

CLiCK Evaluation 2019–2021

Report by The Diffley Partnership

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From many voices to smart choices

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1. CLiCK Overview

Programme Aims

CLiCK sought to enhance provision of community-based services across Scotland to improve the accessibility of frontline services for those engaged in selling or exchanging sex in-doors or online.

The initial aims of CLiCK, shaped within a VAW framework were to:

1. improve access to information and the availability of local support.
2. improve access to specialist and mainstream services.
3. increase levels of safety and wellbeing for women involved in selling/exchanging sex online.
4. capture the voices and experiences of women selling sex online to help shape service development.

Service Model

CLiCK's programme aims map against the key features of the CLiCK service model:

- Digital technologies for online outreach.
- One-to-one support across Scotland.
- Improved pathways to mainstream services such as sexual health.
- An opportunity for women with lived experience to have a voice in shaping future services.
- A platform for women to share their stories and experiences.

The CLiCK service was officially launched in October 2019 by the Minister for Community Safety. The first few months prior to the launch were spent on developing the service in terms of inducting staff and designing and implementing methods of engagement.

Stakeholders

The service model was initially funded for 2 years under the Tampon Tax Fund provided by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). This took the programme funding up to 31 March 2021. An extension of time was secured in early 2021, to take the programme up to 1 June 2021.

Set up as an inter-agency initiative, charities involved from the outset to design, deliver and adapt CLiCK included:

- Sacro

- Women's Support Project (WSP)
- Aberdeen Cyrenians
- Glasgow & Clyde Rape Crisis
- Vice Versa – Dundee
- Quay Services, Alcohol and Drugs Action–Aberdeen (up until 1 April 2021)

All organisations comprising the CLiCK partnership are also members of the Encompass Network¹ and highly experienced in providing support to women throughout Scotland affected by commercial sexual exploitation (CSE). All partners subscribe to the Scottish Government's Equally Safe Strategy for the eradication of all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG).

An Advisory Group was devised in late summer 2019 and started meeting in November 2019. This included representatives from:

- Scottish Government
- Police Scotland
- NHS Lothian
- The Improvement Service
- Women's Support Project

Strategic Context

CLiCK was considerate of the Equally Safe strategy's four broad outcomes:²

- Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls
- Women and girls thrive as equal citizens–socially, culturally, economically and politically
- Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people
- Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.

¹ <https://www.encompassnetwork.info/>

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/equally-safe/>

2. Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation report is the culmination of formative and summative monitoring and evaluation by CLiCK staff and Diffley Partnership throughout the whole programme. The evaluation included primary qualitative research and analysis of secondary data across the two years of CLiCK.

CLiCK was funded for two years until the end of May 2021. Therefore, rather than to inform the continuation of CLiCK, this evaluation has been written to inform future support for women.

Literature Review

Desk research was conducted in 2020 to explore and explain the context of CLiCK's work through the evaluation. We consulted policy material, academic sources, press articles and grey literature shared by Sacro. In addition, we examined publicly available sources of information on CLiCK, partner organisations and the context of their work.

Secondary Analysis

Sources within secondary analysis included:

- Progress updates provided by CLiCK Women's workers in October, December 2019 and February 2020
- Monitoring data up until end May 2021
- Digital analytics
- Grey literature relating to digital outputs including editorial and writing team briefs
- Evaluation of programme strands, including counselling
- Statistics in relation to the Encompass Fund³
- Minutes of Advisory Group meetings
- Policy consultation responses by CLiCK, Sacro and the Encompass Network
- Overview of work by staff members on key topic areas
- Anonymous staff survey to the Encompass Network (including CLiCK staff)

³ <https://www.click.scot/news/blog/reflections-on-the-encompass-fund-so-far/>

Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods were designed to explore the perspectives of those who were closest to CLiCK and familiar with the broader context of this work:

- Qualitative focus-group based was conducted in Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership (VAWP) meeting covering the three Ayrshire groups in February 2020
- Interviews conducted with the VAWP leads in Stirling, Dumfries and Galloway, East and Midlothian and Aberdeen in March 2020
- Interviews with Women's support workers employed by different organisations within the CLiCK partnership
- People working for a range of organisations involved with CLiCK in different ways

A total of 22 qualitative one-to-one interviews were conducted across both years, 10 in Year 1 and 12 in Year 2. In Year 1 these took place in a combination of face-to-face interviews and using a video platform. In Year 2 all interviews were conducted via video platform due to the lockdown restrictions imposed during the Covid pandemic.

Discussion guides (see Appendix A and B) were designed by Diffley Partnership and signed-off by CLiCK, with input from the Advisory Group.

When considering the findings from the qualitative elements of the research it should be borne in mind that qualitative samples are designed to ensure that a range of different views and experiences are captured. It is not appropriate to draw conclusions from qualitative data about the prevalence of views or experiences among the population group. As such, quantifying language, such as 'all', 'most' or 'a few' is avoided as far as possible when discussing qualitative findings throughout the report.

3. Selling and Exchanging Sex

In this section we set out the context of the CLiCK programme. We summarise the broad legal and ethical discussions around selling and exchanging sex, bringing in literature and quotes from people we interviewed. Next, we summarise the available information to give a sense of scale and trends in selling and exchanging of sex, including trends in online usage. We then give an overview of mainstream services and specialist support services available in Scotland. Lastly, we include a section on the COVID-19 pandemic, touching on trends and service provision during the pandemic.

Legal and Ethical Context

Within this report, and the CLiCK programme itself, we use the term ‘selling and exchanging sex’ and ‘women who exchange or sell sex’ as this avoids more loaded terminology and so does not ascribe an identity to women but instead describes activities they are involved in. As Bettio *et al.* (2016) explain⁴:

“The language of ‘prostitute’ and ‘prostitution’ is typically aligned with abolitionist perspectives that see the sale of sex as entailing women’s exploitation and objectification, both by those who manage and create the opportunity for the sexual transaction as well as by those clients who make the purchase and maintain the demand. The language of ‘sex workers’ and ‘sex work’ has typically been preferred by those who emphasise women’s agency in entering into commercial sex transactions ...and who call for the regulation of the sale of sex as akin to the sale of non-sexual labour or services”.

In Scotland, selling and exchanging sex is not illegal but there is legislation covering activities such as soliciting, living off immoral earnings and trafficking. The two main laws currently governing the buying and selling of sex in Scotland are UK Government (1982) Civic Government (Scotland) Act and Scottish Parliament (2007) Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Act.⁵

⁴ <http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/economics/emdp2016130.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1982/45/contents>; <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2007/11/contents>

There have been a number of proposals to decriminalise the sale of sex and criminalise the purchase of sex and challenge demand for selling and exchanging sex.⁶ Currently, the purchase of sex is not criminalised in Scotland, other than "in a public place" under the Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Act 2007.⁷

The sale of sexual services is an activity carried out by women, men, and transgender individuals mostly, although not exclusively, to cater for male demand.⁸ Interagency work lead by Glasgow City Council identified the selling and exchange of sex as violence against women and passed a motion in 2015 stating that selling sex was rooted in gender inequality.⁹

Published in 2016, *Equally Safe* outlines Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls (often referred to as VAWG or VAW).¹⁰ The strategy specifies that the Scottish Government is committed to preventing and eradicating violent and abusive behaviour carried out predominantly by men directed at women and girls because of their gender. Under this VAWG definition, the following types of behaviour are included as violent and abusive: domestic abuse, rape, sexual assault, commercial sexual exploitation (including selling and exchange of sex), and so-called 'honour based' violence including female genital mutilation and forced marriage. Therefore, the Scottish Government has recognised the buying and exchanging sex as sexual exploitation and within the spectrum of VAWG.

Sanders *et al.* (2009) argue that although the majority of women who sell sex experience mental health problems and/or have other vulnerabilities, there are a few women who prefer not to be described as vulnerable and feel they have made choices with which they are comfortable.¹¹ While some associate the sale of sex as being inherently exploitative, others perceive it to present a legitimate form of employment.¹² For example, National Ugly Mugs (NUM) operates across the UK with the mission of 'ending violence against sex workers'. The charity regards selling and exchanging sex as work within an industry. Importantly the charity aims, 'to improve safety,

⁶ <https://care.org.uk/news/2020/10/prostitution-in-scotland-what-does-the-current-law-say>

⁷ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2007/11/contents>

⁸ Cunningham and Shah, 2016 <http://www.restud.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/MS21721manuscript.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.glasgowtimes.co.uk/news/13308206.call-for-moves-on-prostitution/>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/equally-safe-scotlands-strategy-prevent-eradicate-violence-against-women-girls/>

¹¹ Sanders, T., O'Neill, M. & Pitcher, J., 2009. Prostitution sex work, policy and politics, Los Angeles, [Calif.] ; London: SAGE.

¹² <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/explainers/understanding-sex-work-open-society>

prevent crime against sex workers and encourage reporting of dangerous individuals targeting sex workers to the police.¹³

In our evaluation an interviewee involved at strategic levels in delivery of *Equally Safe* across Scotland explained their personal view on the ideological divide in supporting women:

The ideological positioning is a smoke screen, it takes us away from a respectful response away from women managing their own lives. I'm very aware that profit drives policy, there is a lot of profit to be made out of women. Whenever there is profit to be made out of people there will be a range of smoke screens to prevent that profit not being made. I understand both the choice aspect, but I also understand coercion and control and how that links to inequalities. Agency is a tricky subject when you have diminished choices and opportunities.

We also interviewed a specialist in women using drugs who explained many of them would sell and exchange sex. She described how the different debates were not particularly relevant to the women she was supporting:

It's one big mish mash of people and services with different views on selling sex and drugs use and choice or exploitation. But people I am supporting don't have a voice in any of the political debates, they are under the radar, they often don't have a voice to be vocal in either side of a debate. We are talking about traumatised, very vulnerable women.

One of CLiCK's workers pointed out: *'that's something both political fields will agree with, both violence against women and women's choice, is a woman is at much higher risk of emotional abuse or violence from men when selling sex.'*

According to CLiCK's consultation response to The Scottish Government's *Equally Safe*:¹⁴

many women who sell/exchange sex online also face risks and harms similar to women in other parts of the sex industry, with intersecting characteristics directly impacting those

¹³ <https://uglymugs.org/um/about/>

¹⁴ <https://consult.gov.scot/violence-against-women-team/equally-safe-reduce-harms-associated-prostitution/>

risks and harms. According to research, 25% of selling/exchanging sex indoors had experienced physical violence, while 20% had been forced to perform sexual acts without consent.¹⁵ Further research found that while 15.7% of women selling/exchanging sex indoors had experienced violence and dangerous incidents, this rose to 40.9% for transgender women.¹⁶ Further, middle-class women who advertised escorting services online reported feeling better able to handle the emotional labour of the work compared to their working-class counterparts because they felt they shared a similar social background with those who paid for services from them.¹⁷ However, a phenomenon that was found by research to cut across all characteristics of women selling/exchanging sex online was new forms of targeted crime that was digitally facilitated (such as harassing texts, calls, emails and verbal abuse). This was found to be shared by 40% of women online regardless of any other characteristic.¹⁸ Lastly, women online are generally more isolated, lacking physical face-to-face spaces where they can congregate to exchange support and information.¹⁹

Prevalence and Trends

The Expert Group report (2007) recognised that selling and exchanging of sex in Scotland was an issue predominantly in three major Scottish cities (Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen) with some involvement in Dundee.²⁰ At the time, selling and exchanging sex was thought to mainly be on-street based, especially within areas of cities with a reputation as a ‘red light districts’, or ‘unofficial tolerance zones.’²¹

Ten years later, police data showed a year-on-year reduction in prostitution related crimes and public complaints about prostitution in the four main cities. Scottish Government research (2017)

¹⁵ Campbell, R.; Sanders, T.; Scoular, J.; Pitcher, J.; and Cunningham, S. (2018): Risking safety and rights: online sex work, crimes and ‘blended safety repertoires’. *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol 70(5), pp.1539 – 1560.

¹⁶ Jenkins, S. (2009): New Technologies, New Territories: Using the Internet to Connect With Sex Workers and Sex Industry Organisers. In: Hardy, K.; Kingston, S. and Sanders, T. (eds): *New Sociologies of Sex Work*. Ashgate, Buckingham.

¹⁷ Bernstein, E. (2007): Sex Work for the Middle Classes. *Sexualities*, 10(4), pp.473–488.

¹⁸ Sanders, T.; Connely, L.; and Jarvis King, L. (2016): ‘On Our Own Terms: The Working Conditions of Internet-Based Sex Workers in the UK’. *Sociological Research Online*, 21(4), p.15.

¹⁹ Bernstein, E. (2007): *Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity and the Commerce of Sex*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

²⁰ <https://www2.gov.scot/Publications/2005/10/3195139/51417>

²¹ Payne, J., Georghiou, N. and McCallum, F. (2004) Prostitution Tolerance Zones (Scotland) Bill – Update, Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament SPICe briefing 04/10.

indicated that it is difficult to estimate the prevalence of selling and exchanging of sex and sexual activity as there was a decrease of on-street activity and a shift to off-street activity.²²

Indeed, digital technology developments have enabled arrangements for the exchange and sale of sex through computer and smartphone communication. Women selling and exchanging sex see buyers in hotels, rented flats and their own homes. Saunas, brothels and escort agencies also offer women on an outcall basis, sent to the buyer's location.

Women who work in indoor prostitution are more difficult to reach, they do not often use drop-in services and are less easy to identify and promote/offer services to.²³ Another element that increases the difficulty of reaching the women who are involved in selling or exchanging sex indoors is that there is a higher proportion of foreign nationals involved.²⁴ This can create multiple barriers related to their ability to access services including language and cultural barriers.

Research on sexually exploited trafficked women shows that women selling sex on-street have more freedom of movement, suffer less physical and sexual abuse, and are more likely to have access to health services than women who work in parlours, clubs or hotels.²⁵ A trend in women moving to selling or exchanging sex indoors, whether prompted by changes in legislation and regulation, or adoption of new technology, is that it can move the selling and exchanging of sex into secluded places, less visible to the rest of society.²⁶

As well as a trend moving from on-street to off-street selling and exchanging of sex, the development of technology has had other implications. There is combination of scenarios including where marketing and communications are primarily carried out online, but selling and exchanging of sex provided offline; online advertising for phone sex services, and more recent forms of indirect online selling and exchanging of sex including webcamming, instant messaging and self-produced internet content (e.g. personal websites, photos and videos). Selling and

²² Scottish Government 2017, Exploring Available Knowledge and Evidence on Prostitution in Scotland via Practitioner Based Interviews, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/exploring-available-knowledge-evidence-prostitution-scotland-via-practitioner-based-interviews/>

²³ <https://www.sacro.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/00514437.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=8843&p=0>

²⁵ https://econpapers.repec.org/article/tafapplec/v_3a41_3ay_3a2009_3ai_3a18_3ap_3a2261-2277.htm

²⁶ <http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/economics/emdp2016130.pdf>

exchange of sex online is enabled by online spaces, forums and chatrooms.²⁷ Subscription-based influencer platforms enable sharing of explicit content.²⁸

The Beyond the Gaze research project (2015–2018) highlighted the diversity of people using the internet to exchange and sell sex.²⁹ A key trend was the use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, or messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Skype to form private groups for networking, support and sharing safety information between those selling sex online. People providing both direct and indirect sexual services via the internet experience digitally facilitated crime such as online harassment and threats, or non-consensual use of their data. Protecting privacy was found to be an important concern:³⁰

key privacy concerns were the risk of being identified, being outed, having data, content or identity stolen and used without consent and concerns online platforms used may be hacked (leading to loss of credits/income or personal data and confidentiality being compromised). Over one third...stated information they had put online had been used without their consent, these included incidents where commercial benefit had been the motive and also where malicious identification, 'doxing' (personal details posted online identifying the individuals identity) and outing had been the motivation.

In February 2020, over 1.5 Terabytes (approximately 15 mid-market range laptops' capacity worth) of images and videos shared privately on *Only Fans* by women were leaked and shared on Freetube sites such as Pornhub.³¹

In CLiCK's response to the Scottish Government's Equally Safe consultation the partners stated:³²

One of the most concerning behaviours online as observed by CLiCK, is the use of online 'review' sites, where men can review their experiences of buying sex online. Such websites, including Punternet, Barepunting and UKPunting, are rife with misogynist and

²⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-e578sml8I>

²⁸ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-55130695>

²⁹ <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/criminology/people/teela-sanders/briefing-summary>

³⁰ <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/criminology/people/teela-sanders/briefing-for-practitioners>

³¹ OnlyFans Leak: Huge file of stolen porn dumped online. The Independent, 28 February 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3oqdfQv>

³² <https://consult.gov.scot/violence-against-women-team/equally-safe-reduce-harms-associated-prostitution/>

objectifying attitudes that easily demonstrate men's entitlement to women's bodies and online content. A random search of review sites on 09/12/20 yielded the following comments as an example of men's disregard for the women from whom they bought sex/sexual services:

- 'got a text message with a list of her services but that went out the window once the cash was exchanged hands [...] service was dire, didn't understand English at all [...] sex wasn't much better either' (ukpunting.com, November 2020)
- 'Shit punt. Deceitful cow' (barepunting.net, December 2020)
- 'He might push her to make better content then? We can fucking hope, she's boring as fuck haha' (thefappening.com, December 2020)

Practitioners in the pan-Ayrshire and Stirling VAWP identified a shift from on-street to off-street selling or exchanging of sex in these areas. They spoke more on the emerging trends with online websites such as *Admire Me*, camming, pop-up brothels and AirBnb's and saunas being used for settings for sex. They observed that the off-street and online forms of selling/exchanging were 'hidden and transactional'. There was also a view that young women were being targeted to become involved in selling/exchanging sex as a result of financial issues while studying.³³ Moreover, there was a perception that women were being trafficked and the same group of women were being advertised for sex on different sites with different identities and nationalities.

We interviewed a member of Police Scotland who gave an overview of trends seen through their role:

When I started in Glasgow city centre 20 years ago- we didn't have same availability of mobile phones. The development of technology has led to off-street prostitution, it's almost a more controlled environment. On street pimps and violence were the norm. It has shifted. The on-street prostitution problem is still there in parts of main cities. But it has really moved into online space. You just need to click on and look at location adverts. I can almost guarantee that there are 800 adverts in Glasgow this morning advertising sex. You are talking about 1000s of adverts and there is money to be made. Within those

³³

<https://repository.cardiffmet.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10369/10250/Student%20involvement%20in%20the%20UK%20sex%20industry.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

advertises you have people advertising as a single entity, or operating as perhaps a small group. Then you have organised crime in there as well. And it's difficult to tell which is which unless you know what you are looking for. To trawl these days in day out is problematic. There's shifting sands all the time.

What we have seen is a massive influx of foreign nationals being involved in prostitution online, particularly in the last 10 years it has increased exponentially. The bulk of our trafficking we have identified is through online adverts. Women are brought to UK and forced in by organised crime groups. We've seen locals involved as well.

Advertising sex and advertising sexual services is also there online ... women selling images, but not selling contact sex, selling items and fetish services. It's almost an extension of the influencer culture. It's almost normalised now- ex Love Island stars. It's a strange one because doesn't really fit into traditional narrative of prostitution, but it's an extension of the influencer culture.

Mainstream Services

Mainstream service professionals and practitioners include GPs, nurses and housing officers who provide services for a large demographic of people. Women selling and exchanging sex might not choose to disclose this information to such mainstream professionals and a barrier could be that professionals may not have the skills and experience to identify and respond to people with overlapping needs who do not want to disclose that they sell or exchange sex. Women may not disclose their involvement in selling or exchanging sex because of real and perceived stigma within wider society and its mainstream services.³⁴

Mainstream services may also be limited in terms of adaptability and flexibility to respond to women who disclose they sell or exchange sex. In our focus groups with women's workers, their view was that significant work had been done to support practitioners in identifying risk factors for domestic abuse and having conversations with women who may be at risk but have not disclosed. It was felt that a similar strategy could be used to support women who are involved in selling or exchanging sex but fear disclosing this information because of stigma or concern regarding social work involvement with their children. There was a common view that more work is required to build

³⁴ Lazarus, Lisa, et al. "Occupational stigma as a primary barrier to health care for street-based sex workers in Canada." *Culture, health & sexuality* 14.2 (2012): 139-150.

capacity and confidence among practitioners to have productive and safe conversations with women without stigmatising them.

When we spoke to a member of staff from National Ugly Mugs they explained:

From 2012 we were already only working online. It was so challenging to talk to mainstream services about online workers, such as the police. They would just say that they weren't operating in their area because they weren't visible. For years I've had to stop people when they talk about people as 'streetworkers' because that person gets a mobile and they are working off-street and online.

VAWG workers we interviewed pointed out that women involved in selling or exchanging sex are often engaging with GP services or other health services; therefore they supported capacity being developed amongst these mainstream services to support women in addition to developing a bespoke support service such as CLiCK.

In our interview with a senior health promotion specialist for a Scottish Health Board they explained a fundamental barrier for mainstream services supporting women selling sex: *'It is such a hidden issue, women don't identify they work in the sex industry, so any issues might not be linked back to that, and any sort of support in place. Especially with the area of trauma.'*

Support Services

There is an ideological divide across the spectrum of the services and organisations supporting women in selling or exchanging sex.³⁵ This is important because depending on how the service provider understands and approaches the activities of women they support, they place a different emphasis on exiting as part of their service. In other words, while all organisations supporting women in Scotland provide harm reduction services, some services are also equipped to provide specific support if women should decide to stop selling and exchanging sex. It is important to highlight that those services, for example, public services who provide support for women must be non-judgemental. Not all services offer support with exiting, and those that do have trained,

³⁵ Gerassi, L., 2015. A Heated Debate: Theoretical Perspectives of Sexual Exploitation and Sex Work. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 42(4), pp.79-100.

impartial staff to encourage women to look at all their options impartially and discuss these with women who feel that they wish to exit. CLiCK's Equally Safe consultation response explained:

CLiCK's mission, although operating in accordance with the Equally Safe strategy, makes no demands of women to stop selling/exchanging sex online; rather it focuses on ensuring women's health, safety and wellbeing so that they are able to make free and fully informed decisions as to whether they wish to stay or exit the online sex industry.

In addition to ideological standpoints and service provision there are also geographic differences in support for women. As sale and exchange of sex was regarded as most prevalent in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen specialist services developed most in these urban centres.

In Glasgow, interagency work has spanned from the City Council's motion that selling and exchanging sex came within a VAWG framework and was rooted in gender inequality. Glasgow Community and Safety Services have been actively involved. Tomorrow's Women is a community justice centre for women who have been involved in re-offending, including under the current legislation.³⁶ Base 75 and the Routes Out of Prostitution intervention team, have been active in supporting women to 'exit' and cease selling and exchanging sex.³⁷ Established from a different ideological viewpoint, Umbrella Lane was established in Glasgow as a 'sex worker wellbeing project' committed to 'respecting choices' of women in their community.³⁸

After partner engagement on the issue, a 'Harm Reduction Framework for Sex Work' in Edinburgh was approved (Health, Social Care and Housing Committee, 2015).³⁹ A co-ordinated approach to harm reduction developed involving statutory services provided by the police, health board and local authority. Wider partners included the Women's Clinic in Edinburgh and Sacro's Another Way service.⁴⁰

During the early 2000s in Aberdeen, the expansion of the area in which on-street selling and exchanging of sex had traditionally operated began to affect local businesses. A Sex Industry Forum was established as a task group of Aberdeen Community Safety Partnership aimed at resolving

³⁶ <http://www.womenssupportproject.co.uk/content/news/210.1.508/Tomorrow039sWomenGlasgow.html>

³⁷ <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/councillorsandcommittees/viewSelectedDocument.asp?c=P62AFQ0GDX2U81T1>

³⁸ <https://www.umbrellalane.org/about-us>

³⁹

https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/Data/Corporate%20Policy%20and%20Strategy%20Committee/20140121/Agenda/item_no_72_-_sex_work_in_edinburgh_-_harm_reduction_framework.pdf

⁴⁰ <https://www.sacro.org.uk/services/criminal-justice/another-way-service>

issues related to the unofficial zone and focussing on an existing drop-in centre. ADA's Quay Services has been the primary service provider for support services for women in Aberdeen.

While the Scottish Government research from 2017 has focused on the four main cities and mapped the networks of support available in these urban areas, selling and exchange of sex has always been occurring within more remote and rural settings. Technology has enabled a move away from a concentration of on-street activity in Scotland's major cities. However, outwith these areas there may be a lack of specialist support services available to deal with some of the risks associated with selling and exchanging sex. One person we interviewed was a drugs addiction specialist who had been working for a long time in Fife. She explained:

where I live there has never been on-street prostitution. Selling of sex was happening somewhere, but it wasn't on the street like it was in the cities. But the visibility of the transactional sex has shot up in Fife because there are online platforms such as Adult Works, women are joining those and being outed. Transactional sex has become more visible in our area because of those online platforms.

Organisations do operate at Scottish and UK levels. Women's Support Project is a feminist voluntary organisation aiming to raise awareness of the extent, causes and effect of male violence against women, and for improved services for those affected by violence. A main area for the charity's work at national levels is raising awareness of the harmful impact of commercial sexual exploitation and highlighting male demand as the root cause.⁴¹

Women selling and exchanging sex can have complex and multiple needs as a result of overlapping problems with addictions, poverty, poor health, domestic violence, childcare, sexual abuse, mental illness, and persistent offending. There is a shared understanding in Scotland that no single agency can respond to all the relevant issues. Rather, what is necessary is the engagement of the full range of actors including, local authorities, Police Scotland, the NHS, the civil and criminal justice systems, social work, housing, media, the business sector, trade unions, third sector organisations and individuals and communities.⁴²

⁴¹ <http://www.womenssupportproject.co.uk/>

⁴² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/exploring-available-knowledge-evidence-prostitution-scotland-via-practitioner-based-interviews/pages/20/>

One of the individuals we interviewed specialises in addiction service support for women, and works with addiction services to increase their awareness and capacity to address the needs of women:

The services aren't really aware of transactional sex until we train them, their finger isn't on the button with topics such as online selling and exchange because it doesn't need to be on the button. In fact, they miss sex off the agenda all the time. Frankly, in drugs support services it is a failing that we don't really talk about relationships, we talk about drugs. And that's a key failure because relationships are the key to everything. I don't see that happening in our community. We are uncomfortable talking about sex in drugs services and uncomfortable talking about drugs in sexual health services. The way the work that I do is funded across both, it's siloed, to use the terminology that has been used for years. Relationships, or lack of relationships, and those relationship's healthiness or unhealthiness is key to people's lives.

Considering the complex and overlapping nature of many services that women selling and exchanging sex come in contact with, evaluation of programming poses challenges. A limited number of evaluations are available including, for example, a research evaluation conducted in Ipswich, England when a new model of service delivery was adopted.⁴³

When we spoke to National Ugly Mugs they explained how specialist support services did not necessarily incorporate support for 'online working':

When we set up our reporting and alerting service we thought those would come via specialist services, organisations such as Sacro. But from the outset, the majority of reports came directly from women who were not engaged with agencies or charities at all. We also really struggled to signpost to specialist services, because they didn't consider online work. You can't send an online worker to a drop in for street worker. We really struggled to signpost out so we had to set up our case workers. It's great other people are working with online workers now but it's not a new thing.

⁴³ Poland, F., Boswell, GR., & Killeth, AM. (2008). Evaluation Research report: Ipswich Street Prostitution Strategy. UEA Norwich.

COVID Pandemic

There is some anecdotal evidence from the evaluation that the Covid pandemic has impacted on women selling and exchanging sex in Scotland. This includes financial impacts as well as reduced ability to access certain services due to travel restrictions imposed during periods of lockdown.

In addition, one of CLiCK's staff we interviewed had done a scoping exercise for the Encompass Network, looking at adverts for sex during the pandemic:

What I noticed were people were saying I'm not doing it at all or I'm moving online. Starting web camming or selling photos instead. That was to start with. But the longer that went on there were people advertising to go back out during the pandemic. People by then were thinking 'stuff health I need money'. That trend around finance was very apparent. Women were advertising doubles and then you think about the health implications around that. And if you think of the Covid bubbles that puts everyone more at risk when you think of them being together with different men and interacting in person.

One of the stakeholders we interviewed about CLiCK was a specialist sexual health nurse. She could give direct of examples of women she spoke to at her clinic:

Things have been also affected by the pandemic. People have been coming in for the first time and online work is their first experience. One woman explained her business was dependent on other businesses being open to trade- hair products I think- but salons weren't open. She had thoughts about webcamming prior to pandemic, but the Covid pandemic pushed her to the point. She felt that was her only option to keep things going for her- mortgage, bills, family stuff. So that's an example of someone becoming involved during the pandemic in selling sex.

Some of the younger interviewee cohort explained how beyond their work contacts they were aware of an increased online selling of sexual content during the pandemic within their personal networks. They were seeing friends from school and college promoting they were joining sites such as *Only Fans*, and explaining they were trying to make money during the pandemic rather than money from working in jobs like retail or hospitality.

Another stakeholder we interviewed was overseeing a VAW Partnership across two local authorities. She explained the difficulties heightened during the pandemic for mainstream and specialist services to support women:

Firstly, connecting with the women involved. Women are probably more reluctant to come forward for help because of issues around the law. More unlikely to come forward to advice and help around their health. Maybe there's less availability for health services for those women, and less accessible than they were. In our areas women would have travelled into Edinburgh as not the same extent of services compared to in the city. They can't do that under travel restrictions.

All people we interviewed, working closely with women and at strategic levels, were concerned about the impact the pandemic would have on male behaviour in purchasing sex. One women's worker explained:

I think women's personal boundaries will lower, they will allow more to be done to them because they haven't been getting paid for a year. They will agree to doing things they wouldn't have done before. That frightens me, thinking about the women and the extra risk as things open back up. Men will know they can get away with more exploitation because they know that a woman hasn't been making money in such a long time.

Table 3.1: Results from Needs Surveys

<p>Women were asked what their most urgent need was at the start of the pandemic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36% of women stated MONEY • 23% of women stated MENTAL WELLBEING • 21% of women stated HOUSING • 16% of women stated SAFETY • 3% of women stated OTHER (including needing support in applying for benefits and support for drug use) • 1% of women stated SEXUAL HEALTH 	<p>Women were also asked what most urgent need was at this stage of the pandemic (November/December 2020):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 52% of women stated MONEY • 17% of women stated SAFETY • 15% of women stated MENTAL WELLBEING • 9% of women stated HOUSING • 6% of women stated SEXUAL HEALTH • 1% stated OTHER (including support with drug use)
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CLiCK carried out an initial needs assessment in two stages throughout the Covid 19 pandemic, using the service's online, anonymous survey platform. Women were asked questions about their needs at the start of the coronavirus pandemic, their needs now (November/December 2020), how they were feeling at the moment, and what they would like to see change at the service and government level to best meet women's rights and needs (see table 3.1).

Senior staff involved with CLiCK explained working in this environment can be demanding on women's workers' own health and wellbeing. During our period of evaluation, workers did not only adapt to Covid restrictions affecting the service but they took CLiCK work into their homes – their safe space. Due to concern for staff well-being contact was made with agencies to request clinical supervision. A clinical practitioner with experience and knowledge of CSE is not readily available so this took time to establish. CLiCK workers fully engaged and openly expressed their relief in the opportunity to debrief when this option became available to them. Senior staff explained this clinical supervision is beneficial not only during a pandemic, but to support in-depth work with women who have been exploited and are experiencing multiple barriers.

4. CLiCK's Service

The last section included key context for CLiCK's service design and delivery. This section of the evaluation describes the type of support CLiCK provided for women selling and exchanging sex. Support is broadly classed as:

- Emotional and practical through website, online chat, one to one support
- Making women's voices heard through the YourVoice project with produced resources such as podcasts and the CLiCK e-magazine (www.clickmagazine.online)
- Financial support, such as Encompass Fund, became part of the service due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Emotional and practical support

CLiCK provided emotional and practical support to women through online and offline methods:

- online chat
- online surgeries
- a helpline
- a resource hub
- CLiCK app
- one-to-one support
- counselling (not initially part of CLiCK service, but developed during the COVID-19 pandemic)

Online chat was available through the CLiCK website. The operating hours for the online chat were extended in response to feedback from women ("Your Voice" poll on CLiCK website). The chat times were adjusted throughout the programme, based on uptake patterns. The chat hours also changed over time. Initially it was 11-1pm on Mon, Tue, Thurs and Fri; as soon as lockdown started, this was extended to 24 hours per week on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday and included evening hours. From the winter of 2020, CLiCK reduced this again to Monday and Tuesday 12-4 as these were the busiest times and there was no uptake on other days in the week. In total, 18 women engaged through the chat.

In the VAWP focus group there was a discussion about whether an online medium of support is the best way to support women who are vulnerable and displaying complex needs. One women's

worker explained, *'you need to get them there and then'*. There was the sense that the online chat was not used more because it was impersonal. One woman giving her feedback through CLiCK's anonymous form during the pandemic, did explain: *'Drop in is so important. I understand that Scotland wide this might be difficult but we are missing seeing real people. I don't want everything online including my difficult life.'*

However, there was an appreciation by women's workers that online support might suit women selling and exchanging sex. One explained, *'the online forum provided anonymity for women and meant that you don't have to put yourself out there to get support.'*

During our interview with a specialist sexual health nurse she explained how important CLiCK's support had been for a number of women she saw at her clinic. One example she shared was:

A client from England came up to Scotland and the law, culture and trends, punters were different. Lots of things felt new, she linked with CLiCK and found them to be really helpful in terms of questions she had about the law, safety issues, geographical issues and other support groups around the area she could link in with. I don't think she accessed funding. She had been working during the pandemic, and Click was key for her to have a support network. I saw her every couple of months, sometimes more frequently than that. I was able to meet her sexual health needs and some emotional support. But Click were able to give her some more regular emotional approach. She had some tricky situations with gender based violence. She did get a lot of benefit from Click online and the chat.

Online webinars stopped at the end of March 2021 as there was not enough attendance.

A free helpline was also established, available 4 days a week and with the option to request a call back. CLiCK's partners and contacts were encouraged to promote the helpline through their networks from April 2020. In total 8 women phoned the helpline. As with the online chat, CLiCK staff were proactive in seeking feedback and improvement ideas. Women suggested more availability and increased operating hours:

- *"I have selected all times and days as my choice of answer, I'm not sure if this would be an option in reality but I think service users would benefit from a round the clock service/help line/support from you all at click but as I mentioned I don't know if this is possible."*

- *“There is no day of the week that is better than another, Things are changeable in this line of work and no two days are the same. We are led by the punters”*
- *“Evenings are best as my son is in bed, but for women still in the industry day times would be better so overall a combination of both”*

CLiCK provided one-to-one support, given by a trained local women’s worker via phone, text and WhatsApp. Before the Covid pandemic this was also provided face-to-face. Help and advice included completing Universal Credit applications, and help to access other services. In total, 64 referrals were made for one-to-one support to CLiCK women’s workers. These came from specialist support agencies referring women to CLiCK. The service gained a few self-referrals from July 2020 onwards. CLiCK’s Advisory Group discussed reasons for this during their meetings, including the time it takes to embed and promote services for this vulnerable group of women to trust and turn to for support.

CLiCK’s website⁴⁴ contained a resource hub, including up-to-date information on local support throughout Scotland including food banks, housing support and money advice (see figure 4.1). User statistics were collected throughout and discussed at Advisory Group meetings (see figure 4.2) An important design feature of the website was an escape button to the BBC news webpage. This is important for women who might be at risk by self-identifying their involvement in selling sex.

The CLiCK App was intended to duplicate the website itself and it offered the same functionality. It was also intended to include the ‘CLiCK access card’- this was a virtual card that said that if you show it to a health practitioner, they will understand that you sell or exchange sex and will tailor their response accordingly. Due to Covid, CLiCK were not able to test this out. The app had a total of 30 downloads for the duration of CLiCK, and most of those were CLiCK staff.

⁴⁴ <https://www.click.scot/>

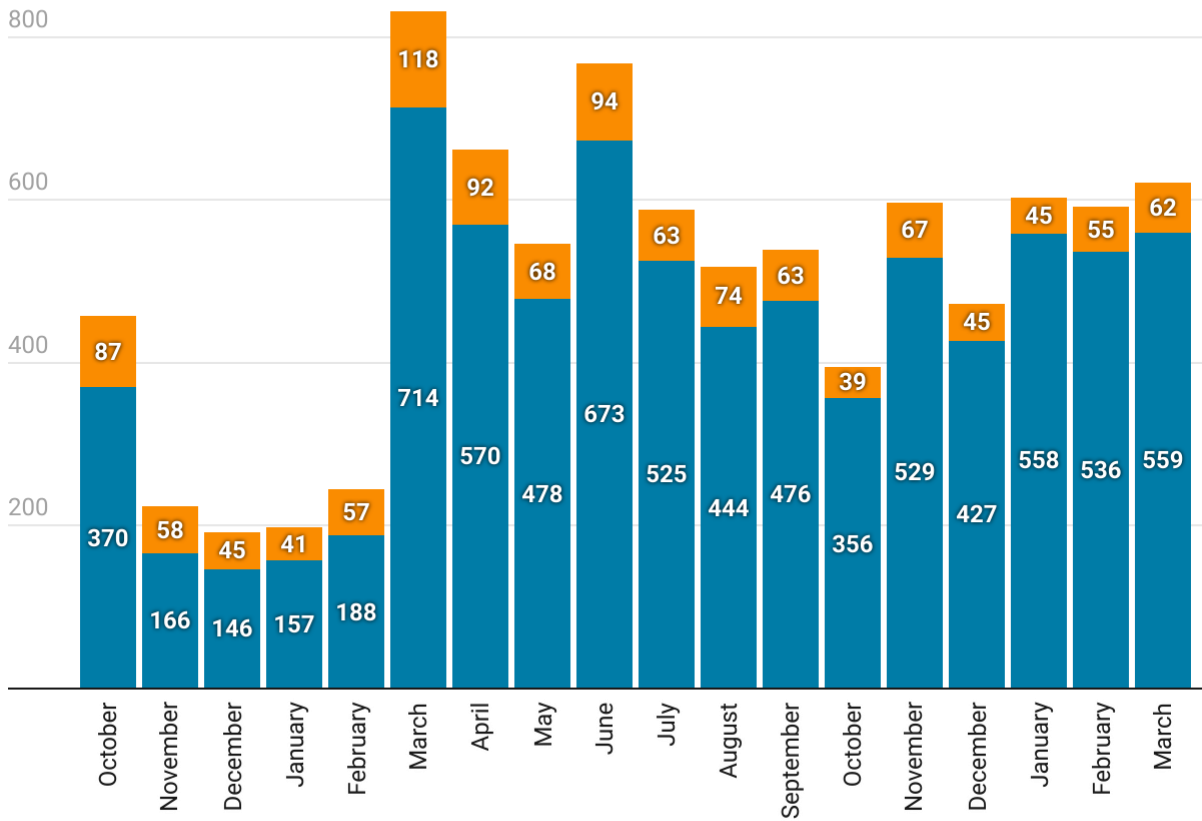
Figure 4.1: Screenshot of part of CLiCK homepage



Figure 4.2: User Statistics of CLiCK website Oct 2019–March 2021

Number of Users

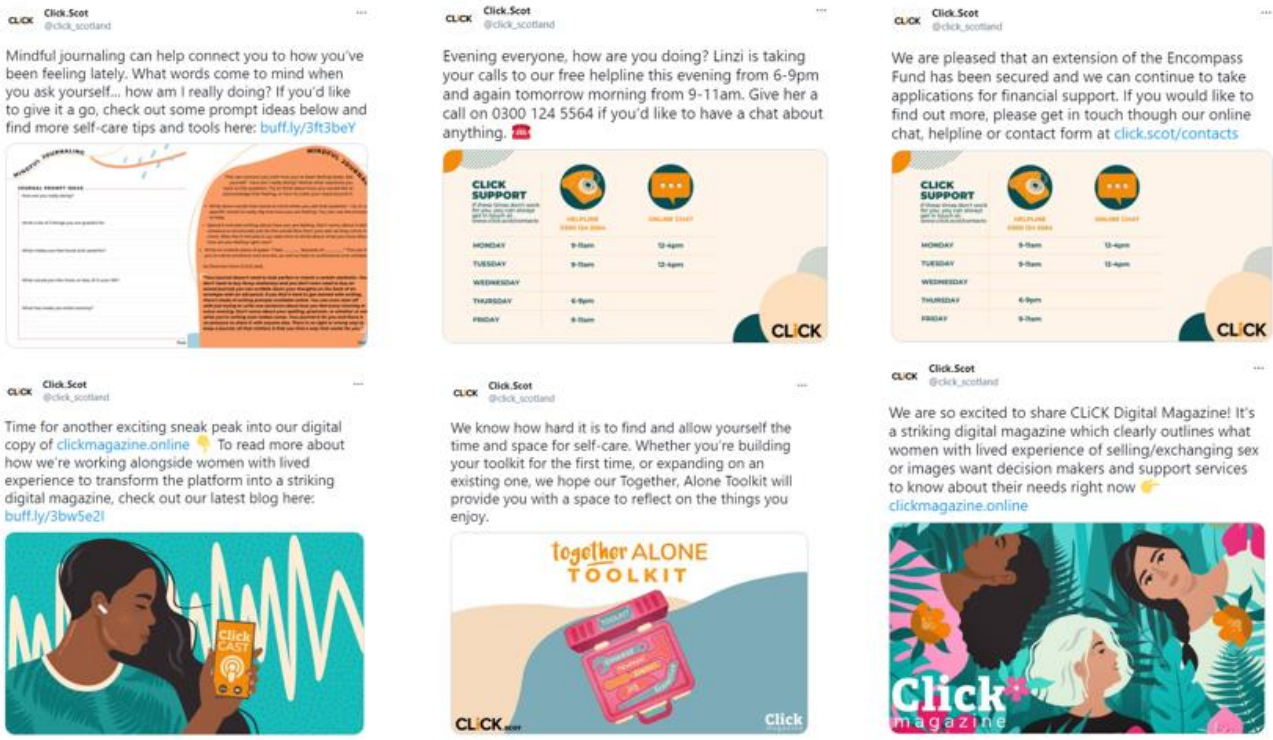
■ New User ■ Returning User



Created with Datawrapper

CLiCK staff were very active in utilising social media. They put call outs to encourage engagement in this way. The tone of social media communication was seen as very important, having an open, welcoming and encouraging presence. The basis was the idea of “women talking to women”. Posts included regular content with updates on the hotline and chat operating hours, and new content by women and for women (see figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Compilation of Twitter Posts by CLiCK



“16 days:16 voices” was a social media campaign focusing on women’s voices during the global campaign 16 Days of Action Against Gender Based Violence. CLiCK’s campaign included 1 quote/piece of creative work going out via social media per day, from the 25th November – 10th December 2020.

CLiCK did engage people on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook:

- Facebook followers steadily grew throughout the programme to 237 by March 2021
- Instagram with 218 posts, 100 followers and 129 following.
- Twitter followers steadily grew throughout the programme to 376 by March 2021

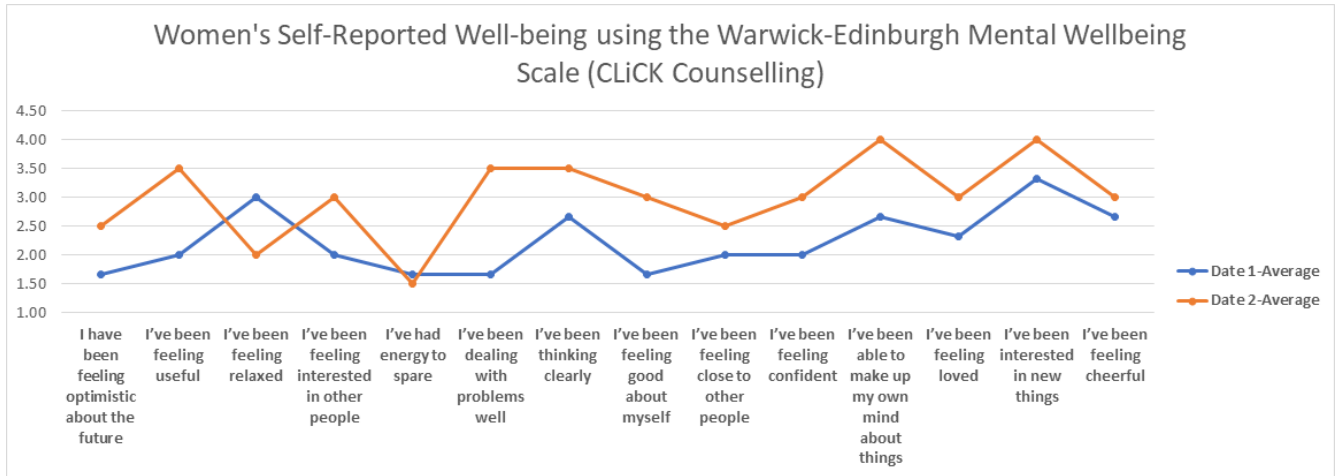
Due to women not wanting to identify themselves on public forum, it is thought that the number of official followers is lower than the number of women actually following CLiCK on these channels. One of the CLiCK staff explained:

It felt a little bit that we were shouting into the void at times with our communications. We know there are women that follow us without 'following us'- they tap in informally. So digital stats don't capture that.

CLiCK already had established a national service utilising many online methods before the pandemic. We interviewed a member of Police Scotland who explained the value of that:

We were trying to get a stay safe message out to women involved in prostitution at the start of the pandemic and CLiCK were really good at being able to disseminate that information through the contacts they had with women. Point making loud and clear was not about criminalising anyone but to keep safe and not do anything that's going to put you or families at risk.

Figure 4.4: Scores for CLiCK Counselling



CLiCK used some of the Encompass Fund to provide in-house short-term counselling to women who were struggling with their mental health during Covid 19. 10 sessions were made available for up to 15 women. Importantly, this provided counselling support very quickly as services and women had reported high thresholds and long waiting lists to access mental health support. For the small number of women taking part, promising results were found by CLiCK using the

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale- women reported improvement in 12/14 areas (see figure 4.4).

Making Women's Voices Heard

In our interviews, there was consensus around the importance of making women's voices heard. One senior health promotion specialist explained this was, *'a really valuable thing to do because it is a hidden population, very few outlets for people to make their voices heard. And shows a recognition that it is not a homogenous group. Working with women we have the dilemma of doing what we think is best as professionals, but we need to get their views.'*

One of CLiCK's staff members shared in their interview:

at the very beginning it was a challenge, because there wasn't a ready cohort of women ready to work with us and wanting to shape the service. We addressed by building networks with organisations especially specialist services working directly with women to generate referrals for the first year until there were women working directly with Click. Numbers were so small at first, but then started building up.

CLiCK's magazine was an online creative platform including four different features:⁴⁵

1. CLiCK Cast
2. RISE (see figure 4.5)
3. Together Alone- including a Tools and Tips section
4. Your Voice.

A CLiCK staff member explained: *'the magazine work was culmination of lots of ideas that we'd had before the pandemic-building up to make it something tangible.'* The staff team and CLiCK took steps to involve and include women with lived experience, not only in creating content, but in the editorial process and design decisions.

⁴⁵ <https://www.clickmagazine.online/>

Figure 4.5: Feature in CLiCK magazine on RISE



CLiCK Cast was a monthly podcast series which ran from June 2020 – December 2020. Each month, hosts Anna (CLiCK Development Worker) and Shannon (CLiCK Resource and Information Officer) heard from women with lived experience of selling or exchanging sex or images – as well as support services, MSPs, and campaigners – about women's needs during the coronavirus pandemic. Every episode was accompanied by comprehensive show notes. The podcast themes were based on the *Your Voice* poll looking at immediate needs (see section 4). The voices of consenting women with lived experience were included throughout through quotes, general discussion, discussion from workers from other services, submissions via RISE and indirect research.

CLiCK collected listener feedback, including:

- *“Really enjoyed this podcast! Very informative, accessible and easy to listen to. The presenters give a good overview of each topic and I also enjoyed hearing from the different guests – particularly service users. Highly recommend!”*
- *‘It’s really good love it! I’m totally happy with it’* (feedback from a woman with a quote in the podcast)

CLiCK’s staff tried different methods throughout the programme on making women’s voices heard. CLiCK also used the survey platform RISE to put out surveys on topics including money, online safety, mental wellbeing, housing, sexual health and needs assessment. There is a broad recognition of the need to acknowledge participants for their time and contribution to informing policy and service design and so CLiCK offered vouchers to the first 50 participants to a needs assessment survey with Encompass increasing this by another 30 vouchers. In total, the needs assessment survey gained 81 responses, and the other surveys gained ten responses in total.

Together Alone was a wellbeing-based arts project which aims to foster a sense of community and solidarity by building a self-care toolkit. The aim was to engage women with lived experience and help them become involved by creatively sharing what self-care means to them and what their needs and experiences were during the pandemic. This included creative masterclasses with an artist and a photographer. Workshop packs and copies of the masterclasses along with the materials needed to do them, as well as some additional items such as mindful colouring sheets and face masks were sent out to ten women. The final toolkit was launched in January 2021.⁴⁶

One of CLiCK’s staff members explained in their interview:

Together Alone was trying to move into a collective need around self-care- approaching issues more holistically. We were looking to change the focus, treating women as women with well-being needs and having a tangible outcome the women involved could be proud of. It was also important because a lot of the women say they want to help other women in the same situation, they want to empower themselves and other women. So Together Alone was a way of encouraging that.

⁴⁶ https://twitter.com/click_scotland/status/1352603757276782594

Your Voice was a space for women with lived experience to share thoughts, needs and stories, and also a creative platform, reflecting women's experiences and needs during the pandemic.⁴⁷ Some examples of pieces include poetry, a photography project and exploring ideas around self-care. These creative pieces discuss both positive and negative aspects of the experiences of women involved in selling or exchanging sex. Two different anonymous women shared some poems and short stories about their experience.

Your Voice involved direct methods of engaging with women:

- Callouts to women via social media, as well as speaking with women already linked in with Your Voice
- Using the Magazine to reach out to women and provide opportunities for their voices to be heard
- Call outs via established links with other agencies such as Encompass services including Sacro's Another Way and Vice Versa and with services such as the G3 Clinic

And indirect methods:

- Speaking with established networks (such as Encompass Network services providing direct support to women) to promote Your Voice involvement methods, keeping them up to date with the various opportunities to have women's voices heard
- Making links with other organisations as a way of raising awareness of the needs of women who sell or exchange sex and keeping them up to date with the various opportunities to have women's voices heard
- Connecting with women that WSP had previously engaged with other pieces of participatory work

CLiCK published a weekly blog to update on the project, as well as ensuring there was weekly relevant content going out on social media and on CLiCK Magazine. The blogs were designed to act as a companion to the other parts of Together Alone such as the masterclasses, providing a reflective space for workers and women to discuss self-care and provide additional support around doing masterclasses. Fifteen women engaged in pieces of work with Your Voice via CLiCK women's workers.

⁴⁷ <https://www.click.scot/voice/>

A survey for Women's Service Feedback was created which women's workers could complete with the women they are supporting, this collected eleven responses.

In our interviews feedback was asked for on the ways CLiCK shared voices of women through podcasts, magazines etc.. One stakeholder commented, *'I think they are good outlets and accessible and they are the best medium for giving that voice for women. I can't think of any better medium, it's the way things are in the world now.'*

Financial Support

CLiCK's Programme Manager explained to us that for women who sell or exchange sex, financial support is often their most urgent need. Since restrictions due to COVID-19, including lockdown, women's income is even more compromised. What is more, it can be difficult to work out the eligibility for financial support.

In March 2020, CLiCK put up advice on its website detailing UK government and local authority financial support eligibility.⁴⁸ CLiCK's response to Scottish Government's *Equally Safe* consultation explained:⁴⁹

UK and Scottish government schemes to support individuals' incomes have not adequately supported women in the online sex industry. As they are not formally employed, many women were unable to be furloughed, while the five-week wait for Universal Credit left many women destitute, or close to destitution. A small number of women who were registered self-employed had a positive experience with the self-employment support scheme, but most are not formally registered as self-employed due to the fear of stigmatisation and potential legal repercussions.

Since June 2020, women who sell or exchange sex could access two separate funds:

- 1) Victim Support Scotland's Victim Fund⁵⁰
- 2) The Encompass Fund.

⁴⁸ <https://www.click.scot/news/covid/covid-19-what-financial-support-can-i-access/>

⁴⁹ <https://consult.gov.scot/violence-against-women-team/equally-safe-reduce-harms-associated-prostitution/>

⁵⁰ <https://victimsupport.scot/victims-fund/>

The Victim Fund is administered through Victim Support Scotland (VSS) to offer crisis financial support to victims of crime. The WSP negotiated with VSS that women involved in selling or exchanging sex could have access to the VF without an incident number. Women selling/exchanging sex were eligible for the victim fund due to the Equally Safe definition of CSE as a form of VAW – they were therefore seen as victims of exploitation even when there was no incident number or Police Scotland involvement. Women can access assistance worth up to £3,000 for a wide range of goods and services where they have no other access to funds. Women can apply themselves, contact CLiCK women’s workers, or through other organisations like Umbrella Lane. CLiCK supported 15 women to apply for this fund. One of CLiCK Women’s workers described how women got access through CLiCK:

A woman got in touch as she was needing support with the cost of day-to-day living due to the impact of coronavirus. To help with energy costs, we applied to a local energy charity who were able to support the woman by quickly topping up both meters. To cover food costs, we discussed the Victim Fund together and decided to apply – the woman will now receive £300 worth of food vouchers.

The Encompass Fund was an investment of a total of £61,771 that has been awarded under the Scottish Government’s Immediate Priorities Fund and distributed by the Encompass Network.⁵¹ This fund aimed to offer destitution funds to women engaged in selling or exchanging sex in local areas during the Covid pandemic. Applications must be endorsed and submitted by a member of staff with an Encompass Network service. There is no expectation that women must continue to receive support via Encompass or that women will agree to exit in order to access this financial support, and this was noted in the CLiCK website.

In total, CLiCK processed 59 applications for the Encompass Fund. Women gave feedback, including:

- *“The fund really was a lifesaver for me... I didn’t feel judged”.*
- *“I have been so anxious, I had no idea how I was going to pay my gas and electric, I’ve been sat in the dark the last few days”*
- *‘It’s a shame we can’t get access to a fund like this all the time if we need it’*

We interviewed a specialist working with women with drugs addictions who had referred women to CLiCK for a combination of financial and emotional support:

⁵¹ <https://www.encompassnetwork.info/>

I think CLiCK has achieved more having the Encompass budget because who is going to put their hand up and say they've been selling sex. CLiCK's on Twitter, email, a website so that removes the need to disclose. The money has been the carrot to get women to engage and know the service providers... Yes I referred women I knew from my work in drugs recover to CLiCK to help them access the Encompass Fund.

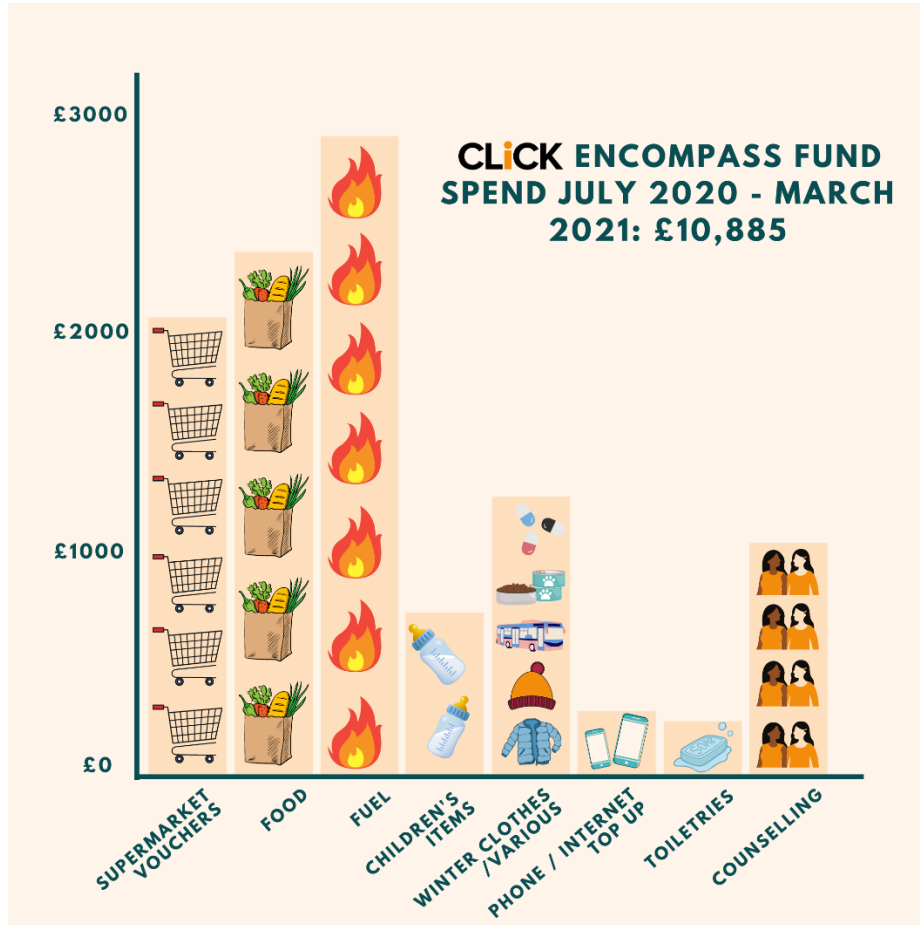
One woman got a cooker sorted. She's still not living the life of Riley, she's still in an abusive relationship. But getting money through CLiCK to sort her cooker was a bit of a catalyst to be honest, she'd never got real help financially before. Now she has cleared Hep C, sorted out some issues she had. It's a work in progress but she is now opening up to her social worker, she is making progress. To be honest it was the money CLiCK could give coupled with the emotional support they gave her, the follow up, having someone to speak to.

CLiCK helped another woman I knew through a support network who needed help. She got money to help her get a bed and a mattress in her house. She had abandoned her house and was hanging out with a friend and taking drugs with her and her friend's dad had her and her friend up on a sex site advertising threesomes. With the money to get a bed she moved back into her own house, she got away from her friend. She's now on medication and is very steady and engaged. She had that support from CLiCK and then the support from us to get the needles in her house disposed of. She has access to see her grandchildren again, she's getting her teeth fixed, she's dealing with her Hep C. She's on a very positive path. That money to get something small really made a difference, it unlocked a change in her life, a change she wanted to make.

The Encompass Fund was initially intended to run until the end of September 2020 with Encompass reallocating top-up funds to different network services dependent on the number of applications. This allowed CLiCK to support more women and it was also able to avail of an extension period until 31 December.⁵² For spending breakdown see figure 4.6.

⁵² <https://www.click.scot/news/blog/reflections-on-the-encompass-fund-so-far/>

Figure 4.6: Encompass Fund spending to March 2021



CLiCK found the barriers women had been experiencing to access financial support included:

- No fixed address
- Unable to disclose how they earned money
- Unable to disclose why they had no money
- Benefits claims being suspended/waiting for benefits to be processed
- No phone/internet access to apply for funding online
- Not knowing what organisations to approach, and other organisations' processes was too complicated/overwhelming
- Fear of social work involvement



- One woman turned down by Scottish Welfare Fund even though she only applies once in the year.
- Universal credit not processed on time.
- Not knowing how to apply
- No bank account/bank card

5. CLiCK's Outcomes

The last section focussed in on the detail of the support CLiCK provided. It is clear from the previous section that a small team has created, coordinated and adapted different types of support for women. All support methods have involved coordination and partnership working, many have been innovative and new for supporting women and there is valuable learning from all the different aspects of support.

This section considers CLiCK's overall achievements, including in connection with the programme's aims and service level milestones. Following these findings, we include some examples of strategic and policy involvement by CLiCK and spotlight an example of CLiCK's activity with particular learning and relevance for future programming.

Whilst reading any statistics and narrative about CLiCK it should be borne in mind that CLiCK only had two years to establish, coordinate and deliver its activity. Putting that in perspective, earlier research working with women selling and exchanging sex on-street found that 'it takes two years of consistent support to build a healthy level of trust. This is especially true where women have experiences of class A drugs, homelessness and historic experiences of transient support workers.'⁵³

Overall Achievement of Aims

The initial aims of CLiCK, were to:

1. improve access to information and the availability of local support.
2. improve access to specialist and mainstream services.
3. increase levels of safety and wellbeing for women involved in selling/exchanging sex online.
4. capture the voices and experiences of women selling sex online to help shape service development.

Quotes from evaluation interviews support achievement towards initial aims (see table 5.1).

⁵³ <https://beyondthestreets.org.uk/one-year-nine-lessons-learnt-launching-door-hopes-daytime-support-project/>

Table 5.1: Quotes supporting delivery of Outcomes

Improve access to information and the availability of local support
Specialist sexual health nurse: <i>'the only pathway I know about it to my service. it's robust and well built into their website. we ensure we are sharing up to date information. And during the pandemic services did change, they didn't stop, but anyone in a vulnerable group would still get access to services in lockdown and there have been a lot of changes and Click have always been looking for regular updates.'</i>
Improve access to specialist and mainstream services
Strategic level stakeholder: <i>idea of a national service was useful, not necessarily an easy one as always localised issues, but right as patchy service and specialist support concentrating in cities.</i> CLiCK staff member: <i>'CLiCK will have done that, make workers in other services think. And there are loads of different types of women who do it. Not stereotypical women who are into substance abuse, it's a whole spectrum of women in different situations. And if there is one thing that CLiCK will have done very well it is raise awareness amongst mainstream services, support services. We were constantly networking with them and making connections. Services that were quite willing to talk about it and were aware of it were addiction services, sexual health and employment services.'</i>
Increase levels of safety and wellbeing for women involved in selling/exchanging sex online
A specialist sexual health nurse: <i>'I think this is where CLiCK have been key, not just in providing the service but raising awareness of the issue with other organisations. I've had lots of experiences of talking to people involved directly through the clinic. But CLiCK give that wider context and expertise to anyone from any service dealing directly with women. It raised the profile within our service, and helped us to think about how to adapt our services. Awareness that in lots of ways it can reduce STI risk, but there is a fine line between cross over online and offline. The online experience can shift over to face to face experience, so I think it has helped us to think about that risk as well and providing information and building in risk reduction and safety strategies.'</i>
Capture the voices and experiences of women selling sex online to help shape service development
Health Improvement manager: <i>My reflections are as a team they are hugely committed to understanding and supporting women to have their voice heard. that is their driving principle. It's got a weight to it to ensure it is heard within the context of a much broader agenda. My</i>

observation is that they have that because of the work of the partnership more broadly and they provide access to information and they have a very accessible website.

Service Level Milestones

At the design stage of CLiCK, service level milestones were created for 1-year and 2-year points of the service; these correspond with October 2020 and October 2021 periods.

In practice these milestones were ambitious, and inappropriate for a service setting itself up from scratch. Awareness raising of CLiCK to other organisations and groups was a huge task for staff based across the country. Before CLiCK partners could promote its service and benefits, they had to raise awareness, knowledge and advise on Violence Against Women and Girls, Child Sexual Exploitation and safeguarding. As CLiCK was building momentum, and generating referrals through other organisations, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. This unprecedented situation undoubtedly affected the service, and the work of other organisation to refer women to CLiCK.

CLiCK progressed towards:

- Signposting women to/ making women aware of local services. This was largely through CLiCK's digital resources, where local information was always kept up to date, and through CLiCK's staff in their interaction with women. The ambition was for over a 2 year period 1,000 women to benefit in this way, with an additional 200 through the online chat. It is not possible to establish how many women acted on information CLiCK made available to them.
- Referring women to specialist prostitution support services (target 200 over 2 years) and to specialist sexual health services per annum (target 150 over the 2-year period). This target was significantly hindered by the series of Scottish lockdowns during which many services had to operate remotely or to close their drop-in centres where women would normally access support.
- Women reporting decreased involvement, or completely exiting prostitution (target of 40 women over 2 years). Women reporting increased mental wellbeing per annum (target of 80 over 2-year period). CLiCK staff attempted to capture this information from women they interacted with. Staff used the Empowerment Star™ to gather information on progress made between any interactions. However, this was dependent upon women recontacting CLiCK, which only happened on an occasional basis.

- Women signing up to “National Ugly Mugs” third party reporting site (target of 150 over 2-year period). CLiCK promoted this reporting site to women they interacted with through digital and directly. It is not possible to ascertain the numbers who signed up to NUM as a result of CLiCK.
- Women engaging with service user involvement group and participatory action research (target to engage 15 women for each). Women were included in these developments, but not as many women as initially planned before the pandemic.

On reflection, these service level milestones were set on unrealistic expectations. The volume of women engaged in elements of the overall programme was small. Referrals to CLiCK were low in number and the programme cannot evidence the signposting, outwards referrals or activity as a result of CLiCK. The Advisory Group discussed many reasons for low up take, these are contextualised in section 3 and expanded upon in section 6.

Strategic Level Activity

CLiCK submitted a partnership response to the Scottish Government’s consultation on Equally Safe in December 2020.⁵⁴ This was ‘A consultation on challenging men’s demand for prostitution, working to reduce the harms associated with prostitution and helping women to exit’.

CLiCK were involved in COSLA’s Short Term CSE Multi Agency Working Group. One interviewee explained:

Click were very involved in that short term group. What was brilliant was we were able to engage further with elected members. We developed a closed event during 16 days. We have now a range of views, directions and priorities vocalised by elected members. That’s a level of engagement between local government and CSE I’ve not seen before. Building momentum and building ongoing active engagement. So Click’s engagement with local government is quite profound. Pandemic was the catalyst for this. Domestic abuse was a key issue, but all forms of violence against women and girls are interrelated and you can’t create forced walls. Women have range of experiences of different forms of male violence and control. It was great we were able to keep minds open to that. having experts I can turn to really quickly

⁵⁴ <https://consult.gov.scot/violence-against-women-team/equally-safe-reduce-harms-associated-prostitution/>

who can flexibly support my knowledge, and in climate where things changing every 3 mins, was really valuable.

The Inclusion Health Group was established by Public Health Scotland during the pandemic to look at mitigating the non-viral impact of Covid 19 for marginalised communities. A closely involved figure described the value of CLiCK's input:

We wanted to include strong voice for women. And we were conscious of pandemic accelerating trends in terms of online activity and then impacts on groups that are already very valuable. They have been heavily involved in us planning the research so that the way we research, and the ethics application were all in place. We were thinking about ways to include women, questions that are appropriate and meaningful, and then thinking about support we can give women on ongoing basis outwith the research interviews...We recognised that for reaching this cohort it is hugely sensitive and concerns around confidentiality and stigma are huge barriers. We recognised Anna could build trust and a positive relationship. The research that we planned, PHS leading and funding, but has a partnership approach from very beginning. Involved CLiCK from early stage. We haven't funded CLiCK in any way, they are partners. The role of CLiCK as a bridge, in that they have these different audiences, that's their strength. They have got a route to influencing policy makers, relationships through the Encompass Networks. But that is founded on the fact that they provide support to women and provide them with opportunity to have their voice heard. I can see such value in that. And that's something that isn't replicated elsewhere. We have been able to strengthen the voice of women in our policy work and we can only do that because of CLiCK.

Spotlight on Tacking Misuse of Images Online

Misuse of sexual images of women who sell or exchange sexual content via webcamming and private gallery platforms is a growing concern for women.

- This work was initially started by the CLiCK Resource and Information Officer who first identified a gap in the existing misuse of sexual images legislation in Scotland. The CLiCK Development Worker, the WSP and the Encompass Network, and a number of other key partners have been fundamental in raising awareness of this issue and pushing for tangible change to protect women and their content.

- CLiCK was amongst the first agencies to develop and share information for staff across the sectors via its newsletter and linked with The Revenge Porn Helpline, Citizens Advice Service and Scottish Women's Rights Centre to look at advice, information and legal gaps.
- The work of CLiCK shaped information on the issue which was then shared by WSP with key strategic forums such as the Multi Agency Group on CSE and the Justice Victims Group through the Justice Department.
- CLiCK supported The Encompass Network in organising a webinar for staff across the sectors to update and inform them of this emerging trend and safety concerns. The Encompass Network further developed this work
- CLiCK covered this issue extensively in a podcast and in the accompanying show notes which are a resource for women and workers.
- CLiCK benefitted from the input and lead of partner organisations to address this area, and this is an important area to build upon in future provision beyond CLiCK.

6. Thematic Findings

The last two sections of this report concentrated on CLiCK's activities and outcomes. With CLiCK coming to a close at the end of May 2021 it is also important to present findings to encourage transferrable learning to future partnership activity.

From our analysis we have identified four main themes:

- Designing and operating a layered and blended model
- Coordination and progress through a multi-agency approach
- Addressing operational challenges
- Working within a pressurised climate

We recommend that these findings are taken into consideration for future programming in Scotland and beyond to support women selling and exchanging sex online.

Layered and Blended Model

- CLiCK included many different ways to provide information, support and a voice to women across Scotland. A layered and blended model of support was essential.
- Interviews revealed an appetite for digital resources to help women: *'if people are 'working online' for all sorts of things, we are going to see more support for people online. Because of the pandemic I do a lot more work online than ever done so online support is ideal. I think we are going to change in many ways as a result of the pandemic and CLiCK could almost see into the future, saying we need an online response and then the pandemic came along. So I think definitely it should continue.'*
- Despite initial scepticism amongst women's workers in online methods such as online chat, there was increasing understanding of how offering this option could be beneficial to engagement: *'an opportunity for women to be anonymous, but still engage. That's very useful. Because of stigma, and all the issues that stop women coming forward-embarrassed, ashamed, fearful they are breaking the law.'*
- People working with CLiCK from within mainstream and specialist support services were especially interested in learning how to engage young people: *'Digital has that wider appeal and as long as you have data, you can access wherever you live in Scotland.'*

Particularly with younger women, and that's a group we are quite concerned about, there are dangerous online platforms. CLiCK uses its platform in a positive way.'

- It should be remembered that even when CLiCK was using digital methods, real people with expertise were shaping and delivering these different options for women to engage. CLiCK did not set up chatbots, it offered interaction with a real support worker through whichever form was the preference of the woman contacting CLiCK.
- CLiCK offered and adapted services that were not digitally based, such as support in person and on phone. Some women were provided with counselling through the Encompass Fund. Therefore, the model of support was blended and not limited to online support.
- From the range of digital activity developed, CLiCK's approach was already innovative. All of CLiCK's partners had to adapt services during the global pandemic, putting the needs of women first. Therefore, some aspects of CLiCK were not planned at the outset or featured in original outcomes and milestones.
- CLiCK staff did play a part in providing crisis support for women during the pandemic, including access to the Encompass Fund. The fund was another important layer of support within the CLiCK service. CLiCK partners reflect that a pot of money to provide support for women would have been beneficial regardless of the pandemic. We found evidence that a small payment for an item essential or important to a woman can start a connection and start a path towards trust building and access to support services. One of CLiCK's staff reflected: *'to me CLiCK was about harm reduction and safety. If being able to provide women with money, regardless of Covid, that would be a harm reduction technique.'*
- CLiCK designed and adapted its model at fast pace and under changing conditions. Efforts were made by a small staff team to involve women's voices in service design and all resources. We interviewed an expert in human rights and participation about CLiCK: *'the participatory strength of the work through CLiCK is something I really admire. I understand the ethical and emotional challenges for women to be able to participate. The understanding, consideration and ethics that have gone into the opportunities being created and supporting women to have their experiences valued and seen as central is fabulous. Fabulous and very sensitive. I really think it's incredibly valuable they are doing that.'*
- Another stakeholder commented: *'Fundamentally CLiCK's about the provision of knowledge, support and respect and that shines out about it.'*

Multi-agency Approach

- CLiCK's partners took formative evaluation feedback on board to try and improve the coordination of organisations.
- In our earlier interviews, CLiCK was broadly criticised for being structured hierarchically. Particular managers were commended by CLiCK women's workers for taking an active role in the partnership and passing on their experiences and suggestions for improving the service. However, CLiCK staff we spoke to did not feel there was a uniform approach by managers working within different organisations.
- People we interviewed who were not part of the partnership directly had a very favourable attitude towards CLiCK's multi-agency approach. This included people who had worked with one of CLiCK's partners in the past, and then engaged with CLiCK.
- However, people we interviewed who were closer to CLiCK and involved in its operations were more aware with challenges in partnership working.
- One of the reflections shared was an initial resource gap, when the person leading the successful funding application for CLiCK did not continue on to lead the service.
- Another reflection was that Sacro were officially the lead partners and funding was routed through Sacro. At the same time, it was intended that all partners jointly lead the project. This was described as a 'tricky balance'.
- Amongst partners we spoke to it was felt that with its criminal justice background Sacro was not as equipped to lead this project in practice as organisations with more specialism within VAW. Furthermore, there was the anxiety that Sacro's official lead, 'could have given the wrong impression to women, there's a real fear from women for being seen within criminal justice.' Even within the partnership itself, some ideological differences were present: *'There is an issue around the different responses embedded in feminist understanding and justice responses, that aren't informed by feminist understanding and analysis.'*
- Despite criticism of Sacro and the initial partnership set up, CLiCK staff (employed by Sacro) were credited for listening, drawing on expertise and developing the approach to partnership working. Towards the end of the service, partners coordinated efforts to wind down CLiCK in the best way possible to ensure cases were transferred appropriately and resources could be turned into legacy materials.
- Our interviews raised that the circumstances of the pandemic were another factor affecting partnership working: *'we are only as effective as our engagement with other agencies, we only do what we do based on what we see. Our support for women becomes more tailored and focussed the more insight we have. Those kind of*

relationships where we can benefit from knowledge sharing haven't really been able to flourish during the pandemic. They started to develop, then the pandemic hit and everyone was firefighting. Therefore, it's a shame if those can't be picked up afterwards through CLiCK.'

- We found that there was agreement with a multi-agency approach at national levels in Scotland was essential to dovetail support, identify and fill gaps in provision and create a strategic overview. One interviewee explained: *'CLiCK included a lot of the partners around the table we engage with anyway, the likes of the Womens' Support Network. We engage with the different agencies. So it consolidates single agencies and multi-agency forums. I think it works well. Where you have a multi-organisational partnership programme with a specific focus it harnesses agencies involved. That's a benefit, because there's nothing else like it in Scotland. For a nation of our size and with the issues that we have with prostitution it makes sense to have a group like that.'*
- A representative from National Ugly Mugs explained: *'There's not enough resources for sex workers, so any resources available do add value. Partnership projects have real value as you have really clear pathways between services and different expertise. You can develop over time. Signposting can't be cyclical, responsibility of services to create clear online pathways. Need to make the user journey really easy. I do agree with the partnership model, that's brilliant.'*

Operational Challenges

- Women's workers explained that the CLiCK service did not feel cohesive from the start, owing to the difficulty of maintaining good communication with the different partners, especially given that those are scattered geographically across Scotland,
- Specifically, communication about CLiCK amongst staff employed by different partners needed improvement. At the start, information on what the programme was doing, how it was operating and progress was done via a generic email which was seen as very impersonal. No personal contact was a concern, especially for those not in Edinburgh. Although this improved, staff felt this should have been built in from the start of a multi-agency programme.
- There was a feeling by staff that CLiCK was slow in taking off and getting referrals and self-referrals from women. Staff explained how in previous roles they had been used to higher case loads and really enjoyed direct interaction with women in their day to day job. One

staff member who left in summer 2020 reflected that one of the reasons was: *'Really, really limited numbers. The role was very much more networking and learning and development as a worker, not really supporting women. I didn't expect that. I didn't think it would be that small. I thought at least a constant case load of about 10 at least, but that was never the case.'*

- One of our interviews touched upon how even more resource should have gone into promoting CLiCK's resources online: *'it needs to be known and promoted on as many platforms as possible. And finding where these women are, online and being as visible and as present as possible. So people who would need the service are aware of that.'*
- The number of women engaged was monitored by CLiCK and discussed at Advisory Group meetings. Low numbers can be explained by CLiCK being a new service with a new brand, trust had to be earned and a reputation built for numbers to pick up. Engagement numbers were building the longer the programme went on.
- In our interviews we worked to unpick the reasons for low numbers, these included- the time it takes to make a service widely known, the barriers women experience to access services, the time it takes to build up trust and the complications of women being warned against using CLiCK services because of its affiliation with VAW and associations with exiting. One of our interviewees explained: *It's really hard for a woman to break the mould and come to us if she has been put off it by her peers.*
- CLiCK's employees we spoke to felt that there was a rise in numbers due to the pandemic and the financial crisis support. One of CLiCK's workers explained: *'This is awful but because the pandemic had a positive impact on CLiCK because the women were in such dire straits they completely disregarded the difficulties we had had because there was tensions between violence against women and it's a women's choice. The fact that women were desperate for money was the only thing that brought them in.'*
- CLiCK put a lot of work into developing online resources, but again there was reflection that numbers of views could have been increased with more signposting, promotion and communications planning. One interviewee pointed out: *'It's okay developing resources and landing them on a website, but that's just part of the project. You have to build it and then deliver it. I'm not sure if it is being delivered or not. Only positive outcomes count, not the resource itself. I don't know who has picked them up or whether they just sit*

somewhere. The only way to find out if all the activity is worth it is to ask sex workers what their experience is.'

- CLiCK tried different ways to engage women in service design, interviewees pointed out the benefits of pushing this even further within support service design: *'involve them, let them test it, let them grow it. As a professional we do our best as professionals, but we can walk away from it. They should be so embedded into anything that is created for them.'*

Pressurised Climate

- Some groups have been hostile towards CLiCK since before the inception of the service. CLiCK faced huge challenges to counter misinformation given directly to women with whom CLiCK aims to engage. Pro sex-work organisations and lobby groups have been vocal against CLiCK in the public domain.⁵⁵ Examples include articles in *The Herald* and *The National* criticising the funding of CLiCK as soon as it was publicly announced.⁵⁶
- Partners involved in setting up CLiCK organised informal meetings with sex worker-led organisations. However, an employee of Ugly Mugs gave their overview: *'Women were asking us 'why have they got this funding and how can we trust these people?' It's the same with policing, even if it has improved ten years later, people still have that reputation in their head for reporting a rape to them in the past and it not being considered a crime. There was confusion as to why CLiCK's partners got that pot of money when it could have gone to sex-worker led, online peer support groups. Those had actually been set up to fill the gap in emotional and practical support when mainstream and specialist services weren't considering online, and weren't including all women, regardless of their views on exiting. CLiCK had been misrepresented in the media too, even though it wasn't the case that they were just using all their money to build an app that rumour was circulating, and there was a lot of anger from sex workers stirred up.... It was really good because even though we were having those challenges they were really open to meeting with us. We could pass on concerns. It was what it was.'*
- In their interview, a staff member gave an example of how CLiCK was blocked from promoting its services on an online chat for women: *'There was a thread online for women, they use as a chat site and CLiCK obviously posted on that to reach out to*

⁵⁵ <https://scot-pep.org.uk/about/>

⁵⁶ <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/17535190.1m-backing-project-help-scotlands-1500-online-sex-workers/>
<https://www.thenational.scot/news/17543019.true-purpose-1m-app-sex-workers/>

women. And then we were backed into a corner through that chat, the organisers wanted to know what side of the debate we were on. CLiCK tried to say it didn't matter. But we got backed into a corner so much that we had to say we were Violence Against Women based. We got kicked out as a result.'

- Another member of staff explained the fall-out from being excluded and labelled on the basis of CLiCK's VAW basis: *'there was constant fear hanging over us. We were under enormous scrutiny, not a healthy scrutiny. It felt like groups were waiting for us to put a foot wrong. Sometimes this ideological debate feels like you are walking on eggshells and put out a resource that might cause an argument, a tweet that might be taken the wrong way. So we keep quiet. We need to be more confident and less scared going forward to do that. We need to speak out about the service and publicly challenge the lies and the rumours... We need a strong comms strategy and positioning that comes across more strongly to women. Like the organisations like Umbrella Lane do. We can actually learn from them, they are polished. We might not agree with them, but they connect with the women and they have a strong online presence.'*
- Stakeholders were conscious of CLiCK operating in this environment. One shared: *'CLiCK has got to walk a tightrope there between agencies that want support in the legitimisation of the sex industry and legalisation, and those who very much see it as abuse, exploitation, a result of gender inequalities. So they kind of made us consider that, and reminded us that not everyone shares the same opinion as you.'*
- CLiCK staff working at local levels, remarked that at management level CLiCK had a strong ideological VAW stance. However, Women's Workers explained their focus was on the safety and wellbeing of women they helped. In general, they saw themselves and their role as 'neutral' or part of a 'harm reduction service'. They felt that the clear ideological standpoint was affecting the service, including limiting some initiatives by women's workers and polarising the agencies involved in supporting women, coming from different standpoints.
- Another contributor to a pressurised environment, and referrals was the length of the funding cycle. One partner commented about the CLiCK team: *'What they are doing is based on such a fragile, temporary funding arrangement. And what they have is a lot of pressure to deliver as much as they can within such a short length of time. A lot of what we want to do has been impacted on that uncertainty of not knowing what that future funding will be like. That's the one barrier we have. What's the point in promoting something to vulnerable women that is likely to end?'*
- One of our interviewees gave a summary of the funding climate supporting Equally Safe: *'what you get is a muddled mixture of direct funding to key services nationally, some*



direct funding to key funding locally, and a huge range of convoluted funding streams that might feed into Equally Safe but are not always funded on the same outcomes...In such a financially challenging environment, new and innovative is not the highest priority, unless it doesn't cost anything of course.'

7. Recommendations for future programming

Interventions to Reduce Harm for Women Selling and Exchanging Sex Online

There are overlaps between women selling and exchanging sex online and in person, especially because the adoption of online tools to promote and arrange the sale of sex are prevalent. At the same time, women in the online sex industry are very much a 'hidden' demographic with distinct needs which differ from the needs of women who sell/exchange sex on-street.

Specialist online support services specific to women selling/exchanging sex online, as developed during the delivery of CLiCK, can be extremely effective in supporting women. This change allowed the service additional flexibility for women to access support as, when, and where they need it. CLiCK included a blended and layered model of different support options and was involved in distributing crisis funding and counselling through the Encompass Fund.

Women who have taken part in selling and exchanging sex online are likely to require legal support with exiting to allow them to access alternative employment opportunities, for example, help to erase their digital footprint or to file requests for the removal of their private content online.

Harm reduction in an online context includes all types of harm affecting women in other areas within the sex industry, as well as specific support to report online abuse and harassment, and to seek legal advice and support following online crimes such as doxing, harassment, online abuse and stalking.

For the needs of women selling or exchanging sex online to be adequately addressed:

- 1. A harm reduction approach for women selling/exchanging sex online needs to respond to their specific needs.**
- 2. Effective support and interventions need to be broadly and extensively available both in the online world and the 'real' world.**
- 3. Any support provision should consider the complex needs of women involved in selling and exchanging sex and take a "whole person" approach.**

4. Future programming should develop CLiCK's digital methods further to counter barriers of engagement through face-to-face appointments and disclosure of involvement in selling and exchanging sex.
5. It is vital that services are proactive and confident in both discussing involvement in the online sex industry with women, but are also prepared to offer short, medium and long-term support.
6. Those charities and groups which include support to help women exit, need to be prepared to support women to exit online selling and exchanging of sex accordingly.
7. Beyond the pandemic, funding is needed to adequately support women in financial crisis, but also to prevent women seeing online selling and exchanging sex as their only way out of financial difficulties.
8. A universal understanding between services of all ideological standpoints and the public is essential with regards to privacy, healthy relationships, respect and consent and the repercussions of uploading and sharing intimate images.
9. Policy and legislation need to be updated on an ongoing basis to respond to the trends in online selling and exchanging of sex.

Steps to Equip Violence Against Women and Girls Practitioners

It is important to treat women as experts in their own experience. CLiCK has made strides in this through making women's voices heard.

CLiCK's evaluation highlighted the tensions between groups seeing selling and exchanging sex as exploitation and groups seeing this as choice. 'There was negative press focusing on CLiCK's VAWG interpretation of selling/exchanging sex online. A learning from CLiCK is how this critical environment creates another barrier for women to access services which could benefit their safety and wellbeing whilst selling and exchanging sex.

The reaction to CLiCK's service in the online sphere was very challenging from the offset. This needs to be considered by any future national programme focussing on selling and exchanging sex online operating within a VAWG framework.

CLiCK staff shared how the impact of criticism on social media and through the press affected their day-to-day service delivery. Staff were scared to put a foot wrong in the online environment. CLiCK's evaluation showed just how crucial a strong and adaptable communications strategy is to accompany any innovative service provision.

For VAWG practitioners to reach more women:

- 1. Best practice participatory research and design within services should be encouraged, taking on board learning from previous work to ensure that a range of voices are included, and women are compensated for their input.**
- 2. Staff employed by organisations delivering services within a VAWG framework need to be equipped and supported to deal with online criticism by vocal opponents regarding selling and exchanging sex as a women's right to choose.**
- 3. All staff supporting women selling and exchanging sex online should be given information on challenges at recruitment, provided with training and appropriate supervision in post, including clinical supervision where available.**
- 4. Resources must be allocated to managing social media and responding to comments and correcting misinformation, along with proactive work to communicate the service offer and the benefits it can bring.**
- 5. All organisations should discourage communications that may lead to women feeling intimidated and unable to take up support from a service because of its affiliation.**

Designing, Resourcing, Delivering and Improving Services for Women across Scotland

Creating any new service across partners on a national-level and on a topic with stigma and different viewpoints and supporting women who can be hard to reach will be slow to take off.

CLiCK designed, developed and adapted services in a short period of time. This included creating a new brand, with new web domains.

CLiCK, as a specialist service, recognised that no single agency or service can address all of the needs of each individual woman. Indeed, CLiCK involved national partner coordination dovetailing to services with regional and local provision. Although a national service, many workers under CLiCK were working within a geographic region. All encountered different set ups, organisations and service level provision for women selling and exchanging sex.

This evaluation found an appetite and appreciate from mainstream and specialist service providers to understand online selling and exchanging sex, especially the experiences and needs identified by women involved.

For services across Scotland to have a sustained impact in line with national strategies:

- 1. All parties should recognise any new service model takes time to embed before it can be widely known and generating referrals from other agencies and self-referrals.**
- 2. Branding, naming and search engine optimisation must be considered carefully so that women can find online resources easily as the name, service and reputation of a service becomes established.**
- 3. All specialist services need to be prepared to act as key contact point for individual women, but also to support them to access additional services better able to respond to additional needs such as financial assistance, housing, sexual health and mental health services, employability, skills development, and legal advice.**
- 4. When bringing together people at a national level, ensure there is tailoring for local context and local autonomy to deliver towards programme goals.**

5. **Need for national-level thinking and action to alleviate geographical inequalities in accessing services and for a joined-up approach that applies to all areas unilaterally.**
6. **Longer-term, sustainable funding models are required across VAWG services and projects.**

We conclude this evaluation report with an insight from our qualitative data:

'More resources and funding is something everyone always asks for. But something key if we really care about this group in Scotland is that we resource services properly'

Appendix A: Discussion Guide 2019

**SACRO, Click Evaluation
Research among Partners;
Focus Group Discussion Guide
November 2019**

Introductions (5 mins)

Introduce self and Mark Diffley Consultancy and Research

Introduce the research: Mark Diffley Consultancy and Research, the independent research company has been commissioned by SACRO to undertake an independent evaluation of Click.

Click is a partnership of Scottish services, working together to improve the provision and accessibility of frontline support services for women involved in selling or exchanging sex or sexual activity online. The service operates within a Violence Against Women Framework.

The evaluation will run until March 2021 during which services will be provided to women involved in online prostitution, as part of the Click partnership. To assist with the evaluation, we want to engage with a range of stakeholders who can comment on the existing landscape of specialist support services available for women involved in prostitution and provide an overview of how CLiCK *may* enhance current approaches and models of service provision in Scotland. This is the preliminary discussion with partners, and we are looking to engage with partners at an operational level, later in the course of the evaluation, once the model has become more embedded.

These discussions are a key aspect of the evaluation and will be synthesised alongside evidence from direct engagement with women, anonymised data collected through the website in the form of polls and feedback along with monitoring and evaluation data in relation to one-to-one support outcomes for women.

- Explain the conversation will last up to 1.5 hour in length.

- Explain that key messages will be reported back to SACRO as part of the interim monitoring reports for the evaluation – no identifiable details about partners involved will be shared with SACRO
- Stress fully anonymous and confidential; Mark Diffley Consultancy and Research abide by the Market Research Society Code of Practice and the SRA Ethical Guidelines.
- No right or wrong answers.
- Request permission to record interview.

Do you have any questions you would like to ask before we start?

About respondents:

Perhaps before we begin you could tell me a little about yourself, including your role within the local VAW Partnership and your/your organisations' work with supporting women involved in prostitution.

Start recording after introductions.

General perceptions of specialist support services (25 mins)

From your perspective, what constitutes a “specialist support service” for women involved in prostitution?

Flipchart responses to arrive at a shared definition

What types of specialist support services are available in your area? *Probe:* statutory services, other services where funding has become available?

Is there a specific type of service that is over/under-represented in your area?

Have you observed any differences in terms of specialist support services operating with the single focus of supporting women involved in prostitution compared with organisations with a broader remit that offer a support service for women within their suite of services?

In your experience are there specific types of services that women are more/less likely to engage with?

Are there any aspects of service provision which are particularly constrained in terms of what you can offer to women? Are you able to identify the key determinants of this e.g. is this related to funding, capacity or something more broadly about the service design?

How would you describe the partnership approach in the delivery of frontline services for women involved in prostitution in your area?

How is this implemented and shared beyond the VAW partnership meetings?

Are there any particular challenges around partnership working? *Probe:* in terms of referrals and working with the police in off-street prostitution cases? What is your approach to sharing information?

What outcomes or tools, if any, do you use to assess the efficacy of specialist support services for women? Can you briefly describe these? *Interviewer review whether similar approaches are described*

Click as a model has emerged from the finding that there has been a shift from on-street to off-street, online prostitution (Scottish Government 2017). Has this been observed in your area? Any other trends that you have observed/any local contextual factors which affect service design and delivery? In your view, how if at all, can specialist services adapt to accommodate these changes?

Are there particular groups who face specific barriers to engaging with specialist support services that has been identified through your work? From your experience, what types of approaches can be used to mitigate some of these barriers?

Flipchart responses with two columns with barriers and approaches

Approaches to supporting women involved in prostitution (25 mins)

We have talked through the general landscape of specialist support services, and we want to look at specific approaches in a bit more detail ...

*Interviewer to explore partnership working, identifying risk factors among women and making appropriate referrals for support by working through scenarios as a group
Depending on size of group, allocate scenarios to groups of 3 or 4 participants – give them 10 mins to workshop their scenario and 15 mins to feedback in plenary.*

Scenario 1: Sally approaches a local housing association as she is being evicted from her home as the council has received a number of complaints about excessive noise and traffic to her home and loitering outside her front door which is leading to anti-social behaviour in the vicinity. She displays signs of trauma and distress and is concerned about being made homeless.

Probes: consider this scenario, what risks would you anticipate that the professional/agency dealing with Sally to identify? What further information may they need to assess Sally's circumstances? How might they go about identifying other risk factors that may apply to Sally?

What types of referrals would you advise that they make? Which partners would you anticipate that they will work with to provide the necessary support that Sally may need? In your view, what types of approaches are required to best assist Sally in these circumstances?

Scenario 2: Amy has filed a complaint to the police about an abusive/coercive partner, he has recently turned violent towards her as she has refused to continue to support him financially. He has a drug addiction, which has led Amy to become addicted to drugs.

Probes: consider this scenario, what risks would you anticipate that the professional/agency dealing with Amy to identify?

What further information may they need to assess Amy's circumstances? How might they go about identifying other risk factors that may apply to Amy?

What types of referrals would you advise that they make? Which partners would you anticipate that they will work with to provide the necessary support that Amy may need?

In your view, what types of approaches are required to best assist Amy in these circumstances?

If exiting prostitution is discussed: In particular, what would you advise to help Amy exit/reduce her involvement in sex work?

Scenario 3: Jana has accessed a local sexual health clinic for condoms and lube. This is the first time that staff at the clinic have interacted with Jana and it's clear from her accent that she is not local. Her English is poor so it's difficult to speak with her fully. Jana has some signs of scarring and bruising which shows that she has suffered from violence.

Probes: consider this scenario, what risks would you anticipate that the professional/agency dealing with Amy to identify?

What further information may they need to assess Jana's circumstances? How might they go about identifying other risk factors that may apply to Jana?

What types of referrals would you advise that they make? Which partners would you work anticipate that they will work with to provide the necessary support that Jana may need? In your view, what types of approaches are required to best assist Jana in these circumstances?

Feedback on CLiCK (30 mins)

People around the room will have varying levels of information regarding CLiCK, so to ensure we have a shared understanding, I have some information regarding the service....

CLiCK is a partnership of Scottish services, working together to improve the provision and accessibility of frontline support services for women involved in selling or exchanging sex or sexual activity online. The service model is funded for 2 years under the Tampon Tax Fund provided by the Department of Culture, Media and Sports.

The aims of the service are to:

- *improve access to information and the availability of local support*
- *improve access to specialist and mainstream services*
- *increase levels of safety and wellbeing for women involved in online prostitution*
- *capture the voices and experiences of women selling sex online to help shape service development*

The service model will include:

- *Digital technologies for online outreach;*
- *One-to-one support across Scotland;*
- *Improved pathways to mainstream services such as sexual health;*
- *An opportunity for women with lived experience to have a voice in shaping future services;*
- *A platform for women to share their stories and experiences.*

What are your general perceptions of CLiCK, and in what ways would this service model enhance or support existing service provision in your area?

Probe feedback on specific aspects: web chat, CLiCK Access Card, online local services directory, research and engagement with women, CLiCK Women's worker.

Interviewer refer back to approaches, barriers, constraints cited in earlier discussion

What are some of the benefits/drawbacks of these individual aspects of the service model?

(Flipchart)

Are there any groups of women for whom these aspects of the service will work more/less well?

What has been your engagement with the service thus far? What might help you to increase your engagement with the service/likelihood of referring women to CLiCK services? How much of the success of the service is dependent on existing patterns of partnership working? Can the service model assist with increased partnership working?

Are there any barriers to sharing information about CLiCK among the range of partners working to deliver frontline services to women involved in prostitution in your area?

Have you accessed the CLiCK website or social media? What are your impressions of the communications of the service model?

In your view, does the service model as it is currently designed help to address the challenges presented by the shift from on-street to online forms of prostitution?

Are there any ways in which the service model can be improved to best meet service user needs in your area? *Probe: befriending/peer support networks?*

Conclusions (5 mins)

Interviewer recap key points from the discussion... and check if there is anything not already covered in the discussion that participants would like to discuss

Using go-around method, ask participants to share final reflections on CLiCK service model in terms of improving access to community-based specialist support services for women involved in online prostitution.

Describe next steps and what data will be used for. Thank and close.

Appendix B: Discussion Guide 2021

<p>SACRO, CLiCK Evaluation Interview Guide February 2021</p>
<p>Introduction</p>
<p>Introduce self and the Diffley Partnership</p> <p><i>Check and acknowledge if participant was interviewed previously</i></p> <p>The Diffley Partnership has been commissioned by SACRO to undertake an independent evaluation of CLiCK. Evaluation has been ongoing throughout the programme, and Diffley Partnership have taken part regularly in CLiCK Advisory Group meetings. These interviews are a key aspect of the evaluation and will be synthesised alongside evidence from direct engagement with women, anonymised data collected through the CLiCK website in the form of polls and feedback, along with monitoring and evaluation data in relation to one-to-one support outcomes for women.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The interview will last approximately 45 minutes - There are no right or wrong answers. - Your views will remain fully anonymous and confidential - The Diffley Partnership abide by the Market Research Society Code of Practice and the SRA Ethical Guidelines. - Request permission to record interview. <p>Do you have any questions you would like to ask before we start the interview and its recording?</p> <p>Start recording after addressing any queries.</p>
<p>Section A: About respondents- 2 questions</p>

Perhaps to start off you could tell me a little about yourself, including your role and your/your organisations' work addressing commercial sexual exploitation at strategic and policy levels.

*Anna Cook- Women Support Project- especially involved in Your Voice- **B,C,D,E,F***

*Yvonne Wilson- Sacro- CLiCK Team leader and been involved from the start, including direct contact with women **B,C,E,F***

*Louise Bowman-Scottish Drugs Forum- worked with Anna from CLiCK's early stages, referred women through support and encompass fund **B,C,D,E,F***

*Laurie Lee Whitton- formally CLiCK women's worker Lanarkshire- now works for Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs **B,C,D,E,F***

*Emma Thomson- Sandyford Clinic NHS **B,C,D,E,F***

*Veronica Campanile and Helen Smart- East and Midlothian Public Protection Office (EMPPO) – employed by East Lothian Council and NHS Lothian, raising awareness link between CSE and VAWG **B, C,D,E,F***

*Raven Bowen and Kerri Swindells- National Ugly Mugs **B,C,D,E,F***

*Katrina Green- Public Health Scotland **B,C,D,E,F***

*Fil Capaldi- Police Scotland- National lead for Prostitution and Human Trafficking **B,C,F***

*Katie Brown- COSLA VAWG **B,C,D,E,F***

Please tell us more about your connection to the CLiCK service?

CLiCK is a partnership of Scottish services, working together to improve the provision and accessibility of frontline support services for women involved in selling or exchanging sex or sexual activity online. The service operates within a Violence Against Women Framework. The service model is funded for 2 years under the Tampon Tax Fund provided by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

Letters above indicate sections to focus upon in discussion guide below.

Section B: Trends in women selling and exchanging sex and specialist support services- 3 questions

CLiCK as a model emerged from the finding that there has been a shift from on-street to off-street, online selling or exchange of sex (Scottish Government 2017). Do you recognise this trend? Prompt- Covid-19 pandemic impacts

Any other trends that you have observed in selling and exchanging sex online? *Prompts- Mis-use of images online, sexually coercive and abusive behaviours in online sphere* *Prompt- Covid-19 pandemic impacts*

In your view, how are services adapting to support women selling or exchanging sex online? *Prompt- Covid-19 pandemic impacts*

Section C: Attitudes towards aims of CLiCK- up to 6 questions

CLiCK has four main aims focussing on women selling/ exchanging sex online. We'd welcome your views on progress towards these any of these aims through CLiCK.

Firstly, improve access to information and the availability of local support?

Secondly, improve access to specialist and mainstream services?

Thirdly, increase levels of safety and wellbeing for women involved in selling or exchanging sex online?

Fourthly, capture the voices and experiences of women selling sex online to help shape service development?

Are all/ any of these aims being achieved by other means including the work of your own organisation?

Do all/ any of these aims align with any strategies and action plans your organisation works towards? *Prompts- Police Scotland's Prostitution Standard, Equally Safe*

Section D: Attitudes towards service model of CLiCK- up to 7 questions

There are five main aspects of CLiCK's service model. For those you have knowledge of, we'd welcome your views on what could be improved and what is working well.

Firstly, digital technologies for online outreach; (e.g. support app, website)?

Secondly, one-to-one support across Scotland (e.g. online chat, freephone helpline during pandemic)

Thirdly, pathways to mainstream services such as sexual health (i.e. signposting and referral with consent)

Fourthly, opportunities for women with lived experience to have a voice in shaping future services (i.e. feedback opportunities through RISE, Together Alone, Your Voice, CLiCK Cast and podcasts and new CLiCK magazine work)

Fifthly, a platform for women to share their stories and experiences. (e.g. CLiCK Cast, Your Stories)

In your view, does the service model as it is currently designed help to address the challenges presented by the shift from on-street to online forms of selling and exchanging sex?

Should any aspects of this service model continue to form part of specialist support services to meet service user needs at national or local levels?

Section E: Attitudes towards CLiCK activities- 4 questions

CLiCK designed a number of resources for women selling or exchanging sex online e.g. Keeping Safe Online, Together Alone Toolkit, information sections on the CLiCK website. Are

Are there any you would especially like to comment on that you were involved in developing/ signposted through your work?

CLiCK created ways to share women's experiences and needs with a wider audience through CLiCK Cast (podcast), blogs, digital magazine. Are there any you would especially like to comment on that you input to/ signposted through your work?

What's your view on the relevance and reach of CLiCK's activities? *Prompt- clarify which activities*

What's worked well and what could be better?

Have you any feedback on the support CLiCK provided through the Encompass Fund? *Prompt- destitution funds available through Encompass partners from the Immediate Priorities fund through the Scottish Government. An intervention not originally planned, but CLiCK model was a route through to access these funds*

Section F: Learning and Legacy- 8 questions

What are the main factors and barriers to success of CLiCK you have observed through your involvement?

Have you any examples of how CLiCK's model and activities have informed support given to women across multi-agencies?

Have you any examples of CLiCK connecting to and enhancing wider initiatives? *Prompt- misuse of images online, policy work, public health research, working with women around their lived experience*

Have you any stories to share of women benefitting from CLiCK's model and activities?

How would you describe the context CLiCK and its partners have been working within?

How much of the success of the service is dependent on existing patterns of partnership working in the VAWG sector?

Do you feel CLiCK encourages knowledge sharing and joint working between organisations supporting women?

Do you feel the success of CLiCK has been helped or hindered by the pandemic? How so? Do any opportunities come out of the pandemic?

Do you have any recommendations for enhanced partnership working between organisations providing support services for women selling/ exchanging sex online?

Yellow- indicates question covered in Year 1 Discussion Guide for local VAW Partnerships



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From many voices to smart choices

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