

UMBRELLA LANE

SEX WORKER WELLBEING PROJECT



Annual Report 2015 - 2016



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Background

As a group of current and former sex workers and supportive allies, we began Umbrella Lane from the grassroots community level in January 2015 and registered with OSCR as an SCIO in August 2015. Umbrella Lane grew out of our shared frustration with the way existing services are delivered to sex workers from a political stance that views all prostitution as violence, meaning that actual needs were not being met and funding directed to services in line with a false perception of need. We sought to change this in two ways. Firstly to design and deliver services for sex workers by sex workers. These focused in the areas of health, safety, and wellbeing.

Secondly, we sought to expand our reach and build a community of sex workers who together, could advise external services on how they could become more accessible and acceptable to sex workers.

Our Mission & Governing Principles

To improve the health and well being of all sex workers in Scotland, through a community-based, innovative & holistic approach that recognises our agency & choices in starting sex work, managing work & sometimes moving on from sex work.

To respect the self-determination of sex workers To respect and promote the human and health rights of sex workers. To be inclusive to all sex workers and work from principles of equality, respect and recognition.

Summary of Current Services

Umbrella Lane provides a non-judgemental support service to sex workers of all genders in Scotland, whether they are working through choice, circumstance or coercion. We currently offer, as volunteers, a range of support and referrals including provision of a safe space, safer sex supplies, safety and empowerment workshops, and in partnership with the Terrence Higgins Trust, a dedicated sex worker health clinic, which has increased uptake of testing and treatment services. We believe that running a holistic service that looks after the material, physical, emotional and sexual health needs of workers is the best way to reduce isolation and marginalisation of sex workers, remove barriers to their access to services and support, and foster a sense of participation and community building.





Goals for 2015/2016

In the first three months of beginning the project we carried out face-to-face and online outreach to seek other sex workers' views of these services, with an overwhelming number of responses stating that they felt stigmatised and judged for the work they engaged in. This has had a devastating impact on the numbers of sex workers accessing specialized services for their health and social care needs, evidenced in the drop in numbers at NHS ran clinics that has been officially reported elsewhere. The effect of sex workers feeling afraid to approach specialised services for us is two-fold; firstly, they are left without catered support for their mental, physical and sexual health, and secondly as an already isolated group in that many workers do not reveal their work to families and friends, barriers to their access to services causes further marginalisation and exclusion of this already precarious community. Being a sex worker-led charity that is building from our own multitude of experiences, we are proud of our ownership of our charity and support services. This, in itself, has brought a sense of community resilience, empowerment and spirit for change to our lives and the lives of other sex workers.

Activities & Achievements During 2015/2016

- Development of partnerships and working groups with other support services and advocacy organisations for sex workers both in Scotland and throughout the UK
- Registered as a member of the National Ugly Mugs Scheme (NUM)
- Built communication platforms with sex workers in Scotland for peer support and project advice and warnings dissemination
- Established social media presence
- Built Umbrella Lane website
- Built working relationship with Police Scotland to improve direct support for sex workers who wish to report crimes against them
- Supported individuals and groups of sex workers in various issues, including safety at work, access to harm reduction, reporting of violence and exploitation
- Supported sex workers to access testing with the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) open clinic before establishing a sex worker specialist clinic in partnership with THT at the end of 2016

Financials Reporting

Umbrella Lane had no income for the reporting period.

**UMBRELLA
LANE**

Thank you for reading

Visit www.umbrellalane.org

to join our community and hear more about our work. You can also follow
our updates at Facebook, Instagram & Twitter

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