



# STREET LEVEL WOMEN AT RISK (SLWAR)

COLLABORATIVE HOUSING FIRST MODEL



# POTENTIAL TRIGGERS

- | There may be people in this room who are currently experiencing violence or who have experienced violence in their life.
- | There may be people in this room who are currently engaged in survival sex work or who have a history of being trafficked.
  - | Please take good care of yourself, whatever that means for you.
  - | Please feel free to step out of the room at any time, and we would welcome you back in at any time.
  - | We will also be available to chat after the session.



# INTRODUCTIONS: JACKIE

SLWAR PROGRAM MANAGER





# INTRODUCTIONS: AMANDA

SLWAR PROGRAM COORDINATOR



INTRODUCTIONS: MELISSA  
WOMEN'S ADVISORY GROUP (WAG) MEMBER



# INTRODUCTIONS: LORETTA

WOMEN'S ADVISORY GROUP



INTRODUCTIONS: MOIRA  
WOMEN'S ADVISORY GROUP (WAG) MEMBER

# HOMELESS PREVENTION SYSTEM, CITY OF LONDON

## **The Vision**

The City of London's Homeless Prevention System is a coordinated and integrated individual and family centered housing stability approach that is outcome focused and designed to address, reduce and prevent homelessness in London.



# COLLABORATION ADVISORY GROUP



# LONDON'S COMMUNITY PLAN: OUR FOUNDATION



## WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT SLWAR?

- | 27 program collaborative
  - | One consent form
- | Priority population of Street Involved Sex Workers
- | Intake identified by Persons at Risk Department, London Police Service
- | Voices of lived experience helped to create the plan and continue to operate as a bi-monthly Women's Advisory Group (WAG)

# THE SLWAR TEAM

## SLWAR Leadership:

- | 1 Managing Director
- | 1 Program Manager
- | 1 Team Coordinator

## Frontline:

- | 1 Housing Finder
- | 3.5 Housing Stability Workers
- | 7 Reallocated Housing Stability Workers through Collaborative Partnerships

# SPECTRUM OF SEX WORK

GRAPHIC DESIGNED BY: HOLLY TAYLOR, REGIONAL HIV/AIDS CONNECTION IN LONDON, ON





# BEFORE SLWAR AND AFTER SLWAR

EQUALITY FOR ALL CALLS FOR BOLD, SYSTEMIC ACTION





# WAG STORY: ENTRY INTO HOMELESSNESS AND STREET INVOLVED SEX WORK



# SLWAR STORY: HOMELESSNESS AND STREET INVOLVED SEX WORK

- i 48 women housed currently
- i Average age group of a SLWAR participant: 30-39 (at intake almost half of women were in this age group)
- i 87% of women had children at intake
- i 0% had children in their care at intake
- i 94% of participants had experienced homelessness for 6 months or more, on average 5 years or more
- i Average age street involved sex work began: 19
- i Youngest age street involved sex work began: 13
- i Length of time engaged in street involved sex work: 7 years or more

All of the participants are considered “hidden homeless”: couch surfing, staying with friends or Johns in order to have a place to sleep.

\*Please note the statistics used in this presentation are based on year 2 evaluation results and the 38 participants that were being supported between April 2016-March 2018



# WAG STORY: SGT LORNA BRUCE, LONDON POLICE SERVICE



# SLWAR STORY: SGT AMY BIRTCH, LONDON POLICE SERVICE



# STREET OUTREACH



# WAG STORY: HOUSING



# SLWAR STORY: HOUSING

- | 100% of SLWAR participants secured permanent housing with supports in the private market
- | Length of time to secure housing on average was 0-29 days from the point of intake
- | 44% remained in their initial housing
- | 56% required a rehousing, of this 68% of participants were re housed within 0-1 days which means they did not have to reenter homelessness before getting housed again
  - | Top reason for rehousing is a landlord conflict (ie. Guest management)
  - | 87% of participants required support to address a landlord conflict or tenancy concern
- | SLWAR is currently working with 26 different landlords across the city

\*Statistics based on year 2 evaluation results and the 38 participants that were being supported between April 2016-March 2018

# SLWAR STORY: HOUSING CONTINUED...

- | City of London
  - | Investment in building and implementing the plan and commitment to permanent annualized funding
  - | Housing allowances to all participants
- | Housing stability Bank
  - | Program which supports with first and last months rent as well as hydro arrears
- | All star Housing Finder: background in housing development
- | Partnership to London Hospitals and Elgin Middlesex Detention Centre (maximum security jail)
  - | Collaborative approach to discharges and releases to try and ensure participants are not entering homelessness from institutions



## SLWAR STORY: HOUSING CONTINUED ...

- | Whatever It Takes Fund
- | In home support is seen as the pillar to long term housing stability
- | Goals are woman-led
- | Rehousing is seen as an opportunity to learn and grow, not a failure
- | All hands on deck approach to moves

# WAG STORY: ACTIVE ADDICTION





## SLWAR STORY: SUBSTANCE USE

- | 100% were using substances at the time of intake
- | Prior to entering SLWAR, 87% were not accessing any form of substance use treatment
- | After entering SLWAR, 82% of participants accesses substance use treatment
- | 95% of participants have continued to use substances during their time in SLWAR, 67% of those women have decreased their overall use and are using safer practices

\*Statistics based on year 2 evaluation results and the 38 participants that were being supported between April 2016-March 2018

# SLWAR STORY: SUBSTANCE USE CONTINUED

- | The top 5 most commonly used substances were:
  - | 1. Methamphetamines
  - | 2. Opioids
  - | 3. Cannabis
  - | 4. Alcohol
  - | 5. Cocaine

Please note: making change regarding using substances is not a requirement for participating in the program. SLWAR operates on a harm reduction basis and all goals are participant led only.

\*Statistics based on year 2 evaluation results and the 38 participants that were being supported between April 2016-March 2018

# SLWAR STORY: SUBSTANCE USE CONTINUED

- | Addiction Services of Thames Valley is the host agency
  - | Heartspace
  - | Reallocation an addictions outreach worker who also offers housing support
- | Partnership to 2 community Physicians offering opiate safe supply
  - | Staff support to daily methadone and suboxone as well
- | Encourage use of and will provide transportation to safe injection site
- | Partnership to Regional HIV/AIDS Connection
  - | Built in outreach support- delivery and pick up of harm reduction materials once participants are housed
- | Partnership to Elgin Middlesex Detention Centre
  - | Collaborative approach with healthcare team to manage potential withdrawal upon release from incarceration

## WAG STORY: LEGAL INVOLVEMENT

**WELL**

**BEHAVED**

**WOMEN**

**RARELY**

**MAKE**

**HISTORY**

## SLWAR STORY: LEGAL INVOLVEMENT

- | 38% had a criminal charge at intake
- | 45% of women were currently on probation at intake
- | 55% of SLWAR participants did not obtain any new charges during their time in the program

# SLWAR STORY: LEGAL INVOLVEMENT

- | According to SLWAR participants, their legal involvement has reduced since being in the program
  - | Receive support to attend probation and court appointments
- | Accompaniment of Sgt Amy Birtch to court appointments to support with advocacy and avoidance of reentering system
- | Letters of support from program to courts



# SLWAR STORY: RESTORING SAFETY

- | First and foremost, we believe in women's autonomy.
  - | The definition of safety is different for every woman
  - | May differ depending upon factors such as: race, income, position on the sex work spectrum, disability, status in Canada, sexual orientation, among others
- | 43% of women continued in sex work and 46% of women continued in street involved sex work with safer practices
  - | Offer cell phones
  - | Women will work from home with regular Johns they know well
  - | Women will work on street but close to their home so they can take rest breaks



# SLWAR STORY: RESTORING SAFETY

- | 100% secured permanent housing with support
  - | Complete lock changes whenever required
  - | Repair broken windows
  - | Program will provide door and/or window alarms
  - | Alarm system
  - | Crisis and safety planning
- | Connection to Sgt Amy Birtch
  - | Assists with guest management
  - | Domestic violence concerns
  - | Bad dates

# SLWAR PARTNERSHIPS: HONORABLE MENTION

## | Partnerships to Psychiatry

- | Support women in need of long term care regarding their mental wellness
- | 'In the moment' support for women experiencing crisis
- | Frontline staff have daily contact with social worker and psychiatrist
- | Support to appointments for outpatient care and in home support
- | Quick referrals can be made through weekly leadership call

## | Partnerships to Canadian Mental Health Association

- | Reallocated staff to provide in home housing support as well referrals to services related to mental wellness

# SLWAR PARTNERSHIPS: HONOURABLE MENTION

- | Connection to Indigenous specific services
  - | Atlohsa Native Family Healing Services
  - | Okaadenige
  - | Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre
- | Partner to Giwetashkad, Indigenous Homeless Prevention Plan

# SLWAR PARTNERSHIPS: HONOURABLE MENTION

- | Trauma informed services
  - | Counselling supports
  - | Training to staff
- | Violence Against Women sector
  - | Shelter support
  - | Counselling supports

# REFLECTIONS OF THE WOMEN'S ADVISORY GROUP





# WAG STORY: JOURNEY TO HEALING



# WAG STORY: JOURNEY TO HEALING



# WAG STORY: JOURNEY TO HEALING





# SLWAR STORY: JOURNEY TO HEALING

## PARTICIPANT QUOTE

**“The most significant change is my willingness to keep moving forward on my goals in my addictions. I have kept a home for myself. I feel strong with myself and SLWAR is always in my corner so I know I am not alone.”**

# QUESTIONS?

i SLWAR plan, evaluation report and infographic can be located here:

<https://www.london.ca/residents/homeless-prevention/Pages/Street-Level-Women-at-Risk.aspx>

# CONTACT INFORMATION

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Social Development Canada

Emploi et  
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London  
InterCommunity  
Health Centre



Ontario



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CANADA

Addiction Services  
*of Thames Valley | Services de toxicomanie de Thames Valley*