**Encompass Network Briefing April 2020**

**COVID-19:** **The experiences and needs of women in the sex industry**

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is having a significant impact on the lives of women who sell and exchange sex in many different aspects such as:

* relying on selling or exchanging sex to survive for basics like food and accommodation
* trafficked for sexual exploitation
* involved in street prostitution
* controlled by boyfriends / a pimp
* paying off debts to loan sharks / dealers
* involved with escort agencies/ saunas / brothels or self-advertising
* in lap dancing clubs
* involved in pornography or exchanging images for money / gifts

Women are primarily there through a lack of realistic alternatives and choices. In the current emergency, they are facing the same challenges that many other women such as housing, no money, lack of access to services and caring responsibilities. They are also in relationships with high levels of violence, abuse and coercion but these women are also facing additional challenges in accessing support due to stigma, fear of disclosing their specific circumstances and confidentiality. Many do not access services, and many do not disclose their involvement in the sex industry due to stigma, fear of judgemental attitudes, loss of anonymity and confidentiality

If a woman discloses that she is involved in selling or exchanging sex and would like help to access support around this, there are a number of emergency funds and specialist services you can direct her to:

**What emergency funds are available**

For women in dire financial situations who are at risk of destitution, there are small crisis funds available through –

**SWARM:**  Sex worker led organisation who have established an emergency fund for people in the sex industry. Women can find out more on how to apply to the fund by emailing contact@swarmcollective.org. More info can also be found at their website [www.swarmcollective.org](http://www.swarmcollective.org)

**Umbrella Lane:** Sex worker led organisation who have established an emergency fund for people in the sex industry. Women can find out more on how to apply to the fund by emailing hello@umbrellalane.org. More info can also be found at their website [www.umbrellalane.org](http://www.umbrellalane.org)

**Victim Fund:** Victim Support Scotland ([www.victimsupport.scot](http://www.victimsupport.scot)) are administering a £100,000 ‘victims fund’ which women involved in selling sex are eligible to access. Women who sell or exchange sex can access this support through the Encompass network agencies below.

**Specialist support**

There are a small number of specialist agencies across Scotland focusing on supporting women involved in selling or exchanging sex. These organisations can offer information, support and advocacy into other services as well as offering practical assistance such as access to the Victim Fund outlined above.

**Encompass network website** <https://www.encompassnetwork.info/>

Aberdeen

**Aberdeen Cyrenians** - work with vulnerable people in Aberdeen area. Offer 1-2-1 support, emotional support, safety planning, practical support, advice & information, crisis intervention, advocacy, assessment of needs and referral to other agencies. flexible, needs led approach, often in response to times of crisis as well as short-, medium- and long-term support depending on individual need. Currently providing phone support, as well as practical assistance delivering food, toiletries, baby items and clothing for those experiencing hardship as part of their AC2U Covid-19 response. Support can be accessed via phone (0808 1964422) and email (hello@weareac.org). More information can be found at their website [www.aberdeen-cyrenians.org](http://www.aberdeen-cyrenians.org)

**Alcohol and Drugs Action - Quay Services** offers regular outreach services and 1-2-1 support to women involved in street and indoor prostitution. Safety advice, panic alarms, condoms, pregnancy kits, advocacy, referrals to other related services and support to attend appointments. Support is available via phone (01224 594700 / 07927 192706) and email (helpline@alcoholanddrugsaction.org.uk). More information can be found at their website [www.alcoholanddrugsaction.org.uk](http://www.alcoholanddrugsaction.org.uk)

Dundee and Tayside

**Vice Versa (WRASAC) -** Promotes the health, rights and dignity of women who are involved in exchanging sexual acts for some form of payment. provide 1:1 support on a range of issues including substance misuse, sexual health, physical and mental health and well-being, trauma and abuse, housing/homelessness and offending behaviour as well as the provision of Personal Safety equipment and information. Support is currently being delivered via phone (01382 205556) and email (support@wrasac.org.uk). Live chat with trained sexual violence support and trauma workers is also available at [www.wrasac.org.uk](http://www.wrasac.org.uk)

Perth and Kinross

**Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre -** Provide crisis support, therapeutic support, and advocacy to survivors of rape and sexual abuse. There is a specialist worker for women affected by CSE. All support is currently delivered via phone (01738 630965) or email (support@rasacpk.org.uk). More info can be found at their website [www.rasacpk.org.uk](http://www.rasacpk.org.uk)

Edinburgh and the Lothians

**Another Way – SACRO** offers support in areas such as healthcare, housing, benefits, parenting, addictions, domestic abuse and exiting sex work if wished. The service also allows women to anonymously report offences through the Ugly Mug scheme or to the police. Support is currently available via phone (07966 222 636). More information about the Another Way service can be found here [www.sacro.org.uk/services/criminal-justice/another-way-service](https://www.sacro.org.uk/services/criminal-justice/another-way-service)

Glasgow

**Routes Out -** Offering telephone support to new and existing clients. New referrals can be made via 0141 276 0737. Routes Out offer advocacy for benefits, money advice, housing, physical and mental health. Harm reduction services continue to be available at Drop In with a door service only. Monday – Friday 10am – 4pm, Wednesday – Saturday 9pm – 1am. <http://www.routesout.org>

National

**CLiCK -** Offer practical and emotional support across Scotland to women involved in selling or exchanging sex online. Women can access support via online live chat and self-refer into one-to-one support with a local CLiCK Women’s Worker. Also provide a COVID-19 resource hub and platform for women to share their needs during the coronavirus pandemic. All support can be accessed via their website [www.click.scot](http://www.click.scot)

**TARA** - : Support and advocacy for women who have been trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and identified in Scotland. Telephone support and advocacy support for current service users.  Out of hours still available but telephone response only between 12am and 9am. These changes ensure we continue to have service capacity to provide in person responses to urgent cases and/or new referrals.

Call: 0141 276 7724 (telephone only between 12am and 9am)

Website [www.tarascotland.org.uk](http://www.tarascotland.org.uk)

**Women’s Support project** is a feminist voluntary organisation, working to raise awareness of the extent, causes and effect of male violence against women, and for improved services for those affected by violence. The project has a service directory on it’s website and a range of information and resources. The Women’s Support Project is the lead agency in the Encompass Network. 01414180748 / 07715007905

<http://www.womenssupportproject.co.uk/>