



»»»»» ***PROTECT YOURSELF***



SCOT PEP

A Personal Safety Handbook for Sex Workers

PROTECT YOURSELF >>>>>

A Personal Safety Handbook for Sex Workers

This handbook is the result of collaboration between Lothian Primary Care NHS Trust Centre for Management of Aggression and SCOT-PEP funded by Edinburgh Community Safety Partnership.

DESIGN & PRODUCTION: THE GRAPHICS COMPANY – 0131 225 7232;
COPY EDITING: SHIRLEY HENDERSON; PRINT: ARC COLOURPRINT.



CONTENTS

<i>GENERAL ADVICE</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>WORKING ON THE STREETS</i>	<i>6</i>
▶ Business in vehicles	8
▶ Business with walkers	11
<i>WORKING IN ESTABLISHMENTS.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>ESCORTING AND HOME VISITS</i>	<i>14</i>
▶ If going to a client's hotel	15
▶ If going to a client's home	17
<i>IF THINGS GO WRONG.....</i>	<i>20</i>
▶ If you are followed	20
▶ If someone becomes aggressive	21
▶ If you are attacked.....	22
▶ What to do after an attack.....	23
▶ How to help a friend who has been attacked.....	24
<i>USEFUL CONTACTS.....</i>	<i>26</i>

Along with other agencies in Scotland, we are working together to take action against those who commit crimes of violence against sex workers. By working together we can help to reduce the number of violent attacks on sex workers.

Violence against any person is a crime and is unacceptable. If you are concerned about your personal safety SCOT-PEP and other local support agencies can provide you with support, advice and personal attack alarms.

This handbook has been written for women working in the sex industry. It contains common sense advice about keeping safe when working, whether on the streets, in establishments or escorting to homes or hotels. The advice comes from those who know best, sex workers themselves.

We hope you will find some useful tips that you might not have thought of before. If you're already aware of them, then you can be reassured that you're doing the best you can to stay safe. If you have any other useful tips for personal safety at work then give SCOT-PEP a call and we will circulate them to other sex workers. The handbook also has advice about what to do if things go wrong and gives details of agencies that can help.

We would like to thank all the many different people who happily became involved in the development of this handbook – without their contribution it would be worthless.



General ADVICE

- Always trust your instinct. If you feel uncertain about someone, then there is a good reason for it. It's not worth ignoring your instinct and later wishing you hadn't.
- Always tell someone when you are going out to work and when you expect to be back.
- Carry a personal alarm or a whistle, and don't be afraid to use it. Keep it handy, somewhere you can get it quickly. The bottom of your handbag is not handy!
- If you have one, carry a mobile phone. You can programme it to dial a number at the press of one button. Make this the number of the police or one of your friends, so you can get help quickly.
- Alcohol and drugs can affect your awareness and your ability to recognise and act on your instinct. You are much more at risk if you are under the influence of drink or drugs.
- Appearances can be deceptive. Don't assume someone is OK just because they look 'respectable'.
- When talking to a client, keep a confident look on your face and be assertive, strong and in control.

- Be friendly but firm when negotiating services with a client and explain your limits.
- Tell other workers about potentially difficult or aggressive or violent clients.
- Seriously consider reporting incidents to the police. Most police forces now have liaison officers for women involved in the sex industry.
- Report all difficult clients and attacks to your local support organisation. SCOT-PEP has an 'Ugly Mug' scheme, which circulates descriptions of potentially violent clients.
- Memorise as much as you can about difficult or violent clients and their vehicles. Get details like:
 - Hair colour, style, length
 - Build, height, age
 - Earrings, chains, rings, watches
 - Skin tone, scarring, spots, facial hair, tattoos, piercings
 - Eye colour, glasses
 - Accent, speech impediment, expressions used
 - Aftershave, body odour
 - Physical disabilities
 - Clothing and footwear – style, brand name labels, rips / tears, badges

- Vehicle – make, model, colour, registration plate, bumps / scrapes, items inside, stickers
- Any other information that would help other workers identify them or their vehicle

»»»»» **Being streetwise does not guarantee your safety. IF IN DOUBT, GET OUT! »»»»»**

POSTURE AND ATTITUDE

- Be aware. Walk tall, act confidently and be assertive. 'Ugly Mugs' go for people who look vulnerable.
- Keep your head up and shoulders back, and take purposeful steps. Pay attention to what's happening around you. Adopt a confident look even if you feel nervous.
- Keep at least one arm free, and always be ready, mentally and physically, to protect yourself.
- Remember NO-ONE has the right to be abusive towards you or to hurt you.

SPIKED DRINK, DRUGS AND FOOD

- If your client offers you a drink in private, ask for an unopened can or bottle, or serve yourself. Don't take any drink you haven't seen prepared from start to finish. Make sure your client is happy to drink from the same bottle or glass as you.
- If your client offers you food in private, don't accept it unless it's pre-packed and still in its sealed wrapper, or you have seen it prepared from start to finish. Make sure your client is happy to eat the same food.
- Avoid accepting drugs from or taking drugs with clients; you can never be sure what they are.

OTHER DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do have cash when you leave the house in case you don't make any money, or get dumped by a client and you need to use a payphone or get transport home.
- Do keep your money well out of sight and put money a client gives you in a different place from other cash.
- Do make sure you can run in whatever shoes you wear to work, and avoid tight skirts that will slow you down.
- Don't wear expensive looking jewellery when working as you may get robbed.

- Don't wear large hoop or dangling earrings that someone could grab and pull off, unless they are clip-ons.
- Don't wear a scarf round your neck as someone could grab it, possibly from a car, and choke you.
- Don't put your handbag strap over your neck and shoulder. Just your shoulder is safer. If someone grabs it you won't get choked.

UGLY MUGS

SCOT-PEP and other sex worker support agencies operate schemes where you can report violent and abusive clients to warn others about potentially dangerous clients. Phone your local support agency for details of their scheme.

»»»»» **Remember that nothing will help you like your instinct. If you have a bad feeling or things just don't seem right, GET OUT!!** »»»»»



Working on the STREETS

KEEPING YOURSELF SAFE

*Some advice shared
by a sex worker on
the Web*

6 >>>>> “Just a word to the wise... Don’t go for a place that is isolated. There is safety in numbers... It is hard to hear a scream when there is no-one nearby to react.” >>>>>

KNOW YOUR BEAT

- Study a map of the area. Get to know the area well, especially the safest escape routes, police stations, pubs, open shops and garages. Know the bus routes and where to get a taxi.
- If possible, have a clear idea of where you’re going. If you can, tell someone the route you’re planning, and arrange to meet up with or phone them at agreed times while you are out working.
- Be aware of your surroundings and familiarise yourself with new areas before you work in them. Never work in areas you don’t know.



- Avoid working in areas with no easy escape routes.
- Avoid working in secluded areas. But if you have to, make sure you are as familiar with your surroundings as possible.
- At night, try to work in fairly busy, well-lit areas.
- Try to work near a busy road and stay on the same side as oncoming traffic. If a car pulls up and you think that something is not quite right, walk quickly in the opposite direction to the traffic.

WORK TOGETHER WHENEVER POSSIBLE

- Whenever you can, work in twos or threes. The others can take the registration numbers of your clients' vehicles, and you can take the numbers of theirs.
- Let each other know where you usually take your clients.
- Agree a sign that you can give each other if you are not happy with a client or situation, so they can help you.
- When going away with a client, wave to the others (or pretend to if you are on your own) and shout out your expected return time.

CHECK OUT THE CLIENT AND VEHICLE

- Approach the vehicle or walker with caution. Keep enough distance to avoid being grabbed or assaulted, at least an arm's length.
- Make the client aware you are taking the vehicle's registration number.
- Look for potential weapons lying around the vehicle, even everyday objects can be used against you.
- Avoid getting into a vehicle on your own with more than one person.

- Check how many people are in the vehicle. If it's a van, remember that there might be others in the back and check it if possible. Think very carefully before agreeing to get in.

BUSINESS IN VEHICLES

Before You Get In

- Do any of his or his vehicle's details ring a bell from 'Ugly Mugs' or from information passed on to you by other workers?
- Be clear about the services you are prepared to provide and your prices.

- Follow your instinct. If you are uncertain or have a bad feeling about the client or the situation, do not get in under any circumstances.
- Make a note of the registration number and try to memorise details of the vehicle.
- You suggest where to go to do business, so you can be sure it's somewhere safe. If the client doesn't agree, ask him where he wants to go. If you don't like the sound of it, don't get in. If the place he suggests seems OK, make sure you tell someone where you're going and how long you'll be.

Once You're In

- Get paid first, and put the money in a different place from where you keep your other cash.
- Most modern cars have central locking, so be aware of this. Ask the driver to keep your window wound down.
- Try to make sure the client doesn't park close to a wall or other obstacle that would make opening the car door difficult. If he does, give him a reason to move it, for example you saw a police car or other people can see you.

- Once the vehicle is parked, try to leave the door slightly open, particularly if it has central locking.
- In two-door cars insist on staying in the front seat, escaping from the back is very difficult.
- Keep as much clothing on as possible, in case you have to run.

>>>>> If you start to feel scared or you are attacked, try to keep yourself and the situation calm, and get out of the vehicle and to a busy public place as soon as possible. Try to leave a small personal object under or stuffed down the cushions of the car seat – something like an earring, bangle or an unused condom (make sure it's in its wrapper and you know the brand name), anything that you could positively identify if you decide to report the incident to the police. >>>>>

BUSINESS WITH WALKERS

- Do any of his details ring a bell from previous 'Ugly Mugs'?
- Follow your instinct. If you are uncertain or have a bad feeling about the client or the situation do not go with him under any circumstances.
- Try to memorise information about the client.
- Be clear about the services you are prepared to provide and your prices.
- You suggest where to go to do business, so you can be sure it's somewhere safe. If the client doesn't agree, ask him where he wants to go. If you don't like the sound of it don't

- go. If the place he suggests seems OK, make sure you tell someone where you're going and how long you'll be.
- Get paid first, and put the money in a different place from where you keep your other cash.
- Keep as much clothing on as possible, in case you have to run.

>>>>>> If you start to feel scared, or you are attacked, try to keep yourself and the situation calm and get to a busy public place as soon as possible. >>>>>>



Working in Establishments

- Avoid working on your own in any establishment as violent clients are more likely to attack if you are on your own.
- Have a plan ready in case a client attacks you. Know the escape routes to a safe place in the building.
- Ask SCOT-PEP or your local support organisation for an 'Ugly Mugs on the Inside' report and keep it somewhere where all workers can find it.
- Always take an alarm into the room with you. If the establishment does not have them fitted, ask them to consider fitting them in the rooms or supplying workers with personal alarms. If they do not agree, you can get one from SCOT-PEP.
- If the doors in the rooms have locks, always know how to open them quickly. Never leave a key in the door as you could be locked in.



- If you are not entirely comfortable with the client do not lock the door.
- If there are mirrors on the walls use them to keep an eye on what the client is up to.
- Be clear about the services you are prepared to provide and your prices.
- Get paid before you provide any services, and put the money in a different place from where you keep your other cash.

▶▶▶▶▶ If you start to feel scared, or if you are attacked, try to keep yourself and the situation calm and get out of the room to a safe place as quickly as you can. Don't be too embarrassed to run out of the room with no clothes on if you have to. ▶▶▶▶▶



ESCORTING and Home Visits

KEEPING YOURSELF SAFE

Some advice shared by a sex worker on the Web

➤➤➤➤➤ “I think the key to this one is weighing up the risks against a loss of custom. I have always been super strict about my appointments (never accepting an in-call without an email address and a mobile number, and refusing to see the client if he will not display his number or uses a different number after this has been explained). No doubt this has lost me numerous harmless clients who feel that it isn't worth the risk to them for a working girl to have these details about them, and that's fair play from my point of view. I have also lost bookings because I refuse to do an outcall without a) calling the hotel to make sure that the client is booked in under the name he has given me and b) calling the room number before I leave to make sure the client is there and indeed booked in that room under that name. Again, I don't hold anything against anyone who isn't comfortable with this. I have also opened the door after receiving all of these details, got a bad feeling and cancelled the appointment on the spot with an excuse rather than go against my instincts (and again I would hold nothing against a client if he did the same).” ➤➤➤➤➤



IF GOING TO A CLIENT'S HOTEL

Before Going Out

- Always try to speak to the client yourself. Use this opportunity to suss the client out so that you can find out exactly what your client wants before you go and to make sure you're comfortable with it. Be clear about the cost of the service.
- If the client sounds drunk or stoned, seriously consider not taking the job.
- Get the client's room number and name of the hotel and arrange to phone the client back. If he is not happy for you to do that don't go as he has something to hide. Get the telephone number of the hotel from Directory Enquiries. Don't accept any number he has given you.
- Only after you've confirmed the hotel phone number, phone the client back and arrange to meet him.
- Always try to meet first time clients in a public place, such as the hotel bar, particularly if you haven't managed to speak with them yourself.
- Tell someone where you're going and when you expect to be back.

On Your Way Out

- Pay attention to the area around the hotel and potential points of safety such as bus routes, taxis, busy streets, open shops, pubs, garages and phone boxes.

On Arrival

- Memorise the layout of the hotel and note escape routes from the bedroom or suite.

- Pay attention to details in the room such as pictures, decor, layout, furniture, personal effects lying around, so you can positively identify the room.
- Watch out for any cameras that may be concealed in the room.
- Keep as much clothing on as possible, in case you have to run.
- If you are uncertain or have a bad feeling about the client or the situation, leave immediately.

>>>>> If you start to feel scared, or you are attacked, try to keep yourself and the situation calm and get to a busy public place as soon as possible. Try to leave a small personal object in the location, such as an earring, bangle, a wrapped condom (make sure it's in its wrapper and you know the brand name) or anything that you could positively identify if you decide to report the incident to the police. >>>>>

IF GOING TO A CLIENT'S HOME

Before Going Out

- Always try to speak to the client yourself. Use this opportunity to suss the client out so that you can find out exactly what your client wants before you go, and to make sure you're comfortable with it. Be clear about the cost of the service.
- If the client sounds drunk or stoned, seriously consider not going on the visit.
- Get the address and the telephone (landline) number, and then phone Directory Enquiries to check that this information is correct. If the

client does not want to give you the information, he has something to hide. Don't go on a home visit if you can't confirm a landline contact number.

- Only after you've confirmed the details are correct, phone the client back and confirm your arrangements.
- Tell someone where you're going and when you expect to be back.

On Your Way

- Pay attention to the location and note potential escape routes and other information such as bus routes, taxis, busy streets, open shops, pubs, garages and phone boxes.

- Are there lights on in nearby properties or any signs that neighbours may be home? It's important to have an idea of how isolated (or not) you might be.
- How many cars are parked outside the property or in the driveway? Are there more than you'd expect? It might not be safe if there are others there that you weren't expecting.
- How many floors up are you? This will affect potential escape routes.

Going Into the Home

- Pay close attention to which way the door opens and locks. If the door gets locked behind you, note where the key is kept.
- Is there a phone in the house?
- Memorise the layout, especially the way to the door.
- Ask to use the bathroom. On your way you can get a better idea of the layout.
- Pay attention to details such as pictures, photos, decor, layout, furniture and appliances so you can positively identify the person and the property.

- Watch out for any concealed cameras.
- Keep as much clothing on as possible, in case you have to run.
- If you are uncertain or have a bad feeling about the client or the situation, leave immediately.

>>>>>> If you start to feel scared, or if you are attacked, try to keep yourself and the situation calm and leave as quickly as you can. Try to leave a small personal object hidden somewhere such as an earring, bangle, an unused condom (make sure it's in its wrapper and you know the brand name) or anything that you could positively identify if you decide to report the incident to the police. >>>>>>



If Things Go WRONG

IF YOU ARE FOLLOWED

- Cross the road, maybe twice, to be sure that the person is following you.
- If they are, head for the nearest pub, police station, garage or open shop as quickly as you can. Go the most public route to the most public place.
- Try to keep yourself composed and your thoughts rational. Pay attention to what someone is actually doing, rather than what you think they might do.
- Don't add to your fear by letting your imagination take over. Be positive and confident about your actions. Focus on the fact that you are heading to a safe place, where you will be with other people.
- Do not head for home, even if someone is waiting for you there. It's safer to go to a public place than to let a stranger know where you live.
- If you think you need to, cause a commotion. Make lots of noise and fuss to attract attention and to deter the person following you.
- Consider giving an 'Ugly Mug' report about the stalker.



IF SOMEONE BECOMES AGGRESSIVE

- If they want your money or bag you need to decide if it is really worth the fight or potentially your life.
- Try to calm the person and talk them out of it:
 - Use open-handed gestures
 - Speak in a low, quiet tone and don't raise your voice or shout
 - Use friendly, sensitive language
 - Try to show understanding and sympathy
 - Persuade them not to carry out the attack
- Keep thinking about how you will get out of the situation. Don't allow fear, panic or anger to take over.
- Tell them someone is meeting you, expecting you home soon or waiting for you.
- Cry hysterically – even if you have to pretend.
- SCOT-PEP occasionally runs workshops on de-escalation techniques so you can learn how to calm a person down, how to talk them out of attacking you and how to get away from an attacker.
- Consider giving an 'Ugly Mug' report about the incident.

IF YOU ARE ATTACKED

- Make as much noise as possible by shouting, screaming or yelling.
- If you have an alarm use it.
- Use your mobile to phone for help.
- If you are in a car, hit the horn or flash the lights to attract attention.

>>>>> DECISION TIME – although this is a difficult one, you may have to submit in order to preserve your life. Men are often physically stronger than women – DO NOT try to fight a man unless you are certain you can win or you are convinced he intends to kill you. If you decide to submit, cut your thoughts to concentrate on the fact that the attack will end and you will hold on for that moment and then get help. If you decide to fight back to escape, you must be confident that you are going to be able to immobilise your attacker. If you don't know proper self-defence, aim for the eyes, throat, groin, chest. >>>>>



WHAT TO DO AFTER AN ATTACK

- Remember that the attack is not your fault.
- Find a safe place away from the attacker. Ask a friend to stay with you.
- Seriously consider reporting the attack to the police and a local support organisation. They are there to help you.
- If you are considering reporting the attack to the police preserve the evidence. Don't bathe, shower, brush your teeth or change your clothes. If you do change your clothes, don't wash the ones you were wearing at the time of the attack. If the attack happened

- in your home, do not disturb the scene as there might be vital evidence there.
- If you are considering reporting the attack to the police and / or putting in an 'Ugly Mug' report write down all the details you remember about the attack and the attacker. What did they do? What did they look like? What did they say?
 - Give the police all the details about the attack, however intimate, including anything unusual you noted about the attacker.
 - Show police any external bruises or injuries, however minor, resulting from the attack.

- Remember that the police may need to take your clothes as evidence.
- Get medical attention. Even if you have no physical injuries, it is important to get checked for sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy, and to obtain any forensic evidence left by the attack.
- Tell the police if you remember anything else later on.
- Recognise that healing from this kind of attack takes time. Give yourself all the time you need.
- Think about phoning SCOT-PEP, Rape Crisis or Victim Support.
- Learn self-defence (to help prevent future attacks)

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND WHO HAS BEEN ATTACKED

- Listen and be there.
- Encourage your friend to consider reporting the attack to the police. It might help your friend to contact SCOT-PEP or Rape Crisis for further support when making a decision about this.
- Try to discourage your friend from taking a bath or shower if they are thinking about reporting the attack. They may be desperate to wash, so gently explain why it's important that they don't.
- Support your friend to get medical help.



- Encourage them to write down the details of the attack. If your friend is shaky, you might be able to help to write things down.
- Be patient. Remember, it will take your friend some time to deal with the attack.
- Let your friend know that help is available through SCOT-PEP, Rape Crisis and Victim Support. Encourage them to get support, but remember that only your friend can make the decision to do this.
- You can also phone Rape Crisis for guidance and support for yourself.



Useful CONTACTS

Sex Workers Support Organisations in Scotland

ABERDEEN

- Aberdeen Drugs Action Tel: 01224 594700

EDINBURGH

- SCOT-PEP Tel: 0131 622 7550

GLASGOW

- Base 75 Tel: 0141 204 3712
- Routes Out of Prostitution..... Tel: 0141 287 5769



Prostitute Police Liaison Officers in Scotland

EDINBURGH LIAISON OFFICER

- Based in Leith Police Station Tel: 0131 311 5908

GLASGOW EAST END LIAISON OFFICERS

- Based in London Road Police Station Tel: 0141 532 4649

GLASGOW CENTRAL LIAISON OFFICERS

- Based in Cranstonhill Police Station..... Tel: 0141 532 3231

ABERDEEN LIAISON OFFICERS

- Based in Queen Street Police Station Tel: 01224 306468

DUNDEE LIAISON OFFICERS

- Crime Reduction Department, based in
West Bell Street Police Station, office hours... Tel: 01382 591640

Lothian Victim Support

- For victims of personal theft, assaults, robbery, domestic house breakings and so on Tel: 0131 668 2556

Edinburgh Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre

- For victims of sexual assault Tel: 0131 556 9437

Women's Aid

For victims of domestic abuse

- ***EDINBURGH*** Tel: 0131 315 8110
- ***EAST LOTHIAN*** Tel: 0131 665 9552
- ***MIDLOTHIAN*** Tel: 0131 663 9827
- ***WEST LOTHIAN*** Tel: 01506 413 721
- ***SHAKTI*** (ethnic minority women) Tel: 0131 475 2399
- ***SCOTTISH BORDERS*** Tel: 01835 863 514



Lothian Racial Equality Council

- Support for members of ethnic communities experiencing problems..... Tel: 0131 556 0441

Lothian LGBT Healthy Living Centre

- Support for members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities Tel: 0131 523 1100

Edinburgh Well Woman Service

- Family Planning & Well Woman Clinic
Dean Terrace Centre..... Tel: 0131 343 6243
18 Dean Terrace, Edinburgh..... or 0131 332 7941

Edinburgh Sexual Health Clinic

- Department of Genito-Urinary Medicine,
Lauriston Buildings
Lauriston Place (females) Tel: 0131 536 2104
Edinburgh (males) Tel: 0131 536 2103

Edinburgh Police Stations

- ***BALERNO*** Tel: 0131 449 5991
- ***CORSTORPHINE*** Tel: 0131 334 4900
- ***CRAIGMILLAR*** Tel: 0131 661 3362
- ***DRYLAW*** Tel: 0131 343 3171
- ***GAYFIELD*** Tel: 0131 556 9270
- ***HOWDENHALL*** Tel: 0131 666 2222
- ***LEITH*** Tel: 0131 554 9350
- ***DXGANGS*** Tel: 0131 441 1518
- ***PORTOBELLO*** Tel: 0131 669 0581
- ***SOUTH QUEENSFERRY*** Tel: 0131 331 1798
- ***ST LEONARDS*** Tel: 0131 662 5000
- ***WEST END*** Tel: 0131 229 2323
- ***WESTER HAILES*** Tel: 0131 442 2626



SCOT-PEP

70 Newhaven Road

Edinburgh EH6 5QG

Tel: 0131 622 7550

Email: manager@scot-pep.org.uk

Web: www.scot-pep.org.uk

