

# Solving Homelessness for Women and Girls In London Ontario



# London's Community Plan Regarding Street Level Women at Risk

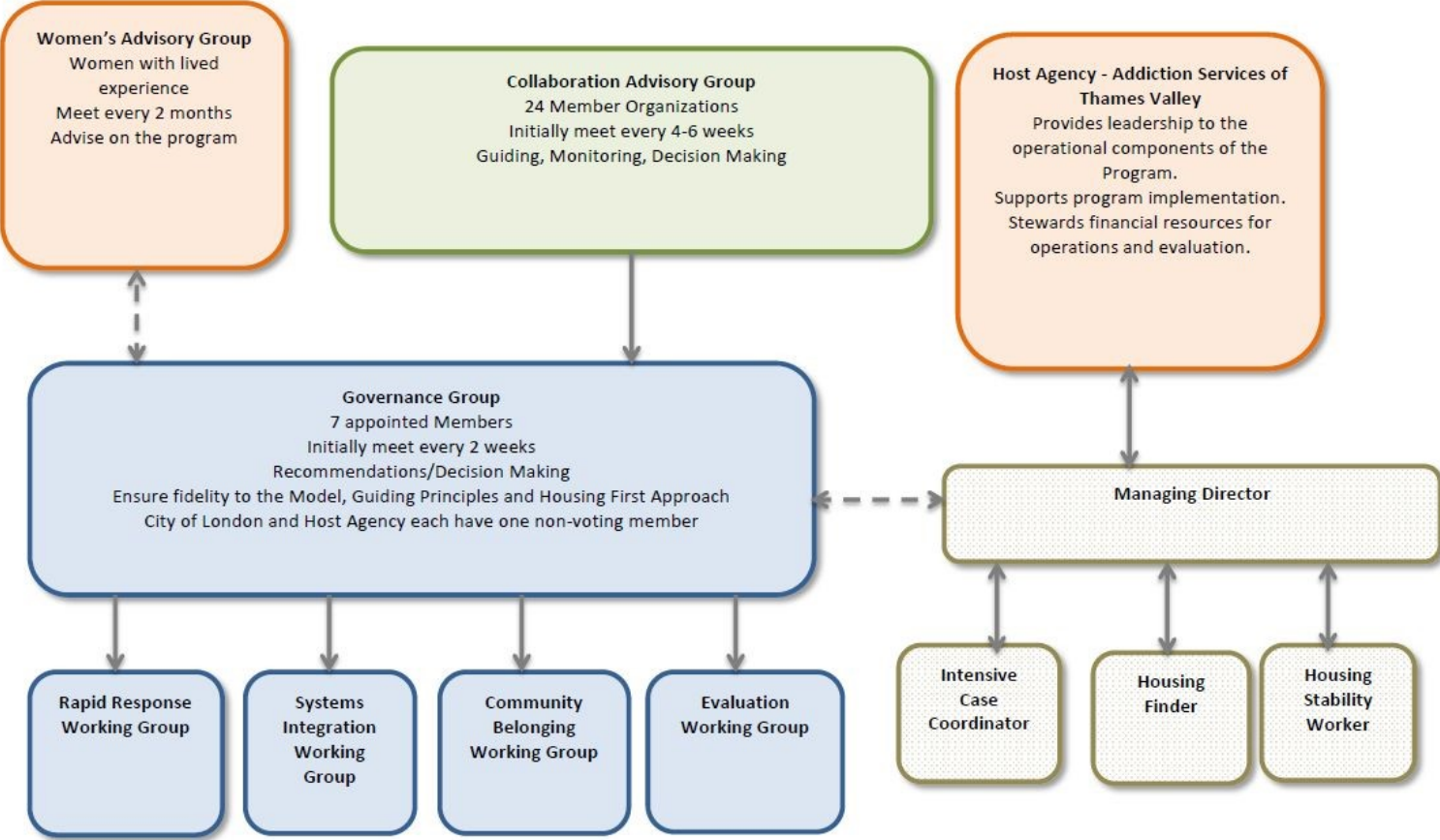


*Hard to Stop...Harder to Stay Stopped*

## Core Purpose

Grounded in London's Homeless Prevention System, the Community Plan Regarding Street Level Women at Risk is aimed at supporting housing stability, sustainable exit strategies, and long term health, wellbeing and community belonging for women involved in survival sex work.

**Organizational Chart - The Street Level Women at Risk Prevention Program**





*“A community response to end homelessness for girls, women and their families”*



## **VISION**

*To reduce and ultimately end homelessness for women and their families in London Ontario.*

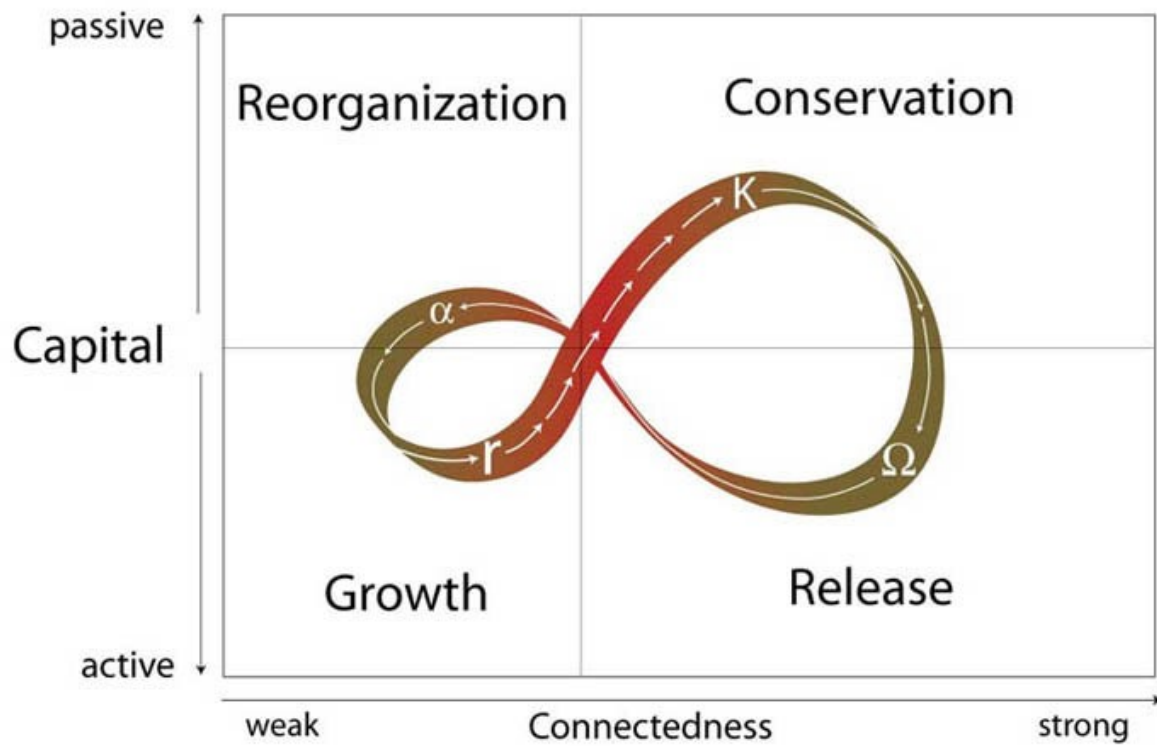
## **MISSION**

*To create a systems response that will make it possible to house and support women and their families using a Housing First approach adapted specifically for the needs of women.*

## **VALUES**

*We believe that when communities and service providers **work together**, we can achieve our vision • We recognize the **unique needs** of homeless women and their families • We believe women and children have the right to **safe and secure housing** • We incorporate and value the voices of women with **lived experience** • We build this program from a **feminist framework** • We take a **trauma informed approach** to supporting women and their families • We follow a **harm reduction** model • We work from a **housing first** approach adapted for women and their families*

# The Story: Homes 4 Women London





## H4W: Idea Developed (Exploration)

**May 2014:** All Our Sisters Conference – Call to Action

**November 2014:** London Community Foundation  
Vitality Grant

**February 2015:** Homes 4 Women London

**April 2015:** Best Practice Guide for Ending Women  
and Girls' Homelessness

**August 2015:** A Framework for Ending Women and  
Girls' Homelessness

**September 2015:** Official Program Launch and  
Program Evaluation Established



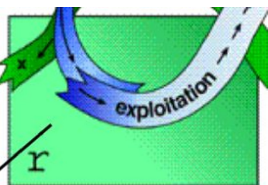
# H4W: Program Implementation (Growth)

## Program Launch

- Policies, Procedures and Practices Implemented
  - Program Structure
  - Referral, Intake and Support Coordination
- Community Partnerships and Collaborations

## Findings

- Significant Demand but lack of support for women experiencing homelessness
- Referral Sources – EMDC, Ontario Works, Shelters & London CArES



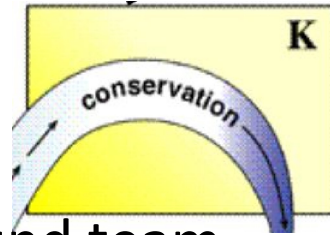
# Women with Lived Experience

- Consultation began by interviewing women with lived experience including current and former street level sex workers
- The Women's Advisory Group continues to advise the program
- Women currently in the program will have the opportunity to share their perspective of the plan through the 3 year Evaluation starting in Nov. 2016

# The Women's Desired Outcomes

- In terms of systems, the women interviewed indicated the need for:
  - Working with service providers that I can trust and treat me with respect
  - Not having to tell my story over and over again; feeling less like a number
  - Having a plan

# H4W: Program Is Established (Conservation)



- Eleven Women
  - Housed with the support of a wrap around team
  - Coordinated response and Support Plan
- Findings
  - Engagement Phase and Relationship Building
  - Impact of Loss, Trauma and Violence
  - Impact of Methamphetamine
  - Role of Primary Worker and Working Group
  - Community Capacity & Readiness
  - Relationship between Community and Corrections

# Challenges Experienced by Women

- Addictions
  - Most common theme
  - Role of substance use and addiction in their initial and ongoing involvement in survival sex work
  - Addiction and sex work are directly related
  - History of abuse and trauma led to addiction
  - Intended outcome of community plan: More women are involved with an addiction treatment plan

# Housing

- The ability to find stable housing was key to becoming healthier and making smart choices
- Provides stability, dignity and independence
- Most women noted that they would still require significant support when they get off the streets
- A continuum of housing options is needed to meet the needs of women
  
- Intended outcome of Community Plan: Increase the number of women who are living in their home

# Children

- The impact of not having children in their care was traumatic
- Losing their children led to a downward spiral leading to and increase in substance use
- Regaining custody of their children is tied to their goals to stay clean
- Many women did not know the appropriate steps to regain custody
  
- Intended outcome of Community Plan: Increase the number of women who are parenting their children in a safe environment with supports

# Safety

- Most women related their level of safety to housing and expressed that only stable housing would make them feel safe
- Women felt unsafe on the streets, as much as they did in shelter
- The lack of safety related to survival sex work involved stories of being beaten, violated, raped, and held against their will
- Women also spoke about safety from the perspective of trust
- Intended outcome of Community Plan: Increase the number of women who are safer



# Supports

- Many women noted that it was when they were able to truly connect with a support worker who believed in them and whom they could trust that things started to come together in a positive way
- Women stressed the importance of peer support
- They also stressed the importance of one support worker who could advocate for them, and connect them with a variety of resources
- Intended outcome of Community Plan: Achieve a high level of satisfaction with service providers & Increase the number of natural supports

# H4W: Sense making & Reconfiguration (Release)

- Program Wrap-Up
  - Program Evaluation, Analysis and Review
  - Program Recommendations
  - Research Evaluation
- Connecting the Dots
  - Building Regional Network
- Knitting Together
  - Identifying Opportunities

