

A TOOLKIT PROVIDING GUIDELINES AND MODELS OF GOOD PRACTICE

- For women refugees and asylum seekers experiencing mental health problems
- For agencies supporting women refugees and asylum seekers
- For Staff and Volunteers
- For Psychotherapy training organisations
- For policy makers and commissioners

- A check list to help agencies and community groups identify whether they are providing the appropriate support to volunteers and staff working with women refugee and asylum seekers.
- A list of agencies which support women refugees and asylum seekers.
- A feedback sheet

Most agencies and community groups will not need to use all the elements of this toolkit. Please make use of those which are helpful to you. Each document is designed to be a 'stand alone' tool which does not need to be used in conjunction with any other element of the toolkit.

We would like to know if this toolkit has helped you in any way and if you can think of ways it could be improved. Please complete the feedback form at the end of the toolkit and return it to us to help us develop more responsive services in the future.

Introduction

Purpose

This toolkit has been developed by the Women's Therapy Centre as part of a three year project funded by Connecting Communities Plus, a government funding programme which seeks 'to reduce race inequalities and tackle extremism' by funding services that promote race equality and foster strong community relations. The Women's Therapy Centre has received funding to 'help develop access to psychoanalytic psychotherapy and other psychological support services for women from refugee and asylum seeking communities'.

This toolkit has been written to provide information to agencies that share the Women's Therapy Centre's aim to ensure that women refugees and asylum seekers and those working with them receive the support and services they need.

The toolkit will be of particular help to:

- Community mental health services, and other agencies providing talking therapies to people experiencing mental or emotional distress, who wish to ensure that women refugees and asylum seekers, including those who have experienced sexual violence and torture, can use their services.
- Refugee community groups and other community organisations who wish to ensure that they are providing relevant support or signposting services to women refugees and asylum seekers who are experiencing mental and emotional distress.
- Both community mental health services and refugee community groups seeking to offer appropriate support to volunteers and staff working with refugees and asylum seekers.

The toolkit consists of:

- A summary of women's experiences – providing a snapshot of the work of the Women's Therapy Centre.
- A leaflet for women refugees and asylum seekers experiencing mental and emotional distress.
- A policy statement for policy makers and commissioners– including recommendations for the policy development and funding of services for women from refugee community groups who require psychological support.
- A statement of good practice for psychotherapy training organizations, community mental health services, and other agencies providing talking therapies to people experiencing mental or emotional distress, including a case study example of good practice.

Serap is a Kurdish asylum seeker, aged 54, who fled persecution in her country of origin. She waited 15 years for a decision from the Home Office concerning her application for asylum. She is illiterate and has six children. While she has been in the UK her parents have died and she has been unable to attend their funerals or grieve for them with others who loved them. She has described the very powerful impact that therapy at the Women's Therapy Centre has had on her life and how immensely re-assuring it is each week to come to a space where someone is waiting, as she describes it, 'to take care' of her in a place where she is permitted 'to feel and to cry' after a lifetime of caring for others.

The experiences of women refugees and asylum seekers using the Women's Therapy Centre's services.

The Women's Therapy Centre works with women refugees and asylum seekers who experience similar persecution to men but who can also be subject to specific persecution because of their gender. This can include trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced marriages, domestic violence, threats of honour killings or female genital mutilation. Women's experiences in their country of origin, during their journey into exile and through-out their battle to secure refugee status once in the UK can be so painful that their mental and emotional well being is severely affected. The Centre seeks to create a space where women can talk of their 'unspeakable' experiences and have the 'unhearable' heard. This is part of a process which can help women to face the past and identify internal resources which can then help them over time to begin to build a new life and look to the future with some hope.

Following are extracts from interviews with, and case studies of, women we are working with:

'People still think you are crazy if you have therapy. The community needs to be educated to realise that going for therapy is helping yourself and not a sign of madness.'

Turkish speaking refugee

'(Here) we speak about our problems. I never had a place to talk.'

Albanian speaking refugee in contact with the Women's Therapy Centre

'(In our country) to go to therapy is if you are really, really mad.'

Staff member at a Refugee Community Organisation for Albanian speaking women.

'I come here and I see we can never say yes to domestic violence. I realise there are people who can help. It can stop.'

Albanian refugee following the murder of another Albanian refugee by her husband

Elsa, who is currently in therapy at the Women's Therapy Centre, was one of seven children who had been physically abused from early childhood. She welcomed the prospect of a better life when traffickers offered to take her to Germany. In Germany she was put to work as a prostitute. She was then taken on to the UK, where she was assaulted by traffickers and her son conceived as a consequence of rape. She tried to escape but was subjected to death threats, beatings and mock drowning. She was held hostage in a flat until a client helped her to escape. At the time she was pregnant with her son. With support from the Women's Therapy Centre she is now living in her own flat, attending college and coping as she faces her past in order to be better able to look forward to a safe future that she is building for herself and her son.

Are you a Woman Refugee or Asylum Seeker?

This leaflet is for women refugees and asylum seekers who are feeling distressed.

YES

- Are you suffering from loss of family, those that you love, your country?
- Are you frightened and angry?
- Do you feel tired all the time?
- Are you feeling anxious, alone and full of despair?
- Have you lost hope in the present and future and feel locked in your past?
- Are you having problems sleeping and having bad dreams?
- Have you difficult memories that you cannot get out of your head? Do they feel very real and strong?
- Are you feeling physically ill? Do you have headaches and other health problems that you cannot explain?
- Do you have problems that you cannot talk to anyone about?

If you have any of these experiences, then psychotherapy may be able to help you. It is for people who wish to feel better about themselves and their past experiences and who wish to overcome emotional setbacks and to move forward in their lives.

Psychotherapy can help you learn to trust. It offers a safe, confidential place with a woman therapist who is trained and very experienced and who will listen to you and help you to make sense of your feelings and problems in your life. She will help you face your past and overcome your fears and in time will help you to start to feel hope, look towards a future and build a new life.

If you have experienced pain in your life this can leave you feeling bad and it can take a long time for healing to take place. That is why therapy is provided over a period of time and will take place every week. It will take time to trust and understand the process. We may be able to offer you therapy in your own language. We also offer interpreters who speak your own language if that is what you need and we will help with childcare.

We may also be able to help you make contact with other agencies to deal with some of the many practical problems that you are facing in your life from housing and homelessness to tracing lost relatives or learning English.

For more information please contact us:

Women's Therapy Centre, 10 Manor Gardens, N7 6JS

T: 020 7263 6200 E: enquiries@womenstherapycentre.co.uk

W: womenstherapycentre.co.uk

A Statement of Good Practice for Policy Makers and Commissioners.

Purpose

This toolkit has been written to provide information to agencies that share the Women's Therapy Centre's aim to ensure that women refugees and asylum seekers and those working with them, receive the support and services they need. This policy statement is directed at policy makers and commissioners, developing policy in relation to women refugees and asylum seekers and funding services for these women.

Policy Statement

The Women's Therapy Centre, through its work with refugee and asylum seeking women experiencing mental and emotional distress, has identified a severe shortfall in accessible therapy suited to the needs of these women. Furthermore, refugee and asylum seeking women face many barriers to accessing the therapy that is available, including: language and communication barriers, stigma, practical and economic problems, a lack of understanding of the needs of these women among providers of therapy, and a lack of understanding and trust on the part of both therapy providers and the women from refugee communities seeking to access therapy.

For women who have sought asylum in the UK, the result of the lack of appropriate, accessible therapy services can be devastating, leaving vulnerable women without the help they urgently require. The Women's Therapy Centre urges policy makers and commissioners to consider one of the recommended foundation principles for the asylum system in the UK, for which the Independent Asylum Commission found mainstream consensus, that:

“People seeking sanctuary should be treated fairly and humanely, have access to essential support and public services, and should make a contribution to the UK if they are able.”

The Women's Therapy Centre believes that talking therapies are essential support for women experiencing emotional distress and, in order to address one of the key recommendations of the Independent Asylum Commission, to 'Ensure the dignity of women, torture survivors, those with health needs and LGBT asylum seekers' there is an urgent need to:

- Fund more research into the emotional and psychological support needs of women refugees and asylum seekers.
- Provide funding for more dedicated services to improve access to therapy for women refugees and asylum seekers.
- Undertake research into the needs of frontline staff from refugee communities who are themselves providing a range of support services to refugees and asylum seekers, including research into the impact of this work on the mental well being of staff.

- Pilot and evaluate a range of models of providing support to frontline staff from refugee communities with findings being widely disseminated to commissioners and providers of services for refugees and asylum seekers
- Give serious consideration as to how the barriers to refugee women and other women from BME communities becoming therapists can be minimised. Such barriers include the fact that training for the most part takes place in the private sector, with therapists having to pay for their own training and supervision costs.
- Ensure that training for all psychotherapists covers the specific needs and experiences of women living in exile, including women refugees and those seeking asylum.
- Give consideration as a matter of urgency to how support can be offered to women refugees and asylum seekers experiencing domestic violence. Such consideration should include action on the lack of choices available to women who have no recourse to public funds, who are currently left without protection from domestic violence.

A Statement of Good Practice for psychotherapy training organisations, community mental health services, and other agencies providing talking therapies to people experiencing mental or emotional distress.

Purpose

This toolkit has been written to provide information to agencies that share the Women's Therapy Centre's aim to ensure that women refugees and asylum seekers and those working with them, receive the support and services they need.

This statement of good practice is aimed at psychotherapy training organisations, community mental health services, and other agencies providing psychoanalytic therapy, psychotherapy and other talking therapies to people experiencing mental or emotional distress who wish to ensure that women refugees and asylum seekers, including those who have experienced sexual violence and torture can use their services.

Statement of Good Practice

The key barriers to accessing therapy services for refugees and asylum seeking women are as follows:

- Language, communication and cross cultural barriers.
- Economic and administrative problems.
- Lack of training/awareness by therapy providers of refugee and asylum seeker issues and their specific needs.
- Lack of understanding on both sides.
- Lack of trust on the part of refugees and asylum seekers.

In order to ensure that these barriers are minimised and to maximize the potential for women refugees and asylum seekers to access services, agencies providing therapy should seek to:

- Provide accessible, mother tongue information about therapy services for refugee and asylum seeking women.
 - Offer mother tongue therapy where possible or, alternatively, provide trained and experienced female interpreters.
 - Consider the issue of the recruitment and training of staff from refugee communities, developing access routes for staff from refugee communities via the provision of bursary places and the appointment of dedicated staff to work with women refugees and asylum seekers.
 - Consider how psychotherapy is perceived and how alien this model can appear to women from some cultures, and then seek to be mindful of this in working with women.
 - Provide appropriate supervision to all staff, ensuring that supervision addresses the specific issues raised by working with women refugees and asylum seekers.
 - Provide in house training for all psychotherapists on the needs and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers and the medium and long term impact of exile and loss on women's mental health.
- Offer practical support (from access to childcare during therapy sessions through to signposting to specialist legal advice for women facing deportation) to refugee and asylum seeking women to make it possible for them to regularly attend therapy. This can be provided by a partner agency such as a refugee community organisation or in house by staff with the appropriate training and skills.
 - Undertake outreach to refugee community organisations working with mother tongue therapists to make refugee and asylum seeking women more aware of what therapy services are available and of how these services can help them to cope with their mental and emotional distress.
 - Ensure that the whole organisation is 'refugee friendly' and that all staff and volunteers are trained and supported, to enable them to offer appropriate and high quality services to refugees and asylum seekers with mental health issues.
 - Actively challenge the stigma and shame of mental ill health among women, including those who have experienced sexual violence and torture, through education and outreach programmes delivered with staff and volunteers from refugee community organisations.

A Statement of Good Practice for refugee community groups and other community organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers.

Purpose

This toolkit has been written to provide information to agencies that share the Women's Therapy Centre's aim to ensure that women refugees and asylum seekers and those working with them receive the support and services they need.

This statement of good practice is aimed at refugee community groups and other community organisations wishing to ensure that they are providing the appropriate support or signposting services to women refugees and asylum seekers who are experiencing mental and emotional distress, while also seeking to offer appropriate support to volunteers and staff working with these refugees and asylum seekers.

Statement of Good Practice

Refugee community organisations and other community groups working with women refugees and asylum seekers have a responsibility to ensure that as far as possible they promote the positive mental health of women refugees and asylum seekers, while also providing adequate support to staff and volunteers, many of whom will have also experienced exile and loss in their search for sanctuary. In order to do this refugee community organisations and other community groups working with refugees and asylum seekers should seek to:

- Provide accessible, mother tongue information about therapy services for refugee and asylum seeking women.

- Develop links with agencies offering support to women with mental health problems, including community mental health projects, and provide information or training to staff and volunteers at these agencies about the mental health needs and cultural expectations of women from refugee communities.
- Ensure that there are appropriate referral routes for women from refugee communities to access psychotherapy and other mental health services.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers receive training on working with women experiencing mental and emotional distress.
- Actively challenge the stigma and shame of mental ill health among women, including those who have experienced sexual violence and torture, through education and outreach programmes delivered with staff and volunteers from community mental health projects.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers receive high quality support, which addresses the impact on their own mental health of working with women refugees and asylum seekers including those who have survived sexual violence, torture and other gender specific persecution.

Check list to help agencies and community groups identify whether they are providing the appropriate support to volunteers and staff working with refugees and asylum seekers.

Purpose

This toolkit has been written to provide information to agencies that share the Women's Therapy Centre's aim to ensure that women refugees and asylum seekers and those working with them, receive the support and services they need.

This checklist has been produced to help agencies and community groups to identify whether they are providing the appropriate support to volunteers and staff working with refugees and asylum seekers. The checklist is intended to be used by any community group or similar agency where volunteers or staff members work with refugee and asylum seeking women.

Information and training

- Do you have information which would enable volunteers or staff members to refer distressed women to appropriate mental health services?
- Do all volunteers and staff receive training on working with women who are distressed?
- Does any training that is provided address the needs of women using the services?
- Does any training that is provided address the needs of the volunteers and staff members providing services?

Support

- Do all volunteers and staff members receive regular supervision?
- Do all volunteers and staff receive support via support group meetings, non-managerial supervision or peer support sessions?
- Are there mechanisms for volunteers and staff to speak with someone between supervision / support sessions ?
- Do supervisors / support group facilitators receive appropriate supervision and support?

Monitoring and Planning Services

- Do you have mechanisms for collecting feedback from volunteers and staff concerning the support they receive during the course of their work?
- Are volunteers and staff members involved in planning how services are delivered to women in distress and how they are supported in their work with these women?
- Does your strategic plan or business plan and fund-raising strategy reflect the need to support volunteers and staff working with women who are distressed?

Action planning

Having completed the checklist, you may have identified areas where you want to improve the services that you offer women refugees and asylum seekers experiencing mental and emotional distress, and volunteers and staff working with these women. The other 'Psychotherapy in the Community' materials could help you to develop your services in this way. The agencies listed below may also be able to help you or put you in contact with local agencies that could do so.

List of agencies which may be able to support women refugees and asylum seekers experiencing mental and emotional distress.

Medical Foundation for Victims of Torture

Provides services dedicated to the treatment of torture survivors

111 Isledon Road

Islington

London N7 7JW

Tel: 020 7697 7777 Fax: 020 7697 7799

www.torturecare.org.uk

Asylum Aid

Provide support and help to refugees and asylum seekers

Club Union House

253-254 Upper Street

London N1 1RY

Tel: 020 7354 9631 Fax: 020 7354 5620

www.asylumaid.org.uk

Poppy Project

Provides accommodation and support to women who have been trafficked into prostitution

Tel: 020 7735 2062

www.eaves4women.co.uk

Red Cross

Provides support for refugees and asylum seekers to access local services and adjust to life in a new country

UK Office

44 Moorfields

London EC2Y 9AL

Tel: 0844 871 11 11 (+00 44 844 871 11 11 from abroad)

Fax: 020 7562 2000

www.redcross.org.uk

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants

Provides free advice and casework, training courses, and a range of publications

115 Old Street

London EC1V 9RT

Tel: 020 7251 8708 Fax: 020 7251 8707

www.jcwi.org.uk/

Women's Aid

Supports a network of over 500 domestic and sexual violence services across the UK

24 hour free helpline: 0808 2000 247

www.womensaid.org.uk

Refugee Council Head Office

Provide support and help to refugees and asylum seekers and to make information and advice available to them directly

240-250 Ferndale Road

Brixton

London SW9 8BB

Tel: 020 7346 6700 Fax: 020 7346 6701

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Mapesbury Clinic for People in Exile

Provides short term integrative counselling & psychotherapy for refugees & asylum seekers

20 Lonsdale Road

London NW6 6RD

Tel: 020 7644 6250 Fax: 020 7644 6241

www.mapesburyclinic.org.uk

The United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)

Holds a national register of psychotherapists and psychotherapeutic counsellors

www.psychotherapy.org.uk

The British Psychoanalytic Council (BPC)

Holds a register of psychoanalytic psychotherapists

www.psychoanalytic-council.org

The Women's Therapy Centre would really value any feedback you could give about this toolkit. All feedback will be used to help us plan future resources for women refugees and asylum seekers and other women experiencing mental and emotional distress.

How did you find the layout and design of the toolkit?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very clear and easy to use <input type="checkbox"/> Clear and easy to use <input type="checkbox"/> Quite easy to use <input type="checkbox"/> Quite confusing and difficult to use <input type="checkbox"/> Very confusing and difficult to use
Any other comments:	
How did you find the content of the course?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very useful and informative <input type="checkbox"/> Useful and informative <input type="checkbox"/> Quite useful and informative <input type="checkbox"/> Not very useful or informative <input type="checkbox"/> Of no use to me
Any other comments:	
What was the most useful element of the toolkit and why?	
What else could have been included in the toolkit?	
Any other comments:	

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form. Please return it to:
 Women's Therapy Centre, Freepost NAT5600, 10 Manor Gardens, N7 6JS