

# Safety First!

## A PERSONAL SAFETY HANDBOOK FOR WOMEN INVOLVED IN SEX WORK

Quay Services is part of Drugs Action,  
a registered charity, Number SC013582,  
and a company limited by guarantee.



Main Office: 7 Hadden Street, Aberdeen, AB11 6NU

# INTRODUCTION

**This handbook has been written for women working in the sex industry. It contains common sense information about keeping safe when working on the streets, in flats or escorting to homes and hotels.**

**We hope that you will find some useful tips and information. If you have any other useful tips for personal safety whilst working in the sex industry then tell us at Quay Services and we can circulate them to other women.**

**Working in the sex industry can be unpredictable and dangerous at times and no amount of careful thought and planning can completely remove all the potential risks you may face. This handbook therefore also provides advice about what to do if things go wrong and gives details of agencies that can help.**

# **1. General Advice**

- What to wear
- Spiked drink, drugs and food
- Prevent the spread of Hepatitis B and C and HIV
- Use of condoms – best practice

# **2. Working on the Streets**

- General advice
- Punters in cars
- Punters on foot

# **3. Working Indoors**

- Before going
- On your way to the venue
- On arrival

# **4. If Things go wrong**

- If you are followed
- If someone becomes aggressive
- If you are attacked
- What to do after an attack
- How to help a friend who has been attacked

# **5. Useful Contact Numbers**

# 1 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 (available from Quay Services) and don't be afraid to use it. **ALWAYS KEEP IT HANDY** – the bottom of your bag 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 that you can get help quickly.
- Alcohol and drugs can affect your ability to recognise risky situations and act on your instinct. Be aware you are much more at risk if you are under the influence of drink or drugs.

- Punters are also more risky/unpredictable if they have been drinking or using drugs. Be aware of this when assessing whether to go.
- Appearances can be deceptive. Don't assume someone is ok just because they look 'acceptable'.
- When talking to a punter **LOOK CONFIDENT, BE ASSERTIVE, STRONG AND IN CONTROL** – dodgy punters usually go for people who look vulnerable.
- Let the punter walk in front of you and keep your eyes on him and his hands at all times.
- Be friendly but firm when negotiating services with a punter and be firm about what you do and don't do.
- Always get the money first and stash it away separately from your other money. This way, if a punter does try to rob you he will not find all your money and you can at least save some of it.
- Memorise as much as you can about difficult or violent punters and their vehicles. If you wish, this information can be circulated to other women through the Quay Services 'Dodgy Punters' Scheme at the Drop In.
- **REMEMBER THAT NO-ONE HAS THE RIGHT TO BE ABUSIVE TOWARDS YOU OR TO HURT YOU**



# WHAT TO WEAR

## DO

- Tie up long hair
- If you need glasses or contact lenses – wear them!
- Wear clothing that does not have to be removed or that is easy to put on and take off
- Wear clothes that make you clearly visible at night
- Wear trousers with easy access – especially if you go in punters cars
- Wear shoes/boots that you can take off easily or run in

# WHAT NOT TO WEAR

## DON'T

- Have long hair loose
- Wear clothing/jewellery that could be used to harm you, e.g. scarves, heavy necklaces, large hoop or dangly earrings
- Wear floaty clothing that could easily get trapped in car doors
- Wear sharp jewellery that could damage condoms
- Put your handbag strap over your neck and shoulder. Just your shoulder is safer as if someone grabs it you won't be choked
- Wear shoes that are tricky to put on/take off



# SPIKED DRINK, DRUGS AND FOOD

- If the punter offers you a drink ask for an unopened can or bottle. **DO NOT TAKE ANY DRINK YOU HAVE NOT SEEN PREPARED FROM THE START.** Make sure he is happy to drink from the same bottle/glass/can as you.
- If your punter offers you food **DO NOT ACCEPT IT UNLESS IT'S PRE-PACKED AND STILL IN IT'S WRAPPER.** Make sure he is happy to eat the same food as you.
- Avoid accepting drugs from or taking drugs with punters; you can never be sure what they are giving you.





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take **any** drink  
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and still in  
it's **wrapper.**

# PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF HEPATITIS B, C & HIV

- If you inject drugs, **do not share works, water, spoons, filters or anything used for preparing a hit.** Quay Services staff can provide you with a needle exchange service and can also give you practical advice on alternatives to injecting.
- If you inject drugs, a Hepatitis B vaccination is available. Quay services staff can arrange this for you at DA or the G.U.M. clinic.
- **Do not share toothbrushes or razors with anyone.**
- **Always use condoms.** This protects you against the spread of sexually transmitted infections as well as preventing unwanted pregnancies. See section on Condoms – best practice.
- Always **cover any cuts or grazes** with a plaster or waterproof dressing.
- If you use Crack Cocaine, **do not share pipes** as there may be a risk of Hepatitis C transmission from people who have cut or cracked lips.
- Burns caused to fingers/lips from smoking crack can produce cracks/wounds in the skin/lips that can make transmission of infection more of a risk.
- For further information or **if you would like to be tested for Hepatitis B, C or HIV** speak to a Quay Services worker.

# USING CONDOMS – BEST PRACTICE

- Always have a condom ready and easy to reach.
- Use only one condom per job.
- Use flavoured for oral.
- Use extra/ultra strong for sex.
- Practice different techniques of putting a condom on so you are able to put a condom on quickly and easily.
- **Use condom friendly lubricant** (no baby oil/lotions, skin creams, hair products or anything that's not a proper lubricant) with each condom to help prevent it from bursting.
- Some lipsticks/glosses may weaken condoms and cause them to split, so always try and wipe off any residue from your lips before oral.
- **NEVER AGREE TO DO A JOB WITHOUT CONDOMS.** The extra cash you may get for this is not worth the risk of exposing yourself to STI's (many infections don't have symptoms and someone can look or 'feel' clean but still be infectious).

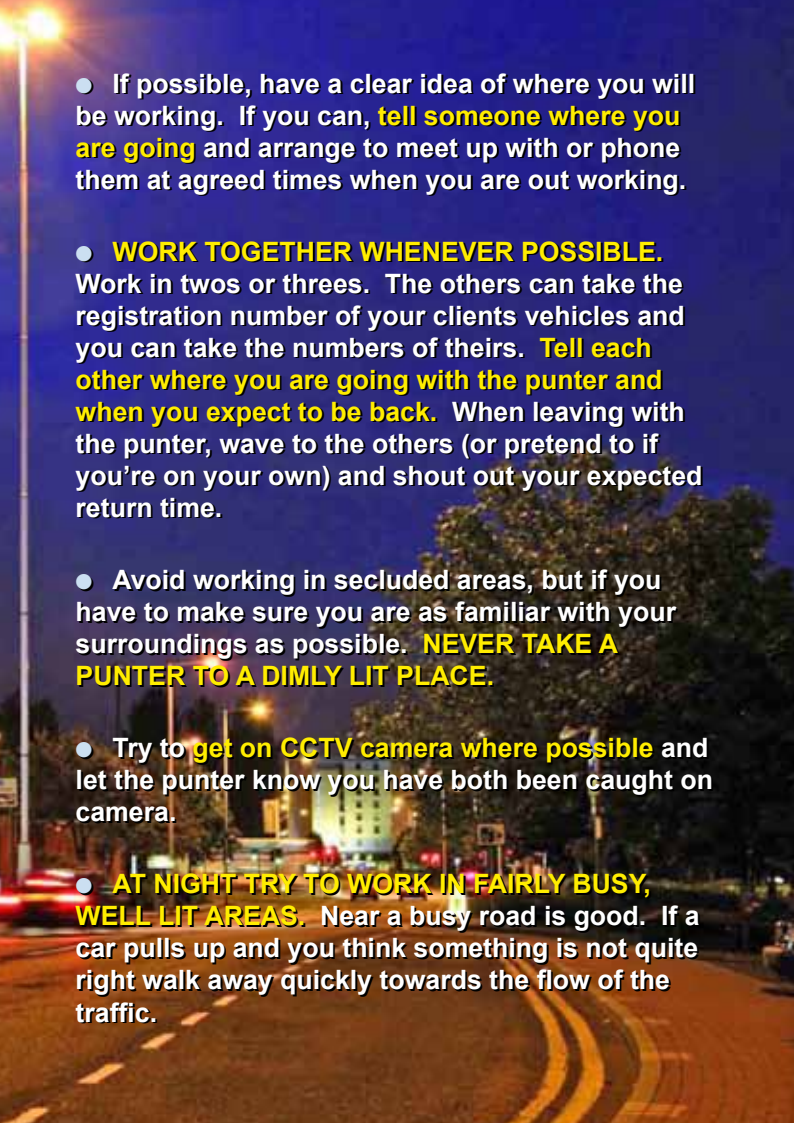


# 2 WORKING ON THE STREETS

## GENERAL ADVICE

- Get to know the area you work in well. **Know the safest escape routes, police stations, pubs, open shops and petrol stations.** Know the bus routes and where to get a taxi.



A night street scene with a road, trees, and streetlights. The background is dark blue, suggesting dusk or night. There are streetlights and some blurred lights from buildings or cars in the distance. The road has white dashed lines and a yellow double line.

- If possible, have a clear idea of where you will be working. If you can, **tell someone where you are going** and arrange to meet up with or phone them at agreed times when you are out working.

- **WORK TOGETHER WHENEVER POSSIBLE.** Work in twos or threes. The others can take the registration number of your clients vehicles and you can take the numbers of theirs. **Tell each other where you are going with the punter and when you expect to be back.** When leaving with the punter, wave to the others (or pretend to if you're on your own) and shout out your expected return time.

- Avoid working in secluded areas, but if you have to make sure you are as familiar with your surroundings as possible. **NEVER TAKE A PUNTER TO A DIMLY LIT PLACE.**

- Try to **get on CCTV camera where possible** and let the punter know you have both been caught on camera.

- **AT NIGHT TRY TO WORK IN FAIRLY BUSY, WELL LIT AREAS.** Near a busy road is good. If a car pulls up and you think something is not quite right walk away quickly towards the flow of the traffic.



# PUNTERS IN CARS

## BEFORE YOU GET IN



- Approach the vehicle with caution. Ask the punter to wind down the window to speak to him and keep enough distance from the car to avoid being grabbed.
- Be clear about the services you are prepared to provide and your prices.
- Tell the punter you are taking the registration number before you get in.
- Look for potential weapons lying around the vehicle, even everyday objects that may be used against you.
- Check the number of people in the vehicle before you get in. **NEVER GET INTO A CAR WITH MORE THAN ONE MAN IN IT.** If it's a van remember that there may be others in the back and check it if possible. Think very carefully before agreeing to get in.
- You suggest where to go to do business, so you can be more in control. If the punter does not agree, ask him where he wants to go. If you don't like the sound of it then don't get in. If the place he suggests seems ok, make sure you tell someone where you're going and how long you expect to be.



## **ONCE YOU'RE IN**

- **Most modern cars have central locking, so be aware of this. Ask the driver to keep your window wound down.**
- **In two-door cars insist on staying in the front seat – escaping from the back is very difficult.**
- **Try to make sure the punter does not 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- especially if it has central locking.**
- **Keep as much clothing on as possible, in case you have to run.**



If you feel scared or you are attacked **try to keep 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 the wrapper and you know the brand name); **anything that you could positively identify** if you report the incident to the police.



# PUNTERS ON FOOT

- **Follow your instinct.** If you are uncertain about a punter on foot or you have a bad feeling then do not go with him under any circumstances.

- Try to get a good look at the punter and memorise details of what he looks like, what he's wearing etc.

- Be clear about the services you provide and your prices.

- **You suggest where to go to do business,** so you can be sure it's somewhere safe. If the punter does not agree, ask him where he wants to go. If you don't like the sound of it then don't go. If the place he suggests seems ok, **make sure you tell someone where you're going and how long you expect to 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 CALM AND GET TO A BUSY PUBLIC PLACE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**

# THINGS TO KEEP ON YOU...

- **Condoms and Lubricant**  
Quay Services can provide you free of charge with a range of condoms and lubricant at times and locations convenient to you.
- **Pen and Paper**
- **Mobile Phone**



# 3

## WORKING INDOORS

We would strongly advise that you do not go with a punter to their home or any other venue. This can be very risky as recent experience suggests that the most serious attacks against women happen in the punter's home.

**If you do decide to go;**

### **BEFORE GOING**

- **ALWAYS SPEAK TO THE PUNTER YOURSELF.**

Use this opportunity to suss him out and find out exactly what he wants before you go and to make sure you're comfortable with it. Be clear about the cost of the service.

- If a punter sounds drunk or under the influence of drugs then seriously **consider not taking the job.**

- **Always** try to meet first time punters in a public place, such as the hotel bar, particularly if you have not managed to speak with them yourself.

- **Tell someone where you are going and when you expect to be back.**

## ON YOUR WAY TO THE VENUE

- **Pay attention** to where the venue is and **potential points of safety**, 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 how isolated (or not) you might be.
- How many cars are parked outside the property or in the driveway? Are there more than you would expect? **It may not be safe** if there are others there that you were not expecting.
- How many floors up are you? **This will affect potential escape routes.**



## ON ARRIVAL

- **Memorise the layout** of the venue and the **escape routes** (ask to use the bathroom so that you can have a quick scan about), especially **the way to the door**.
- Use this time to check if there are any **other people hiding in the venue**. It may **not be safe** if there are other people there you were not expecting.
- Try to get yourself and the punter **seen by any CCTV cameras** that may be positioned at the venue's entrance or reception.
- 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 you could use? **Where is it?**
- **Pay attention to details** in the venue (pictures/décor/layout/furniture) or **remember the hotel room number** so you could positively identify 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 punter or the situation then **leave immediately**.

**If you start to feel scared or are attacked try to keep calm and get out of the venue and to a busy public place as soon as possible. Try to leave a small personal object somewhere discreet – something like an earring, bangle or an unused condom (make sure it's in the wrapper and you know the brand name); anything that could positively identify you if you decide to report the incident to the Police.**



# 4

## 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. Take the most public route to the most public place. When you get there, **tell someone you think you are being followed**, phone a taxi or phone a friend to arrange to meet you.
- 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.
- Do not head for home, even if there is someone waiting for you there. **It is 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 completing a report for the Quay Services '**Dodgy Punters**' scheme at the Drop In so that other women are aware.





# IF SOMEONE BECOMES AGGRESSIVE

Try to calm the person and talk them out of it by:

- Using open handed gestures
- Speaking in a low, quiet tone and **don't raise your voice or shout**
- Using friendly, sensitive language
- Trying to show understanding and sympathy
- Persuading them not to carry out the attack
- Thinking about how you will get out of the situation – **do not let fear/panic take over**
- Telling them someone is meeting you, expecting you home soon or waiting for you
- Cry – even if you have to pretend

**DECISION TIME** - Do not try to fight a man unless you are sure you can win or you are convinced he intends to kill you.

If you decide to submit, cut off your thoughts and 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 reasonably confident that you are going to immobilise your attacker. Aim for his eyes, groin and chest and then get away from him as soon as possible.

# SELF DEFENCE

- **Walk away from danger -**  
defend yourself only if necessary
- **Do not carry a weapon -**  
it could be used against you
- If someone attempts to attack you  
**make a lot of noise, scream and shout**
- If you have to fight back to escape  
**attack soft areas, such as the eyes, testicles and kick shins**
- **If they have their hands around your throat, smack both ears with the flat of both hands**
- **Run against traffic direction and towards people and lights**
- If you need to yell for help **shout 'fire' or 'police'**
- If there are people around **address a person directly** i.e. 'You in the red coat'



# WHAT TO DO AFTER AN ATTACK

## ● REMEMBER THE ATTACK IS NOT YOUR FAULT

- Find a safe place away from the attacker. Ask a friend to stay with you.
- Report the attack to the police and a local support organisation such as Quay Services or Rape and Abuse Support. They are there to help you.
- If you report 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.
- If you are planning to report the attack to the police or to the Quay Services 'Dodgy Punters' Scheme write down everything you remember about the attack and the attacker. What did they look like? What did they say?



**Remember the att**

- Give the police all the details about the attack, however intimate, including anything unusual you noted about your attacker.
- Show the 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.
- Call or come to the Quay Services Drop In.
- Quay Services can provide advice about your future including help to leave prostitution.

**ack is not your fault** ,

# HOW TO HELP A FRIEND WHO HAS BEEN ATTACKED

- Listen and be there
- Encourage your friend to report the attack to the police. It might help your friend to contact Quay Services or Rape and Abuse Support for further support when making a decision about this.
- Try to discourage your friend from taking a bath or a shower if she is thinking about reporting the attack. She may be desperate to wash, so gently explain why it's important that she doesn't. Even if your friend has bathed or washed their clothes, you should still encourage her to report the attack.
- Support your friend to get medical help.
- Encourage her 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 Quay Services, Rape and Abuse Support and Victim Support. Encourage her to get support, but remember that only your friend can make the decision to do this.
- You can also phone Rape and Abuse Support or the DA helpline for guidance and support for yourself.



# 5

## USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

- **Quay Services** (part of **Drugs Action**)  
TEL: **01224 594700** (Helpline)  
**01224 577120** (Admin)  
**07704609186** (7-11pm  
Mon, Weds, Thurs and Fri)
- **Police Liaison Officer**  
**Based in Queen Street Police Station**  
TEL: **07747607711**
- **Grampian Police**  
TEL: **0845 600 5700**  
(non-emergency)  
**999** (emergency)

## EMERGENCY HEALTH SERVICES IN ABERDEEN

- **Aberdeen Royal Infirmary**  
TEL: **0845 456 6000**
  - **GUM Services (Woolmanhill Hospital)**  
TEL: **01224 555555**
- Corner Clinic (GUM services for women only)**  
TEL: **07917067093**

## **SUPPORT SERVICES IN ABERDEEN**

- **Rape and Abuse Support**  
TEL: 01224 620772
- **Aberdeen Domestic Abuse Project**  
TEL: 0845 345 6766
- **Grampian Women's Aid**  
TEL: 01224 593381
- **Samaritans**  
TEL: 01224 574488
- **Cyrenians Womens Worker**  
based at Simon House  
TEL: 01224 572877
- **Shelterline**  
TEL: 08088004444
- **Social Work Duty Team**  
**(Aberdeen City Council)**  
TEL: 01224 765220  
01224 693936 (out of hours)
- **Victim Support**  
TEL: 01224 622478
- **Alcohol Support**  
TEL: 01224 573887







# Notes

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 26 horizontal dotted lines on a cream background, provided for writing notes.

**[www.drugsaction.co.uk](http://www.drugsaction.co.uk)**

**Helpline: 01224 594700**

**Admin: 01224 577120**

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