



Threshold Women's Services

Specialist Service for Women

The role of Specialist Worker is new to Threshold and BHT, and is designed to meet the needs of all women who may be deemed too unwell or 'too chaotic' to be offered support or therapeutic input from statutory, and non- statutory services, but also not necessarily in crisis.

The two specialist workers will offer trauma-related work for women whose traumatic experiences may have left them with residual issues, including substance use, isolation, anxiety, flashbacks, and nightmares.

The specialist Workers will deliver 1:1 or group psychoeducational interventions and therapeutic input, as part of the Stabilisation process of Trauma Treatment.

Assessment and referral process

The Specialist Worker will review all information and documents relating to the referral, and either contact the client directly, or discuss the referral with their Support Worker, or equivalent worker.

The Specialist Worker will then meet with the client for up to three 1:1 assessment sessions, either outdoors or virtually (Covid-dependent), and will decide together what she may need, options including:

- ✓ Individual support for up to 6 sessions (subject to review) and for an agreed purpose - for example, to view addiction or relationship issues as trauma responses, to normalise them and suggest coping strategies; to prepare for counselling or to engage with the Drugs and Alcohol Services
- ✓ Individual support in preparation to undertake the Missing Link group
- ✓ To directly access group work (The Missing Link and the Nurturing Your Inner Self groups).



Making a referral for Individual or to Group Work

The referral form will be completed by the clients' Support Worker (or BHT equivalent), and the client, and emailed to:



babi.abis@bht.org.uk



lara.smith@bht.org.uk

Any questions about the referral can be directed to Babi via email or mobile:



07824 123286
07919 080604

Underpinning principles of Group and Individual Specialist Work:

1. Psychoeducational intervention, intended to:

- ✓ Educate women about what trauma is and what the symptoms are (including flashbacks, anxiety, panic, nightmares) in a simple and relatable way.
- ✓ Help women to understand that some usually considered 'challenging behaviours' as a normal response to trauma (ie anxiety, lashing out, substance misuse). This can help women to normalise their responses to triggers, and to develop self-compassion.
- ✓ Help women to identify some of the intense emotions that emerge when they're triggered, but that normally stay unprocessed (ie fear, powerlessness etc) resulting, for example, in shame and guilt.

2. Stabilisation intended to:

- ✓ Introduce the idea of Safety and Emotional regulation
- ✓ Provide women with grounding techniques and soothing strategies to be able to cope with intense emotions, flashbacks and nightmares

3. Connecting with and developing inner resources and strengths, intended to:

- ✓ Help women to identify their inner, interpersonal and intrapersonal strengths to support them.
- ✓ Help to change their perspective from 'trauma victim' to 'survivor', developing a sense of efficacy and control.
- ✓ Consider capacity of survival as a strength, which can guide and inspire for future change.

Individual 1:1 work

Individual work can be offered in preparation for group work, or as an alternative to group work for clients that would struggle to work in a group setting.

The Specialist Worker can offer up to 6 individual sessions (subject to review) and will work closely with the other professionals involved with the client (usually their referrer) to ensure ongoing safety and containment.

At the end of the contracted 6 sessions, the client can refer herself to the Missing Link or the Nurturing Your Inner Self groups and benefit from 6 further sessions, and form connections with other women in the group.



Case Study example of 1:1 work:

We will work consistently and proactively with women with complex needs, including women experiencing the effects of trauma or complex trauma.

Sam is living in a hostel and has been referred to us by her support worker for additional specialist support, as she is displaying some of the symptoms of trauma, which are stopping her from moving on and from accessing other services.

Sam was subjected to trauma from an authority figure in her teens and from previous partners as an adult.

Part of the presenting problem is that she lacks confidence in communicating her needs, has a problematic use of substances, and personal relationships with men at the hostel, which they are concerned about.

There is a risk that Sam may be pregnant, but she is refusing to discuss this with staff at the hostel.

She has been told that she cannot access any counselling services as her use of substances and alcohol is considered problematic, which impacts her motivation, concentration and commitment to engage in any support at all.

As an example, the Specialist Worker would:

- ✓ Assess Meet Sam at an agreed venue (Covid-dependent) or virtually, to build a relationship over a maximum of 3 sessions. She would explore what is going on for her, how she is feeling and how she would like to change. She would explain what the aim of the service is and how they could work together.
- ✓ Offer a choice of 1:1 work for 6 sessions or refer Sam into the Missing Link group or the Nurturing Your Inner Self group.
- ✓ Understand that Sam might not feel confident in the group setting straight away, so may offer additional 1:1 sessions, in preparation for the group, prioritising the more pressing issue of Sam's pregnancy risk, it is agreed as appropriate for her to do so
- ✓ Understand that Sam might experience some shyness at the beginning of a group but hope that Sam being in a group of peers that share similar life experience, are not judgemental and also want to feel "normal" again, will motivate Sam to keep coming.
- ✓ Offer Sam a further 6 sessions of a more therapeutic group and continue the journey of connecting with herself and feeling compassion for the vulnerable part of her that still can feel quite triggered in certain situations.
- ✓ Support Sam to feel empowered to change and, with the help of her support worker, access some additional support from services in the city, for example substance use services.

Group work

Group work can trigger very profound changes for people. Some of the benefits of group work are:

- ✓ Improving social networks: people can learn how to build relationships with others, which they can replicate outside of groups. They can learn how to deal with difficult situations, confrontations, or shyness in a healthy and positive way.
- ✓ Providing social support: Groups can help to promote a sense of belonging and a feeling that it is possible to fit in and experience healthy relationships.
- ✓ Reducing stigma, isolation and feelings of shame and alienation. Through identification, people in groups have an opportunity to get out of themselves and feel like they are not the only ones who experienced traumatic events, the results of which they are still struggling with today.
- ✓ For example, they might live in isolation, have feelings of shame and organise their life around avoiding triggers, or coping with symptoms.
- ✓ Representing a caring witness, when people share very sensitive experiences and feelings. People who have lived through trauma might have experienced oppressive secrecy, or lack of validation of their feelings and accounts from the people who were supposed to protect them. It's important that they can tell their stories and share their feelings with people that are willing to listen, to support and to witness their truth.
Providing opportunity to hear feedback from a peer, which in most cases can be more valuable than just receiving feedback from a therapist. People can relate to each other in a very profound way, through shared experiences, constructive feedback and supportive advice.

The Missing Link Group

This is a 6-week group, with sessions of 1.30 hours each, following this format:

- ✓ Creative warm up and check in
- ✓ Exploration of the session's topic
- ✓ Before the end of each session, women will be provided with grounding and soothing techniques which they can take away and practice during the week, particularly when they experience intense emotions and trauma symptoms
- ✓ Every week we will be adding to a Soothing Kit material will be added each week, including material, thoughts, affirmations, images, and reflections that women can refer to, to reconnect with the power of the group, and/or to feel reassured, supported and calmer.
- ✓ Group check-out at the end of each session.

The session plan is as follows:

Session 1: What is Trauma

Session 2: Triggers and Responses

Session 3: Emotional Regulation

Session 4: Shame

Session 5: Abandonment and Healthy Relationships

Session 6: Self Care and Grounding

Nurturing Your Inner Self Group

After completing the Missing Link group, clients could choose to join the Nurturing Your Inner Self, the aim of which will be to strengthen their sense of themselves as they connect with their inner self and other women sharing a similar journey.

This group for women to explore themselves, to understand some of their dysfunctional behaviours and to develop self esteem, self care strategies, self regulation, and to build on personal and interpersonal strengths. This is a closed group (to maximise the benefit of group work) of 1.5hr sessions. Clients will be encouraged to share from personal experience through creative exercises.

Service Flowchart

