



# PRESS RELEASE

## Launch of 'Over the Parapet: a short study into the needs and aspirations of sex workers in Edinburgh'

As the organisation began to wind down its services following loss of funding, SCOT-PEP commissioned an independent short study in early 2009 to identify sex workers' needs and aspirations. Women from all parts of the sex industry in Edinburgh took part – street-based, those working in licensed and unlicensed establishments and independently as escorts.

The study identified that *'Sex workers operate in an environment which is hostile; rarely valued for who they are; they experience explicit and implicit messages that reduce them to people who represent parts of society that others would rather keep hidden or lose altogether – the implicit message in that is for them to keep hidden or stop work altogether.'*

The idea behind the commission was to articulate the issues for sex workers as they identified them. The women's voices are heard unchallenged and unfettered by professional voices, be that in the public or voluntary sector. In 'Over the Parapet' women talk about their needs and aspirations not as sex workers, but as women who work in the sex industry. They are women first, partners, parents, members of social networks; and they work in the sex industry. They talk about their concerns about services and policing; about friendship and family; and about their children.

The study is intended as a *catalyst* for providers to ask of themselves: 'Are we really meeting the needs of the women we serve?'; for commissioners to ask 'What will make a difference?'; and for women to ask 'How can we make life a little easier for ourselves?'

**issues** **socially isolated** want family support **lack confidence in services**  
**require coordinated services** **have relationships** need appropriate drug services  
**wish for safety** new to the sex industry need discreet sexual health services

**key messages** **For providers - being non judgemental in word and deed.**  
**For commissioners - services need to be quality assured, coordinated and long term.**  
**For those who advocate for sex workers - the message behind the message.**  
**For women in the sex industry - peep over the parapet.**

### For further information contact:

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The full study and summary findings are available on [www.scot-pep.org.uk](http://www.scot-pep.org.uk)



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