

Exploring the Health and Wellbeing (HWB) needs of Sex Workers in two English Regions

Georgina Wilkinson, Shahin Parmar: UK Health Security Agency, 61 Colindale Avenue, London NW9 5EQ

Cathie Railton: Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, Quarry House, Quarry Hill, Leeds, LS2 7UA

INTRODUCTION

As an inclusion health group, sex workers often experience the most extreme health inequalities (Figure 1). This population is however largely unidentified (even within broader inclusion health work) due various factors including stigma and the hidden - often transient - nature of sex work.

METHODS

Work was initiated in two English regions (East of England and Yorkshire and Humber) for different reasons. The East of England saw an increase in syphilis in a group of sex workers whilst Yorkshire and Humber recognised that sex workers were not considered in broader inclusion health work. Scoping work was undertaken to better understand the needs, scale, range, and distribution of sex worker populations across both regions.

OUTCOMES and SUMMARY

Figure 2 highlights the common findings and outcomes of investigations from each area.

Sex workers are not being recorded within health datasets and can therefore be absent from service developments and strategic planning. Effective partnership working, and strong relationships need to be established across health, public health, local government, third sector, and police to address this complex and sensitive issue.

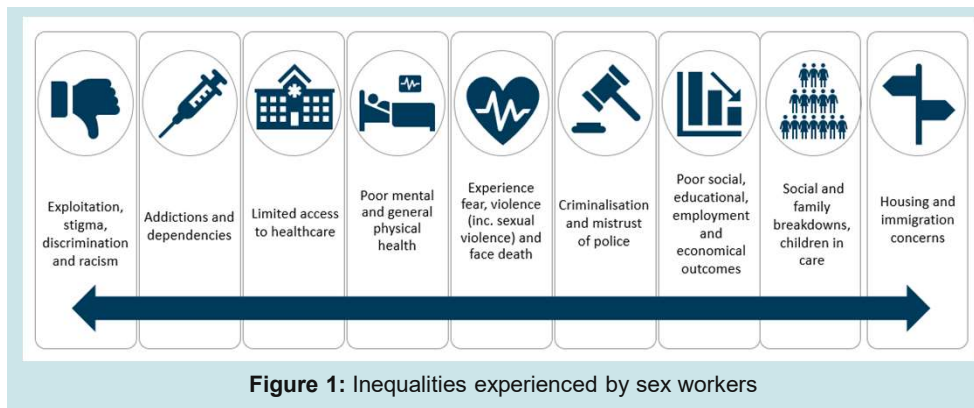


Figure 1: Inequalities experienced by sex workers

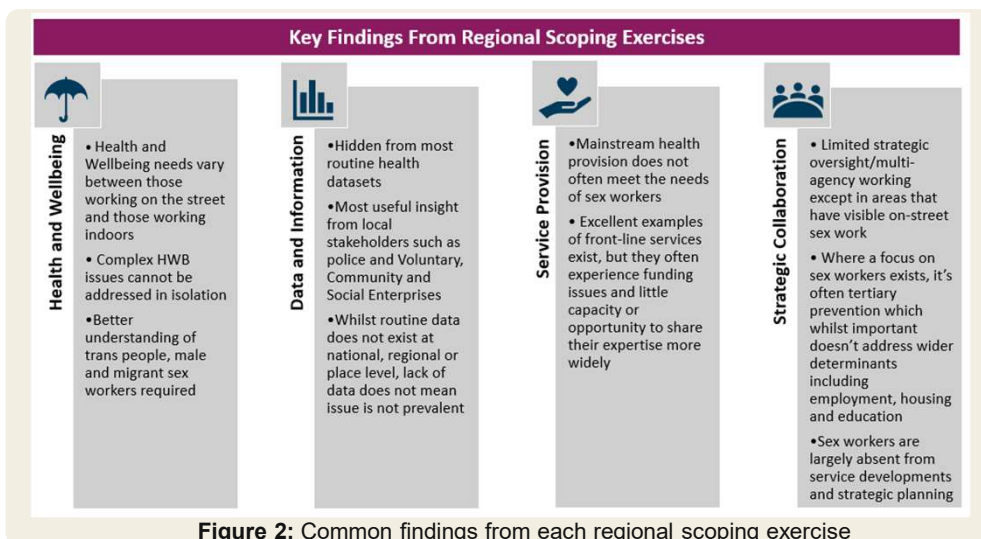


Figure 2: Common findings from each regional scoping exercise

FURTHER WORK

Work is ongoing to respond to the issues identified from the scoping exercises:

- Multi-agency steering group, including lived experience representation, established to take Yorkshire and Humber work forward
- Development of a public health approach to sex work resource
- Research proposal submitted for a multi-sited evaluation of third sector-led health interventions for street sex workers in the North of England
- Self-assessment tool aimed at all key partners
- Introduction of *Law Enforcement Public Health* tool for frontline police officers
- Case study template for local government, service providers, the police and voluntary sector
- Sex worker *Ladder of Interventions* produced to determine if a measure is deemed acceptable or not
- Library of research, policy and best practice via open access Knowledge Hub platform

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge all stakeholders and people with lived experiences across both regions who have contributed towards work to date and for their ongoing support.