

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Goldsmiths, University of London		
Unit of Assessment: 22, Anthropology and Development Studies		
Title of case study: Improving the personal and population health of sex workers: The Praed Street Project		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000-2007		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Sophie Day	Professor, Anthropology	1993-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013-2017		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Historic and widespread discrimination towards sex workers impeded the provision of appropriate health care and support in the UK. Drawing on longitudinal research into the health and career trajectories of sex workers, Professor Sophie Day challenged medical and public assumptions about their health risks and support needs. Day's combined qualitative/quantitative research directly informed specialist service provision at the Praed Street Project in London, leading to the establishment of the UK's first dedicated and integrated health service for sex workers. The Praed Street Project had a transformative effect in providing clinical and non-clinical support to sex workers as Day's research continued to challenge stereotypes, and inform policy as well as social science and health care training.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Responding to widespread fears that sex workers would drive HIV transmission among heterosexuals in the mid-1980s, Day collaborated with Professor Helen Ward (School of Public Health, Imperial College London) to develop a novel methodology for understanding and denominating marginalised groups through combined anthropological and epidemiological methods. Their research provided an evidence base for working with sex workers, who had been considered 'hard to reach' and 'out of reach' from service perspectives. This allowed a large enough population to be studied over time, leading to a new understanding of the prevalence and incidence of infectious disease, social mobility and working life risk. These data demonstrated a need for specialist services that were non-stigmatising and sensitive to local conditions.</p> <p>Between 1998-2003, Day and Ward were joint PI's on the Wellcome Trust funded project, <i>Changes in prostitution</i> (053592) and in 2000 they established the <i>European Network for HIV/STD Prevention in Prostitution</i>, supported by the European Commission across 18 countries (2000-2003). Pre-2000, Day's work had focused on collecting longitudinal data about women's working lives and the local industry. From 2000, she embarked on the data analysis that addressed changing conditions in sex work and led to service recommendations, including how to integrate clinical with other support, how to increase the geographical and demographic reach of services, and how to build trust and collaborate with participants. These recommendations were based on 3 key insights:</p> <p>Firstly, Day and Ward observed a low prevalence of HIV infection among sex workers (owing to widespread condom use) and no evidence of increasing incidence over time. There was a high mortality rate, and they were able to demonstrate that the greatest risk to sex workers' health and life expectancy was not infectious disease or drug use, but violence. (R1, R4, R6).</p>		

Secondly, their research into sex worker careers challenged stereotypes about 'trafficked' victims, emerging in response to increased migration and its subsequent regulation. These misconceptions had impeded reforms to sex work in the UK (R1, R3).

Thirdly, Day's monograph, *On the Game* (R1) provided insights into sex workers' responses to widespread discrimination, which led them to segregate their private and public affairs (R5). This had positive and negative health consequences, helping to account for low infection rates on the one hand but aggravating reproductive health problems on the other. In *On the Game* Day challenged prejudices about sex workers' reproductive bodies and provided new visibility to their longstanding notions of consent, including those surrounding date rape.

Her recommendations for targeted and integrated services for sex workers were incorporated into the NHS-funded Praed Street Project which operated in London for over 37 years and provided specialist clinical and non-clinical services. These responded to changes in the sex industry in co-created interventions to support non-English speakers and those who had moved from street to indoor work, ensuring access to off-site testing and new forms of screening for diseases that presented a risk, like TB. This service model combined HIV/STI prevention, health promotion, social support and advocacy.

3. References to the research

R1. Day, Sophie. *On the Game: Women and Sex Work**. London, Pluto Press (2007). [Book] Pp. 277. (ISBN: 0745317588)

* Won prizes in the UK and USA: Wellcome Medal for Anthropology as Applied to Medical Problems (2006) and Eileen Basker Memorial Prize, American Anthropological Association

R2. Day, Sophie, Ward, Helen (eds) *Sex work, Mobility and Health in Europe*. London: Kegan Paul (2004). [Edited Book] Pp. 281. (ISBN: 710309422)

R3. Day, Sophie. The re-emergence of 'trafficking': sex work between slavery and freedom. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2010; 16 (4): 816-834. [Journal Article] (ISSN: 1467-9655). DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9655.2010.01655.x

R4. Ward, Helen, Day, Sophie. What happens to women who sell sex? Report of a unique occupational cohort. *Sexually Transmitted Infections* 2006; 82 (5): 413-417. (ISSN: 1368-4973). DOI: 10.1136/sti.2006.020982

R5. Kilvington, Judith, Day, Sophie and Ward, Helen. European Prostitution Policy: A Time of Change*? *Feminist Review* 2001; 67: 79-94. (ISSN: 0141-7789). DOI: 10.1080/01417780150514510

*also produced as a leaflet and disseminated to 18 countries in Europe

R6. Ward, Helen, Day, Sophie, Green, A, Cooper K, Weber J. Declining prevalence of STI in the London sex industry, 1985 to 2002. *Sexually Transmitted Infections* 2004; 80 (5): 374-379. (ISSN: 1368-4973). DOI: 10.1136/sti.2003.009068

***All outputs available on request**

4. Details of the impact

Day's research, presented in *On the Game* (R1), was integral to the origins, approach and service offered to sex workers attending the Praed Street Project in London. In the 4 years between August 2013-2017 the Praed Street Project provided vital health care services and support for up to 1,800 individuals p.a. before its closure owing to NHS reconfigurations. The Project's success helped to establish Day as a leading expert in the health and safety of sex workers. Her research has informed national and international policy, practice and advisory services as well as educational courses in top ranking universities.

Shaping Praed Street Project services, August 2013-2017: Day's research indicated that sex workers do not separate health from other aspects of their lives, such as immigration, welfare, safety, policing and the law. Furthermore, it showed that sex workers will attend services that provide appropriate and integrated support relevant to people working in this industry (R1). The NHS funded the Praed Street Project services on the basis of initial research findings from 1991-2017 and, by August 2013, the Project offered 11 drop-in sessions per week, enabling sex workers to develop health and safety strategies, obtain counselling, referrals, and clinical care. Routinely collected NHS data (2015-2017) shows that the Project attracted women with different backgrounds from all sectors of the industry. The data records 2,339 different coded activities, including sexual and other health care (e.g. addiction, reproductive & mental health, violence), demonstrating the demand for an integrated service where sex workers could access tailored advice on a range of different issues, that are now known (as a result of Day's research) to significantly affect their health and wellbeing [S1].

The provision of public funding for the Praed Street Project is testament to its perceived significance to service users and for broader STI/HIV prevention. Whilst it is difficult to provide detailed insights into the effect of the Project on the everyday life of individual users (given the nature of the industry and the confidential services on offer), comments collected from social media platforms, including Twitter and the Support and Advice for Escorts (SAAFE) online forum give an indication of how highly valued the Project was [S2]:

29/1/2015: "I've been visiting the Praed Street Project for years and the ladies are so lovely not to mention all the great advice and support I get from them"

06/0/2016: "Use them to get our certs*. Excellent service every time".

08/11/2016: "They have been a god send for me over the years ..."

**Some workplaces require certification that sex workers are free of infection.*

On news of Praed Street Project's closure in 2017, service users again took to social media to voice dismay about the loss of integrated, specialist services. Responding to a thread on the SAAFE forum about the closure, entitled 'sex worker services at Paddington', commentators reflected, "...I've had bad experiences in the past when I used the clinic for non-sex workers there"; "I might as well just go to my local GUM [genito-urinary medicine] and not admit to being a sex worker" [S2]. In 2018, a Lancet report suggested parallel concerns, widely shared across health associations and charities including the National AIDS Trust and Terrence Higgins Trust, and a Kings Fund (2018) blog which describes researchers' and policy advisors' alarm about the closure of sexual health services. Reflecting on this trend and highlighting the benefits of providing the blend of services on offer at the Praed Street Project, a British Medical Journal blog post (2018) notes that remaining services for sex workers have a less holistic approach that makes them less effective [S3].

Challenging stereotypes and transforming lives through public debate and cultural performances: Day contributed to public debate about sex and sex lives at an event at the Royal Court in 2014 [S4] and advised on the Young Vic's 2015 Brolly Project, a response to Shakespeare's Measure for Measure, in which members of the local community drew on their own sex industry experiences. Day's involvement in the Brolly Project play, called *See Me Now*, included helping the production team form a relationship with Praed Street Project and recruiting sex workers as creators and performers.

Challenging the stigma associated with their work and the wider policing of sexuality, *See Me Now* was performed at Latitude and the Young Vic in 2015. Imogen Brodie, former director of Taking Part, Young Vic (2012-2018) and David Lan (former Artistic Director, Young Vic 2001-2018) confirm that Day's research and involvement in the project benefitted the lives of those involved, helping them gain skills and confidence. For example:

"One member of the group has been accepted into drama school to retrain as an actor, another has created a solo show which was performed at BAC, and another used the

money she earned from the run of the show to pay for gender surgery. She describes the show as giving her a chance to live her true life – a chance she’s been waiting for many years. Whilst it is clear that these changes are not solely down to taking part in a play, it is also evident that the creative process had a significant impact on the people involved” [S5].

Brodie and Lan go on to talk of the wider cultural implications of *See Me Now* on audiences: “It challenged expectations and stereotypes. It illustrated the huge range of people who are sex workers. It shone a light on a section of society which holds great fascination but little understanding.” Comments from the audience on social media further corroborate this impact, “The Brolly Project @youngvictheatre overwhelmingly beautiful. Shattered stereotypes, full of hopeful hearts” [S6].

Informing attitudes to sex workers’ health through evidence provided to Liberal Democrat policy advisory group: In 2015, the Liberal Democrats embarked on reviewing and updating their 1994 Policy on Sex Work and Day was invited to contribute evidence to the *Liberal Democrat Working Group on Consenting Commercial Sex Work*, Liberal Democrats HQ. In advising the working group, which included an MP, MEP, Peer and other elected representatives, Day provided a historical overview of career trajectories, health provision and treatment of sex workers in the UK. The influence of her research on the working group’s thinking can be traced in the Working Party’s *Sex Work: Policy Consultation Paper* [126] (2016), including commentary on access to health services (p.17) and questions posed, e.g. Q25; “Is it important to maintain sexual health services separate from GP’s?” (p.31) [S7]. As a foundational source of evidence about the long term health and career trajectories of sex workers, (R1, R4, R6) the influence of Day’s research on the resulting Policy Paper [126]; ‘*A Rational Approach to Harm Reduction*’ is reflected in recommendations about stigma and risk, ‘one stop shops’ (7.4.4), and statements which refer to Day’s research findings; “evidence suggests that sex workers are more likely to engage in safe sex than their non-sex worker counterparts” (7.4.5) [S8]. The motion to “decriminalise sex work and provide them [sex workers] with support that will improve their health and help them feel safer” was passed unamended at the LibDem 2017 conference and contributes to ongoing national debate about the social, cultural and legal treatment of sex workers [S9].

Broadening approaches to health education to improve training for health care professionals: In making a contribution to the broader field of Anthropology and Public Health, Day’s research on sex workers’ health and wellbeing has achieved recognition through the Wellcome Medal for Anthropology as Applied to Medical Problems (2006) and Eileen Basker Memorial Prize, American Anthropological Association (2007). Her book, *On the Game* (2007) (R1) has become a key educational resource for social and health sciences and between 2014-2020 has been used in pedagogy and health care training in undergraduate and graduate courses at: the Central European, Edinburgh, Johns Hopkins Universities and the Universities of Cambridge, Kent, Surrey and Imperial and University Colleges London *inter alia*. It is a set text for training social scientists and health professionals about research evidence and its application in the sex industry, which enables a better understanding of health and other social circumstances, individual and population health.

At Imperial College London, the history of the Praed Street Project is used to train health practitioners in research methods and practice, providing an evidence base for services developed with sex workers and in response to emerging issues. Courses such as *Society and Health* (350 1st year medical students, Foundations of Clinical Practice, until 2016) *Anthropology in Public Health*, Master’s in Public Health (20-40 students, per year to date), *Global Health* training (undergraduates and postgraduates) incorporate social science approaches to underpin students’ understanding of healthcare. Day and Ward’s teaching and research in this field and the Praed Street Project model, in particular, are used to enable trainees to challenge widespread cultural and medical stereotypes. The majority of students

on these courses complete training to practice as doctors and public health professionals [S10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Praed Street Project: services for sex workers

S1) Evidence of the reach of Praed Street Project: NHS activity data, 2015-2017 (courtesy Dawn Wilkinson & colleagues, Jefferiss Wing Clinic).

S2) Evidence of the significance of Praed Street Project for service users via Twitter: a) Tweets [@PaddProject4SW](#) by users of the Praed Street Project, August 2013-2017 and via the SAAFE forum: b) [Comments](#) on 'sex worker services at Paddington' [Grouped source]

S3) Evidence of effectiveness of targeted services for sex workers: Millie Davies' student research report 'Services for Sex Workers in London' published on the [BMJ blog](#) (30 August 2018). [Blog post]

Contributing to public debate and raising awareness

S4) Evidence of contribution to public debate: [The Royal Court Theatre, 'Big Idea' Panel \(2014\)](#) discussing Alecky Blythe's *The Mistress Contract*, (chair, Libby Purves; members, Alecky Blythe, **Sophie Day**, Lynne Segal, Peter Tatchell)

S5) Evidence of Day's impact on the Brolly Project's play, *See Me Now* (2015) at the Young Vic: Letter from Imogen Brodie (former Director of Taking Part at the Young Vic, 2012-2019) and David Lan (Artistic Director, Young Vic 2001-2018). [Testimony]

S6) [Evidence of the impact](#) of The Brolly Project's play *See Me Now* (2015) on audiences, Young Vic, 'Taking Part at the Young Vic: Summer - Autumn 2015' (30 November 2015). [Blog post]

Informing policy development

S7) Evidence of the Liberal Democrat working party seeking Day's advice on their updated sex worker policy recommendations and their subsequent consultation paper: a) Invitation from the Chair of the *Liberal Democrat Working Group on Consenting Commercial Sex Work* to present research; b) Policy Consultation Paper on Sex Work Policy, 126 (2016) (see pages 17 and 31, for example, on specialised health services for sex workers). [Grouped Source]

S8) Evidence of influence on Liberal Democrat policy recommendations; 'A Rational Approach to Harm Reduction: Policy Paper 126' (2017) (see p.66, 67 on the trusted role of One Stop Shops for sex workers). [Report]

S9) Commentary on passing of the policy to decriminalise sex workers at the Liberal Democrat Conference, 2017 published in the [Liberal Democrat Voice](#). [Article]

Impact on teaching practice

S10) Evidence of contribution of courses in Anthropology and Public Health, taught by Day and Ward, to overarching approach to training medical professionals at Imperial College, London: a) Undergraduate Course description: BSc Global Health; b) Masters Module description: Anthropology in Public Health [Course outlines] [Grouped source]