

Women's Housing Movement

Join the network to build a
movement for women's housing
justice

Women's Housing Movement

Why is it needed?

The number of women experiencing homelessness is growing. Shelter reported that in the last 10 years alone it has increased by 88%¹. The impact of systemic gender inequality on pathways into and experiences of homelessness is recognised by many in the homelessness sector, but it is by no means commonly understood or accepted. There is a lack of varied and flexible accommodation options for women, most notably single-gender accommodation which constitutes 11.1% of accommodation for single homeless women². Services which are designed for everyone without recognising the difference that gender makes, can privilege access for men. There is a need to untangle the impact of systemic inequalities on the design and delivery of services to provide an adequate response. Organisations across the homelessness and other sectors have taken this step and have developed innovative responses to improve knowledge of and response to, women's experiences of homelessness.

From the frontline to senior leadership, experts in the women's and homelessness sector are developing practices to address the systemic inequalities that impact women's homelessness. The activities which look to address this gap are ambitious and innovative in nature, ranging from the creation of new methodology to count women's homelessness in London; the effective commissioning of a women's pathway in Leeds; the development of a national accreditation framework for supported accommodations service by Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse (STADA) to many local initiatives seeking to improve and develop local services for women.

The women's housing movement is a platform for practitioners across the homelessness, criminal justice, women's sector and beyond to work together to improve the support to women experiencing homelessness. It is a forum through which best practice can be shared and activities can be coordinated which aim to end women's homelessness. It is an inclusive movement which will act in accordance with the statement on anti-racism and intersectionality³. The movement is comprised of three parts, the strategic network, leaders practice

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https://assets.ctfassets.net/6sxvmndn0s/3fo63KyM9D5qJedQvxe7A6/df905542ec226fd909388759727059d0/Fobed_off_women-centred_peer_research_report_FINAL.pdf

² <https://homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/2021-annual-review-of-support-for-single-homeless-people-in-england/#:~:text=Homelessness%20trends,->

[During%20the%202020&text=This%20includes%20194%2C670%20single%20households,increase%20of%2037](#)

³ See Appendix 1

forum and frontline practice forum. While they operate as separate forums, the knowledge shared and generated each will be disseminated to the other forums under the umbrella of the movement. The rest of this briefing is dedicated to explaining the structure and content of these forums and how you can get involved.

Contents

- 1 Strategic Network
- 2 Leader's Forum
- 3 Frontline Practice Forum

Strategic Network

Purpose: The purpose of the strategic network is to act as a national forum in which the activities across the homelessness and women's sector can be coordinated effectively to drive forward transformation of systems and develop best practice across the England. The network will enable collaboration through the exchanging of information, ideas, and the creation of a shared workstream to address key priorities identified by the network⁴. In its first meeting in January 2023 the network identified ten priorities which can be found on the last page of this document.

Aims and Objectives:

- Foster a spirit of collaboration and solidarity, increase collective ability to influence systems change nationally and locally.
- Connect organisations across the women sectors, readily exchange information to build collective knowledge and understanding.
- Identify shared commitments and shared work plan.
- Monitor and evaluate progress of shared work plan.
- Incorporate feedback from women's network into development and evaluation of work plan.
- Disseminate information and learning to women's networks and other local networks.
- Ensuring actions are consistent with statement on intersectionality.

⁴ See Appendix 2

Membership: The network is open to anyone working for an organisation that supports women experiencing homelessness who has the skills, expertise and capacity to contribute. This contribution involves attending the quarterly national meeting and leading or participating in the work of one of the identified priorities.

How can you join: Contact the Women's Homelessness Project Manager Isabel.langdale@homelesslink.org.uk

Leader's Practice Forum

Purpose: This is a community of practice focused on designing and developing services for women experiencing homelessness. In the first forum which took place in February 2023 the attendees identified the subject of future forums. In these forums we will hear from those with expertise on the subject, share best practice with each other and discuss shared challenges. The best practice and discussions had in these meetings will be shared with the strategic network.

Membership: The forum is for those who are currently providing or hoping to provide services to women experiencing homelessness. You might be a service manager, housing lead, network coordinator, or just interested.

How can you join: The meetings will be available via Eventbrite registration on [Homeless Link's events page](#).

Frontline Practice Forum

Purpose: This is a community of practice is focused on improving support to women experiencing homelessness. In the first forum, which took place in March 2023, the attendees identified the subject of future forums. In these forums we will hear from those with expertise on the subject, share best practice with each other and discuss shared challenges. The best practice and discussions had in these meetings will be shared with the strategic network.

Membership: The forum is for those who are currently work on the frontline and provide support to women experiencing homelessness.

How can you join: The meetings will be available via Eventbrite registration on [Homeless Link's events page](#).

Appendix 1

Anti-racism and Intersectionality Statement

The strategic network is committed to pursuing an anti-racist and intersectional approach to work.

This position acknowledges the role of power and privilege in setting the agenda and aims to address this by ensuring that the voices of all organisations, particularly those that represent marginalised communities are represented and listened to.

This network will have a sharp focus on what needs to be done to address structural racism and other forms of structural violence faced by women experiencing homelessness.

This network will build into the agenda spaces to reflect on the particularity of experiences of racialised and other marginalised people including women with disabilities, women in the LGBTQIA+ community and migrant women.

This network is inclusive of trans women and will ensure that the consideration of the experiences of trans women is at the forefront of our work. This network will also seek to enable the inclusion of nonbinary people.

It will ensure that any new work undertaken by the group contains a critical assessment of how the experiences of racialised and other marginalised people will be affected by the work, and how the work can ensure their needs are met.

This network will commit to supporting and elevating the work of organisations developing responses to the needs of racialised and marginalised people.

Appendix 2

Strategic Network Priorities

1. Improving data capture around women rough sleepers nationally by replicating and adapting London Women's Census to other part of the country. Share best practice on outreach services which effectively reach out to and record women rough sleeping.
2. Advocate for and share best practice regarding fairer commissioning requirements which improve create more accessible accommodation and support pathways for women (i.e., reducing need for verification).
3. Develop and coordinate training offer and systems change interventions to improve local authorities' response to women experiencing domestic abuse.
4. Support by and for organisations to collect, share and use data. Recognise the lack of capacity within the BME women sector to join spaces and produce data. Develop solutions which make visible the voices and challenges of the by and for sector.
5. Share best practice and develop engagement with lived experience voice to evidence need for funding, rather than reliance on data for women's homelessness which we know isn't reflective.
6. Sharing best practice and upskill frontline workers to challenge gatekeeping of local authority accommodation for women fleeing domestic abuse.
7. Develop guidelines and training which recognises the vulnerability of women when evicted from temporary accommodation and supports providers to reduce evictions.
8. Share best practice, and advocate for the commissioning of multiple, flexible and varied accommodation options for women (including specialist services). This may involve guidelines, training and workshops for commissioners on developing pathways for women.
9. Consider how to develop better support for staff working with women experiencing homelessness, understanding the impact of vicarious trauma.
10. Improve collaboration to build collective voice, developing a cross sector approach to influence commissioners effectively and prevent competition for tenders, recognising value, particularly of smaller organisations.

What We Do

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.

Homeless Link

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Let's End Homelessness Together

