



# Women's Strategy

## 2026-2029

Ensuring that all women who access our services feel physically and psychologically safe, and are supported to achieve meaningful outcomes.

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# Our Women's Strategy goals

**Strategic goals**



**Strengthen service delivery**

Respond to the needs of our women clients across the entire service ecosystem



**Advocate for systemic change**

Push for lasting policy and commissioning changes that address the root causes of women's homelessness



**Collaborate with sector specialists**

Learn, share and partner with specialist organisations, to provide impactful, wrap-around support



**Embed a consistent service standard for women**

Set a standard for what our women clients can expect from us as colleagues and an organisation

**Description**

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# Introduction

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**We understand women experience homelessness differently to men, and expecting women to succeed in traditional services dominated by men isn't suitable for supporting women effectively. This strategy is designed to address the ways in which women's experiences of homelessness differ and to ensure women feel both physically and psychologically safe in our services, equipping us to achieve equally positive outcomes with women.**

Many people's homelessness is rooted in trauma, underpinned by early experiences of neglect, poverty, family breakdown and disrupted education, compounded by their experiences as adults. However, women's experiences differ to men's. The trauma that women with experience of homelessness face is often rooted in sexual and domestic abuse – before, during, and after their experience of homelessness. This experience of multiple trauma is linked to poor physical and mental health outcomes; substance use and a higher risk of further violence and abuse. Our women clients are affected by a range of challenging issues and circumstances, including but not limited to mental and physical health conditions, substance use, engaging in sex work or survival sex, separation from their children and unclear access to public funds. These challenges can lead to homelessness or result from it, or both. Women's homelessness is also more likely to be hidden, which challenges both data collection on women's homelessness and traditional approaches to working with those rough sleeping and in supported accommodation. This hidden homelessness prevents women accessing the services they need.

We have worked with clients, colleagues and our partners to develop a strategy informed by lived experience, client-facing services realities and best practice service delivery. In the context of short-term funding and cuts to contracts, we know services are being forced to deliver the same service with higher financial pressures and reduced staff numbers. Our clients cannot wait for the government to act, but we acknowledge that we cannot change the system by ourselves. We must continue to collaborate and work across strategic, policy and operational partnerships to end homelessness for good for all women.



At St Mungo's, we recognise that homelessness is a deeply personal and varied experience, particularly for women. Our Women's Strategy is built on the understanding that women's experiences of homelessness are not only distinct from those of men but also diverse among women themselves. We approach our work with an intersectional lens, acknowledging that factors such as race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, gender identity, or disability all play crucial roles in shaping these experiences. Our commitment to inclusivity extends to all women, including trans women, and strives to understand the experiences of women regardless of social capital, economic status, culture, parental or relationship status. This Women's Strategy looks to ensure that our support is comprehensive and respectful of any client's unique journey through homelessness. We recognise that issues discussed in this strategy may also extend to non-binary and gender diverse individuals, including those assigned female at birth.

We are proud of the progress we've made, but we know there is more to do. Through this strategy, we reaffirm our commitment to continuously improving our services, ensuring they are safer, more inclusive and effective, so that every woman we work with has an even greater chance of recovery stability and empowerment.

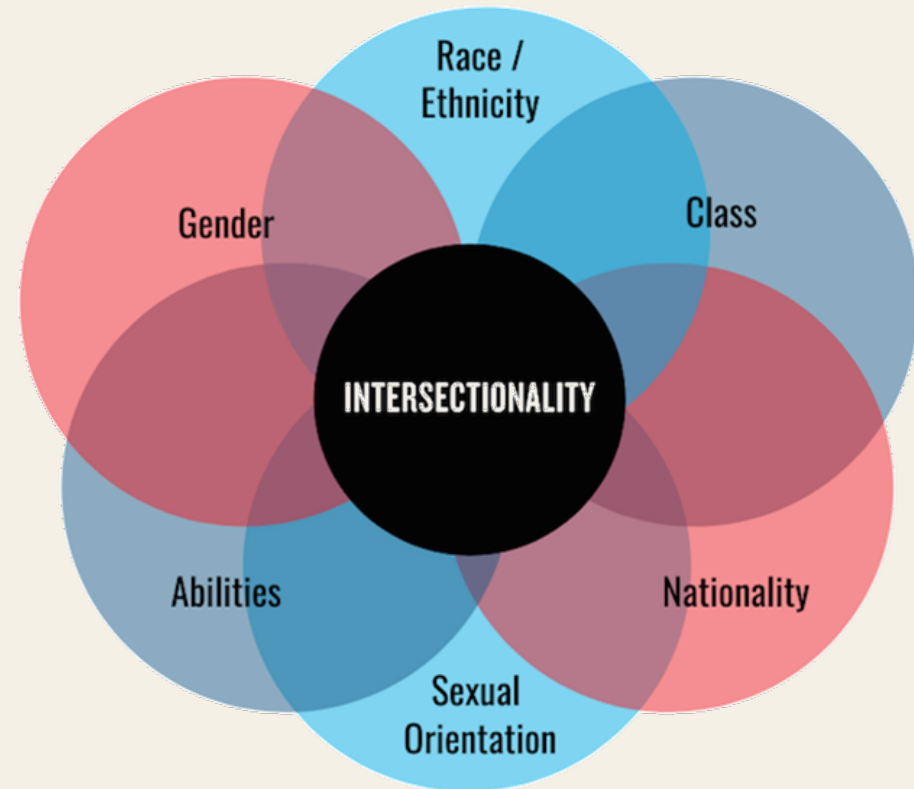


Image: First Book

**Figure 1** - Intersectionality Diagram showing how we consider tailored support through inclusive, intersectional understanding.

# The role of the Women's Strategy in our organisation

The role of our Women's Strategy within the organisation is to ensure that gender-informed, trauma-responsive services are embedded across all stages of homelessness support. It aligns with our organisational strategy by driving consistent, high-quality service delivery for women, amplifying their voices, and influencing systemic change. Through this strategy, we commit to meeting the distinct needs of women with tailored support that is inclusive, intersectional, and impactful through the delivery of four goals.

## Organisational strategy 2024-2030

The Women's Strategy supports our organisational strategy by delivering personalised, trauma-informed support for our women clients and influencing system change by amplifying women's voices.

### Women's Strategy activity

**Goal 1 - Strengthen service delivery**

**Goal 2 - Advocate for systemic change**

**Goal 3 - Collaborate with sector specialists**

**Goal 4 - Embed a consistent service standard for women**

### Delivering our services

#### Supported housing

Safe, trauma-informed accommodation where we rebuild stability, recover from abuse and develop the skills needed for independent living.

#### Support in your own home

Our clients receive personalised, in-house support like Housing First or floating support to sustain tenancies and live independently.

#### Assessment centres

Rapid, gender-informed assessments in safe spaces help women move off the streets and into appropriate housing or support pathways without delay.

#### Outreach

Specialist teams engage women on the streets, offering trauma-aware support and pathways out of rough sleeping,

#### Through care

A dedicated navigator walks alongside each woman throughout her journey – from street to home – ensuring consistent, holistic support and long term recovery.

#### Advice services

Women receive expert guidance on housing, welfare, and legal issues in safe, supportive environments that recognise and respond to their unique challenges.

#### Therapy services

Embedded therapeutic support helps women process trauma, build resilience and engage with recovery through accessible, flexible psychological care.

#### Policy and procedures (P&P)

Support Pregnant Clients and Clients with Children Procedure  
Safeguarding Clients Procedure  
Safeguarding Adults Procedure  
Preventing and Responding to Sexual Assault Procedure

Our policies and procedures support the delivery of our services by providing consistent and regulated processes for our colleagues to follow.

This ensures our clients have a standard level of service they can expect from St Mungo's, enforced by a comprehensive suite of P&Ps.

# Services we offer our women clients

We recognise that women may engage with homelessness services at various stages of their journey, from prevention to move-on. This underscores the importance of a tailored, gender-informed approach. This includes access to women only accommodation or specialist interventions such as Domestic Abuse Navigators. Here, we articulate how our women services interact with the homelessness pathway to ensure our clients have appropriate options at every step of their journey.

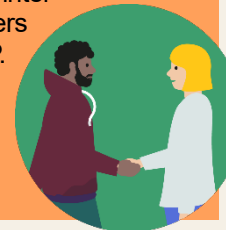
## At risk of rough sleeping

- Homelessness prevention and engagement services.
- Criminal Justice Services working with people in prison and in probation (e.g. HARP).



## Temporary accommodation

- Emergency accommodation such as assessment centres, hospital discharge and recovery accommodation.
- Winter accommodation, including winter night shelters and SWEP.



## Accommodated

- Supported housing with varying levels of support, including women only accommodation.
- Floating support and tenancy sustainment.
- Training and employment services.
- Mental health services, including women's psychotherapy.



## 1<sup>st</sup> night out

- StreetLink and outreach services.
- Welfare and housing advice services.



## Rough sleeping

- Through care, such as outreach and navigator services including our Domestic Abuse Navigator service.



## Move on

- Clearing House for former rough sleepers.
- Keeping in Touch St Mungo's phone service.



Figure 2 – services we offer to our women clients

# Client case study

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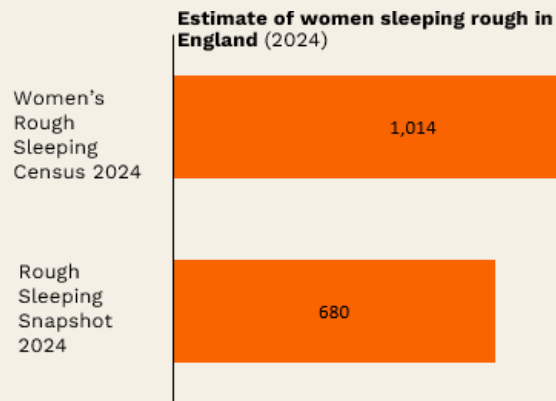
Client X, a woman with a history of trauma, substance dependency, and domestic abuse, received two years of consistent, trauma-informed support from a Domestic Abuse Navigator. Through this intervention, she completed residential rehabilitation and remained substance-free for over three months. She engaged with mental health services, developed healthier coping strategies, and participated in empowerment groups that boosted her confidence and social connections. With support, she secured permanent housing via Housing First and transitioned to independent living. Tailored domestic abuse recovery work enabled her to safely disengage from abusive relationships, with no further incidents reported. By case closure, X had achieved stability, safety, and increased self-awareness, demonstrating the effectiveness of the DA Navigator model in supporting women with intersecting vulnerabilities.



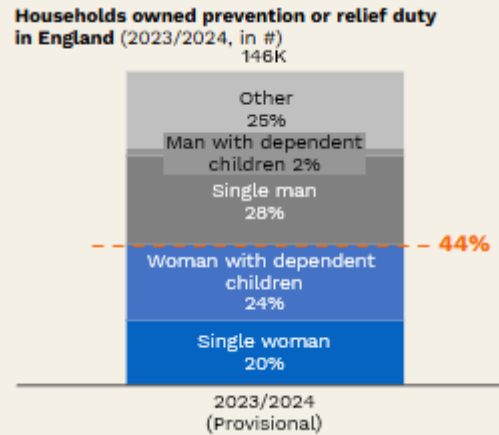
# Women's homelessness statistics

## National Statistics

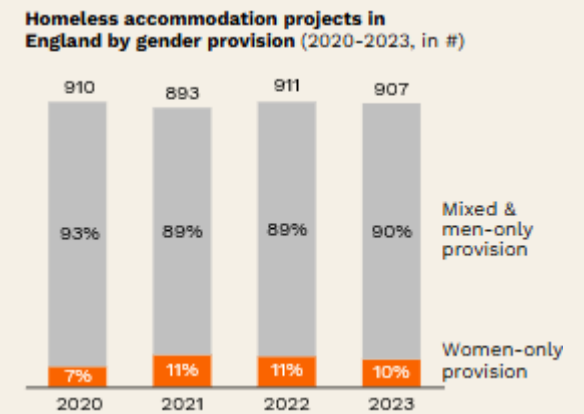
Number of women rough sleeping could be at least **10 times higher** than government statistics<sup>1</sup>



**44%** of statutory homeless households were single women or single mothers in 2023/2024<sup>2</sup>



**Only 10%** of homeless accommodation projects offer women-only provision in 2023<sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Women's Rough Sleeping Census 2024, Solace Women's Aid

<sup>2</sup> Statutory homelessness England level time series "live tables"

<sup>3</sup> Support for single homeless people in England annual report 2020-2023

## St Mungo's client demographic data<sup>4</sup>

Women	Men	
<b>22%</b>	<b>76%</b>	Alcohol support need
43 of client identified as non-binary		<b>30%</b> of women <b>39%</b> of men
Aged 35 or under		Substance use support need
<b>39%</b> of women	<b>33%</b> of men	<b>43%</b> of women <b>39%</b> of men
Previously slept rough		Physical health support need
<b>76%</b> of women	<b>90%</b> of men	<b>66%</b> of women <b>55%</b> of men
Identify as disabled		Mental health support need
<b>21%</b> of women	<b>17%</b> of men	<b>79%</b> of women <b>66%</b> of men

Source: 2023/24 annual St Mungo's client statistics

<sup>4</sup> 2023/24 annual St Mungo's client statistics

# Progress since previous strategy

1

Continued development of our practice working with women, included development of 'Keeping us Safe' guidance and Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation.

2

Currently running 18 women only services across London and Bristol as of September 2024, an increase from 2019. New services include Nova Project (Reading), Domestic Abuse Navigators (including an expansion) and The Old Theatre (previously mixed provision).

3

Produced Homeless Couples and Relationships toolkit, informed by interviews with clients, colleague focus groups and commissioning partners to offer standardised approach and support to colleagues working with couples.

4

Developed Women's Minimum Standard Audit to highlight good practice and identify gaps in meeting the needs of women and shared this tool with the Women's Development Unit for the development of a gender informed self assessment toolkit.

5

Development of Women's Action Network through increased volume of events and reach across the organisation, focus on intersectionality and establishment of Domestic Abuse Supporters Network.

6

Collaborated with organisations across the sector, including involvement and delivery partner in Women's Rough Sleeping Census and contributes to National Domestic Abuse and Housing Policy and Practice group.

7

Expansion of our training offer to include domestic abuse eLearning and review and updates of the related Policy and Procedure

8

Establishment of Women's Lead Workers across the organisation.

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# Client case study

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## **INSPIRIT Women's Group - Chrysalis Project – Lambeth**

The INSPIRIT Women's Group, part of our Chrysalis Project in Lambeth, is a peer-led, co-produced therapeutic space supporting women affected by substance use and complex trauma. By fostering emotional literacy, relational safety, and consistent engagement, it has enabled participants to build self-understanding, improve wellbeing, and make meaningful life changes.



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# Goal 1 – Strengthen service delivery

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**We commit to recognising and responding to the needs of our women clients across all our differing service models, from preventing homelessness to sustaining housing and moving on.**

A gender-informed approach is essential to strengthening our service delivery as women face unique challenges in the homelessness system. These can significantly impact their experiences of homelessness and the services that are there to support them. This approach recognises the specific needs of women, ensuring safety, dignity, and psychologically-informed support. For example, Housing-First has been proven to be effective intervention for those experiencing homelessness, but we must ensure our Housing-First services are adapted to supporting women. We also recognise how particular contexts and identities have an intersectional impact on women's experiences.

Improving health outcomes for our women clients remains a priority at St Mungo's, including as women age in our services. We understand that individuals assigned female at birth can also be affected by similar health issues to cis women in our services.

Many of our clients are affected by gender-based violence. Our **Domestic Abuse Strategic Plan** goes into more extensive detail on how we plan to develop our services and approach to supporting those experiencing violence and abuse. This includes our dynamic risk assessment approach and empowering clients to assess risk and make informed decisions.



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## Key Objectives

- Strive to understand and respond to the full spectrum of women clients' circumstances to provide the best services possible through analysing the current gaps in our practices in supporting clients with children, improving data collection, and creating further resources to empower colleagues
- Complete a needs assessment of our women clients in different service delivery contexts through gender-informed approach (including employment, training and skills offering and Housing First model) to refine and continuously improve our service delivery offer with a data-informed approach
- Identify and scale the key factors and conditions that enable positive move-on outcomes and tenancy sustainment for our women clients using lived experience testimony to inform practice across the organisation
- Position St Mungo's as a sector leader in gender-informed homelessness support by sharing best practice, influencing policy and continuously improving service delivery through innovation and collaboration
- Champion and promote inclusive health interventions such as screenings and support health needs for our clients, recognising LGBTQIA+ (including sexual health, cancer screenings, mental and physical health including menopause and menstrual health, and with drug or alcohol use)

## Goal 2 – Advocate for systemic change

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**Advocating for systemic change for women experiencing homelessness in the UK requires focused objectives that address the root causes of homelessness and push for lasting policy change to support women to recover from homelessness.**

Systems must become more inclusive, responsive, and supportive to the gendered issues of homelessness and provide solutions designed for women. Due to women's significant underrepresentation in current homelessness data, we still need to build a greater understanding of the scale, causes, and needs of women experiencing homelessness through continued client involvement and research.

We must continue to strengthen collaboration between ourselves, sector organisations, central government and commissioners to ensure that the voices and experiences of women experiencing homelessness are heard and influence systemic change. We will also leverage external communications and social media presence, to raise the public's understanding of women's experiences of homelessness.



## Key Objectives

- Continue to collaborate with other sector organisations and policymakers to ensure that the voices and experiences of homeless women are heard and influence systemic change
- Improve data collection on women's homelessness by supporting Women's Rough Sleeping Census
- Adopt gendered approach to policy by considering the impact of policy positions on different groups of women clients
- Review our existing women's policy recommendations to ensure they are ambitious and will lead to system change, while continuing to identify opportunities to pursue new policy positions on issues that affect our women clients
- Develop a sustainable process for co-producing policy positions, alongside our women clients
- Continue to highlight women's experiences of homelessness by raising awareness through amplifying our clients' voices, in a trauma-informed way

### The Women's Census

The Women's Census is a data collection initiative aimed at capturing a detailed snapshot of women's lives in the UK, focusing on areas such as housing, employment, health and caregiving responsibilities. Its findings are used to inform public policy and funding decisions, ensuring services better reflect women's lived experiences. St Mungo's assists and promotes the census to ensure that the experiences of women who experience homelessness and rough sleeping is used to shape and improve women's services.



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## Goal 3 – Collaborate with sector specialists

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While we may not yet be recognised as sector specialists in women’s services, we bring extensive experience in delivering both women-only and mixed provision from a homelessness perspective. We have a lot to offer, and through this strategy we are striving to become sector leaders in gender-informed, trauma-responsive support. We can inform and develop our practice by connecting with women’s sector organisations (including those working with LGBTQIA+, disabled, migrant, global majority women, sex workers or those engaging in survival sex and non-binary and gender diverse individuals). Where gaps in support are identified, we will explore partnerships to adapt and develop more specific support for our client group.

Through this strategic goal we will also develop deeper connections with sexual violence, domestic abuse, human trafficking and FGM services to ensure clients’ immediate needs are met.



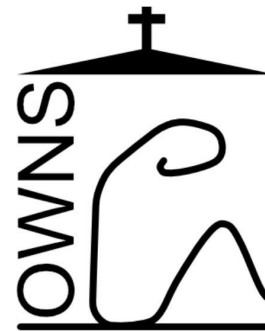
## Key Objectives

- Provide wrap-around holistic support by addressing housing, health, employment, education, childcare, pregnancy with specialist support through partnerships
- Create an external service directory, with relevant organisations and their specialities to connect women to the right support
- Foster better coordination between homelessness services, social services, NHS, local authorities and beyond to avoid gaps in support
- Connect with specialist partners to support LGBTQIA+, disabled, migrant, global majority women and women experiencing multiple disadvantage
- Establish links with organisations supporting sex workers, with potential to work with them to develop resources to support for our specific client group
- Explore more opportunities to deliver services in partnership with specialist organisations

### Case study

#### The Women's Group – The Living Room - Oxford

The Women's Group, launched in January 2025 by St Mungo's and OWNS at The Living Room in Oxford, provides a safe, supportive space for women experiencing homelessness, shaped by insights from a local needs survey. Despite modest attendance, the group continues to offer valued, trauma-informed support, with referrals now open to a broader range of agencies through a structured process ensuring guest safety and wellbeing.



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# Goal 4 – Embed a consistent services standard for women

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We recognise that women should have the choice over mixed and women-only accommodation, based on their safety and preferences. We work with women in both contexts so it's essential that we develop our approach to supporting women and delivering best practice across both environments.

While we will continue to advocate for consistent women-only accommodation provision across the country we know under the current system, by choice or due to resource constraints some women, will be placed in mixed provision.

As we work to embed a consistent service for women, we also recognise the need for any type of support for women to be approached with an intersectional lens, understanding the diversity among women and tailoring support to their experiences. We also recognise that we work both in and outside of London and the causes and experiences of women's homelessness in these areas will also vary.

We will ensure that colleagues across the organisation understand the causes and effects of women's homelessness. We know that women may be reluctant to enter services, use bed spaces irregularly and that it may take time for women to develop trust with colleagues. We aspire to deliver training that equips colleagues with the right knowledge and skills to deliver their best work. In addition, we offer colleagues development opportunities, reflective practice, colleague forums and supervisions to be able to provide our clients with the necessary support and understanding. You can read more about our wider strategic intent to people and culture in our [People and Culture Strategy 2025-2030](#).



## Key Objectives

- Work collaboratively both internally and externally to offer women only services and spaces as an option to all women clients (where possible)
- Continue to recognise the intersectional experiences and needs of women to tailor support to each unique individual's journey
- Actively share best practice across the organisation and with external organisations
- Continue to develop an inclusive approach to recruitment of colleagues, including valuing lived experience and trauma-informed practice, to ensure our workforce reflects the communities we work with
- Understand the appetite and impact of updating the Women's Minimum Standard Audit, including accessibility and capacity of service colleagues
- Explore a refresh to Women Lead Worker resources and establishing a Women's Forum to allow colleagues to share best practice and new projects and hear from external speakers
- Review learning and development offer on issues related to women and homelessness, as well as promoting resources that already exist through internal communication channels
- Connect initiatives across the organisation that drive consistent service delivery and leverage best practices to ensure efficient use of our resources and maximising impact for our clients

### Case study

#### Safe Spaces Psychotherapy - Camden

Safe Space Psychotherapy is a trauma-informed, client led therapy service designed specifically for women and non-binary people experiencing homelessness and multiple disadvantages. Developed by Camden in 2021, it offers flexible, in house, humanistic talking therapies across hostels, with no referrals or assessments, and a strong focus on relationship building and trust. The pilot evaluation showed positive outcomes in wellbeing, housing engagement, and crisis prevention, highlighting its impact on safety, stability and recovery.



# Monitoring our Women's Strategy 2026-29

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## Ownership

- Executive strategy owner: Executive Director of Client Services
- Operational strategic lead: Regional Head and Women's Services Matrix Lead

## Monitoring

- The Women's Strategy 2026-29 will be monitored annually by the Client Services Committee
- Progress towards the goals and objectives will be monitored via an annual delivery plan
- The Executive Director of Client Services will also monitor any challenges or blockers to the implementation of the strategy, and these will be escalated to the Board as appropriate

If you would like more information about  
our Women's Strategy please contact  
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**StMungo's**