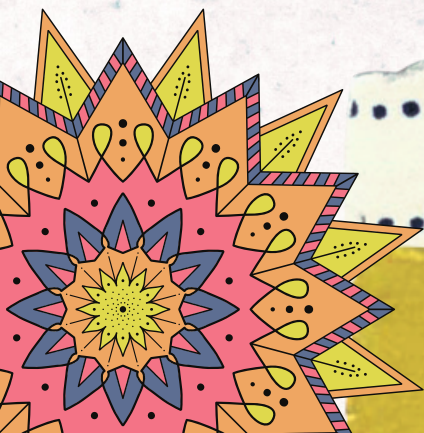


Trauma Informed Network Cornwall

# A Commitment to Women's Trauma

TAMPON TAX  
COMMUNITY  
FUND



July 2021



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This commitment has been co-produced by -  
CLEAR, Dracaena Centre, LiveWest, Safer Stronger Consortium, SEEDS,  
Shekinah Mission, The Women's Centre Cornwall, Victim Support, We Are With  
You, West Cornwall Women's Aid, Safer Cornwall and Third Response.

Established in 2020, Trauma Informed Network Cornwall (TINC) represents a multi-agency effort to implement and support trauma informed care initiatives across Cornwall.

This powerful publication has been collectively co-produced by TINC's women and trauma group. A community of women, committed to campaigning side-by-side with those who have experienced trauma and distress, including homelessness and rough sleeping.

The urgent need to work together was identified locally, in response to the alarming escalation of female rough sleepers in Cornwall. Recorded in 2019 as 20-25%, well above national average of 12-14% of people sleeping out. *Cornwall Council, 2019.*



# Introduction

Through a series of conversations, practitioners identified opportunities to capture, connect and communicate women's authentic voices.

We felt strongly that we needed a forum to vocalise how the ways in which we currently deal with women's trauma, systematically denies us all the opportunity to experience their recovery, resolve and survival as an active and collaborative process.

Discussions centred around four key aims that organise what we have learnt and what we intend to do next:

- System change.
- Values-led approach.
- Commissioning and funding.
- Sharing best practice.

Women with lived experience of trauma exist at the heart of our commitment, in their own words.



*"Value specialist services, women only space as a choice are important." Practitioner*





## A Woman's Perspective

"Practitioners should be better educated about the reality of how far some people will go. They control their partners, children and the judge. They [abusers] are professional manipulators."

Woman

*"Professionals should map the process out. Ask women, 'what do you want to happen next?'"*

Woman

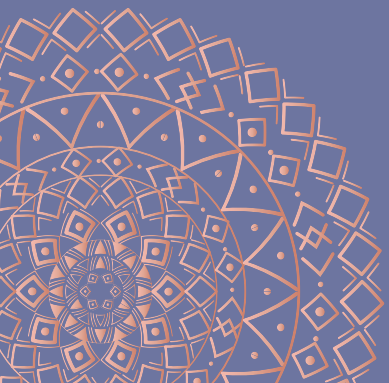
"Women who have experienced trauma are labelled excessively by services they come into contact with because they don't fit the mould."

Practitioner

*"Let's question what individual women's steps to support look like for her..."*

Practitioner

"Given the strong relationship between women's mental ill health and their experiences of interpersonal violence and abuse, an understanding of trauma is crucial to any service supporting women." Wilton & Williams, 2019





System change

"The pull yourself  
together brigade"  
Woman



"Women are retraumatized  
by current practice and  
services are culpable."  
Practitioner





System change requires a cultural shift away from medical models of assessment and a narrow focus upon women's physical ailments and mental ill health.

Women are too often defined by problematic, stigmatised and women-blaming labels which is itself a traumatising and dehumanising experience.

Labels are powerful and women default to them to describe themselves, make sense of their trauma and prove their eligibility to access support. Silencing more meaningful, person-centred conversations.

Beyond this culture of diagnosis, women experience barriers to accessing a broad range of services due to issues concerning how systems interlink with each other. Each impacts upon the next and causes a domino effect of exclusion and victim blaming.

**“System change is crucial,  
women are defined by labels  
– broken and disordered,  
mad or bad.”  
Practitioner**



*“Women shouldn't have to get lucky with a good worker,  
there should be a minimum standard for everyone.”*

*Woman*

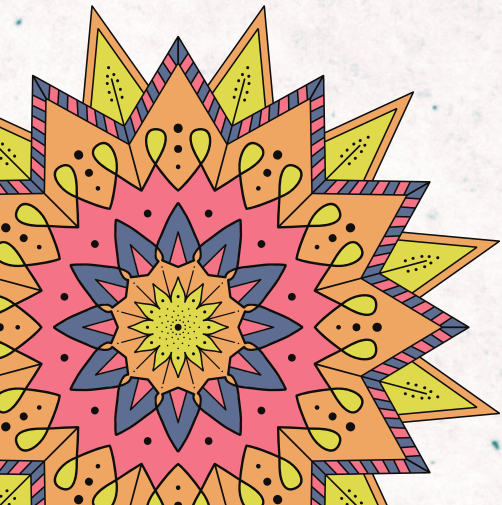


Values-led approach

# Compassionate Warriors

"Compassion feels like giving your time, listening,  
believing, not blaming and no checkboxes."

Practitioner





*Listen to and believe women's narratives and stories of abuse*

*Establish a connection to promote relational healing after trauma*

*The problem is the problem, not the person*

*Prioritise sharing thoughts and ideas*

*Place value in groups of women*

*Beautiful basics, trauma with a small 't'*

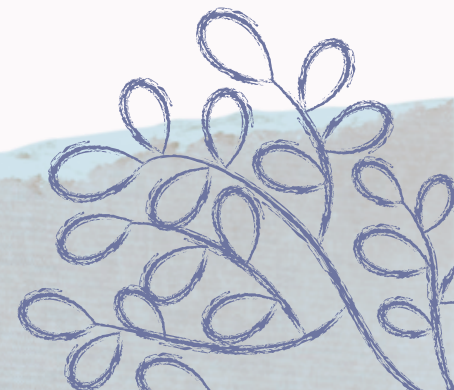
*Non-blaming, offer validation that all feelings are ok*

*Make time and space to celebrate the humanness of human beings*

*Practitioners must promote self-awareness and resist traumatic cycles ourselves*

*The power of 'what if...'*

*"Engage with groups of women who have experienced trauma to understand what they want." Practitioner*







# Commissioning & funding



aka...she's worth it £££

- Funding is too externally driven and loaded with preconceived ideas; women's journeys are already plotted for them.
- Hard outcomes are so unachievable for women who have experienced multiple traumas.
- Not all professionals are afforded time for reflection, humility and developing an appreciation of each woman's individualised experience.

"It is within our gift to value women's stories as outcomes." Commissioner



We have become so detached from the human story and condition that women are being lost in the process. It's time for a culture shift in commissioning and funding, because women are getting harmed.

Let's put people before outcomes. Go beyond the checklists and impersonal number crunching. Together we must value, measure and accept the goals women set for themselves as our evidence of impact.



*“Soft skills and self-worth MUST be self-defined by women.”  
Practitioner*

Funders and commissioners need to:

- Understand gender inequality and its impacts and the value of feminist approaches to empowerment and healing.
- Invest at an adequate level and over longer time periods.
- Enable projects to build their capacity as well as to deliver services.
- Build trusting and flexible funding relationships.
- Provide or support opportunities for sharing learning and networking.

*National Lottery Community Fund Women and Girls Initiative, South West, 2020*

**“We appeal to commissioners to join us in co-production alongside women with lived experience of trauma to achieve a truly gendered approach.” Women and Trauma Group Members**





Share best practice

# Listening to women's voices

“Women need to be empowered, not be scared to have our own voices.

I was living in fear anyway so I was frightened to ask.”

Woman





"Services should work with the person to understand her and help her to understand the system." Woman

### *Funding model one: Flexible Support Fund*

The Safer Stronger Women's, 'Flexible Support Fund' is provided through the Homeless Link 'Ending Women's Homelessness' grant and part of the Government's 'Tampon Tax' fund.

Safer Stronger Consortium (SSC) was able to spot purchase packages of flexible support of up to £1,200 per woman from a network of specialist providers in areas such as healthy eating, budgeting and money management, health and well-being, accommodation, mentoring and positive use of time. SSC wanted to make the criteria for the women to receive the support as broad and as flexible as possible, with experience (or risk) of homelessness as a central theme.

### *Funding model two: Community Leader Network*

Awarded by The National Lottery Community Fund's, 'COVID-19 Fund'. this SSC project was open to women who had experienced trauma and expressed an interest in becoming a community leader. The women received bespoke support from Safer Stronger Consortium partner organisations to address their self-identified needs and also received training and peer support to become ambassadors and spokes-people for local women

In addition to individualised support, The Women's Centre Cornwall partnered with SSC to offer leadership workshops. Women were offered time and space to come together, find their voice, build skills and confidence as well as develop knowledge of the network of local support services; safety planning and how to respond safely to disclosures.



## Our collective commitments:

*“You develop such a bond with people when you have all experienced similar things. The chance to tell your story and be believed. To listen to others. Even if you only listen, you know you are not the only one. Not on your own.”*

*Woman*



1. Collaborate with other thematic sub-groups of TINC, to increase collective voice and its influence.
2. Co-produce a TINC values charter for adoption by organisations as a sign of their commitment to a gender and trauma-informed approach.
3. Host an information dissemination workshop for commissioners and funders. Present women's experience and the impact of flexibly funded models of support.
4. Nominate a representative with lived experience of trauma to join the TINC women's group.

In addition, we wish to issue a **call to action** for funders and organisations to work alongside us. Empowering women and practitioners to coproduce their own service journey and qualitative outcomes through a gendered approach to trauma.