SWERV Project: Information for Focus Group Participants

We are doing research to evaluate how National Ugly Mugs (NUM) affects people who sell sex. Please read this leaflet before you decide if you want to take part. Please ask us any questions you have about the project.

Who is carrying out the study?

The SWERV project is being carried out by researchers at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) (Claire Broad, Pippa Grenfell, Lucy Platt, Sedona Sweeney Chris Bonell, Lorna Guinness), Brunel University (Rachel Stuart) and National Ugly Mugs (Elizabeth McGuinness, Raven Bowen). The research is funded by the National Institute for Health Research. The project is participatory, meaning that people with lived experience of sex work are involved in designing, advising on and delivering the research.

What is the purpose of the study?

In the SWERV project, we want to hear from people who sell sex about their views and experiences with NUM. NUM is a UK-based violence prevention and support charity for adults in sex industries. NUM processes reports of harm against sex workers; provides victim casework support by qualified Independent Sexual Violence Advisors; and sends out alerts to warn sex workers of dangerous people and conditions that pose a threat to their safety. NUM also hosts the 'NUMChecker' tool that allows sex workers to screen potential clients using email addresses, phone numbers, profile names and vehicle registrations, to check if there is a match to a submitted report of harm. We are doing this research to find out how NUM's alerts, NUMChecker tool, reporting system and casework support affect people who sell sex, including their physical safety and their mental health. We will use the results to make recommendations to NUM and other services by and for people who sell sex.
We are inviting people who sell sex to take part in one-to-one interviews, group discussions and surveys (questionnaires). We also plan to talk to people from NUM, sex worker-led and sex worker-serving organisations, and to estimate the costs of running NUM services.

What is involved?

We will invite you to take part in a group discussion (up to 90 minutes) with several other participants and two of the researchers, in a place where the group can talk privately. We will ask what you think about NUM services (to report harms, receive alerts, screen clients (NUMchecker or other tools) and receive safety or mental-health related support), how you think they affect sex workers' safety and mental health, what makes it easy or difficult to use them, and what you think NUM and other services could improve. During the discussion, feel free to talk about anything you think is important that we haven't asked about. You don't have to talk about anything you don't want to, and you can leave the discussion any time without giving a reason. If you and the other group participants agree, we will audio-record the discussion so that we don't miss anything that you say.

Is the research confidential?

Yes. Your personal identity will be protected at all times. You do not need to tell us your real name. Whenever we write or talk about anything you have told us, or use a direct quote from your interview using your words, we will never use your real name (or any other name you decide to give us). You can choose a pseudonym for us to use instead. Nothing you discuss will be linked to you. We will ask everyone taking part in the group not to tell anyone what others have said during the discussion, but please be aware that we cannot guarantee this.

The *only* exception would be if you told us something that showed that you or another adult was in serious danger, or that a child was being harmed. If this happened, we might have to tell someone, but we would always talk to you about this first.

How is the information stored?

We will keep all the information you share with us confidential and store it securely. We will save the audio-recording and notes in a folder that only the researchers can open (password-protected). At the end of the project, we will delete the recording. NUM staff/volunteers who are not on the research team *(See: who is carrying out the study?)* will not have access to the recordings or interview notes.

What are the benefits and risks of taking part?

You might see the chance to talk about your experiences as a positive thing, but some things might be difficult to talk about. We will ask questions as sensitively as possible and we will try to make sure that the discussion is led by you and the other people taking part. We will tell you about organisations that provide support on safety, health and rights, and we can help you contact these organisations if you want. We will offer you refreshments during the focus group if this takes place in person. We will give you £75 for taking part in the focus group discussion, to thank you for your time.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is totally up to you. Before you decide, think about whether taking part in this group discussion could cause you any personal or work problems.

- Is this a good time and place to talk about your views and experiences?
- If not, what time or place would be better for you?
- Do you have any concerns about taking part in this group discussion? If you do, please talk about them with the researcher or a project worker before you decide.

You can change your mind about taking part at any time, without saying why. This will not affect your care or your legal rights in any way.

How will the research be used?

We will use the information we collect to write up a public report, to share with NUM and other sex worker-led and sex worker serving organisations. This report, and any other publications or presentations we write about this research, will be freely available.

The interview will only start after you have had the chance to ask questions, and after you have given your consent to take part. You will be given this leaflet to keep, if you wish.

Thank you for reading this information.

If you have further questions or thoughts about the study, please contact: Pippa Grenfell (pippa.grenfell@lshtm.ac.uk). If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this by contacting the LSHTM Research Governance and Integrity Office at RGIO@lshtm.ac.uk or call 02079272626. If you have any questions you would like to ask to a person who is independent of the study team, please contact swerv@lshtm.ac.uk and we will put you in contact with someone.