Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA)
Community Project for Sex Workers (SW’s) in East London 2011

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Background to ISVA

- Sexual Violence against SW’s accounts for less than 0.5% of sexual offences reported in London.

- Yet third party reporting from SW’s indicates significantly higher figures.

- The Home Office commissioned a review of reporting sexual violence in the UK.
Role of the SW’s ISVA

- To support individuals working in the sex industry who report sexual violence and rape
- To increase reporting of sexual violence as well as to increase criminal convictions
- Partnership work to reduce the anxiety of reporting and going to court
- To offer a non judgemental support pathway for individuals to safely stay in the criminal justice system
- Offer support for those not wanting to report
What is Sex Work?

Types of Sex Workers

Outdoor / street based

Indoor / off street

- Flats
- Saunas
- Escorts
- Clubs / Porn
Barriers to Reporting

- Many SW’s in the UK face language barriers.
- Fear of deportation or criminalisation stops SW’s reporting sexual violence in the UK.
- Many SW’s do not feel able to proceed with the Criminal Justice System due to chaotic or complex lives.
Tools to aid the ISVA

- UGLY MUGS
- Language Tool
- EEK’s- Early Evidence Kits
Multi-agency working and referral pathways

Statutory, Voluntary and Community Services

Victim

Police

Haven Sexual assault Referral Centre

ISVA Incoming Referrals

Assessment of Victims' needs

ISVA Interventions referrals and support

Voluntary, community & Faith Groups

Health Services

Welfare assistance, benefits

Police Specialist Rape and Sexual Assaults Investigation Unit

Practical support & advocacy re reporting, judicial and legal procedures, safety, accompany to services

Housing, Safe Refuge

Children and Family Services
Stats and Outcomes

- To increase reporting ISVA has done work with Metropolitan police and promoting the service to the SW’s.
- 24 referrals were made in the first 6 months alone, compared to 12 in the whole of the previous year.
- 46% of referrals to ISVA came from The Police with a further 15% giving information
- 5 convictions in 2011
Case Example

- Commercial sex worker in flat
- She fled out the back door when a gang of 8 men tried to break in by smashing the door down
- Previous client happened to be outside and offered her refuge
- Went to his house which was close by and he violently raped her
What happened next

- Escaped over garden wall, neighbours saw her calling for help and called police
- Forensic Medical Examination at The Haven SARC
- Referred to Victim Support
- Police officer referred client to Open Doors the sex worker project where the ISVA is based
What the ISVA provided

- Provided practical and emotional support for client in this process.
- Attended court and supported client through the criminal justice process.
- Raised funds for Visa as immigration was an issue and arranged food parcels from local faith groups.
- Contacted Social Services for support with her child’s welfare.
Outcome

- Suspect was arrested and charged
- Leave to remain form filled in and Home Office granted a visa
- Social Services gave financial assistance to help support the child
- Assailant was found guilty
- Client now back in education studying Nursing
Feedback

“I was thinking I was a victim, but she really tells me that I am not a victim, and I should not put myself down. Thanks to their services, I feel stronger”. (Service user)

“It did make a lot of difference, and it changed my life. Yeah. Because I knew that I’ve got people who are looking after me, yeah”. (Service user)

“The ISVA worker is someone to trust, to confide and then the ISVA worker would bridge the gap of trust between the client and the police officer. So it’s a good system.” (SOIT Interviewee)

“Jacqui can come in to actually help and support and actually get the timing right to conduct the interviews.” (Police Interviewee)

“I think it makes a world of difference, having that continuity. And I think that keeps them in the system.” (Haven Interview)
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