



August 2010: Communicating our research

# Sex Work Research Wales

**‘A four year research project to map the sex industry in Wales’**



The four-year project, ‘Sex Work Research Wales’ is sponsored by

the not-for-profit company **Gibran UK**, in partnership with the **University of Wales Swansea**.



Swansea University  
Prifysgol Abertawe

The research will be conducted across Wales with the aim of filling the current gap in knowledge and sharing learning and

best practice to bring about positive change. The research has several focuses in summary these are:

- **Mapping** - To conduct a pan Wales **scoping** exercise – in consultation with sex-workers, stakeholders & communities. Including geographical and media monitoring.
- **Exit** - To research best practice and explore ways in which sex workers can exit the industry if they so wish
- Empowering sex workers to be involved in the research process and have a voice
- **Empowerment** – consultation with communities affected by sex work. Focus and mediation groups – listening to communities, encourage their involvement in the research and development of responses
- **Community Cohesion** - Explore ways in which sex workers and their community can work together to bring about positive improvements in all of their lives.

We will be training sex workers to become peer researchers and aim to bring together sex workers and their communities in safe environments by facilitating community focus and mediation groups. We aim to identify concerns regarding prostitution and help provide the knowledge to bring about positive change

The distributing of knowledge and best practice is central to this research: Improving community safety, decreasing disaffection for sex-workers, empower sex-workers & communities to address common issues (community cohesion) & identify **services** needed to be developed for sex workers.



***Funded by the Big Lottery Research Programme***

The UK wide Research programme awarded grants to voluntary organisations that work with researchers to run high quality medical and social research projects. Grants for up to five years of between £10,000 and £500,000 were awarded to charities and VSO's, with up to £1 million for exceptional projects.



The programme aim:

*...’ to enable VCS organisations to produce and disseminate evidence-based knowledge, to influence local and national policy and practice and, in the longer term, develop better services and interventions for beneficiaries’*

In doing so the programme would develop VCS capacity to engage with, use and do research.

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## **Why?**

There is currently no national strategy in Wales to tackle sex work.

In Cardiff there is an identified on street sex trade, widely acknowledged by services, and the community.

There is little publically available data regarding the indoor sex industry.

Gibran UK already provides existing services (The ‘Going Home Project’) to female ex-offenders their review of services in Wales for female ex-offenders identified a gap in knowledge and services for sex workers.

Dr Tracey Sagar’s research (Lead researcher Swansea University) 2002 - 2009 in Wales found:

- Communities are negatively affected by sex work
- Community members forced sex workers out of communities
- Sex workers felt excluded and victimised

- Sex workers forced into unsafe environments
  - Found an urgent need to bring sex workers and communities together
  - Underdeveloped multi-agency collaboration
  - Voices of sex workers and community are absent in research
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## **Why Now?**

Recent publications and significant changes in the law will impact directly on sex workers and services. The evidence that contributes to the timing of the research is summarised as follows:

**‘Hester & Westmarland, Home Office 2004** - Recommends inclusive, holistic work with sex-workers.

**‘Home Office 2006 Coordinated Prostitution Strategy’** - Directs stakeholders to tackle underlying causes of sex work/ assist exit.

**Introduction of Section 17** - Engagement and support orders to identify causes and assist exit of the sex industry

**Policing and Crime Acct 2009** - increasing numbers of sex workers will be ordered to exit sex work - increasing service demand.



Problematic areas need to develop coordinated services

There is a knowledge gap to inform policy and best practice

Rehabilitation, housing, counselling, improved wellbeing, education/ training, health care are necessary if sex workers are to meet the challenges of modern society.

**No individual service can meet all these needs.**

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### ***The Research Team***

**Gill Hurley**, MD Gibran UK

**Emma Harris**, Project Manager Gibran UK

**Tracey Sagar**, Lead Researcher Swansea University

**Debbie Jones**, Research Assistant Swansea University

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**For more detailed information about the team visit [www.gibran-uk.co.uk](http://www.gibran-uk.co.uk)**

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### ***What we ask of you?***

The research project 'Sex Work in Wales' adopts a Participatory Action Research approach and involves: the mapping of sex work in Wales; quantitative and qualitative data collection; the setting up and managing of focus groups with sex workers and members of the wider community;

participating in community mediation sessions with sex workers and the wider community.

***'It is essential that we identify key stakeholders and policy makers to ensure that we access the widest possible range of individuals. We want to share best practice and provide the knowledge base to direct future policy development in Wales.'***

***'Identify local experts to identify local need, to corroborate research findings and take the research forward'***

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