



We are doing a participatory research project to work out the possible effects on sex workers' safety, health and access to services, if police stopped enforcing sex work-related laws and policies, in East London. Please read this leaflet before you decide if you want to take part. Please ask us any questions you have about the project. You can contact the research team at any time on the email and phone numbers below.

What is the purpose of the study?

We want to understand how sex work-related laws and police enforcement affect the safety and health of people who sell sex, and their access to services. This project is participatory, meaning that some of the people doing the research and giving advice to the team are current/former sex workers. This stage of the project is a cohort study where we will carry out two surveys approximately 6 months apart, which will measure how much laws and enforcement affects sex workers' safety, health and access to care, and how this changes over time. We will invite sex workers to fill in a questionnaire and, if they wish, to undergo screening for HIV, chlamydia and gonorrhoea. When needed, we will facilitate access to treatment via Open Doors and the Homerton Hospital.

We want to hear from people aged 18 or above, who sell direct sexual services (by that we mean any kind of sexual contact conducted person to person, now or in the past three months) in any sector. We want to talk to people of all genders and nationalities, who *have* and *haven't* had contact with police because of their work.

Who is carrying out the study?

The project is being carried out by researchers at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), York and Bristol Universities, Imperial College and Homerton Hospital, led by Dr Lucy Platt. The cohort study is led by Lucy Platt, working with Jocelyn Elmes, Pippa Grenfell, Dr. Sarah Creighton and with researchers who either have experience of sex work themselves or of working closely with sex workers. Our key partners are Open Doors, National Ugly Mugs. The project is funded by the National Institute for Health Research and has been approved by London-Stanmore Research Ethics Committee.

What is involved?

The research involves three key stages: (1) completing a questionnaire online; (2) voluntary testing for HIV, chlamydia and gonorrhoea (but you can choose to just complete the questionnaire; (3) consider allowing us to re-contact you in about 6 months.

1. We will ask you to complete a questionnaire online, which should take about 40 minutes, in a place and at a time that suits you. The questionnaire will include short questions with yes/no or set responses that you select on the following topics: contact you've had with police and other authorities because of your work; age, education; access to health and social services; working practices; experience of physical or

sexual violence by clients, other parties at work, police, non-paying partners and others outside of work; emotional health; sexual health; and drug and alcohol use. You don't have to answer any question if you don't want to, and you can stop the interview any time without saying why.

2. You will also be offered testing for HIV, chlamydia and gonorrhoea using self-collected devices that consist of a finger-prick blood test (for HIV) and self-collected tests for chlamydia and gonorrhoea (using vaginal or rectal swabs and urine samples as appropriate). Testing will be done by a testing service called the Doctors Laboratory (TDL). You have to give your address (or that of a friend) to the research team in order to receive the test kits and your phone number to TDL to receive the results. You will receive an automated text message with your results after a few days from TDL and be referred to Sarah Creighton at the Homerton Hospital for treatment if necessary or directed to a local clinical service. In the case of a positive HIV test result you will be asked to go for confirmatory testing at the Homerton Hospital or an STI hospital near you. **These tests are voluntary.** If you have just had a recent screening for HIV, chlamydia or gonorrhoea at the Homerton Hospital, the researcher will ask you whether you would mind giving two out of three items of information: (1) Clinic number; (2) date of birth (this does not have to be the real DOB just the one provided to the clinic); (3) name used at registration of clinical services (again this does not have to be your real name), so we can link in your results to your questionnaire. Any personal information that you give such as name, or date of birth or clinic number will be kept separately from your questionnaire data and destroyed at the end of the project.
3. After you have completed the questionnaire and tests, we will ask you whether you agree to be re-contacted to take part in the research again in 6 months' time. We want to re-contact individuals in order to see whether there have been any changes in their experience of policing over time, perhaps due to changes in a policy or new police officers working in the area. In order to re-contact you, we would need to collect the following information from you: mobile number; email address; other numbers where you can be contacted (without risk of people finding out about your work if you do not want them to know); or let us know if we can re-contact you via Open Doors outreach team. All of this information will be stored securely in a password protected file. It will not be linked to the replies you gave as part of the survey questionnaire.

Is the research confidential?

Yes. Your personal identity will be protected at all times. You do not need to tell us your real name; you can give us a nickname or any other name you choose. When we write or talk about anything you have told us, we will not use your real name (or any other name you give us) and we will not include any other information that could identify you. Your personal information will not be shared with any government authorities. The *only* exception would be if you told us something that showed that you or another adult was in serious danger, or that a child was being harmed. If this happened, we might have to tell someone, but we would always talk to you about this first.

We will keep all the information you share with us confidential and store it securely. We will keep the information from the questionnaire in a computer folder that only the researchers can access (with a password), this is all stored under an anonymous

identification number and not your name. The questionnaire is completed via a secure electronic system with restricted access and is fully encrypted at all times to the highest standard. Any information you provide us will be fully encrypted to international gold standards in compliance with Data protection Act and EU General Data Protection Regulations. Only the research team will be able to access your data. Using the highest security standards your encrypted data will be transferred to secure servers at LSHTM. At the end of the study any personally identifying information will be securely digitally deleted. All information that you give us to enable us to facilitate any treatment for chlamydia, gonorrhoea or HIV as well as re-contacting you in 6 months' time will be stored in password protected files and not linked to the questionnaire information. The testing service will require your mobile number to send you your results and your address to send the test kits. This is a standard service following NHS confidentiality guidelines and TDL will not have any other information about you or that you are participating in this study. At the end of the project, we will delete your contact information.

What are the benefits and risks of taking part?

You might see the chance to share your experiences as a positive thing, but some issues may be difficult to talk about. We will ask questions as sensitively as possible and you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to. You might welcome the chance to be tested for HIV, gonorrhoea and chlamydia without going to a clinic and we will provide results and any treatment necessary. As a positive result is likely to be distressing – particularly in the case of HIV - we will ensure you receive the correct clinical support you need. We will tell you about organisations that provide support on safety, health and rights, and we can help you contact these organisations if you want. You may not want us to re-contact you in 6 months if you think that you may no longer be working in sex work or you are concerned someone will find out about your sex work. It will be important for the research to re-contact you in 6 months anyway just to find out how you are and whether you have left sex work. We will only re-contact you via the methods you tell us to and will not persist in re-contacting you if you do not wish to be contacted. If we cannot get hold of you, we will not tell people the focus of the study or the reason we are trying to contact you. We will give you £20 to thank you for taking part in the study.

Do I have to take part in the study?

No. It is totally up to you. Before you decide, think about whether taking part in this study could cause you any personal or work problems.

- Is this a good time and place to talk about your experiences and your views?
- If not, what time or place would be better for you?
- Is this a good time to have a test for HIV, gonorrhoea and chlamydia?
- Do you have any concerns about taking part in this interview? If you do, please talk about them with the researcher or a project worker before you decide.

You can change your mind about taking part at any time, without saying why. This will not affect your care or your legal rights in any way.

How will the research be used?

We will use the results to design the next parts of the project - a 'mathematical model' to work out what the effects could be, if police stopped enforcing current sex work laws/policies. We will use the full results to recommend policies and services to local authorities, police, health and social services, that protect sex workers' safety, health and

Information for Participants recruited online: Quantitative (v.5, 140119) East London Project (IRAS project ID: 231206)

rights. The results will be available for free on our website and in published reports. We will also hold events for sex workers, health and support services, local authorities, police and the public.

The research will only start after you have had the chance to ask any questions, and after you have signed the consent form. You will be emailed or able to download a copy of this leaflet and the consent form to keep, if you wish.

Thank you very much for reading this information. If you have further questions or thoughts about the study, please contact: Jocelyn Elmes on 0207 612 7824/ 07404 160920 or elp@lshtm.ac.uk