Sex workers evaluate reporting violence

Who is doing the research? Our team has expertise in service-delivery with sex workers, epidemiology, social sciences, evaluation and economics and strong links with sex working communities. It is a collaboration between Professor Lucy Platt and Dr Pippa Grenfell at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Dr Raven Bowen, CEO of National Ugly Mugs and Dr Rachel Stuart a criminologist at Brunel University. Lead researchers include Dr Claire Broad and Dr Vee Holt with Elizabeth McGuinness (National Ugly Mugs). Dr Lorna Guinness is leading the economic evaluation alongside a researcher from LSHTM.

What is this research about? We want to improve the health and safety of people who sell sex. To do this, we are evaluating violence prevention tools delivered by National Ugly Mugs (NUM). The study is called Sex Workers Evaluate Reporting Violence (SWERV!) The project was developed with sex worker-led organisations across the UK and sex workers are centrally involved (as researchers and through discussion workshops) in designing and carrying out the research. We want to know the extent to which these tools do prevent violent incidences towards, and improve the mental health of, sex workers.

What does the evaluation involve? NUM receives reports of violence and other crimes against sex workers and uses this information to develop alerts. They circulate alerts by text and email to sex workers, venues and services signed up to the service, to raise awareness about people and situations that pose a threat to sex workers. NUM also has a national database of violence and other crimes (e.g. theft, fraud) against sex workers which they can use to screen potential clients (by their contact details, profile names, vehicle registrations)

This two and a half year project will be implemented with National Ugly Mugs and networks of sex workers the UK, including for example Birmingham, Bristol, Brighton, Manchester, London, Glasgow, Hull, Cardiff etc.. It involves 5 work packages:

- Work package A – Discussion workshops with the community to plan the research; and a review of existing evidence.
- Work package B – Interviews and focus groups with sex workers, service providers and stakeholders.
- Work package C – Impact evaluation including a baseline and follow-up survey with sex workers who are NUM members and those who are not.
- Work package D – Economic evaluation, estimating whether NUM is value for money.
- Work package E – Discussion workshops with the community to develop recommendations to action research findings.

This information sheet refers to Work package C

Who is funding the research? This research is funded by the National Institute of Health and Care Research. Grant Number: NIHR156812 (**{**HYPERLINK "https://fundingawards.nihr.ac.uk/award/NIHR156812"**}**)

Who has reviewed this study? All research involving people is looked at by an independent group of people, called a Research Ethics Committee, to protect your interests.

This study has been reviewed and given favorable opinion by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine Research Ethics Committee (Ref: 30275).

Why have I been invited? You have been invited to be part of the study because you are over 18 and you have sold sex in the last 6 months.

W**hat is involved?** If you decide to participate, you will complete a questionnaire, which should take a maximum of 30 minutes. The questionnaire will include questions on the following topics:

- your background, including age, gender, ethnic group, and education
- how you organise your work
- any recent experience of violence or harm
- your mental health
- your use of health and social care services

We ask all participants for permission to keep a record of their name (this can be a pseudonym or 'nickname') and contact details so that we can recontact you in 6 months' time to repeat the questionnaire. It is up to you whether you share your name and contact details with us.

You do not have to answer any question if you do not want to, and you can stop the questionnaire at any time without saying why.

Do I have to take part? No. Participation is your choice and is voluntary. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. If you choose to withdraw this will not affect your role or relationship with National Ugly Mugs or any of the organisations we are working with. You are free to withdraw at any time.

Is this research confidential? Yes. All information that you share with us will only be seen by members of the research team. All information which is collected about you during the research project will be kept strictly confidential, stored on a secured, encrypted server or in a secure and locked office, and on a password protected database.

All of your responses will be anonymised and the research team will not share anything you say with any organisations or those outside the project. The *only* exception would be if you told us something directly with a team member 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.

Will I be compensated for my time? Yes. If you are eligible and provide consent, you will receive £30 cash immediately upon completing the questionnaire (or via a money transfer app if you are completing this online).

For those who are not NUM members, we will also ask you to refer other colleagues or friends who are also working as sex workers into the study. We will compensate you £10 for everyone you refer who completes the questionnaire.

What are the potential benefits and risks of participating in the study? You might not directly benefit from this research, but our aim is that this study will improve violence prevention tools and survivor support services for people working in the sex industry. This might be of benefit to you and/or people you know in the future.

We appreciate that discussing violence, mental health and sex work may be difficult. If you would like to talk about this with anyone, we can signpost you to several organisations that may be able to help. Please visit https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/research/centres-projects-groups/swerv for the full list of services.

What will happen to the results of the research study? Using data from this survey, we will find out if using NUM's alerts, NUMchecker and making reports of violent incidences affect sex workers' safety and mental health, in cities such as Birmingham, Bristol, Brighton, Manchester, London, Glasgow, Hull, Cardiff etc.. Findings from the research will be presented to sex workers and sex worker services (WP E) and together we will review and pull out key messages to be written up in a policy brief or another format to be agreed. We hope these findings will help to identify gaps and opportunities to improve services and resources for sex workers to end violence. Findings will also be published in scientific journals to contribute to the academic literature on the evaluation of violence prevention interventions.

Who to contact for further information or concerns? If you have any questions or would like more information please contact:

- Professor Lucy Platt on lucy.platt@lshtm.ac.uk

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should ask to speak to the researchers who will do their best to answer your questions. 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 [insert name and email address of identified colleague].

Do you have any questions? I will be happy to clarify anything.