

HOW DID BEYOND THE GAZE IMPACT ON THE PRACTITIONERS AND POLICE?

Aim: The aim of this research is to measure the impact the Beyond the Gaze project had on practitioners and services provided for sex workers.

Background: Previous research has not tended to specifically focus on the digital aspect of sex work. Beyond the Gaze is the biggest study to date to map out this space. Beyond the Gaze provides a look into the online sex industry in the UK, which is now the largest sector of the sex industry (Sanders et al., 2018a).

Methods: One aspect of the project involved surveying practitioners in 2016 about their provision to online sex workers and then re-surveying the same (and new) projects in 2018 to see the changes and the influence of BtG. The survey questions were mostly quantitative, and the numbers gathered are compared to the previous survey from 2016. Some of the questions are identical to the questions asked in 2016 to make it possible to look at the changes on these specific questions. There are also new questions added directly to look into if Beyond the Gaze had an impact on practitioners.

Findings:

- Overall, the 31 participants in the study had a high level of engagement with Beyond the Gaze, and all of the participants said their engagement had increased their knowledge about internet-based sex work.
- When asked how much do you feel like your engagement with BtG increased your knowledge about internet-based sex work, all of the participants said their engagement had increased their knowledge: 84% (26) said it had increased the knowledge a lot.
- 64% (20) said they currently work with internet-based sex workers and 53% (16) reported that they had targeted services for internet-based sex workers.
- With the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation, there has been a change in how services are contacting sex workers. In 2016 62% (16) noted a form of contacting sex workers directly via the internet, this has declined to 44% (7) in 2018.
- Participants were asked if they had increased any specific activities since engaging with the Beyond the Gaze project.
- 61% (19) said that they had increased communication with other agencies about the online sector,
- 39% (12) had developed new information resources for online sex workers and
- 32% (10) ticked that they had increased staff or volunteer time to promote or deliver services to online sex workers.
- 3 noted that they were in the process of making changes.
- 65% (20) said that their engagement with Beyond the Gaze helped develop service provision for online sex workers.

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Some quotes from survey respondents:

- *“Having an evidence base for some of the work delivered. Having the opportunity to hear from other projects about their work with online sex workers. It has been useful for developing peer involvement.”*
- *“What has been useful is the provision of evidence to support the need for the work we do with online sex workers”*
- *“So far my work has been solely with street based sex workers so BTG has been vital in informing the way we approach, advertise & work with internet workers.”*
- *“We have not yet expanded to advertising our project online but the BTG research & events have had a massive impact in the way we have started designing our service information & the kind of service we will be offering”*

Further evidence demonstrates the impact of the work on understanding of sex work and direct change to everyday practice

Interview 1 – Researcher

I mean for me it's the biggest research project we got on this topic, so it's definitely useful, you know reading the articles and the book that has been produced from the project and it's definitely a big knowledge base that we can build upon we are writing our articles from our research and in that sense it will shape my practice so to speak

I think it useful obviously on a wider scale for practitioners in terms of them working with sex workers but I think it's also interesting, I think it would be really good for people that are new to research on the sex industry to also read those guidelines because, you know, often people coming in to do research on sex worker a have a lot of different assumptions, and so I think that having some sort of good practice guidelines, generally, about how to engage with sex workers would be really good.

Interview 2 – CEO sex worker project

I think that what we've done is we found each area got different practises and by going and working with the groups that support sex workers through out the UK we have learnt different practise, best practice, and I found that we've gained knowledge in particular areas and we have also been able to share our best practice, in particular in relation to migrant sex workers

I think we got to keep our eyes on the pause; we got to keep our finger on the pause to revise our practise accordingly. ... So we have got to make sure that these finding do not sit on the shelves, that this best practise is applied... This is practical research that is really going to impact on our service delivery.

Interview 3 - Detective Inspector

I'm currently rewriting national guidelines for how the police deal with sex workers and prostitution and a lot of the Beyond the Gaze stuff is having an influence on how we seek to change those guidelines. I mean, police being police we like stats and we like evidence and we like to understand, you know, percentages and stuff like at and all that sort of stuff from a police perspective has been really useful because it really runs home to people that sex workers themselves wont report offences to the police etc. for various reasons so that's a point of view that was particularly useful. So understanding reasons why people have certain behaviours and attitudes have been really quite good.

Interview 4 - Health Promotion Service Manager

We found out a lot about online sex workers, things about how they like to be contacted, how the work has changed from, you know, simply just maybe working on the streets or working in flats to working online, setting up their profiles, the social media sites that they access and advertise on, so yes, knowledge has increased quite a bit

Q: Do you think these guidelines would be useful for your organisation?

Absolutely, something we would like to take forward to our commissioners along with most of the research so far have proposed some work that we could do. Obviously we would need more funding, you know, resources as well. So those guidelines on top of that would be really helpful

I think keeping it on the agenda is really really important because it is definitely the way forward, and not just with sex workers, with everything going online. So definitely keeping it on the agenda. You know, I think it's a really good thing to keep on the agenda around the safety of women as well, and around decriminalisation of sex work which it really supports some of that as well.

Interview 6 – Police Inspector

There a number of points there really, one is a greater appreciation of the online space that sex workers work in. We probably had, or I probably had a quite narrow view of online sex work principally around adultwork and vivastreet. So the project has certainly given me a greater awareness of the online space, it's not just about those two websites. So that's one, it's also, we came to your launch in Manchester back in January and started to do some of our own online mapping really, and it's that appreciation really. You

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need to count people not adverts, if you're counting adverts you will excaudate the number of sex workers working in a particular area.

Well, to be fair I though it would be quite useful when we broke off and did the groups sessions from the Beyond the Gaze event. We were in a room that had sex workers, and to be fair from a policing point of view, they where quite negative as towards how police deal with it and all the rest of it, it was quite uncomfortable to be sat in the room. But, when you flip it around it made me think of how a sex worker might feel when they turn to report a crime or that uncomfortableness in terms of how they would be when they speak to police. So it was quite good in terms of that, that you where able to then feel how sex workers would, which will then influence how you then approach them and ways in you would potentially work with them in terms of trying to not have them feel how I did in that meeting.

It does, really does, opens up your eyes in terms of how far you need to go as an organisation to input like a successful sex worker policy really. I think we have given it very very little thought before the project, this coupled with the sex workers guidance document being published, so I think it has really open up or eyes in terms of what we need to do, the challenge is actually turning words from a bit of paper into some sort of tangible actions.

Interview 7 - CEO sex worker project

We had to change how we do net reach, as a result of the information we found out about how we where doing it previously, we where directly contacting sex workers, but unsolicited contact, which as part of research the guidance we realised that actually we couldn't do that, it was a breach of the data protection legislation. So that's kind of a negative impact, but for what it lead us to, it lead us to look at how we as an organisation, how we market ourselves, how we use social media and how we use marketing in general to meet potential clients aware of the services that we offer. I think previously, we were very very behind the on doing that, where as, just being involved in putting the guidance together has realty made us think about our practice and what we do as an agency and how we sell ourselves, and how we help potential clients to be aware of the services that exist to them. Its kind of come from a negative in some respects, but it's been really positive.

So we use the knowledge in funding bids, we sit on, what's it called, in Manchester we have prostitution forum, which is convened by the City Council, Local Authority, and we are one of the participants in that and we have cascaded that information to all participants in that as well, helping to inform policy there, and it's certainly the headline statistics have been very useful in working with other agenises in Manchester, to

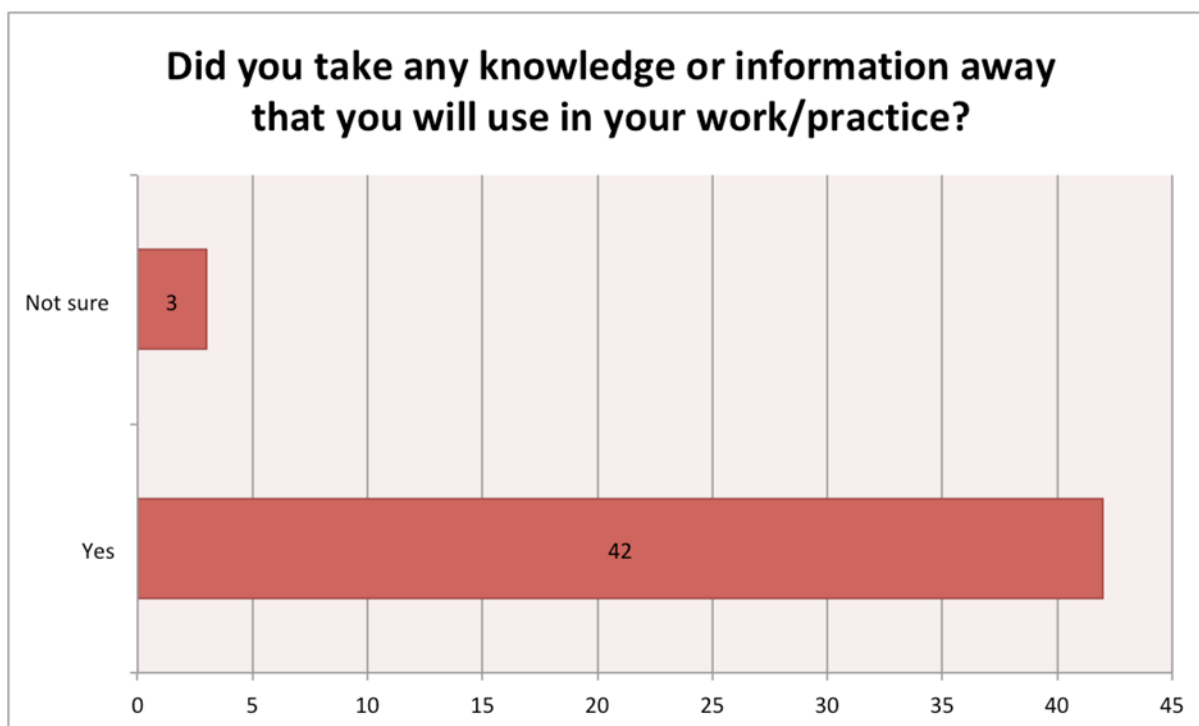
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help them to understand the prevalence of certain issues and what the numbers are, really. So we use that quite regularly, we have included a lot of the statistics from Beyond the Gaze in our training program. So when we go out to speak to other agencies about us and deliver training session, we have updated our training sessions in line with the results from the survey.

One of the things we are looking to do as an agency is to follow up on Beyond the Gaze with some research the focuses specifically on male sex work and the internet and we are in discussion with academics about potentially getting that funded. Similar exercise but very much focused on just male sex work.

Also, now that we got this fantastic piece of research on online sex work it is actually defining boundaries with online sex work, you know, social media, apps, street to online, it's one of those blurred edges; how do they feed into each other and how do they influence each other as well, that kind of stuff.

Overall the training we delivered would have a direct line of change into practitioners working routine:



Conclusions: The participants all said that their engagement with Beyond the Gaze had increased their knowledge. The majority of participants said that their engagement with Beyond the Gaze provided information or guidance in which helped further develop service provision for online sex workers.

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Recommendations: It is recommended that policymakers take internet-based sex workers into consideration when creating new regulations since internet-based sex workers account for the largest part of the market. Furthermore, it is recommended that services try to incorporate some ways to support internet-based sex workers since internet-based sex work is the largest part of the market.

