

MANCHESTER ACTION ON STREET HEALTH

Independent Evaluation of the Impact of Services 2023 - 2025 Executive Summary

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MASH EVALUATION REPORT 2023-2025 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

This executive summary presents the findings of an independent evaluation conducted to assess the impact of Manchester Action on Street Health (MASH) services for women involved in sex work across Greater Manchester. The evaluation, carried out between November 2024 and January 2025, examined how effectively MASH delivers on its core mission: helping women remain safe, healthy, and empowered. The evaluation employed a comprehensive, mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data, including surveys, interviews, focus groups, and activity data analysis. Conducted by independent researchers CK Kpiaye and Sarah Tayleur in collaboration with Sue's Space, a lived-experience advisory panel, the evaluation ensured the voices and experiences of women accessing services were central.

“As soon as you come in, it's familiar. They make you feel safe, like you belong again.”

2. Key Findings

The evaluation highlights the important role MASH plays in the lives of many of the women it supports. Some of the most notable findings of the evaluation are presented below.

Demographic data

The evaluation identified significant gaps in demographic data, limiting a comprehensive analysis of service reach and effectiveness among diverse groups. However, the available data revealed some notable patterns — for example, a lower proportion of Asian women accessing MASH services compared to the wider Manchester population, and a significantly higher proportion of women with disabilities.



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The evaluation found that MASH successfully created an inclusive environment for trans women and women with disabilities. Trans women accessing MASH services expressed feeling welcomed and affirmed, which is critical given the limited availability of trans-inclusive support services. Disabled women similarly praised MASH for the flexibility and adjustments made to ensure accessibility and inclusivity.

"Everything is excellent here. Not many places are trans-inclusive and trans-friendly, but this is the best place."

"MASH makes sure women feel included."

Health

MASH supports women's health by addressing their immediate and longer-term needs. The evaluation identified substantial health improvements, with 86% of women in 2024 reporting better health due to MASH's services. Essential health interventions include STI prevention and treatment, mental health assistance, drug and alcohol harm reduction, and the provision of basic needs such as food, clothing, and hygiene facilities.

Women consistently emphasised the importance of compassionate, non-judgemental healthcare. Women also highlighted the vital role MASH played in addressing mental health challenges and substance use, often facilitating their first contact with external healthcare services.

"If it wasn't for MASH's partnerships with GP services and their way of working I never would have gone to the doctors."

"Seeing the nurse helped me with my STDs... She supported and encouraged me to go to the hospital and get blood tests."

"They are brilliant, they help you out in every way. They give clothing, food. They are like a second family."

"Now I have come off heroin through MASH."

Wellbeing

Women described MASH as a source of emotional stability, friendship, and community, with 90% reporting improved wellbeing as a result of MASH support.

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The consistent, compassionate care from MASH fosters resilience, boosts self-esteem, and reduces isolation. Many women who previously felt excluded or overlooked by other services deeply valued the emotional validation and empathy provided by MASH.

Women also highlighted MASH's role in reducing stress, increasing their coping skills, and enhancing their sense of identity and self-worth. The organisation is instrumental in rebuilding trust and relationships, creating an environment where women feel genuinely heard and understood.

"Helped me look at myself and have really tried to help me love myself. More confidence."

"I'm really proud of myself. I really am."

"When my son saw me with my weight back on looking like his Mum again, he was overwhelmed. He looked so happy when he seen me and proud of how well I looked."

"I was suicidal, emotional, broken, and depressed, and coming here was the best thing."

Safety

MASH significantly enhances the safety of women involved in sex work. The outreach van is particularly crucial, offering both physical protection and emotional reassurance. Women repeatedly described the van as essential.



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“If I’m feeling down, in a bad place, when you see the van it’s like a light. It’s like being at sea and seeing a lighthouse.”



Between April 2023 and September 2024, MASH distributed 136 personal safety alarms and recorded 139 dodgy punter incidents, demonstrating proactive harm reduction efforts. Women expressed feeling secure and supported due to practical resources and emotional support, highlighting MASH's role in providing physical and psychological safety.

“Always know that someone is gonna be there for you...They offer a sense of security.”

“Without MASH I wouldn’t be here today, they have helped me a lot. I had nothing, I was sleeping on the road and they helped me find somewhere to live. I worked with the outreach van first, they helped me find the accommodation.”

Achieving Goals

MASH effectively supports women in identifying and achieving their personal goals, ranging from securing stable housing and improving financial independence to reconnecting with family and accessing education or training opportunities. Of surveyed women, 82% indicated that MASH helped them identify and achieve their priorities and goals.

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Women described feeling empowered and motivated by the structured yet flexible guidance provided, whether this involved practical life skills, financial management, or personal growth.

“A woman knows that we genuinely care because we do, you know, and I think that comes across, and it makes all the difference in the world sometimes.”

“[case worker] has helped me with money like getting PIP back pay. I’ve bought a brand new sofa, I’ve had carpets fitted.

It felt amazing to go out, buy furniture and pay for it. I can’t even explain it. I was so proud. Walking out with the receipt. I was so excited. I absolutely love it.”

Service Delivery

The evaluation strongly emphasised that how MASH delivers services is as impactful as the services themselves. Women highly valued MASH’s consistency, kindness, flexibility, and the genuine care of staff.

Women repeatedly praised MASH for creating a non-judgemental, welcoming, and trusting environment where they could engage comfortably, leading to deeper and more sustained impacts.

Women particularly appreciated the flexible, person-centred approach, emphasising that this adaptability allowed them to access support at their own pace and according to their individual circumstances and readiness.

“They are there to help. They understand what I am going through. They understand what I need.”

“Mash know and remember me and always remember the last thing I spoke about, even if it has been months and months. This means a lot to me and makes a difference to my feelings.”



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3. Recommendations

Based on the evaluation, the following recommendations were identified:

Review and simplify the Theory of Change: Engage with Sue's Space to streamline and clarify the existing framework.

Improve demographic data collection: Address significant data gaps to improve understanding of service reach and effectiveness.

Cultural competency: Offer structured training to ensure services are inclusive and culturally sensitive.

Promote service accessibility: Further reduce barriers for marginalised groups, enhancing visibility and targeted engagement.

“I love MASH. Like I say, MASH saved my life. They save many women's lives, actually. They're still doing it now.”

Conclusion

MASH is an essential service for women involved in sex work, providing safety, health support, wellbeing resources, and pathways to independence. By continuing its trauma-informed, person-centred approach, MASH can further its impact and ensure that all women receive the support they need to build safer, healthier lives.



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A big thanks also to Sue’s Space for collaborating with us on this project. Your time and effort made this work possible.



About the Authors

This evaluation was led by a dedicated project team with extensive experience in research, evaluation, and frontline service delivery for women experiencing multiple disadvantages, including those involved in sex work.

CK Kpiaye brings over 11 years of experience in the homelessness sector complemented by their own lived experience of substance use, rough sleeping, and the criminal justice system. CK began their career at St Mungo’s, supporting women exiting sex work and managing low-support housing services. Their passion lies in ensuring that women’s voices are heard and their experiences are central to service delivery, making them uniquely positioned to deliver evaluations that are both empathetic and effective.

Sarah Tayleur specialises in research and evaluation for non-profit organisations, with a focus on people experiencing multiple disadvantages, including women involved in sex work. Holding an MSc in Health and Social Care Management (Distinction), Sarah focussed her academic research on the barriers women involved in street-based sex work face to accessing sexual health services. Sarah’s work supports non-profits in enhancing their services, influencing funding outcomes, and ensuring long-term sustainability through robust evaluations and actionable insights.