



# Addressing barriers to working with sex workers to improve sexual health and well being

25 September 2019, Kensington & Chelsea Town Hall

Abigail Gyamfi

Lee Brooker

sash



# Who are SASH

Brief summary

sash



# SASH (Support and Advice on sexual health)



## OBJECTIVES

To empower and equip all people aged 15+ living in the Bi-Borough and Hammersmith & Fulham to take ownership of their sexual-reproductive health and HIV status.

- **SASH aims to work in partnership** with sexual-reproductive healthcare providers, GPs, community organisations, advice agencies and educational institutions.
- **Supporting all service users** to access prevention, screening, treatment and care services, **enhancing emotional and physical health and wellbeing**.
- **Service users to develop knowledge and skills** through accessing a range of **SASH** services designed to enhance emotional & physical wellbeing.

Partnership provides a wealth of specialism in various areas, including sexual health, LGBT+, HIV, BAME, substance misuse, women's reproductive health.



## Counselling

- solution-focused, using SMART goals to facilitate behavioral and emotional changes.

## Coaching & care co-ordination

- Identifying support and managing SASH journey and care plan. Identifying and supporting people to achieve positive change

## Family support

- 1-2-1 and family interventions at a **SASH** site or at client's home

## Complementary Therapies

- reflexology, shiatsu massage and holistic massage

## Community engagement

- outreach and in-reach

## Advice & advocacy

- Specialist advice, social welfare support, benefits applications and appeals, accompanying to appointments

## Sign-posting and referral

- to additional support services – mental health, substance misuse

## Chaperoning

- to clinical assessments

## Sex worker drop in services

- testing, treatment, advocacy and support. Drop in (partnership working) clinics at John Hunter and 56 Dean Street



# Understanding sex work

Definitions and terms

Key guidance that informs project work



# Sex workers: Terms and types

- **Sex worker** : is the preferred term, other terms considered judgemental or stigmatising (escort is often acceptable) . (Sex worker refers to adults working consensually and within the concept of personal choice without any form of coercion to override the former)

- Sauna workers
- Flat workers (brothel)
- Agency worker (commercial sex work)
- Adult performer (porn )

- Independent worker (in and out calls)
- Flat workers (independent)
- Online sex worker
  - Cam worker

- Lap dancers/peep show artistes
- Dom / dominatrix (no sex)
- Street based sex worker



# Perceptions of sex workers

## Common misconceptions

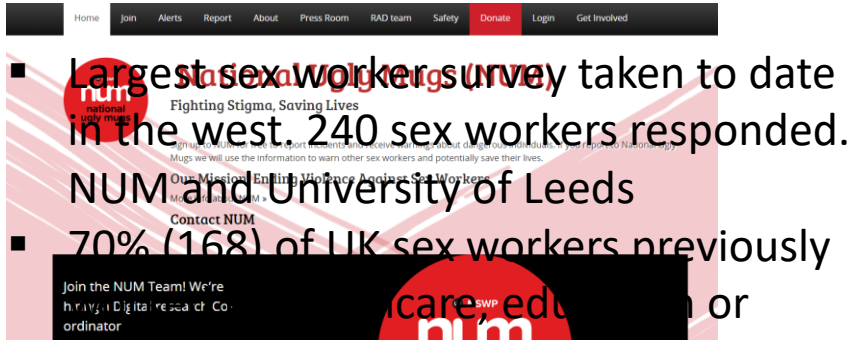
- It's dangerous
- Tarts – they look a certain way
- Quick cash – its not a career, is it?
- Must have low self esteem to sleep with so many strangers
- Can't enjoy it - must have been forced into it
- Lonely life – double identity
- Feeding a drug addictions
- Only women
- Must be pushed into it by someone





# NATIONAL UGLY MUGS - satisfaction survey

## NUM

- 
- The screenshot shows the NUM website with the following text overlaid: "Largest sex worker survey taken to date in the west. 240 sex workers responded. NUM and University of Leeds". Below this, it says "70% (168) of UK sex workers previously". The website header includes: Home, Join, Alerts, Report, About, Press Room, RAD team, Safety, Donate, Login, Get Involved. The main content area includes: "Fighting Stigma, Saving Lives", "Our Mission: Ending Violence Against Sex Workers", "Contact NUM", and "Join the NUM Team! We're Hiring: Digital Resource Coordinator".
- Largest sex worker survey taken to date in the west. 240 sex workers responded. NUM and University of Leeds
  - 70% (168) of UK sex workers previously
  - A third of respondents hold university degrees
  - Majority of respondents feel work is flexible, 58% describe it as rewarding and use many positive terms
  - A large proportion experience stigma and live in fear of 'being recognised' or 'outed'

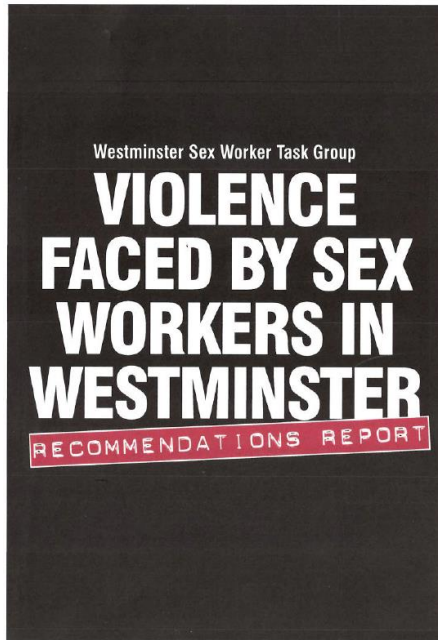
## The survey

- The survey aimed to reveal the pressures that lead people into the industry and further understand issues of safety for its workers. The policing of sex work was also assessed, with respondents reporting both positive and negative experiences. Dr Sanders commented:
- *"We recommend that sex workers be allowed to work legally together. This is the main way they believe their safety will be enhanced. Societal attitudes need to change in order to minimise the stigma underpinning sex work and consequently reduce the harm that prejudice has on sex workers."*
- *"A policy with decriminalisation as its focus ought to be recommended to improve relationships with police by removing threats of enforcement. Police resources should be channelled into dealing with exploitative situations in sex work."*
- The research, launched at the Policy, Policing and Protection Conference on 2 March 2015 has been widely covered by the media, including articles in [The Guardian](#), The Metro, The Yorkshire Post and other regional newspapers.

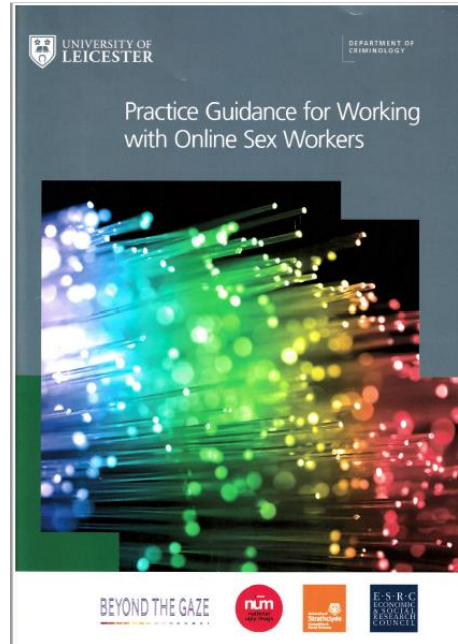


# identifying barriers – evidence based resources

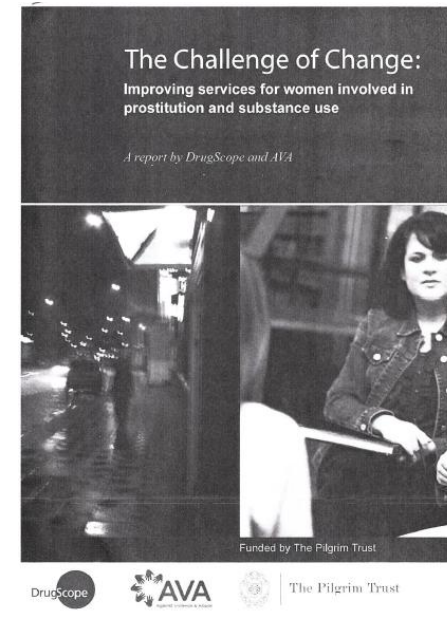
First local authority report of its kind covering the subject of supporting sex workers and not identifying them solely as a social problem



Most extensive sex worker inclusive research undertaken in UK – many resources available



Identifying addiction and prostitution – providing guidance



sash



# Recommendations from the reports

## Westminster report

## Beyond the Glass Ceiling of change-Prostitution & substance use

Westminster made its recommendations for the following reasons:

- 1) Supported by local sex work projects and other key stakeholders
- 2) Held as best practice nationally
- 3) Effectiveness is evidence based
- 4) They will result in improved health and wellbeing outcomes for both sex workers and the wider community
- 5) They require minimal resources and **return on investment** review that was conducted demonstrates significant savings can be made if recommendations are implemented

Further research into men who exploit women through prostitution, how services can identify, target and engage with this group to address and change behaviour

Women only provision, access to domestic and sexual violence support is crucial

Measures to improve accessibility of services for women involved in prostitution and substance use include evening and weekend opening hours, mobile outreach services, childcare provisions, drop-in support and a flexible approach to missed appointments



# SASH Sex work team

Regular activities to support tri-borough sex workers



sash



Addiction support



outreach



clinics



Drop in  
Breaking  
isolation



Comp  
therapies



Specialist  
advice



Counselling

sash



# Did we identify the barriers to working with sex workers?

- Non – judgemental approach
- Understanding choice
- Providing relevant knowledge and suitable solutions where appropriate
- Extensive networks of suitable agencies and individuals who follow the model of client support
- Engage with sex worker projects and obtain sex worker inclusion
- Sex workers are all genders – understand the differences of working and problems most commonly arising for each group
- Adaptive services, flexibility of appointment times, specialist services
- CLINICAL level confidentiality contracts
- Build trust through listening and professionalism



# Resources

- National Ugly Mugs  
<https://uglymugs.org/um/>
- Beyond the Gaze
- <https://le.ac.uk/criminology/research/research-projects/beyond-gaze>
- <https://www.beyond-the-gaze.com/briefings/>
- Challenge of change
- <https://www.drugwise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Challenge-of-change-policy-briefing.pdf>
- Violence faced by sex workers in Westminster (Cllr Ian Rowley – sex worker task group)
- [http://transact.westminster.gov.uk/docstores/publications\\_store/policy-scrutiny/sex-worker-report-2013.pdf](http://transact.westminster.gov.uk/docstores/publications_store/policy-scrutiny/sex-worker-report-2013.pdf)

