenging process, but longitudinal research exploring this with delegates would strengthen this aspect.

Outcomes for staff teams and services

Across the homelessness sector in particular, practitioners and staff teams benefited from increased knowledge and awareness of the specific needs and approaches needed to support women; increased staff capacity to respond effectively to women experiencing multiple disadvantage; and demonstrated more compassionate attitudes towards women. Improved practice was also evidenced through women's lead workers and women focussed time, space and

interventions as well as enhanced partnership approaches to prevent women falling through the gaps in support. Services were also improved from co-producing services and interventions with women with lived experience.

It is important to note that women's sector services already incorporate many of these aspects throughout their delivery. The benefits to many of the women's sector services were that they were able to strengthen and deepen their existing provision, especially in relation to housing, and test and learn from new approaches to supporting women, stemming from existing organisational commitment and ethos that is women focussed.

Partnership working

The EWHF also provided the ability for specialist services and mainstream or mixed sex services to work more closely in partnership together to support women. Doing so does not make mainstream services experts in this area but instead equips a broader range of practitioners with mechanisms and strategies for recognising women's circumstances better, and how their experiences may impact on them so that they can link women in with the most appropriate support. Enhancing the quality of provision across all services that women may access whilst at the same time retaining and further developing the specialist expertise contained within the women's sector is vital for preventing women falling through gaps in support. These partnerships led to close relationships between services and collaborative ways of working which are likely to be sustained beyond the life of the fund.

Galvanising national support to deliver for women

Another important difference made through this fund is the increased confidence of grantees to advocate on both a local and national scale that women need to be fully considered in strategies, the design and delivery of services and have support options that are appropriate to their circumstances. The grantee sharing and learning events, and the development of a community approach to this work helped galvanise cross sector country wide support and collective action to end women's homelessness.

Challenges and learning

Despite the successes of the programme in reaching a broad range of beneficiaries and achieving a host of positive outcomes, the programme faced a number of challenges. These included:

- Challenges in trying to deliver good quality services within a difficult and under-resourced system and ongoing systemic challenges that make women's circumstances even harder than they already are – such as women with NRPF not being adequately recognised in policy and legislation.
- A lack of political will and a coordinated approach at both national and local levels to recognise the importance of resourcing, designing and delivering effective support for women; and lack of female representation in decision making roles.
- Resistance amongst some local authorities and voluntary and statutory services to recognise the need for explicitly designing and delivering provision that is women focussed.
- Practical delivery challenges were noted in relation to partnership and multi-agency working including challenges of establishing information sharing protocols and processes and lack of role clarity.
- Additional barriers to accessing services for Black and minoritised women and improvements needed in how to embed culturally informed practice across services.
- Short term funding which means that it is difficult for services to develop and deliver initiatives that require ongoing and sustainable funding if women are not to be let down at the end of a pilot or short-term intervention.

Whilst the grantees have made significant steps towards supporting women to improve their housing situations, and personal circumstances, it is also evident that significant unmet need remains across the country. Reported outcomes by grantees suggest that investment in cross-sector, gender-informed approaches is effective and has enhanced their provision for women. Sustainable and secure funding is required in this area if we are to end women's homelessness. Any additional funding ideally should also support a robust framework to document the value and effectiveness and impact of that funding to communicate to commissioners who benefits from what types of interventions and in what circumstances.

Overall, the effort and resilience shown by the grantees and the women they support throughout the life of the EWHF cannot be underestimated. The achievements, challenges and learning from this programme are extremely valuable for working towards ending women's homelessness. It is also hoped that the networks and relationships made amongst grantees will be a lasting legacy of this programme. There is significant will amongst the grantees and programme management team to continue aspects of provision that can be embedded in existing work where possible. With some grantees having been fortunate to secure continuation funding, even more women can benefit in the future.



10. Recommendations

The section sets out recommendations arising from the research for the following key stakeholders: policy makers; funders and commissioners; Homeless Link; and services supporting women experiencing multiple disadvantage.

Policy makers

- Government must develop a national coordinated strategy to end women's homelessness guided by an evidence base, practitioner expertise and experts by experience.
- Government must incorporate a gendered focus into rough sleeping strategies to ensure that the extent of women's homelessness is effectively counted and recognised.
- Encourage and provide funding for gender and trauma informed training for all statutory staff working in housing and homelessness services that come into contact with women experiencing multiple disadvantage.
- Ensure local authorities develop coordinated strategies to support women experiencing multiple disadvantage, embed gender and trauma informed working across all services and develop coordinated approaches to support, guided by the evidence base, practitioner expertise and experts by experience.
- Local authorities must adequately fund women's sector specialist services which support women experiencing multiple disadvantage to coordinate strategic cross-sector partnership approaches to support women experiencing homelessness and multiple disadvantage.
- Enable all migrant women who do not yet have leave to remain to access public funds to access safe and secure housing and prevent human rights violations including destitution, experiences of extreme hardship and risks of abuse and exploitation.
- In relation to the recent Domestic Abuse Act (2021), abolish the no recourse to public funds condition and ensure that all migrant survivors of abuse can apply for indefinite leave to remain independently of their perpetrator.
- Following the 'Everyone In' initiative, and in line with recommendations in the Kerslake report, the Government must invest in tailored, women-only, gender informed approaches to women's move-on from the hotels and other emergency accommodation, informed by the expertise of specialist sectors.

Funders and commissioners

- Fund approaches to ending women's homelessness that are delivered by women's sector specialist services which are underpinned by an ethos and understanding of women's lived experiences of inequality.
- Ring fence funding in the Rough Sleeper Initiative for gender specific, women-only emergency accommodation and specialist services for women.
- Fund strategic cross-sector partnership approaches to supporting women as these have the benefit of shared aims and objectives, pooled resources and shared responsibility which ultimately facilitates well-coordinated, accessible support for women.
- Develop decision making processes based on robust research and input from women with lived experience and service delivery practitioners experienced in supporting women experiencing multiple disadvantage.
- Incorporate requirements within mixed sex services to provide support that is specific and relevant to women's needs and encourage mixed sex services to work in partnership with specialist women only services so that women can benefit from specialist expertise.
- Embed good quality data collection frameworks and processes into Fund design, working with experienced researchers, to help programmes capture relevant data and measure what matters to evidence the outcomes, impact and effectiveness of their initiatives.

Homeless Link

- Continue to build and nurture the network of grantees by providing valuable ongoing support and sharing of learning, alongside a collective approach to influence local and national decision making.
- Alongside development of a good practice toolkit for organisations, consider supporting the toolkit with training so that services understand how to implement it.
- As a second-tier, strategic organisation, use learning from the Fund to campaign for systemic and strategic policy changes to supporting homeless women with multiple disadvantage, including investment in strategic, co-ordinated local and national approaches and increased funding for safe, secure women specific housing options for women.
- Within future programme management, improve the approach to monitoring, data collection and measurement by enlisting support from researchers with impact expertise. This would support the development of an effective measurement framework, processes and tools to measure the most important aspects, and enhance the quality of evidence collected to demonstrate the difference that the programme makes to the beneficiaries.



Services supporting women

- Embed co-production throughout delivery to create a learning cycle based on women's lived experiences, providing a wide range of options for women to contribute on an on-going basis. Ensure women with lived experience are in decision making roles.
- Where possible form strategic partnerships between women's sector services, homelessness services and other specialist agencies to develop a coordinated approach to support based on shared aims and objectives and pooled resources.
- Organisations to take the lead responsibility for staff wellbeing; create a culture and ethos where staff wellbeing can be discussed and supported; and dedicate budget to this area. Embed a range of methods to support staff wellbeing including: reflective practice, clinical supervision and access to other forms of wellbeing support.
- Build on learning from the adaptations from the COVID-19 pandemic to continue to offer one-to-one support to women in outdoor locations, and where appropriate to offer the option of telephone support to women if they prefer it.
- When supporting women involved in prostitution, as well as providing practical and emotional support with existing circumstances, also incorporate support options that can proactively help women leave prostitution if they want. Also offer the option to link women in with other specialist services designed to help women leave so women can make an informed decision about whether that is something they want to engage with or not.
- Develop culture informed practice to overcome barriers to accessing services for Black and minoritised women. This includes: providing language support; considering women's cultural and religious requirements and how to appropriately meet these; increasing staff knowledge and capacity to support women who have experienced forced marriage; honour-based violence and FGM - and make links with specialist services to provide women options of support.
- Embed intersectional understanding of women's inequality into service design and delivery. This means understanding ways that

women's inequality is compounded by other characteristics such as race and ethnicity, impacting on their personal circumstances and wellbeing. In particular build links with specialist agencies that support Black and minoritised women; women with no recourse to public funds; LGBT women; and women involved in prostitution.

Specific recommendations for women's sector organisations

- Collaborate with homelessness sector organisations to enhance the range of appropriate options available to women, through sharing knowledge, advocating for women and developing partnership approaches to support to ensure women benefit from specialist expertise.
- Strengthen data collection and approaches to measurement that can effectively evidence the impact, value and effectiveness of specialist women's sector organisations.

Specific recommendations for mainstream mixed sex services

- Ensure that there is a commitment to working from an understanding of women's lived experiences at the strategic level, through management and Board understanding and buy-in to this approach, and the development of strategic plans to support women effectively.
- Incorporate elements of women-only provision, such as women-only spaces, in service design to help women feel safer and engage with support.
- Embed roles that are women-specific and held by staff with skills and experience in gender informed working to continue to drive a gender informed approach in the organisation.
- Deliver mandatory training to all staff on gender and trauma informed working alongside training on specialist areas of support need.
- Collaborate with women's specialist services to enhance support and provide women with options.

- Incorporate women's voices into the service design through co-production methods such as creating women's voice groups.

Training delivered by organisations

- Consider the development and standardisation of some of the cross-sector training to ensure the quality and learning outcomes are appropriate.
- Develop evaluation approaches to measure the quality and difference made from the delivery of training on gender and trauma informed practice.
- Build on benefits experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic of online training and continue to deliver some training online to reach a wider cohort of participants.



Appendix 1: Case studies

Case studies of three of the projects funded by the EWHF are included below.

Case study 1: Baobab Women's Project

The numbers

- 90 women supported
- 112 service delivery staff trained
- 2 staff members and 8 volunteers benefited

About the service

Baobab Women's Project supports refugee and migrant women, who are suffering hardship due to precarious immigration status, refusal of asylum, domestic or gender violence, labour and sex trafficking or domestic servitude through casework, advice and advocacy.

With funding from the EWHF Baobab was able to...

- Provide specialist trauma-informed casework to women such as facilitating access to legal advice, providing housing support as well as supporting women to access other services.
- Train statutory and voluntary sector support agencies and volunteer advocates to improve practice with migrant women who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness.

COVID-19 impacts

Training was re-purposed to an online format. There was a reduction in homelessness among asylum seeking women due to a pause on asylum support evictions and bed spaces through 'Everyone In'.

"And then [project worker] called me and said they had found a place for me and I was really pleased. It's one the best houses I've ever lived. I thought thank God for that."

"She referred me to counselling and I'm about to start working, volunteering."

"A number of people have got their papers and actually a number of people are still getting their papers." (Project Staff)

"I was scared of the covid vaccine but they brought someone to talk to us about it. Thanks to the people who came, I did have the vaccine."

Reported outcomes for women:

- Some women have been granted leave to remain in the UK
- Access to housing, including charity housing, asylum accommodation, and temporary and permanent housing for those with leave to remain
- Access to counselling and health services
- Access to basic necessities
- Reduced social isolation

Reported outcomes for trainees

- Statutory and voluntary sector agencies have increased knowledge and skills to support migrant women including understanding of trauma

Key challenges

- High demand for the service
- Immigration policy creates destitution
- Lack of access to face-to-face legal support during COVID-19 pandemic

"You're not allowed to work. You're not allowed to do anything. You're not allowed benefits. I can't wish that for even my worst enemy." (Woman accessing support)

Key features for success

- ✓ Monthly beneficiary meetings helped the project to keep responding to what women need
- ✓ Baobab uses interpreters and recruits staff and volunteers with language skills

"I would ask people, how do you feel about the project, what do you want to see more of? How could we improve". (Project staff)



Case study 2: Encompass South West: Women's First Partnership

The numbers

- 126 women supported
- 12 children supported
- 6 volunteers and 98 training delegates supported

About the service

Encompass South West works to prevent and alleviate homelessness and poverty across Northern Devon and surrounding areas through advice, support and specialist housing with a strong focus on rural/remote locations, providing both community-based projects and supported housing.

With funding from the EWHF Encompass was able to...

- Deliver the Women First project: a coordinated approach to support to women through a formal partnership between Encompass Southwest (ESW), North Devon Against Domestic Abuse (NDADA) and MIND
- Provide one-to-one specialist mental health, housing and IDVA support for women and access to group courses
- Introduce two new four-bed apartments for women only as emergency accommodation provision
- Host a conference on gender informed working for local agencies to improve support for women

COVID-19 impacts

Unable to establish a drop-in service as planned.

Group course on domestic violence was adapted to one-to-one and small group formats.

Some group work adapted to online format

“I’ve literally gone from homeless and penniless in December to a stable tenancy. I’ve got a job now”

“I’ve got a lot more confidence in myself. So that now there is no question that I would go back that. I feel a lot stronger, more confident, more empowered in all aspects of myself.”

“Now I work in supported housing for people who have been homeless”

**“People know who we are and they’re referring in at that earlier stage, before it becomes the really complex women that we tend to see.”
(Project staff)**

Reported outcomes for women:

- Access to multiple services under the ‘Women First’ umbrella
- Access to emergency and permanent accommodation
- Access to employment
- Increased self-confidence
- Increased knowledge of patterns of domestic violence and cessation of abusive relationships
- Increased sense of life purpose

Additional reported outcomes

- Increased referrals from partner agencies and ability intervene early
- Increased awareness of gender informed practice in Encompass and local agencies

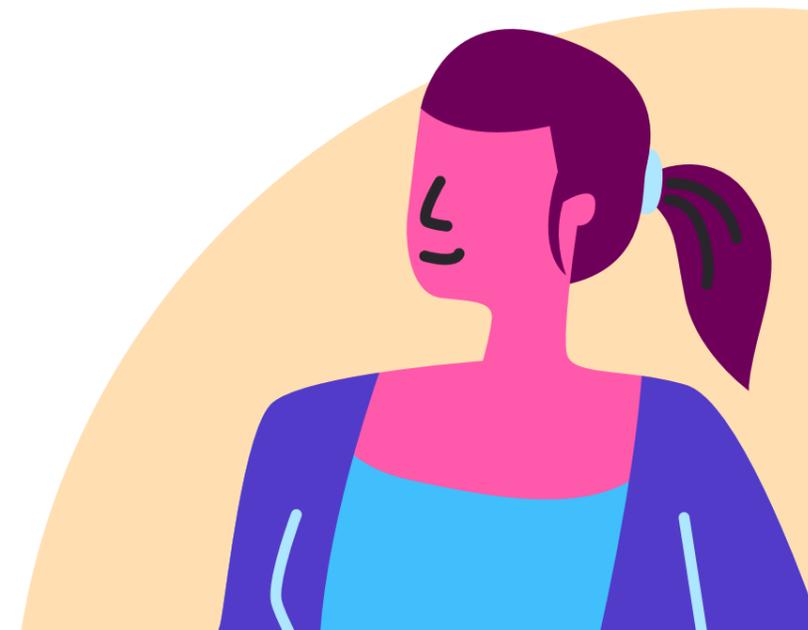
Key challenges

- Attracting sustainable funding to continue the project

“I would ask people, how do you feel about the project, what do you want to see more of? How could we improve”. (Project staff)

Key features for success

- ✓ Development of a peer network to feed into service design and delivery as well as local decision making
- ✓ Partnership working based on transparency and shared ethos has enabled pooling resources and shared responsibility and facilitated a coordinated response for women



Case study 3: Wearside Women in Need (WWiN)

The numbers

- 31 women supported
- 9 staff members benefited through the learning from the project

About the service

WWiN provides accessible community-based services to women and children at risk of, or suffering, abuse. As a feminist organisation, the approach is rooted in an understanding of the gendered nature of violence against women and girls, and recognises the way factors such as age, ethnicity, sexuality and disability can affect women's experiences.

With funding from the EWHF WWiN was able to...

- Provide a therapeutic recovery centre for women experiencing multiple disadvantage, for whom current provision is ineffective and inaccessible.
- Provide access to specialised counselling at the recovery centre alongside key worker support and access to regular group activities
- Provide a strengths-based, trauma-informed, individual-led model of supported accommodation

COVID-19 impacts

A lack of P.P.E was available for staff working at the centre for the first six months of the pandemic

Some positive benefits of the lockdown restrictions including increased ability to build community

"The way I was coping was just horrible. I haven't self-harmed for 8 months. I haven't had any suicide attempts."

"I'm understanding and having meaning to life. I've got purpose. I can see a bit into the future and it's looking brighter."

"I couldn't make decisions before as I was addicted to drugs and unable to maintain contact [with child]. I've had support to contact her and maintain contact."

"I have moved away from all the bad influences I was associated with"

Reported outcomes for women:

- Increased sense of safety
- Reduced or cessation of self-harming and suicide attempts
- Cessation of substance use
- Improved mental health and increased knowledge of positive coping strategies
- Increased contact with children
- Increased sense of purpose
- Increased self-confidence and sense of self-worth
- Cessation of contact with perpetrators
- Access to education opportunities and new qualifications

Key challenges

- Access to sustainable funding and lack of understanding by funders of the cost benefits of the model

"Everybody wants everything done on the cheap. They want a really good job but they don't really want to pay for it." (Project staff)

Key features for success

- ✓ Development of a strong team with experienced leadership and a supportive learning culture
- ✓ Partnership with specialist trauma-informed counselling organisation to deliver in-house therapy

"I think it's about strong leadership and a real learning culture and staff that are confident enough to learn from what's gone wrong or right." (Project staff)

The project has received follow-on funding from the local CCG



Appendix 2: The Grantees

The table below presents an overview of the aims of the 29 projects. It is important to note that some of the intended activities were adapted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These descriptions are taken from grantees' descriptions of their projects.

| Grantee | Purpose of the EWHF grant |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1625 Independent People | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support young women aged 16-25 in Bristol and South Gloucestershire who have experienced or are at risk of homelessness and domestic and sexual violence, through a new partnership between 1625ip, Julian House, SARSAS and Next Link. To increase the number of staff working in a gender-informed way and increase the level of knowledge and skills of staff to work with women and those with multiple disadvantage. |
| AVA (Against Violence and Abuse) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To build the capacity of the statutory and voluntary sectors to support women experiencing homelessness in Haringey through working in partnership to implement a survivor-led co-production approach in the borough. To provide enhanced, specialist support to women who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness with experience of domestic or sexual abuse with the support of peer facilitators. |
| A Way Out | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop an outreach, engagement and recovery service for survival sex workers in Teesside and provide specialist support for vulnerable and exploited women and help them to secure and sustain accommodation. To co-design and deliver specialist one-to-one and group support with women to break the cycle of homelessness, violence and multiple disadvantage. To build partnerships with housing service providers to advocate for women to secure/retain safe accommodation and provide training to staff and volunteers to ensure their services are designed to effectively support women. |

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| Baobab Women's Project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide specialist trauma-informed casework to refugee, migrant and asylum-seeking women experiencing homelessness and disadvantage. To network with partner organisations, plus train and support partner agencies and volunteer advocates to improve practice with migrant women who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness across the West Midlands. |
| Basis Yorkshire | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To appoint a specialist housing champion to work to reduce the number of homeless sex workers in Leeds. The housing champion to regularly engage with key stakeholder groups on housing and be a spokesperson for housing-related issues affecting women at network and stakeholder events ensuring resources are dedicated to a gendered, trauma-informed approach to homelessness across Leeds. |
| Black Country Women's Aid | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To establish an assertive outreach project working with women 18+ who are homeless/at risk of homelessness. To work with specialist partners to offer a "one-stop-shop" for a range of needs. |
| Encompass | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To build on the work of a partnership between Encompass Southwest (ESW), North Devon Against Domestic Abuse (NDADA) and MIND, which has been co-designed with the support of female service users currently living in supported accommodation and or rough sleeping. To design and implement a range of local services aimed at sensitively engaging and supporting women including introducing 8 new support accommodation units for females only and providing trauma-informed co-located services for women. |
| Falcon Support Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services specialist support services for women, increasing the provision of female-only bed spaces in the supported accommodation and cross-sector working. To employ a women's project worker for women in the supported accommodation services and coordinate dedicated services for women attending the Drop-Ins. |

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|---|---|
| Harbour Support Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve partnerships between Harbour specialist domestic abuse service and homelessness services across six local authority areas in the northeast: North Tyneside, Durham, Darlington, Stockton, Hartlepool & Middlesbrough. |
| Independent Choices Greater Manchester (ICGM) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To deliver a bespoke training programme to upskill specialist frontline staff and managers to work with severe multiple disadvantage, specifically with women with NRPF. Focusing on the issues, rights, experiences and barriers faced by migrant women with insecure immigration status following gender and trauma-informed approaches. To provide small crisis grants to support women with NRPF who are experiencing homelessness or vulnerably housed in partnership with Safety for Sisters and build local community capacity to respond better to NRPF needs. |
| Julian House | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To employ a Specialist Female Casework Coordinator and Training & Peer Support Facilitator to deliver the project to support homeless women and those at risk of becoming homeless who have had children removed from their care, to secure and maintain settled accommodation. The Casework Coordinator to be partly seconded to Footprints, a service delivered by Adult Social Care to support people who have had children removed from their care. |
| Kairos Women Working Together | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To offer increased specialist homelessness-focused support for women in Coventry, improve Local Authority partnership-working, map pathways and influence provision of trauma-informed and gender-appropriate support. |
| Micro Rainbow Ltd | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To expand specialist provision by recruiting a part-time LGBTI Women Housing Officer and a volunteer to run a pilot project in the London area in support of homeless LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees, including outreach and housing support. |

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| Oasis Domestic Abuse Service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work in partnership with Catching Lives to develop psychologically informed environments (PIE) and services for women who are homeless and have experienced complex trauma. To co-locate a domestic abuse practitioner at Catching Live's drop-in centre in Canterbury to work in partnership with the outreach team and support women attending the centre. To support the development of a PIE implementation plan, using the five key elements set out by 'No One Left Out' to evolve practice concepts and opportunities for female service users. |
| Padley Group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To establish gender and trauma-informed approaches to supporting women experiencing homelessness and those at risk by working in partnership between Padley Group's Women avoid Risk Through homelessness (WORTH), Women's Work and Riverside Housing Association. |
| Praxis Community Projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To build on successful collaboration across the homelessness, women's, legal sectors to deliver a multi-faceted pilot programme, providing holistic, gender and trauma-informed support to women with NRPF and their children. |
| Safer Places | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with Streets to Homes to support homeless or vulnerably housed women who have experienced domestic/sexual abuse and multiple disadvantage. To engage women who are street-homeless or sofa-surfing and those who do not want or cannot sustain refuge accommodation. To establish a joint co-located women's services team, sharing core skills of each agency, extending the expertise of both. |
| Safer Stronger Consortium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Safer Stronger Consortium (SSC) and Safer Cornwall (Cornwall's Community Safety Partnership) to coordinate a system-wide response to women's homelessness that better links VCSEs to statutory services and adopt a gendered and trauma-informed approach to multi-agency service provision. |

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| <p>Simon on the Streets (SOTS)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help women to access the emergency housing provision (originally planned in partnership and later adapted) and to provide support on an intensive one-to-one basis, ensuring the women receive the services and help they require including during evening and weekends when other services are closed. To deliver assertive outreach to homeless women in Leeds via the Women's assertive outreach/NRPF Workers to provide emotional support and help women engage in services and deliver emotional support. |
| <p>Staffordshire Women's Aid</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work in partnership with the Housing Options Team at Stafford Borough Council to pilot a Women's Housing and Resettlement Officer (WRO) project co-located at the council within SWA's own specialist women's services team. (Partnership approach adapted due to COVID-19) To provide appropriate support for female rough sleepers living with domestic/sexual abuse. |
| <p>Standing Together Against Domestic Violence</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To partner with St Mungo's to develop a new support approach co-produced with VAWG survivors. To pilot the STADV's model in St Mungo's frontline outreach and accommodation services. To deliver a programme of involvement sessions for women with lived experience of VAWG and homelessness, sleeping rough, and living in mixed and women-only homelessness services. |
| <p>Stockport Without Abuse (SWA)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To deliver safety-focused, strength-based, therapeutic provision based on a theoretical model designed to help homeless women who have experienced trauma understand the impact on their wellbeing. To provide specialist support to Black and minoritised women in Stockport using elements of Safety, Trust, Choice, collaboration and Empowerment to avoid triggers and re-traumatising. To empower and support women and to increase the voice and opportunities of women to engage in a more meaningful way. |

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| <p>Society of St James (SSJ)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To embed gender and trauma-informed practice across Society of St James's projects. To commission a female-only local provider, Aurora New Dawn, to provide gender and trauma-informed training for staff in the homeless day service, night shelters, supported accommodation services, supported lettings scheme and housing management provision. To identify and embed champions across SSJ accommodation provision and develop a new gender-informed quality framework. |
| <p>THE Y PROJECT</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide accommodation for young women aged 16-21 experiencing at least three of the following criteria: Homelessness, Substance misuse, Mental health, Self-harm, Offending behaviours, Disabilities, CSE, Childhood trauma, Domestic abuse by providing gender-specific responses focused on these areas. To utilise regional partnerships inviting experts with lived experience of CSE as well as local Domestic Abuse organisations to train staff across the wider organisation and co-produce services. |
| <p>Trafford Domestic Abuse Service (TDAS)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide a Move on Domestic Abuse Service Advisor across Trafford to enable women to break free and move on from domestic abuse. In partnership with HOST, to provide place-based support service for women who are presenting with housing needs as a result of domestic abuse through twice a week drop-in, pre-appointment service for women and offer support to housing staff. |
| <p>Trevi House Ltd</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To recruit a Trauma-Informed Resettlement Worker to build effective strategic relationships across a range of third sector agencies. To help women in recovery who are homeless or at risk of homelessness navigate the housing landscape and remove barriers improving accessibility to housing for women in need across the city. To coordinate focus groups and one-to-one interviews to gain qualitative insights that will help shape an accredited trauma-informed workshop that can then be delivered out to key professionals. |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <p>Turning Tides, Worthing</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase capacity in West Sussex for women-only spaces at local hubs and services by extending times, location, and days of current women-only groups in Worthing and Littlehampton. • To increase the offer of specialist female support by employing three dedicated workers to be based in a variety of settings including a multi-disciplinary team and mixed service that has a women-only unit on site. |
| <p>Wearside Women in Need (WWIN)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a therapeutic recovery centre for women experiencing multiple disadvantage, for whom current provision is ineffective and inaccessible, based on a strengths-based, individual-led model of supported accommodation, underpinned by a feminist understanding of trauma. |
| <p>Wintercomfort for the homeless</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide women's only support during the hours of 2pm - 4pm at Wintercomfort's Day Centre, to include: weekly welfare information sessions; benefits, housing and debt advice; and regular one-to-one counselling sessions, to help address trauma, mental health problems and substance misuse. |

Appendix 3: Terms of reference

Culturally informed practice: 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. It also includes consideration of closely related factors such as socioeconomic status, immigration status and literacy level.

Gender specific support: 'Gender specific' or 'women specific' approaches are from services designed and delivered by women, for women. A strong thread through these services is the appreciation of the lived experience, disadvantage and inequality experienced by women. Gender specific approaches usually have a strong feminist ethos to stand alongside women to support them using a strengths-based approach that validates their experiences and empowers women to make positive changes in their lives.

Gender informed support: Gender informed support seeks to adapt and configure elements of support or parts of the service to better support women in the way that works for them, noting that their experiences are different to men. The services are not always women-only services and may not have a feminist ethos underpinning services but seek to implement an approach which recognises the lived experiences disadvantage and inequality experienced by women into their approach to supporting women.

Trauma informed approach: A programme, organisation, or system that is trauma-informed: realises the indicators and widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognises the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and seeks to actively resist re-traumatisation³⁹.

Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE): Psychologically informed environments (PIEs) are services where the day-to-day running has been designed to take the psychological and emotional needs of people with these experiences into account.

39. SAMHSA (2014) Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach.

Appendix 4: Methodology

Document review

The researchers reviewed key documents including blogs written throughout the programme, some early reports to funders, monitoring reports and aims and objectives set by each grantee.

Qualitative data collection

The researchers designed and carried out a range of activities to gather qualitative data from grantees and women accessing support, enabling as many beneficiaries and stakeholders to take part as possible.

Grantees

The researchers engaged with key stakeholders from the grantee projects via a combination of online focus groups and interviews. Two focus groups were conducted with ten grantees to gather data about the successes and challenges and learning across the programme as a whole. In total there were 11 participants across the focus groups and there were two representatives present from one partnership model.

Interviews were conducted with 11 grantees, including ten one-to-one interviews and one paired interview. These gathered data about the aims and objectives of the funded projects, the delivery and ethos of the project, progress made towards the desired outcomes, examples of successes and challenges as well as learning from the grantees and the perceptions about the programme management.

In addition, a researcher attended a grantee learning event to introduce the research and listen to the experiences of grantees. The researchers also attended the Homeless Link conference in June 2021 to listen to the experience of grantees.

Women accessing support

To gather valuable data about what women thought about the support they had been offered and the extent to which it had enabled them to make positive changes in their circumstances, researchers engaged with women that had accessed projects funded by the EWHF.

12 women engaged in the research via one-to-one telephone or Zoom interviews. For some women who did not feel comfortable talking to a researcher, we offered the chance to answer a short series of Five questions relating to the reflections about the service they had accessed and any changes to their circumstances, with the support from a key worker. One woman participated via this method.

Some additional quotes from women accessing support were also analysed that were provided through the grantee monitoring forms.

The table below documents the engagement with different audiences via each of the qualitative research methods.

| Method of engagement | Number of participants |
|---|------------------------|
| Stakeholder focus groups | 11 |
| Stakeholder interviews | 11 |
| Interviews with women | 12 |
| Comments provided by women via their support worker | 1 |
| Total participants | 35 |

Design of the qualitative research tools

The research tools and discussion guides for the focus groups and interviews were designed by the researchers and were reviewed and signed off by Homeless Link prior to the activities taking place.

Information sheets documenting the research aims and objectives, as well as how any information would be used and stored were shared with participants prior to them taking part. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before any focus group or interview (including the limits to confidentiality) and the researchers reiterated this at the start of each session. The participants were asked for permission to record the interviews or focus groups and participants were told about their rights to withdraw from the research if they wished.

To incorporate a gender informed approach within the research process, a protocol was developed between the researchers, Homeless Link and the relevant support services, that each woman accessing support who participated in the research interviews was offered a debrief chat with their support worker following the interview if they wanted. This was to ensure that they had an opportunity to ask for additional help or to talk over the experience with someone they know and trust.

Recruitment of participants

To ensure the engagement of stakeholders was as broad as possible across the programme within the available resource, grantees were invited to participate in a combination of interviews and focus groups. Those projects that had conducted more of the life cycle of their project by the time of the qualitative fieldwork period were invited to take part in the one-to-one interviews to explore their experiences, successes, challenges, outcomes, and recommendations in more depth. Whereas the focus groups focussed more on creating discussion between grantees about the successes, challenges and learning about the programme as a whole.

Women accessing support were recruited to take part via the services that had been supporting them. Grantees were asked if they would offer the opportunity of a short telephone interview to the women they supported, using an information sheet created by the researchers. Some grantees reported that this was more or less appropriate for the women they supported. To encourage participation from different groups, or women who might not ordinarily take part, the researchers

designed a short series of questions that women could answer with their support worker and have the information sent anonymously to the researchers.

By doing this, the researchers incorporated a gender informed approach to the research process which recognised the importance of relationships when working with women who have experienced trauma. The timeframe for conducting interviews with the women didn't allow for a relational approach and to mitigate that this a tool was made to support women to participate facilitated by their support worker. The methodological implications to this are acknowledged, however, the purpose of this research is not to generalise, but to amplify the voices of women and provide an opportunity and platform for them to be heard. Overall, this method helped to give voice to women who would not have participated through another method.

Quantitative data

At the beginning of the programme Homeless Link designed the monitoring reports. The 29 grantees were required to provide monitoring data to Homeless Link each quarter between January 2020 and April 2021 with a final report due at the end of each grantee's delivery period. These reports included quarterly update reports as well as a final monitoring report for grantees who had completed their programme of work.

Quarterly update reports

The monitoring questions for the update quarterly reports included the numbers and types of beneficiaries reached through the programme, the types of homelessness faced by women they supported, whether women were older or younger, and which part of the world women were from. Through the update reports, grantees were also required to provide case studies of outcomes for women and examples of how COVID 19 had affected their service.

Final reports

The final reports for grantees that had completed their delivery period included some of the same questions as the update reports, plus additional questions about reflections over the programme including grantee plans for the future of the project and whether additional or continuation funding had been secured. The type of support offered

and whether services provided support for women with NRPF, those who experience domestic violence and exploitation, was also collected through the final reports. 11 of the 29 projects completed a final report.

The technical team at Homeless Link provided the researchers with the quarter 1-4 monitoring data plus the final report data to use for analysis. It was acknowledged by the researchers however, that some of the grantees had provided figures for a quarter instead of for the whole programme delivery period. Due to these inconsistencies and challenges with how the questions had been interpreted, the figures in the final reports were not included in the analysis. The final reports were used to gather quotes from women, and data about projects' future plans.

To address some of the challenges noted with the monitoring data, the researchers designed a simple tool for grantees to complete to give final end figures for the number of beneficiaries supported, but not all grantees completed this.

Data analysis

This research produced various data sets for analysis including:

- Qualitative data from grantees and women beneficiaries about their experiences of the programme and insights and impacts regarding the difference made to them.
- Qualitative data from the monitoring reports regarding the challenges and successes experienced by grantees, case studies and quotes from women about the quality of their experience of support and any difference made
- Quantitative data about the numbers and types of beneficiaries reached

The researchers designed a thematic analytical framework and sifted the interview and focus group data qualitative data through the framework and triangulated this with the qualitative and quantitative data shared by Homeless Link from the quarterly and final monitoring reports from January 2020 to April 2021.

The researchers identified the themes across the various data sets in terms of the achievements, challenges, learning from the programme

and the types of outcomes achieved for the different beneficiary audiences. This process helps to strengthen the reliability of the findings relating to insights and impacts from the EWHF.

Limitations of the research

As with any research there are some important limitations to consider which impact the validity and reliability of the findings:

- The resources and timescales involved in this research did not support an evaluation of the programme and so the methods were not designed to be a full and comprehensive evaluation of the EWHF. Therefore, the research is light touch, designed to draw out some examples of insights, impacts and learning. Therefore, it is important to note that the findings are illustrative purposes only and are not to be taken out of context or generalised beyond this study.
- It was not possible to include each grantee in the research, and so methods were designed to engage as many grantees as possible through a range of activities such as focus groups, interviews, listening events, the monitoring reports and offering options for grantees and beneficiaries to provide responses to a series of questions.
- Attempts were made to gather data from women accessing a range of support projects across the programme, however due to practical challenges in engaging women, those who did take part were from a small number of grantee projects. The findings from their responses therefore are indicative of their experiences and cannot be generalised across the programme.
- There are several limitations to note about the quantitative data:
 - The ability to capture or quantify robust monitoring or impact data and changes over time for beneficiaries using the existing quarterly monitoring reports was not possible.
 - The data for each beneficiary was not available in single line format and so analysis across or between the cases was not possible to verify any of the figures. Instead output data from each grantee was available where grantees had been asked to record the number of beneficiaries per quarter and so it is not known how reliable these data are from the data entry as some beneficiaries may have continued to engage through more than one quarter.
- The researchers analysed organisational monitoring data that was provided quarterly to Homeless Link by each of the 29 grantees. Due to differences in interpretation across the grantees, staffing changes, changes to ways of working and crisis management during the COVID 19 pandemic, the monitoring forms were not completed in a standardised way by all grantees. As such, the data across the programme about the beneficiaries' circumstances is patchy with inconsistencies identified and the extent to which the results can be relied upon is unknown.
- Data regarding race or ethnicity were not collected by Homeless Link via the monitoring reports and so these findings are not available. To attempt to address this gap, the researchers asked questions relating to the diversity of the client group to the grantees who participated in the research to get a sense of this across the programme.
- Examples of double counting of beneficiaries were noted in the monitoring reports as figures were provided on a quarterly basis. Where beneficiaries have continued to engage beyond one quarter, they could have been counted more than once. Therefore, a true figure for the total numbers of beneficiaries reached is unknown. Figures reported are indicative.
- Due to interpretation challenges noted in the final monitoring reports from grantees that had completed their programme of work, these figures were not used in the analysis – instead, monitoring data from quarters 1- 4 for each of the 29 grantees were included. Therefore, it is important to note that the work by some grantees is ongoing, and those that have completed do not have their figures from the final report included.
- An additional challenge was that the quarterly update reports and the final reports were not fully aligned and so incorporating the responses to these reports into one set of analysis was a challenge – but ultimately due to the inconsistencies described above, the figures in the final reports were not used in the analysis.



Homeless Link

About Us

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness services. We work to improve services through research, guidance and learning, and campaign for policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

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