



**Welcome to the Autumn Westminster Homelessness Partnership Newsletter** – thank you for signing up! Please do pass this on to others in your organisation or networks who might be interested. They can sign up to receive regular updates by emailing [becky@accendo-consult.co.uk](mailto:becky@accendo-consult.co.uk).

### **Women's services special feature**

At the Practitioners Group we hold each six weeks, it was noted that there has been significant change and development in rough sleeping and homelessness services specifically for women in recent months. The group felt it would be useful to outline the current picture of women's services in Westminster in the newsletter.

Below we have provided a brief outline of the current specific women's services in Westminster, as well as links to some useful resources.

#### **Day services**

**Marylebone Project** Day Centre is now a 24-hour service, open 7 days a week. For health and safety purposes, access to the drop-ins is by appointment only. Women who don't have an appointment are still able to collect a food bag. To book an appointment please contact 0203 959 1444 / [marylebonecentre@churcharmy.org](mailto:marylebonecentre@churcharmy.org)

**CSTM's women's space** is a weekly drop in on Wednesday morning 9am-12pm for women who are or are at risk of homelessness. It's for practical support, activity groups and advice from the CSTM team.

#### **Emergency accommodation and assessment**

The Safe Spaces project is the new iteration of the 'Green Room' which provided communal assessment space no longer appropriate due to Covid-19. The Westminster Women's Safe Space will offer 24/7 support for women experiencing or at risk of VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls) and Multiple

Disadvantage. The service will support 16 women at any one time, 13 of these spaces are on-suite bedrooms with dedicated clusters and kitchen facilities. Five will be allocated to women with No Recourse to Public Funds. The remaining three rooms are 'safe seats' which will be dedicated assessment spaces accessible throughout the night for outreach teams to make referrals. These three spaces will provide a crucial supported space for women in crisis situations with high levels of support on hand to allow high risk monitoring for women at immediate risk from perpetrators. Email contact: [westminsterwomenssafespace@mungos.org](mailto:westminsterwomenssafespace@mungos.org)

### Drug and alcohol services

**Turning Point** provide the OpenDAWs Women's Service - dedicated specialist service for women only, which provides a safe space to seek support with substance misuse. The services include women only groups and 1:1s, counselling, personal development and support in the community. The service in non-Covid times runs on site on Tuesdays but currently is by phone and digital running on Tuesdays. Turning Point also provide in reach to the Women's Space at CSTM, the Marylebone Project and work closely with the outreach team.

**CLG** who provide the local alcohol service, are planning a women's group which they will provide more details to partners on soon.

### Housing First for women

**The Westminster VAWG (violence against women and girls) Housing First project** provides permanent, independent housing and intensive support for 20 women experiencing long term homelessness, any form of VAWG and multiple disadvantage. Solace work to build relationships with the women and provide intensive 'woman led' support to help them maintain a tenancy and improve physical and mental wellbeing. Standing Together manage partnerships with a coalition of housing partners who provide units for the project.

### Hostels and supported housing

- **Marylebone Project Hostel** has over 100 rooms for women, a proportion of which are commissioned by Westminster County Council.
- **Queen Mary's hostel** is part of the mental health pathway commissioned by the council and delivered by Riverside – this hostel has 49 bedspaces. There are five emergency beds with more flexible referral routes.
- **Hopkinson House**, run by Look Ahead has a women's cluster within the larger hostel.
- **St Mungo's** also have a small women's only supported housing project in Westminster with eight spaces.

### Health

The Homeless Health Service has a women's counselling service.

### Capacity building and support

**Standing Together** has a dedicated Westminster role (held by Louisa Steele - [l.steele@standingtogether.org](mailto:l.steele@standingtogether.org)). This provides support in a range of ways to help services work with women affected by violence including:

- **The VAWG and Multiple Disadvantage Forum:** a monthly space for professionals to bring the cases of women they are supporting for both reflective discussion and practical advice around issues such as violence, abuse and trauma. The forum is co-facilitated by a clinical psychologist from the psychology in hostels team, and professionals with expertise around domestic abuse and women's homelessness. **A range of training opportunities** for services. Recent examples include 'Gender and Trauma' and 'Domestic Abuse in homelessness settings'. To find out about future opportunities contact Louisa.

**The Women's Development Unit is a pan London project led by** Connection at St Martin's and Solace Women's Aid (Solace). The Women's Development Unit will work collaboratively to bring together the wealth of expertise across the homelessness and VAWG sectors to build a strategy and a plan that will make a tangible difference to the lives of women experiencing homelessness. For more info and contact details see:

<https://www.solacewomensaid.org/womens-development-unit>

**Groundswell** are refreshing their directory of women's services which includes more detail on the services listed above and additional information on relevant services that are not women's only - it will be available on this page of their website soon:

<https://groundswell.org.uk/westminster-hhpc/health-directories>

### Resources

The MARAC referral form - <https://www.standingtogether.org.uk/marac> - the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a regular local meeting to discuss how to help victim/survivors of domestic abuse who have been assessed as being in the top 10% at highest risk of homicide or serious harm. The MARAC is both a forum to share insights on these cases with other local services and to develop a joined-up safety plan.

In Westminster there is a Multiple Disadvantage MARAC rep who is able to support homelessness services around the MARAC process e.g., making referrals and presenting cases. From November 2021 the rep will sit within the Westminster Women's Safe Space team. Email contact:

[westminsterwomenssafespace@mungos.org](mailto:westminsterwomenssafespace@mungos.org)

Standing Together also recommend the following resources for homelessness services:

- [Keeping Us Safer](#) an approach for supporting homelessness women experiencing multiple disadvantage
- [Working effectively with survivors and perpetrators](#) in homelessness settings
- [Working with perpetrators](#) of domestic abuse
- [Complicated matters](#) – a tool kit addressing domestic and sexual abuse, substance misuse and mental ill-health

### Other news...

**Winners** - congratulations to **St Mungo's Westminster SOS team** who bagged a prize at the London Homelessness Awards. Those reading this newsletter are likely to know how well deserved this was especially after the incredible efforts the team made through the pandemic. The **VAWG Women's Housing First** project was also highly commended by the judges.

**London Councils** – have appointed a new rough sleeping programme director, Michelle Binfield, tasked with co-ordinating cross-agency efforts to secure long-term accommodation and prevent people from returning to the streets. One area of work is the **Rough Sleeping Information Review Working Group** which Westminster Council and St Mungo's representatives from Westminster are currently attending. This group is exploring how we can better use data and evidence to make rough sleeping rare, brief and non-recurrent in our city.

### And finally

Suggestions, questions, comments are always welcome here at WHP – please contact @WestminsterHP [becky@accenco-consult.co.uk](mailto:becky@accenco-consult.co.uk).