

# The Women's Advocacy Project: A Protocol for Supporting Participatory Evaluation

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**Background** – There are approximately 80,000 people involved in sex work in the UK of which an estimated 85-90% are women (Scambler, 2007). In Wales, there are at least 2,471 sex workers although the actual figure is believed to be substantially higher (Sagar et al, 2014). Sex workers are one of the most victimised group in society experiencing violence, child abuse, trafficking and sexual and mental health issues (Matthews, 2015). Subsequently, sex workers have a unique range of health, social, emotional and physical needs (Cunningham, 2011), that includes: substance misuse, poor mental, physical and sexual health, risk of violence and abuse, housing and debt. However, there are a number of barriers to accessing and engaging with services including stigma, a fear of being judged (Sagar et al, 2014) and chaotic lifestyles (Mosedale et al, 2009). In Wales, only a handful of services offer specialist or any kind of support to sex workers and those that do predominantly focus on street-based sex work (Sagar et al, 2015). SEWREC has been funded for three years by the Big Lottery Fund to deliver the **Women's Advocacy Project**. The aim is to provide information, support, advice, and advocacy services to women involved in the commercial sex industry, and women at risk of sexual and/or financial exploitation in Newport. Female street-based and off-street sex workers (online, brothels, parlours, escort agencies, private houses/flats, telephone services), can access the project via drop-in and/or outreach to receive one-to-one support (structured and unstructured). Women working 'online' are made aware of the project through an online agency that provides them with a description and a link to the project.

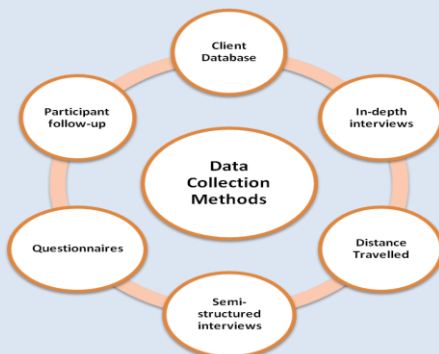
**Project Summary** - University of South Wales researchers have been commissioned by SEWREC to support their design and implementation of a framework of evaluation for the Women's Advocacy Project. The role of USW is predominantly to facilitate and support the design and development of a system to meet the projects needs and oversee the on-going evaluation undertaken by the project staff themselves. USW's involvement will provide external peer review to the internal evaluation that SEWREC are completing. Additionally, USW will support the project to develop evaluation skills including: protocol preparation, securing USW ethical approval, data collection and data analysis. SEWREC's framework for evaluation is participatory evaluation; women accessing the project, project workers and a range of stakeholders (police, drug and alcohol service, the university health board, community health), will play active roles in its design and delivery.

## Aims

To aid in the development and delivery of an evaluation design that meets the needs of the project, to support its implementation and oversee the monitoring of the on-going evaluation.

## Objectives

- Conduct participatory events/workshops with stakeholders to develop the evaluation design.
- To develop the protocol and prepare for ethical approval with the study team and stakeholders.
- Train staff in the evaluation implementation and delivery.
- Support with data collection when a female researcher is required.
- To monitor quality control of data collection.
- To identify other similar projects and networks in the UK.
- To provide advice and support on data analysis.
- To communicate progress to stakeholders.
- Deliver interim and final evaluation reports to dates negotiated with the funder.



## Key points the evaluation will consider

- The impact of the project on women accessing the service.
- Why women involved in sex-work decide not be involved in the project
- The projects own design and delivery to improve effectiveness.
- The relationship of key services and their ability to offer services to the women.
- The relationship to local communities, wider perceptions of sex-work and key players/influencers such as the media and the links to policy formulation.
- Obligations to report to the funder – the Big Lottery Fund.
- The impact/success of the Diversionary Pathway for Sex Workers (a new partnership pathway with SEWREC, local police, drug and alcohol service and the diversion team based at Women's Aid).

## References

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