



## **"Why a gendered approach to supporting women experiencing homelessness is essential"**

Homelessness, like domestic and sexualised violence and abuse, is a deeply gendered phenomenon requiring specialist provision from services who understand and support an intersectional approach to ending homelessness, as the article below demonstrates:

Women with children in refuge accommodation, living in homeless shelters, sofa-surfing, exchanging sex for a bed or sleeping rough on the streets.

These women, regardless of their exact situation, usually have one thing in common: violence. Estimates range between 44% - 89% of women who are homeless have also experienced violence either during or prior to becoming homeless. Violence during childhood and/or adulthood plays a significant role in how a woman is affected by homelessness. We also know, from St Mungo's Rebuilding Shattered Lives report and work by AGENDA, that these same women report a range of other adverse childhood experiences that often extend well into adulthood.

With such wide experiences of violence and abuse contributing to women's homelessness, many women also go on to develop mental health issues, such as Post traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and substance dependency, falling into the multiple and complex needs category. Currently, around 30% of people accessing homelessness services are women and recent figures show that it's just 12% for those sleeping rough. We know, however, that women sleep rough differently to men and will often be in "hidden" homeless situations and therefore, will not show up on official statistics. Yet, despite women's unique and complex experience of homelessness, very few homelessness services are gender specific and responsive to women's multiple disadvantages and needs. ....

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