



# CSE Aware bulletin

## Issue 3:

# Mental Health

Selling or exchanging sex can have specific impacts on women's mental health. However, women are often faced with stigma which can prevent them from disclosing their involvement. And this lack of mental health can have a knock on effect on other aspects of their lives such as their housing situation, substance use, safety, life aspirations and access to services in general.

A [2022 report](#) by specialist service Beyond the Streets found that mental health was the support theme most frequently mentioned by women selling or exchanging sex, and 96% of the women said they were concerned with accessing mental health services.

Following the publication of our [Safety bulletin](#), here we explore the links between selling or exchanging sex and mental health. Included in this bulletin is an interview with a trained psychotherapist and expert in violence against women, as well as a wealth of resources to reflect on your role as a worker when supporting the mental wellbeing of women. I hope you find this bulletin useful!

*The CSE Aware Resource Worker*

**“I would like services to get to know me first, not to take on other people’s opinions before working with me.”**

— Woman involved in the sex trade in Scotland



## Mental health insights

# Women, mental health and the

# impacts of the 'sex industry'



Access to mental health care is fundamental for anyone who needs it, and poor mental health can prevent people from living a full and rich life and make it harder to maintain even the most basic needs, like food and shelter.

In this article, we explore some of the ways in which selling and exchanging sex can impact on women's mental health, the barriers that prevent them from engaging with mental health support, and the ways in which workers in any service (whether focused on mental health or not) can support the mental wellbeing of women.

[Read more](#)

## A WORKER'S PERSPECTIVE

### **Angela Voulgari - Mental health support is as vital as having food and shelter**

In this interview with psychotherapist and violence against women expert Angela we discuss mental health as a right for women, a counselling service for women who sell or exchange sex that was piloted in Scotland during the pandemic, and we reflect on the role all services have in supporting women's mental wellbeing.

[Read more](#)

## A worker's perspective



with  
Angela  
Voulgari

## CSE AWARE UPDATE

### **Our illustrations and a note on representations of women who sell or exchange sex**

In this blog we discuss the media representations of women involved in the 'sex industry' and the work we did to create illustration that showed a different perspective of women's lives.

[Read more](#)



## Mental health resources

- [CLiCK bitesize - Mental health](#)  
A training resource exploring the safety needs of women involved in the 'sex industry'. Includes PowerPoint slides and training notes.
- [CLiCK Cast Episode 4: Mental Wellbeing](#)  
This podcast episode by CLiCK Scotland discusses the mental health of women selling/exchanging sex online, particularly the impact of the pandemic. [Read the show notes.](#)
- [Encompass Focus On... Mental health](#)  
This briefing based on the snapshot of Encompass services and the needs presented by the 150 women they support shows the prevalence of mental health issues and need for support of women who sell or exchange sex.
- [The mental health of female sex workers](#)
- [Experiences of women who sought support for their mental health after rape or abuse](#)
- [Support needs of women involved in the uk sex industry.](#)

[More resources](#)

“I'm still on a list for counselling. I don't like to think too much about what I had to do. It's not all easy, see. Even though I'm out of that life now, it's still in me. See, I was a prostitute and now I'm an ex-prostitute. Some days, that big ball of feelings all comes back and I can't speak. It just sits there, and I have to close my eyes and push it away.”

– Kandi, *Outside*



## Events and training

### CSE AWARE EVENT

# Mental health and women involved in selling or exchanging sex

The event poster features a pink watercolor background. On the left, the CSE aware logo is displayed, with the text 'Mental health and women involved in selling or exchanging sex' below it. The date and time '28 September 2022 11:30am - 1pm' are centered, followed by the text 'Free event for front-line workers and support services'. On the right, there is a line drawing of a woman's profile, looking upwards, similar to the one in the top section.

**CSE aware**  
PREVENTING AND REDUCING HARM AND RESPONDING TO COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

## Mental health and women involved in selling or exchanging sex

28 September 2022  
11:30am - 1pm

Free event for front-line workers and support services

28 September, 11:30am - 1pm

Our next CSE Aware event will offer an introduction to the mental health needs of women involved in selling or exchanging sex in Scotland. We will reflect on the links between women's mental wellbeing and their wider needs, and discuss examples of good practice when responding to women.

[Register here](#)

## FREE WEBINAR

### Psychological First Aid with VITA Network

Ongoing

On May 26 VITA Network held its first SafeREFUGE webinar on Psychological First Aid. The aim of the webinar was to equip people with the knowledge and skills to better help those who are in distress in the wake of disaster.

[Watch the recording here](#)

## Interesting reads

### NEW SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT REPORT

#### Experiences of people who sell or exchange sex and their interaction with support services

The Scottish Government has published the report on research commissioned to understand the service provision for people involved in selling or exchanging sex in Scotland. The report maps current services and shares views of people with lived experience on accessing services, experiences and impact of support, and ideas for future service design.

[Read more](#)

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#### STUDY: Nearly half of young underage Britons have seen pornography

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#### How trauma-informed fitness helps survivors process and heal through exercise

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#### At risk: exploitation and the UK asylum system

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#### French porn site owner arrested over rape, pimping allegations

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#### The insidious and dangerous nature of Only Fans

## Updates from services

### New trauma and substance use e-module

The National Trauma Training Programme has released a new e-learning module: "Understanding the use of substances to cope with the impact of trauma," which aims at increasing understanding of how to support recovery and develop trauma informed relationships.

[Access the module here](#)

### Developing your trauma skilled practice 4:

Understanding the use of substances to cope with the impact of trauma



## **New practice guide – Gypsy, Roma and Traveller domestic abuse survivors**

This Good Practice Guide from the Traveller Movement is a tool to raise awareness of the barriers that GRT survivors face when accessing support. The guide outlines what specialist services, statutory agencies, local and national Government must do to ensure that GRT victims and survivors of domestic abuse get the support they need.

[Read more](#)

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## **Police seeking ideas and stories to help shape their Violence Against Women strategy**

Police Scotland would like to hear and understand experiences of violence directed towards women and girls. They have created a dedicated portal with prompts to share stories. All anonymised findings will be used to inform their Violence against Women and Girls Strategy.

[Read more](#)

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## **Independent report finds support to remove the Not Proven Verdict**

The Scottish Government has published an independent report analysing responses to their consultation on the Not Proven Verdict and related reforms (jury sizes, conviction majorities and corroboration). The report has found support for moving to a two-verdict system, saying this would be both fairer and easier to understand.

[Read more](#)

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## **Creative spotlight**

### **HUSH – using art to express the grief of losing a loved one to murder**

We don't often reflect on what life looks like for people who lost a loved one to violent crime. This perspective is what Victim Support Scotland set out to share through their exhibition HUSH – Breaking the Silence.

The CSE Aware team had the opportunity to visit this one-off exhibition and here we share our impressions.

[Read more](#)

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### **Mexican sex workers fight injustice with the pen**

A group of women selling sex on the streets of Mexico has gotten together to create a magazine to report on issues affecting women in their community and to ensure their voices are properly represented in the media.

[Read more](#)

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how important it is for teams to incorporate the five principles of trauma-informed care.

Below we show how the responses we received link to those five principles:

**Safety:** supervisors provide physical and psychological safety in the environment and relationships. Respondents listed *stewardship, direction, administration* which shows how important it is for the workers to feel that they are rooted within the organisation and that they are part of a collective when navigating the complex waters of human services.

**Trust:** supervisors lead with integrity and they are transparent and consistent in their communication. The responses that we have received included *mutual trust and respect* as well as *more than box ticking* – implying that workers' trust needs to be earned through meaningful engagement process.

**Collaboration:** supervisors address power asymmetries and engage staff in the decision-making process. The importance of *listening, patience* and *genuine care* was highlighted in our survey.

**Empowerment:** supervisors promote a strengths-based approach. Some of our readers prioritised *praise* and *encouragement*, showing that staff want to feel valued and celebrated.

**Choice:** supervisors ensure that staff have a voice within the organisation and offer choice whenever possible.

Your comments made it loud and clear: support and supervision cannot and should not be a mere box-ticking exercise. It has to be relational, adequately resourced and visionary.

## Over to you!

# What other issues affecting women selling or exchanging sex would you like us to explore?

So far we have explored housing, safety, mental health and we are planning future bulletins on substance misuse and poverty. Please write down any other issues you'd like us to explore.

Send

If you are unable to use the response above, [use this link](#) to open the bulletin on your browser and submit your response.



## **CSE Aware**

an initiative of the Women's Support Project

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