



A Review of Effective Practice in Responding to Prostitution

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Ministerial Foreword

Prostitution can have far-reaching impacts for many communities and many people, sometimes with tragic consequences. The murders in 2009 of three women in Bradford who were involved in street prostitution clearly highlighted the risks faced by those involved, many of whom continue to face violence and exploitation. Often they will need help and support to beat addictions to drugs or alcohol and to help them to leave a life of prostitution. There is also the problem of the sexual exploitation of children and its serious long-term effects for the victims. In addition, local communities can suffer damage and local residents' lives can be severely affected by prostitution.

Local agencies know how to best respond to the needs of their particular community and the most effective responses are therefore developed at a local level. But Government can provide support to these local agencies as they develop and improve their response. This document aims to help communities affected by prostitution and to improve the lives of people involved, by helping Local Authorities and Community Safety Partnerships to develop a proactive approach to the complex issues involved.

Prevention is a key part of effective local strategies. Often this is focused on children but prevention can also help more broadly, with enforcement measures against those engaged in exploitation, or those who create demand for prostitution by buying sex. Many strategies also focus on improving the safety of those involved in prostitution, including by stopping attacks on those involved, and catching and convicting those responsible.

Good local strategies take account of the concerns and interest of all groups, including local residents, voluntary organisations and local partner agencies, as well as reaching out to those involved in prostitution themselves. Similarly, multi-agency approaches and partnership working can help all of the relevant issues to be tackled.

In these areas, and in others, this document contains lessons that can be learned and best practice that can be shared from across the UK. I am very grateful to the local agencies and to the people involved in prostitution who contributed their views and knowledge during the development of this document. I hope that it will be useful in helping other areas to develop an effective response.

Lynne Featherstone

1. Introduction & Purpose

1.1. The murders of three women who were involved in street prostitution in Bradford, and earlier murders in Ipswich, were a stark reminder of the dangers that can be faced by people involved in prostitution. The characteristics of prostitution make it hard to estimate the number and nature of people involved in the UK, but what is clear is that people involved in prostitution are particularly vulnerable to violent and sexual crime. At least 137 have been murdered since 1990 and women in street prostitution are 12 times more likely to be murdered than the rate for all women in same age group in the UK¹.

Aims & Principles

1.2. Improving the safety of those involved in prostitution and reducing violence committed against them is the key focus of this work. The issue of safety is therefore mainstreamed throughout the different themes considered in this review.

1.3. This document has been developed to help improve the lives of people involved in prostitution and the communities of which they are part. In doing so, it acknowledges the complexities involved and the range of issues that need to be balanced to ensure an effective response. The advice collated in this document is not intended to be prescriptive nor exhaustive. Rather, it draws on examples of responses and practices that individual areas have found to be effective.

1.4. As well as reflecting local circumstances, responses to prostitution reflect different ideological approaches². Some areas and partners focus primarily on reducing street prostitution; others take an approach that focuses mainly on reducing harm to those involved and/or encouraging people to exit prostitution altogether. Despite these differences, there remains common ground in prioritising the safety of those involved and ensuring they are given the support they need to improve their lives and achieve their aspirations.

1.5. In some cases, these aspirations will involve seeking a route out or an exit from prostitution. Support for those who wish to do so is therefore an important element in ensuring that people are protected from harm, and forms a key part of this review.

1.6. This review recognises both the similarities and differences between street prostitution and off-street prostitution. Whilst the former can often be more visible to communities and partners, examples are provided of work to support *all* people involved. This includes acknowledging the diversity of people involved in prostitution, taking account of men, transgender people, migrants and BME groups.

Audiences

1.7. This review is aimed at the strategic level of Local Authorities and Community Safety Partnerships. It is intended to allow and encourage them to develop a response to

¹ Salfati, C. G. (2009) Prostitute Homicide: An Overview of the Literature and Comparison to Sexual and Non-Sexual Female Victim Homicide, pp. 51-68. In D. Canter, M. Ioannou, & D. Youngs (Eds.) *Safer Sex in the City: The Experience and Management of Street Prostitution*. The Psychology, Crime and Law Series. Aldershot: Ashgate.

² It is for this reason that the term “person/people involved in prostitution” is used throughout, rather than “prostitute” or “sex worker” which are felt by some partners to be more value-loaded terms.

prostitution that aims to improve the outcomes for the community and particularly those involved in prostitution. It highlights key principles necessary for an effective response, illustrated by case studies and examples of work that are already happening across England and Wales.

1.8. How authorities choose to respond to prostitution in their area will of course depend upon local circumstances, and this review identifies effective practice for assessing local circumstances based on different approaches (Section 4 – Multi-Agency Working, provides more information).

1.9. It is hoped that this review is the start of a process of sharing and disseminating effective practice to help areas respond to prostitution. This can continue as the Government develops a general framework for sharing effective practice between partner agencies on a range of local issues.

Other resources

1.10. Useful links and other examples of effective practice in dealing with related issues are listed at Annex B. The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) is producing its strategy for *Policing Prostitution and Sexual Exploitation* and a link will be provided to that document when it becomes publicly available.

1.11. The Home Office has also collated effective practice examples to provide a tool in preventing and cutting crime, targeted at Community Safety Partnerships. This is available on the [Home Office website](#).

1.12. At a local level, there are many and diverse services and projects in operation across the UK. For example, the [UK Network of Sex Worker Projects' \(UKNSWP\) website](#) contains listings and contacts for many of them.

Key messages and lessons

1.13. Evidence from visits to 14 areas and consultation with experts in the field have consistently shown the following key elements of a successful strategy for responding to prostitution and keeping those involved safe:

- Taking account of the concerns of a broad range of constituencies, which includes local residents, statutory and voluntary sector agencies, as well as the people involved in prostitution themselves;
- A multi-agency approach, with as many relevant agencies involved as possible including relevant specialist services, is important to tackle the range of complex needs and issues that around prostitution;
- Considering prevention, particularly with regards to identifying and preventing sexual exploitation of children;
- Comprehensively mapping an area to identify a set of multiple and complex needs and issues to address. The safety of those involved in prostitution is a priority, alongside a wider range of support;
- Local 'Ugly Mugs' or 'Dodgy Punter' schemes can help improve safety by allowing people involved in prostitution to report incidents of violence, which can then enable

information about dangerous individuals to be disseminated to others or be used to report a crime to the police for investigation;

- The police's responsibility for public protection means that stopping attacks on those involved in prostitution, and catching and convicting those responsible, is a core part of reducing the harm from prostitution;
- Increasing the confidence of those involved in prostitution to report crimes to the police. This can involve working with sex work support projects to communicate the message that crimes against those involved in prostitution will be taken seriously;
- The availability of an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) or the services of a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) or a Rape Crisis Centre can make an important contribution to safety. A number of areas have developed a partnership with a SARC to ensure that those involved in prostitution who have suffered a serious sexual assault can access the appropriate services;
- Outreach is an effective way of achieving an initial engagement or awareness with individuals which can then lead to more sustained engagement;
- Individuals involved in prostitution are likely to have a wide and diverse range of needs that require addressing.
- Housing was identified as a particularly important issue for those seeking to stabilise their lives and to exit prostitution and to cease drug use;
- Ongoing monitoring can help ensure that appropriate standards are being upheld, that local objectives are being met, and that no adverse impacts are arising. Evaluation can also help maximise value for money of interventions and support.

2. Methodology

2.1. This review was commissioned by the Home Secretary. Its development was overseen by a steering group of representatives from:

- Home Office
- Department of Health
- Crown Prosecution Service
- Association of Chief Police Officers
- Local Government Association
- UK Network of Sex Work Projects
- Beyond the Streets
- Eaves
- National working group for sexually exploited children and young people

2.2. The steering group helped to chose 14 areas for the Home Office to visit to identify examples of effective practice and understand the elements that are integral to an effective response to prostitution³. The areas were:

- Birmingham
- Bradford
- Brighton
- Bristol
- Cardiff
- Derby
- Hackney
- Hull
- Ipswich
- Lambeth
- Liverpool
- Middlesbrough
- Manchester
- Tower Hamlets

2.3. A team from the Home Office met with relevant agencies in all 14 areas who were also given the opportunity to provide written submissions. Where possible, people accessing specialist services were also interviewed: primarily women involved or formerly involved in street prostitution, although some had been involved in off-street prostitution. It was not possible to speak to men or transgender people involved in prostitution as they were generally not represented amongst the clientele of the services visited.

2.4. Meetings were held in London and Manchester to present findings and to seek views. A number of organisations and individuals attended and were also invited to make written contributions, a summary of which was prepared and shared with the steering group to inform the development of the review.

2.5. The steering group advised on the process for consulting other organisations and on the development of this review, although – with their agreement – they were not expected to endorse the full final document.

³ Representatives from the Department of Health, the Local Government Association, and the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People were invited to join the steering group at the suggestion of other members after the areas had been identified.

2.6. The examples of effective practice in this document reflect work that is already taking place to respond to prostitution, and the current priorities of agencies within the areas visited. Although the examples and principles which have been identified may highlight responses focused on women in street prostitution, this review applies to all forms of prostitution. A comprehensive approach within a local area should seek to reflect the reality of all prostitution within that area.

3. Community Engagement

3.1. This document is intended to help local authorities and strategic forums such as Community Safety Partnerships develop a strategic response to the problems associated with prostitution. A key element is partnership working, with an important partner being the local community living and working within that particular area.

3.2. While it may be that community concerns are the immediate impetus for action, this review identified that the most effective responses take account of the concerns of a broad range of constituencies. This includes residents, people involved in prostitution and statutory and voluntary sector agencies.

3.3. It is important that the response to prostitution recognises people involved in prostitution as part of the community, and is developed with their involvement.

3.4. Methods that areas have adopted for ensuring that the views of members of the community contribute to a local strategy include inviting representatives of organisations such as the Neighbourhood Watch to be part of the operational forums, or holding regular public meetings involving specialist projects, police representatives and other appropriate agencies.

3.5. Formal surveys of community views can be helpful in tailoring a response. In Cardiff a survey of residents' views (commissioned from the University of Swansea)⁴ was conducted in the main areas where street prostitution takes place in order to inform the development of the approach. It identified a range of views in terms of how to respond to prostitution and an improved level of understanding of the challenges faced by those involved.

⁴ Sagar. T and Jones. D.A, & Harris. E, Community Perceptions of Street Sex Work in Cardiff, University of Swansea (2010)

4. Multi-agency working

Identification of needs

4.1. A response to prostitution should start by assessing the characteristics of prostitution within that area, and to identify the locations and communities whose needs should be addressed (including people involved in prostitution and local residents). This can identify which agencies need to be involved, where the response needs to be targeted, and how support will need to be delivered to address the community's needs.

4.2. Such an assessment can also form the basis for developing aims, objectives, terms of reference and outcome measures for a strategy.

4.3. An independent mapping process can help ensure that the results do not simply reflect the client base of existing services, and that they properly reflect the range of needs of people in street and off-street prostitution, and including men, transgender people, migrants, and sexually exploited children. For example, an area may experience an increase in migrants becoming involved in prostitution and may need to respond to this by adapting services to take account of language or cultural issues (particular issues relating to migrants involved in prostitution are covered in Section 6 – Holistic Support).

4.4. Although commissioning of independent mapping may require funding, it is an important element of identifying how other resources are allocated to ensure that they are meeting needs most efficiently. It can therefore be an aspect of ensuring more efficient long-term use of resources and improved value for money.

Multi-agency partnership

4.5. The range of complex needs and issues that need to be addressed around prostitution emphasises the need for a multi-agency approach. It is therefore vital to have as many relevant agencies as possible involved in a local response, including relevant specialist services whose expertise will be important in developing a strategy.

4.6. It is also important to adopt appropriate partnership structures to sustain this involvement and to ensure that each agency is contributing effectively and working to agreed terms of reference, objectives, and outcome measures. These can be informed by the findings of comprehensive mapping. Whatever the outcome of mapping and whatever priorities are identified, multi-agency partnerships will need to adhere to their duty of care for all citizens and their responsibility for public protection, including the public safety and protection of people involved in prostitution.

4.7. Partnerships and individual agencies should also be compliant with the refreshed National Compact (published in December 2010) which governs how they should engage with voluntary sector organisations. This can be accessed [here](#).

4.8. The different elements of support that need to be in place (set out in more detail in Section 6 – Holistic Support) will require the involvement of a number of agencies. The agencies represented in the areas visited included:

- Specialist prostitution projects and services
- Community safety Partnerships
- Health (including sexual, reproductive and mental health services)
- Police
- Local Authority housing services

- Drug and Alcohol services
- Social services
- Children's services
- Probation Service

4.9. As well as ensuring appropriate service delivery from each of these agencies at an operational level, an effective model will be needed to bring together the necessary agencies at a strategic level. A number of models were identified for ensuring effective multi-agency co-operation at operational and strategic level, which are considered below.

Joint strategy

4.10. A number of areas have produced a written strategy on prostitution, setting out agreed joint goals. This ensures that while the agencies may have different aims, and sometimes philosophical approaches, they are working towards common objectives in relation to prostitution, which are monitored against agreed outcome measures.

4.11. Such outcomes will depend on local priorities, but could include for example: a reduction in number of violent attacks on people involved in prostitution; a reduction of number of women working on the streets; fewer arrests or convictions for soliciting/ 'kerb-crawling', etc.

4.12. It is preferable for such a strategy to be overseen by a forum of strategic representatives of relevant agencies. Operational representatives of these agencies may also need to form a separate group to address issues of a more immediate and operational nature.

4.13. The inclusion of agencies responsible for responding to the sexual exploitation of children is important – ideally this will be dealt with by a sub-group responsible for children's issues, with a link to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

4.14. Given the importance of community engagement, it is also important that the strategy is made as accessible to the public as possible.

Case management

4.15. Some areas have adopted a multi-agency case management approach which involves regular meetings between agencies who can each refer a particular service-user who they feel is in need of particular support. The agencies discuss the most appropriate intervention for an individual and then subsequently review its effectiveness to identify whether further intervention is necessary. A summary of a typical case dealt with by the *Cardiff Sex Worker Operations Team (SWOT)* using a case management approach, is outlined below.

S's Story

Background

S is a white Welsh twenty five year-old female. She agreed to be referred to the Safer Wales StreetLife project in October 2010 via Cardiff homeless hostel services. She was being controlled by a pimp (DG) and was being forced to sell sex on the street on a daily basis. A StreetLife project worker was immediately allocated to work with her.

Presenting Issues & Sex Worker Operations Team (SWOT) response

Partner agencies at the SWOT were aware of DG. He was known to have 'relationships' with a number of women in street prostitution, and professionals assessed that S was being exploited. At the initial SWOT meeting, information on DG was passed on to members present from the South Wales Police and Probation Services.

A recent assessment by Safer Wales StreetLife indicated that S had not been engaging with them. She had disclosed use of heroin, crack cocaine, and diazepam and concerns had been expressed about her alcohol intake. Following the SWOT meeting, a Drug Intervention Programme worker engaged with S during Safer Wales StreetLife evening outreach, and work began to address her chaotic substance misuse.

On-going SWOT activity (November 2010)

S attended the Women in Hostels Integrated Sexual Health (WHISH) Clinic. This clinic was set up by the Nurse Practitioner for the Homeless and the Integrated Sexual Health Team at the University Health Board, specifically for people involved in prostitution and homeless women, and is accessed by members of the SWOT. StreetLife provide transport for the women.

December 2010 SWOT & Outcome

At the SWOT review meeting in December 2010 it was reported that S was in hostel accommodation and was engaging well with a substance misuse detoxification programme. It was noted that due to her being unwell, she had missed an appointment for an immunisation but subsequently attended the next clinic with the support of the StreetLife transport. Following a review of S's case, professionals present at the December meeting agreed that her case would be closed by the SWOT as she was no longer deemed to be at risk of significant harm and had good support networks in place. S continues to access Safer Wales StreetLife and it is planned that she will eventually move from the hostel accommodation into one of the Safer Wales StreetLife properties where she will receive ongoing support until her lifestyle is such that she can maintain her own tenancy.

Information sharing

4.16. It may be that an individual is known to a drugs or health service who may not know that that person has been involved in prostitution. This information could be highly relevant in order to manage the risks to that individual and identify other services that he or she may need to be referred to.

4.17. Some areas have developed a protocol to govern the sharing of information between agencies. This can help ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between exchanging information to improve the services offered to people in prostitution, whilst protecting the confidentiality of service users.

Service Level Agreements

4.18. Where a multi agency strategy does not exist, some projects have developed service level agreements or a memorandum of understanding with different agencies in order to embed good joint working.

5. Prevention

5.1. Prevention should be a key part of local strategies responding to prostitution. This includes preventing the issues associated with its existence, and preventing people entering or re-entering prostitution.

5.2. Preventative work is often focused on children, and many of the examples in this section relate to identifying exploitation of children. However, preventative strategies can also focus on wider measures to prevent prostitution, for example through enforcement against those engaged in coercion and exploitation, or who contribute to prostitution by purchasing sex with people who are exploited. These issues are covered in further detail in Section 7 – Policing.

Child sexual exploitation – Introduction

5.3. Child sexual exploitation takes many forms and offenders operate in different ways, from an individual case of grooming to cases of serious and organised child abuse. It can often involve a young person being encouraged to perform sexual activities in exchange for “something” (for example food, accommodation, money etc), and it is often facilitated by the use of technology such as mobile phones or the internet.

5.4. Sexual exploitation of children and young people is a form of child abuse and is therefore unacceptable and this Government is keen to do all that it can to stamp it out. This includes helping local agencies to do more to safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation – by developing local prevention strategies, identifying those at risk of sexual exploitation and taking action against perpetrators. It will also involve working with national and local partners to develop a national action plan to safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation which will be published later this year. It will draw on local agencies' work across the country on effective prevention strategies, identifying those at risk of sexual exploitation, supporting victims, and taking robust action against perpetrators. It will take full account of the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre's work in tackling child sexual exploitation and the findings from their report.

5.5. Child sexual exploitation in the form of paying for the sexual services of a child (aged under 18) is a serious offence, with a maximum penalty of seven years. There are also a number of other offences carrying a maximum penalty of 14 years, such as controlling a child prostitute, which makes clear that the involvement of children in prostitution is unacceptable and that those who exploit children in order to involve them in prostitution or who pay for sex with children will be targeted. Engaging persistently in loitering or soliciting in the street for the purposes of prostitution applies to children (aged 10 or over) as well as adults, as is the case for most offences; whether to amend this offence to apply to over-18s only has been raised as an issue.

Identification of child sexual exploitation

5.6. It is important that local agencies understand what is meant by child sexual exploitation and are able to recognise it. A key part of mapping the needs of an area is to identify levels of sexual exploitation and locations or circumstances where children are particularly at risk.

5.7. In order to help agencies identify the sexual exploitation of children, the National Working Group on Sexually Exploited Children has identified the following definition:

The sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of performing, and/or others performing on them, sexual activities.

Child sexual exploitation can occur through use of technology without the child's immediate recognition, for example the persuasion to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones with no immediate payment or gain. In all cases those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources.

5.8. *Safe & Sound Derby* have identified a range of behavioural indicators that can help identify those at risk of sexual exploitation. These include:

- Frequent repeat episodes of going missing from home or care
- Truancy, a lack of engagement at school, causing disruption etc.
- Having a significantly older 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend'
- Having more money, new clothes etc.
- Going out late and not returning until the next morning
- Being secretive
- Increasing use of mobile phone
- Anti-social behaviour
- Criminal offending (e.g. theft, assault, criminal damage)

5.9. Some of the reasons behind committing offences may include:

- Stealing at the request of the exploiter
- Money to fuel alcohol or drug addiction (which may be caused by the supply of drugs or alcohol by the exploiter)
- Seeking support or safety

5.10. A Serious Case Review, carried out by Derby Safeguarding Children's Board (2010) in the wake of recent cases of multiple sexual abuse reinforces the importance of identifying the factors underlying difficult behaviour. It found that:

'Staff did not recognise the significance of their [two child victims'] behaviour in terms of abuse, and they were dealt with as 'rebellious adolescents'.

5.11. A full (though not exhaustive) set of indicators that practitioners may find helpful is contained in [Government guidance issued in 2009](#) and reproduced in the recent CEOP thematic assessment of localised grooming (available [here](#)).

5.12. As well as being able to identify signs of sexual exploitation, it is important for areas to be able to ensure their services are targeted at locations or situations in which child sexual exploitation may occur. *Barnardo's Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Streets (SECOS)* project in Middlesbrough engaged in comprehensive mapping to identify sites throughout the city where prostitution and child sexual exploitation were prevalent. This allowed the project to focus their outreach work, in turn aiding the identification of victims.

5.13. *SECOS* have also found that adult women involved in prostitution can be sources of information as they have sometimes been approached and asked if they can "get access

to younger people". The project is then able to pass this information on to the police and other agencies.

Working with Children and Young People

5.14. Having identified children who are at risk or have been sexually exploited, it is important that they are given appropriate support. This may mean counselling or ensuring that their concerns are listened to and addressed, or it may mean providing the opportunity to engage in meaningful activities. Projects visited highlighted the importance of providing activities that were attractive to young people such as cooking, arts and crafts, music, and computer games. They also stressed the importance of a comfortable and safe environment which helps victims to engage with appropriate support services at their own pace (all factors which are also applicable to adult service-users).

Education and Prevention

5.15. Education is an important part of working with victims and preventing young people from becoming exploited. *SECOS* and *Safe and Sound Derby* provide education on a wide range of subjects which are of direct relevance including sexual health, safer sex, bullying, and drugs and alcohol awareness.

5.16. Education on a broader scale can include initiatives aimed at raising awareness among members of the general community of the issues associated with prostitution, such as the risk of harm and levels of exploitation. This can include working with boys and men in particular as the principal users of people involved in prostitution. In addition, the Department for Education is currently consulting on sex and relationship education, including the teaching of sexual consent, within in the context of Personal Social Health & Economic (PSHE) education.

6. Holistic Support

6.1. Where services have carried out comprehensive mapping in their area they are likely to have identified a set of multiple and complex needs and issues to address. In particular, assessments and mapping are likely to have indicated that a range of support for those involved in prostitution and children who are being sexually exploited through prostitution is necessary.

6.2. This section sets out some of the key elements that services responding to prostitution will need to address. These include (but are not limited to):

- Safety
- Outreach
- Drop-in services
- Health
- Domestic violence
- Housing
- Benefits
- Alcohol and drugs
- Employment and training
- Criminal justice support
- Exiting and aftercare

In relation to a given individual, an effective holistic approach should take account of that individual's needs as part of an agreed care plan, and not seek to address one issue in isolation (e.g. drug use).

6.3. Given the focus of many of the areas visited, the elements identified are most relevant to women involved in street prostitution, although many have broader relevance. Women involved in street prostitution will frequently have complex needs that will require sustained and dedicated support. Specialist services are usually best placed to co-ordinate this care, whether through offering dedicated support themselves or by referring on to other services. Faith-based groups can also play a helpful role in providing volunteers.

6.4. The stages below summarise some of the key elements of holistic support and engagement⁵.

Stage 1 (Pre-contemplation/ Contemplation stage): Building trust and assessing needs, with a focus on addressing immediate safety and welfare concerns and developing good relationships with the service users to encourage re-attendance.

Stage 2 (Preparation for change stage): Improving health, accommodation, relationships, and agreeing a care plan, with a focus on raising awareness regarding options for change and improving a person's belief that they are capable of achieving long-term lasting change. At this stage, as well as keeping people as safe as possible, small achievable goals are set to help them move forward, for example reducing illicit drug use, re-contacting supportive family members, improving diet, attending GP appointments etc.

Stage 3 (Action & maintenance stage): Focus is on supporting people who have made significant life changes such as addressing drug use and their involvement in prostitution. The support provided at this stage is often focused on helping to develop new supportive

⁵ After Prochaska J. O., DiClemente C.C., Norcross J.C., 1992 "In search of how people change: applications to addictive behaviours" *American psychologist* 47 1102 - 1114

social networks and developing relapse prevention strategies in relation to drug use and prostitution.

Safety

6.5. Safety is a key issue across all aspects of prostitution. Support to prevent risks to an individual or improve the general safety of the community – in particular by disseminating intelligence about dangerous individuals and apprehending perpetrators – is a key element in responding effectively to prostitution.

6.6. Some areas have developed a formalised method for allowing people involved in prostitution to report incidents of violence, which can then enable information about dangerous individuals to be disseminated to others or be used to report a crime to the police for investigation. This is widely known as an ‘Ugly Mugs’ (or ‘Dodgy Punter’) scheme.

6.7. In many areas of the UK such schemes not only circulate alerts to people involved in prostitution but have developed report forms and formal information-sharing and partnership arrangements (which protect client confidentiality and consent) with local police forces. This aids intelligence gathering, victim support, detection, and conviction of offenders. It also allows third party reporting and provides an extra source of intelligence to police. Recently the *UK Network of Sex Work Projects* conducted a feasibility study into the development of a nationally co-ordinated scheme and has made recommendations to take this forward.

Case study: Liverpool

As part of its overall approach to prostitution, Liverpool has sought to prioritise the safety of the women involved. Merseyside Police identified safety as their priority in policing prostitution. Key aspects of this are:

- *All offences reported against those involved in prostitution are prioritised in terms of police resources and are treated as Hate Crimes;*
- *The provision of a specialist Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) based in The Armistead Project, offering specialist services for individuals in prostitution.*

This approach has led to an increase in the reporting of offences and several convictions for offenders who have committed rapes and others serious sexual assaults. The results include:

- *In the first 18 months of having a specialist ISVA service for sex workers, there was a 400% increase in the proportion of people giving consent to share full details with the police;*
- *22 court cases since 2007 (with some other offences dealt with by way of police caution, fines, and recalls to prison);*
- *83% conviction rate for all cases going to court (including violence and sexual assault); 75% conviction rate for rape and sexual violence cases;*
- *total number of known victims who have received justice: 32 women;*
- *95% of women involved in these cases have exited prostitution, and are drug-free and settled.*

Costs and savings:

An ISVA costs approximately £40,000 per year, whereas the cost of investigating a rape is estimated to be £76,000. Furthermore, as highlighted by a number of convictions, some

offenders have committed earlier offences, and therefore savings can be attributed to each conviction on the basis of preventing further offences.

6.8. The availability of an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) or the services of a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) or a Rape Crisis Centre is a key aspect of the support that is provided in Liverpool. A number of areas have developed a partnership with a SARC as part of their approach to ensure that those involved in prostitution who have suffered a serious sexual assault can access the appropriate services. A number of SARCs have the services of an ISVA, and there are an increasing number of ISVAs offering specialist support to people involved in prostitution.

6.9. SARC services vary from area to area. Some are only able to offer an immediate forensic examination, whilst others provide a range of support and medical services which victims can use anonymously. Victims can choose to report sexual violence to the police at a later date.

6.10. Rape Crisis Centres offer independent specialised counselling either by helpline or face-to-face. As well as a range of support services, in some areas Rape Crisis Centres also have Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) who can offer specialised holistic support for all victims of sexual violence. More information is available [here](#).

Outreach

6.11. A number of areas run outreach projects which provide a variety of support services. These can range from small local charities, to projects within larger charitable organisations or the NHS. Outreach is primarily delivered on the street, although some areas deliver to the off-street sector and to prisons. Some projects use the internet as a way of contacting people to offer services ('netreach'), particularly in seeking to reach men involved in prostitution.

6.12. Contact with the outreach service may be brief and in some cases may simply amount to the provision of a snack, condoms, clean needles or a short conversation. In other cases it may be an opportunity to offer medical advice or health checks, refer on to other services, and provide information about further support that may be available or gather information about an individual's general well being. In some cases outreach services can take reports of violent incidents that have recently occurred (for example through Ugly Mugs schemes).

6.13. Outreach is an effective way of achieving an initial engagement with individuals which can then lead to more sustained engagement with specialist or mainstream services. A number of regular clients of specialist services who were interviewed during the visits indicated that they first learned of these projects through outreach or through word of mouth from other women on the street, indicating that maintaining a presence on the street is important in terms of making contact with this client group.

Drop-in Services

6.14. Many projects run a drop-in service (sometimes referred to as 'open access') the day after the outreach service, or more frequently. This ensures that there is an immediate opportunity for an individual involved in prostitution to continue to access support after initial contact. The availability of this immediate support recognises the often chaotic lives of those involved and the need to sustain engagement to ensure that opportunities for

offering support are not lost. Service users highlighted the importance of drop-in services as a place where they could obtain food and other basic necessities but also as a place of safety, allowing them the time and space to consider and fulfil their ongoing needs and aspirations, such as education or employment.

6.15. A number of projects have described the initial response to a woman who accesses services as a form of crisis management, with the aim of achieving some form of stability though addressing their immediate needs. These may appear relatively straightforward, for example arranging an appointment with a doctor or dentist. Users of these services have also identified the importance of this immediate support at the precise point of need, to ensure that some stability can be achieved at this vital moment.

6.16. This can then help the service users get into a position where they can begin to address more significant issues affecting their lives, such as housing, debt, drugs issues and for some, ultimately exiting prostitution. This is frequently addressed through a care plan or pathway, developed in consultation with each client to ensure that their individual needs are addressed.

6.17. The individual care plan will vary in each case, but it is likely that the following issues will be among those identified:

- Health
- Safety
- Domestic violence
- Housing
- Alcohol and drugs
- Employment and training
- Exiting from prostitution
- Aftercare

6.18. It is important that partnerships consider how all of these issues can be applied across all aspects of prostitution relevant to that area, including:

- Street prostitution
- Off-street prostitution
- Male and transgender sex workers
- Migrant sex workers (including refugees and asylum seekers)
- Children
- Partners

Health

6.19. Those involved in prostitution are likely to have a range of health needs. These will vary from case to case, but it is likely that individuals may need to access the following services:

- GP and primary care
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Mental health
- Alcohol and drugs
- Dentistry
- Accident and Emergency

6.20. A report for the Department of Health⁶ identified the importance of ensuring access to GPs and primary care as a gateway to other health services. It noted that: 80% of people involved in street prostitution reported difficulties in accessing GP surgeries, in particular in waiting for an appointment, and the difficulty of keeping appointments; 45% of those who had difficulty accessing their GP also reported fear of being judged by staff; 83% were registered with a GP – but nearly two thirds had not disclosed that they were involved in the sex industry. This underlines the important role that specialist projects can play in providing advocacy and support to help people in prostitution to register with GPs and seek access to primary care.

6.21. Service users indicated that they often felt they were not taken seriously by professionals from other services. It was felt that services were more responsive when an individual was accompanied or supported by a member of a specialist project. Whether or not this perception is always the case, it demonstrates the importance of providing support to people in prostitution to help them gain access to health care services. Specialist projects may not always have the resources to accompany individuals to appointments or provide advocacy support. In these cases, it may be helpful for these projects to contact local GPs or other health providers to try to identify some of the general issues faced by those involved in prostitution – including the fear of being judged and stigmatised. It may also be beneficial for healthcare services to consult and involve specialist projects as appropriate, in order to try and remove some of these barriers and ensure their service takes account of particular issues affecting those involved in prostitution.

6.22. A number of partnerships include a specialist project which is part of the NHS, such as the project *Open Doors* in Hackney.

Open Doors, Hackney, London

A specialist project based within St Leonard's Hospital, Open Doors co-ordinates the provision of healthcare and other services to people involved in prostitution within the mainstream NHS, providing access to:

- *Outreach to people in street and off-street prostitution within Hackney, including to male partners of women in street prostitution;*
- *A drop-in for women in off-street prostitution;*
- *Fast track sexual health services;*
- *Housing support and emergency accommodation;*
- *Drugs services (including low threshold prescribing);*
- *Trauma counselling;*
- *Psychiatric assessment and support;*
- *Criminal justice support;*
- *HIV and TB treatment;*
- *Ante-natal support;*
- *Support with the family courts;*
- *Benefits advice.*

This has resulted in:

- *195 women case managed since 2006;;*
- *78 women no longer appearing on Police National Computer as engaged in street prostitution;*
- *No new cases of TB amongst women in street prostitution in last 12 months.*

⁶ N Jeal and C Salisbury, 'Self-reported experiences of health services among female street-based prostitutes: a cross sectional survey' in *British Journal of General Practice* (July 2004)

Domestic violence

6.23. The vulnerable circumstances of some involved in prostitution may put them at risk of domestic violence; others may be in an abusive relationship where their partner forces them to sell sex. Those working with them therefore need to be aware that they may be suffering from domestic violence. It also means that as a matter of effective practice partnerships should seek to make links with local domestic violence agencies and relevant multi-agency forums such as Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs), and/or involve them in their strategy.

6.24. Domestic violence is also relevant to prevention (see Section 5), as witnessing domestic violence is a factor that can make children more vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Housing

6.25. One of the key issues identified within the areas visited was the importance of suitable and sustainable housing for those who were seeking to stabilise their lives. It was cited as a particularly important factor in helping people to exit prostitution and to cease drug use. Secure housing is also a key element in supporting children who have been sexually exploited. Agencies need to take care that children aged between 16 and 18 do not fall through gaps in provision, as they may not always be able to access accommodation provided for younger children but are nonetheless treated as children under the law.

6.26. It is important that people who are in need of support but are not yet in a position to stabilise their lives are given crisis accommodation which does not house other drug users. Accommodation needs to be risk assessed before an individual is placed there. If women in this initial phase of seeking support have been able to cease using drugs or reduce or cease their involvement in prostitution, then housing them in accommodation with other drug-users or people still involved in prostitution risks undermining this important step towards stability. It can also be important for women involved in prostitution to be able to gain access to women-only accommodation in order to guard against the risks of them meeting clients, abusers or pimps.

6.27. Even after accommodation is secured, an individual who is still engaged in or has recently exited from prostitution may find the transition to a stable life difficult. They may need continued support in order to maintain an ordered life that does not put the accommodation at risk (for example by allowing other tenants to stay who may cause a nuisance).

Benefits

6.28. It is also important that people who are looking to stabilise their lives and/or exit prostitution are able to access the benefits to which they are entitled. Without awareness of available benefits, and swift access to them, there may be a temptation to return to prostitution to get cash. Organisations in some areas help women who are involved in prostitution do this, for example by accompanying them to appointments and helping them fill in relevant forms.

6.29. Women leaving prison are able to use the 'Freshstart' process which involves pre-arranging a New Jobseeker Interview to claim Jobseeker's Allowance at the prisoner's local Jobcentre Plus office for as soon as possible after they are released. The customer normally has an appointment with a Jobcentre Plus Adviser within three days of leaving prison, which helps to speed up receipt of benefit and aims to ensure they engage with the Jobcentre at the earliest opportunity to gain appropriate support.

Alcohol and drugs

6.30. Support aimed at overcoming alcohol and drug abuse should recognise the complexities of these issues in relation to people involved in prostitution. They may be the cause of involvement in prostitution, or used as a coping strategy, but supporting someone to deal with drugs and alcohol issues will need to be part of a broad response to a range of issues.

Case study: Ipswich

Helping women involved in street prostitution to stop using drugs was an important part of the multi-agency approach in Ipswich that helped significantly reduce the number of women involved in street prostitution. Action taken to achieve this included:

- *Prioritising funding for residential drug rehabilitation for sex workers ;*
- *Funding Community Drugs Team to offer extended opening hours;*
- *Supporting voluntary sector project ICENI to provide specialist support to help women in street prostitution to stop using drugs.*

Main achievements

- *85 women have been in contact with the project, and around 30 are still being intensively helped (although 4 of these are 'hard to reach');*
- *85 off-street premises have been visited and around 40 foreign national women have been offered help;*
- *Of the 30 women being helped, 8 women are 'clean', and 19 are still in drug treatment. 26 are housed, and 4 homeless.*

6.31. Drugs and alcohol can also be used as a way of influencing and controlling children in order to sexually exploit them. Similarly with adults: some pimps and/or 'boyfriends' may encourage their partners to take drugs which can lead to them becoming dependent on both drugs and the individual supplying the drugs.

6.32. A number of areas identified alcohol use as an increasing problem amongst women involved in street prostitution, sometimes as an alternative to drugs. This underlines the importance of having suitable treatment for those with alcohol problems available as part of a strategic response to prostitution.

Employment and Training

6.33. People involved in prostitution may find it difficult to re-train and gain employment in order to help them move away from prostitution. Increasing their employability is one of

the key elements of helping people who wish to exit prostitution. Young people who have been sexually exploited frequently have their education disrupted as a result, and education is therefore an important part of the support provided to children recovering from sexual exploitation.

6.34. Criminal records resulting from someone being involved in prostitution can sometimes prove a barrier to employability (and as noted above, children who have been sexually exploited commonly engage in criminal activity for a variety of reasons). In recognition of this a number of areas have developed diversion schemes which allow people arrested for loitering and soliciting to be directed into support services as an alternative to the criminal justice system. Other areas have developed the capacity to use Engagement and Support Orders: a criminal sanction imposed after conviction for loitering or soliciting, successful completion of which means that the particular conviction does not appear on a criminal record (see 'Criminal Justice Support', below).

6.35. Ensuring access to appropriate training is a valuable element of effective practice. The *Lighthouse Project* in Hull set up the *Next Step Project* in 2009, which aims to help women who have exited prostitution with little or no education to develop their basic numeracy and literacy with a view to gaining employment

Case Study: the Hull Lighthouse and Next Step Projects

Next Step provides a 'safe' space where women engage in 1-to-1 training and small group work to form a working relationship of trust with the Skills for Life Trainer. They build confidence and self-esteem by training at their own pace, obtain certificates which in turn motivate them to achieve further.

In addition to courses on basic skills such as Maths, English and IT, the women are involved in courses such as Mental Health First Aid, Confidence Building, Stress Management, and Alcohol Awareness. The Art of Happiness sessions provide space for women to focus on positive, affirming activities that promote well-being and help build emotional capacity.

Training summary

- 56 students assessed for training – 43 gained qualifications (13 women hindered by personal issues);
- 30 students currently attending for training;
- 2166 hours of student training (Nov 2009 - Feb 2011)

Achievements

- 6 students have gained employment (1 full-time, 5 part-time; all over 34 and having been unemployed for at least a year, in some cases having never worked);
- 1 special needs student gained a voluntary role in a local school (having never volunteered before);
- Numeracy & literacy: 20 OCR accredited Level 1, 12 Level 2, and 17 C&G Entry Level qualifications;
- IT: 38 EDCC slim IT qualifications;
- 7 Basic Food Hygiene Level 2, 15 Basic life support attendees, 11 other courses attended;
- 6 book challenges completed with Hull Library;
- 1 Peer Support Worker certified with Drugs Intervention Project;
- 1 Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector Level 2;
- 9 students completed in-house Employability Training;

- 1 student attending mainstream college for FE, 3 students attending Hull University for part time courses.

Finance

The total cost of the project for 25 months (Oct 09 to end Dec 2011) will be approximately £110,000 – which includes £25,000 for the trainer salary. Quarterly cost for running the centre is just under £10,000 – which includes £6,200 salary for the trainer. Funding is provided from large charities.

Criminal justice support

6.36. Although people involved in street prostitution may become involved in the criminal justice system as a result of offences directly related to prostitution, they may also become involved due to their generally chaotic lifestyle, for example through shoplifting or possession of drugs.

6.37. If individuals involved in street prostitution are arrested and prosecuted, support from specialist services may be necessary. This may take the form of liaison with criminal justice agencies on behalf of an individual, supporting them to attend court hearings on time, or dealing with the fact that an individual may have children and may be at risk of losing them. Advice can also be given on their rights, options around housing, and benefits. A number of projects also conduct outreach visits to prisons to ensure that support can still be offered while an individual is in custody.

6.38. Some projects provide diversion schemes which aim to help people who have been arrested to seek support for the factors that contributed to their engagement in street prostitution.

TRUST, Lambeth – Court Diversion Scheme

Trust's Court Diversion Scheme in Lambeth is run in partnership with Camberwell Magistrates Court, Lambeth Metropolitan Police Service and the Crown Prosecution Service. It provides an opportunity for women to be diverted from the Criminal Justice System and into treatment and support. Women opting on to the scheme can have their cases discontinued by attending two structured appointments where a full needs assessment is carried out and a Care Action Plan drawn up. The aim of the appointments is to engage women with the services they need to support changes in their lifestyle, increasing their stability, reducing drug use and in the longer term, exit from prostitution. It has consistently delivered a completion rate of 89%.

Safe Exit, Tower Hamlets – Pre-court Diversion Scheme

The Safe Exit Diversion Scheme provides an alternative to appearing in court for women arrested for loitering or soliciting by the police in Tower Hamlets. Women are bailed at the police station to appear at court, usually five weeks after arrest. If they attend and complete an initial assessment with the Diversion Scheme worker and a second appointment at an appropriate service, they are not required to attend court, and the prosecutor discontinues the case at court on the appointed day.

84 women had been through the scheme between Jun 2006 and Dec 2009. On average, women were referred to the scheme five times (although this is a result of women being re-arrested, this continued contact and support is important, as it is unlikely for someone to exit prostitution after only two appointments).

Engagement and Support Orders

6.39. Engagement and Support Orders were introduced by the Policing and Crime Act (2009) and became available to Courts in 2010. They offer an alternative penalty to a fine for those convicted of loitering or soliciting. The purpose is to help break the 'revolving door' whereby those found loitering or soliciting are given a fine, the payment of which may provide motivation to continue in prostitution.

6.40. To successfully complete the order, the person targeted will need to attend three sessions with a supervisor appointed by the court. The aim is to engage those involved in street prostitution with vital services that can help address the issues underlying their involvement, with the ultimate objective of helping them exit prostitution.

6.41. If an individual successfully completes an Engagement and Support Order then the conviction for which the order was made will not appear on the criminal record.

Birmingham's use of Engagement and Support Orders

Agencies signed up to the prostitution strategy in Birmingham have developed an effective process for delivering these orders and ensuring they can be used constructively. The Drug Intervention Programme (DIP) has mapped partner agencies. The DIP court team, probation court team, and SMART (police substance misuse arrest referral team) have engaged in the process to ensure that each agency is aware of the possibility of an Engagement and Support Order being made when someone has been charged with loitering or soliciting. They have designated agencies (SAFE and Turning Point – Birmingham Drug Line) that provide a supervisor to conduct a needs assessment and oversee further appointments that must be completed as part of the assessment.

Exiting & Aftercare

6.42. Helping someone to 'exit' prostitution refers to supporting them to find an alternative to prostitution by providing appropriate advice and support. Exiting prostitution is not a distinct act but a process involving several 'stages of change', which occur over time and typically involve one or more returns to the lifestyle within prostitution before someone can be said to have exited completely. The capacity to exit is influenced by many factors, including the nature and scope of accessible support. Specialist service provision should be available on a flexible, long-term basis in order to maximise a woman's capacity to exit safely and effectively.

6.43. Where areas have an established specialist voluntary sector project it is likely that it will play a key role in supporting an individual's progress towards exiting prostitution by acting as the main contact point for individuals while ensuring that they are in touch with the appropriate services.

6.44. A number of projects monitor progress toward exiting, including measuring outcomes such as a reduction in the number of hours or frequency of selling sexual services.

6.45. If services are successful then it is likely that individuals will cease to access specialist services at some point. However their movement away from services will likely be gradual and will require follow-up to ensure that previous issues have not re-emerged. Aftercare is particularly vital in responding to children who have been victims of sexual exploitation in order to prevent re-victimisation.

Eaves & London South Bank University – Model of exiting

After conducting a research project on exiting prostitution Eaves & London South Bank University have developed a five staged model of exiting taking into account the specificity of the issues relating to prostitution.

This model and the interim findings provide information to practitioners who would like to provide effective support to those wanting to exit. More information on the exiting prostitution research project is available [here](#).

Off-street prostitution

6.46. In some localities the prostitution strategy is focused on street prostitution. In others, areas have managed to make contact with the off-street sector, for example through running drop-in services or 'netreach'.

Off Street Prostitution – Brighton

With no visible street prostitution in Brighton, the area has adopted a model with many of the features outlined above but delivered primarily in response to off-street prostitution. OASIS, a specialist voluntary sector project delivers:

Outreach to parlours and working flats (in partnership with Terence Higgins Trust): health promotion, personal safety issues, signposting, referrals, offer of support/ advocacy, safer sex supplies.

Offer of follow-up support: telephone, drop-in, appointments at Brighton Oasis Project or in the community, option of long-term care planned support.

Weekly multi-agency meetings within the local partnership of substance misuse services:

- *Daily risk meeting;*
- *Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults for women with involvement/ risk of involvement in criminal justice system.*

Care planning and support around 9 offender management pathways

- *A range of interventions to support and sustain behaviour change or harm minimisation as required;*
- *Signposting, referrals and facilitation into health and support services;*
- *Attendance at Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs), Complex Case Meetings when required.*

Ad hoc/ short term support:

- Brief interventions using a harm reduction model: health promotion, signposting, referrals, advice & information;
- Safer sex supplies;
- Short term support/ advocacy: crisis support, accessing other health/ support services – e.g. accompanying to appointments;
- Monthly prison visits;
- Assertive outreach/ 'cold calling', seeking and contacting via telephone and email.

Care Coordination (within substance misuse treatment services): Care planning and support for women throughout journey through treatment services: prescribing, recovery and reintegration (currently 7 individuals).

Ugly Mugs/ Dodgy Punter reporting scheme: taking reports of incidents, information sharing with police around perpetrators of crimes against sex workers, support, advocacy and liaison with police regarding violence or abuse at work.

Management of Communities Against Drugs funded Outreach Worker – Provision of brief interventions and care planned support for women with substance misuse problems deemed as vulnerable. Although not specifically targeted at people involved in prostitution, provision of this post enables flexibility to support women with substance misuse problems and complex needs who are involved in prostitution or who have not disclosed their involvement in prostitution.

Outcomes

100% of respondents to a feedback survey questionnaire said that they had found contact with the outreach workers helpful. The categories of support identified as most useful were advice & information on safety issues, and information on local services. In addition, 69% of the respondents said that they had also received support on personal issues – the majority of which referred to safety. The survey also showed that as a result of contact with the outreach service, the majority of women (75%) had given more thought to their sexual health and safety.

Male and transgender prostitution

6.47. Some areas involve projects offering services to men and transgender people within their strategy in order to ensure a specialist response to this sector. An example of a male project that was not from one of the areas visited but which provides an example of effective practice is outlined below.

Case study: Working with Male and Transgender Sex Workers: Central London

The SWISH project, Terrence Higgins Trust, London (Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea) is one of a few projects to support male and transgender sex workers as its primary target group. It employs a non-judgemental and harm minimisation approach and works primarily to improve access to health and sexual health care for chaotic and marginalised clients.

Services are offered via drop-in, 1-to-1, clinic, outreach and phone. It offers advice, support and referral on a range of matters, (including outcome figures for 3-months to June 2011):

- Sexual health (30 clients: 27 reported improved understanding of where to access)

- *Relationship advice;*
- *Domestic abuse;*
- *Disclosure of involvement in prostitution to partners;*
- *Reporting violence and criminal acts against men involved in prostitution (12 reported: 3 positive convictions, 6 clients reporting positive outlook and experience);*
- *Safety advice (23 clients: 17 reported increased knowledge, 10 were given safety alarms);*
- *Training and education and signing client up to courses (including migrants with language difficulties) (30 clients: 26 reported increased knowledge);*
- *Employment advice and help in preparing CVs (9 clients: 7 reported increase in skills);*
- *Access to GP services;*
- *Counselling and other sexual health services (21 clients: 19 said they benefited from counselling sessions at THT);*
- *Advice on 'escort agency' working and consumer rights (9 clients: 7 expressed increased knowledge);*
- *Help and advice with welfare benefits and tax credits (7 clients: 6 were then felt able claim benefits);*
- *Help with immigration issues and referral to specialist services;*
- *Drugs advice and drugs services (27 clients: 15 reported increased knowledge, 8 engaged with a drugs service).*

The project also delivers training to other agencies on male and transgender support needs.

Migrants

6.48. Migrants involved in prostitution can face particular problems in accessing support and gaining protection. These occur for a number of reasons, such as not speaking English, fears about their immigration status, lack of knowledge of health and other social care entitlements, financial pressure (to sell sex rather than attend clinics), fear of the police, and violence.

6.49. Research conducted by Hackney identified that migrant women would, in the main, be prepared to report crimes committed against them. However, it was identified that they would be less prepared to report crimes if they struggled to speak English. As a result, *Open Doors* and the *Whitechapel Haven* (SARC) have developed information in foreign languages such as Romanian and Brazilian Portuguese and developed the capability to return a call in a particular language that has been requested. The development of foreign language tools could also be beneficial in helping migrants involved in prostitution to access other services such as healthcare.

6.50. *SAFE Outreach Service* in Birmingham delivers outreach and support to women in street prostitution. It works with a large number of migrants off-street and has also had some contact with migrants on street. It has access to language line translation service and has written information and advice material in a number of languages. It has worked with a number of victims of trafficking and has developed pathways for such service users. It works closely with UK Borders Agency and UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) when under-18s and adult victims of trafficking are identified.

Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) and Refugees

6.51. People from BME communities may face specific challenges relating to their involvement in prostitution. Areas for consideration include:

- BME women involved in prostitution may face higher levels of stigma and non-acceptance within their communities. This can result in women being reluctant/ fearful of accessing services for fear of being targeted by family or community members.
- Harmful stereotyping around particular groups of women (e.g. South East Asian women as exotic and subservient) has an impact on how those women may be viewed as more readily available for the provision of sexual services. This can increase the risk faced by those women and can also create greater barriers when women are seeking to exit.
- Prostitution may be linked to issues such as forced marriage, e.g. where the marriage is a precursor to sexual exploitation or where young women fleeing forced marriage may be vulnerable to exploitation.
- A number of BME women may be exploited through organised crime structures which are linked to family networks. Women in such situations are likely to be less visible to support agencies and face higher risks as they seek to exit. In such cases it is important that the expertise of specialist BME women's services around issues such as Honour Based Violence and the risks associated with multiple interested parties is sought.

Trafficking

6.52. Trafficking involves the movement – not necessarily across borders – of a person, using force, fraud or coercion, for the purpose of exploitation. Trafficking disproportionately affects women, but men and children are also trafficked. Often victims have no choice about coming to the UK, or they may have come willingly but have been deceived about the nature of work once they arrive. Trafficking for sexual exploitation in the sex industry is the most common form of trafficking in the UK, with the majority of victims exploited in off-street prostitution.

6.53. Victims of trafficking may have experienced high levels of violence including verbal, psychological, sexual and physical and therefore the safety of victims must be prioritised by partner agencies as well as law enforcement.

6.54. Those who are trafficked have rights within the UK and should therefore be given access to high quality expert support and assistance. They can be formally identified through the National Referral Mechanism, and the police helpline (in the Met) can assist victims escaping exploitative situations and potentially pursuing justice.

Children's Services

6.55. It is important that a holistic response to sexually exploited children and young people takes account of the need for child-specific services, such as specialist therapeutic outreach, and that agencies offering these services are engaged in the local multi-agency arrangements. More information about preventative strategies for child sexual exploitation and about the identification of child sexual exploitation is included in Section 5 – Prevention.

6.56. More information on responding to sexually exploited children and young people is contained within [guidance produced by the Department for Education](#). Both the DfE guidance and forthcoming ACPO Prostitution Strategy (see para 1.10) emphasise an approach where children involved in prostitution are always considered and treated as a victim.

Partner scheme

6.57. One of the factors that may work against someone exiting prostitution is the influence of individuals around them, and in particular a partner, who may be co-dependent in terms of drug use and financially reliant on their involvement in prostitution. This includes domestic violence issues and situations where a 'boyfriend' is acting as a pimp. *Open Doors* in Hackney identified this issue and developed a male partner co-ordinator who works with partners of women in street prostitution in order to try and help them address issues and help stabilise their lives.

7. Policing

7.1. The enforcement of the law relating to prostitution is a key element of a local approach to the issue. While legislation applies nationally (see Annex A), precisely *how* it is applied is a matter of local policing policy determined by local priorities and circumstances. These will include local assessments of the risk, harm and vulnerability factors of those involved in prostitution, the community, and the exploiters.

7.2. Having a specialised, strategic approach to local policing of issues around prostitution was a feature of every area visited and is a key element of the effective policing of prostitution. It is also an important aspect of ensuring the effective delivery of holistic support. As such, it is important that local policing approaches are developed as part of a multi-agency response.

7.3. Communities will expect the police to enforce the law, but it is important that the way in which this is done takes account of the need for support for those involved in prostitution, and that policing is sensitive to this balance. It is essential that policing is proactive and consistent, and communicates and liaises with specialist projects as far as possible so that disruption between activities can be minimised. It is also important that the police and specialist support services are linked in order to support those involved in prostitution.

Public protection and harm-reduction

7.4. The nature of sex work makes those involved in prostitution particularly vulnerable to sexual and violent crime, including from serial perpetrators who may target them. The police's responsibility for public protection means that stopping attacks on those involved, including catching and convicting those responsible, is a core part of reducing the harm from prostitution.

7.5. An important factor in responding to crimes against those involved in prostitution is increasing their confidence to report attacks. This may involve working with sex work support projects to communicate the message that these crimes will be taken seriously and investigated. Police training and attitudes in terms of how people involved in prostitution who report rape and other crimes are treated will be important. Local police can also support 'Ugly Mugs' schemes where they operate, as well as other safety initiatives developed by specialist projects.

7.6. Neighbourhood Policing Teams can enable local community members to report their concerns, and can also provide additional intelligence on specific local issues.

Street prostitution

7.7. The policing of street prostitution needs to take account of those buying sex, as well as those selling sex. In a number of areas visited the focus of enforcement was primarily on those seeking to buy sexual services on the street. Any approach that focuses on those selling sex needs to take account of the need to ensure access to services as an initial response.

7.8. A number of areas support the enforcement of offences related to soliciting by running a programme aimed at getting men engaging in kerb crawling to reflect on their conduct and cease offending. A number of areas noted that this course was run on a self-

funding basis as it was paid for by attendees (having consented to do so as a condition of the sentence set by the court).

Case study: Ipswich

The policing strategy in Ipswich involves zero tolerance approach to kerb crawling, with an explicit strategic aim to remove all street prostitution from the town. Features of this include:

- *Reducing demand by introducing a zero tolerance and robust enforcement of the law on kerb crawling, utilising all available technology such as CCTV and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR);*
- *Where appropriate, the police will engage in intelligence-led enforcement activity using anti social behaviour legislation to tackle persistent street prostitution and kerb crawling;*
- *To discourage street sex markets by improving the environment such as increased street lighting, CCTV and alley-gating along with regular clean ups and the removal of needles and used condoms.*

The approach to those involved in prostitution is less punitive and more supportive. Those arrested are provided with information and support services and every effort is made to encourage them to seek appropriate support.

Approximately 18 months after the launch of the strategy in 2007, kerb-crawling and street prostitution had been effectively eliminated in Ipswich (with no evidence of displacement to off-street markets).

Off-Street prostitution

7.9. While the approach to policing off street prostitution may be different from that for street prostitution, it is important that an effective response is developed. In this respect a number of areas focus on the premises where sexual services are sold and that present a nuisance, or where exploitation, trafficking or the involvement of children is suspected. This highlights the need for areas to develop a definition of exploitation and a way of identifying and responding to it, including ensuring that support is in place for victims identified.

7.10. As with street prostitution, it is important that the approach to policing off-street prostitution is developed in partnership with specialist services and takes account of other services that may be being delivered to those involved. In some areas those involved in off-street prostitution raised concerns about accessing services because they perceived them to be associated with the police or were concerned that disclosing information about their involvement in prostitution (or in some cases their immigration status) would be passed to the police. This highlights the importance of the police building trust so as not to disrupt the provision of other services.

Case study: Greater Manchester Police – off-street prostitution and trafficking

The Greater Manchester Police Sexual Crime Unit is a force-wide unit, and part of the public protection division. Although not a reactive Human Trafficking unit, Human Trafficking is investigated as part of its remit.

Within this context, the unit have gone into off-street premises being used by sex workers (including accompanying HM Revenue & Customs officers investigating tax issues, for example). Having introduced themselves, they speak to each girl and any staff individually.

The unit are clear with the people they encounter that such premises are illegal, and that the police as a whole are not turning a blind eye. However the unit's central focus remains harm-reduction and the welfare of the women involved, so they will advise on issues relating to safety, for example on how to look out for a trafficking victim.

The assistance of people involved in prostitution has been vitally important in bringing prosecutions. Where the police have been able to rescue a trafficked woman, it has improved the trust they have received from other women at that premises, and the unit has found that many of the sex workers who are willing to be at the premises genuinely care about the welfare of the trafficked women, and are quite willing to give statements or intelligence if they feel it will help the victim.

The police have also found that premises and women are relatively willing to engage on issues such as trafficking, as they know that reducing exploitation will also reduce the chances of the premises coming into contact with the police.

Greater Manchester Police, including the Public Protection Division, has a close working relationship with Manchester Action on Street Health (MASH), which has been helpful in dealing with local prostitution and associated issues.

The unit has also given presentations to other police officers and groups such as churches, women's groups and local authority working parties, to give them an insight into trafficking and prostitution.

Coercion, exploitation and grooming

7.11. In relation to both street and off-street prostitution, vulnerable people may be subject to coercion or exploitation, or may be groomed into prostitution. Policing should therefore not simply focus on the most visible aspects of prostitution, but should seek to address those who may be responsible for helping to continue someone's involvement in prostitution.

7.12. Trafficking, coercion and exploitation can often be linked to organised criminals. The policing response to these issues of prostitution can therefore contribute to the response to organised crime groups, and vice versa.

Child sexual exploitation

7.13. The need for a proactive multi agency response to child sexual exploitation has been outlined in Section 5 – Prevention. Forces will need to develop the capability to identify and investigate child sexual exploitation and establish links with other agencies, and Local Safeguarding Children's Boards in order to ensure children who have been identified as exploited or at risk of exploitation can be appropriately supported.

7.14. One of the legislative tools available to police in situations where children and young people are at risk of harm from those who may be sexually exploiting them are Warning Notices. These are aimed at tackling incidences where young people under the age of 16 years (or under 18 if in local authority care) place themselves at risk of harm due to their forming inappropriate relationships. If issued properly, the Notices can provide evidence to support the prosecution of other criminal offences and/or to support civil proceedings.

Case study: Child sexual exploitation – Operation Retriever

A major covert police investigation into the organised sexual exploitation of girls in the Derby area started in late 2008. The police worked closely with Safe & Sound Derby; a charity that works with children and young people who had provided most of the referrals in this case.

Of the thirteen defendants, eight were found guilty and five were cleared of charges relating to sexual exploitation (though one was found guilty of cocaine smuggling).

The men were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 18 months to 22 years, with two defendants receiving indeterminate sentences.

Ugly Mugs

7.15. As covered in Section 6, some areas have developed local 'Ugly Mugs' schemes, the majority of which are supported by the local police. The police clearly have a direct role where someone involved in prostitution gives consent for their Ugly Mugs report to be passed on to report a crime. Anonymised Ugly Mugs reports and alerts that fall short of a full crime report can also provide valuable local intelligence. The effective use of local Ugly Mugs schemes can therefore be an effective part of policing prostitution.

Accountability and Monitoring

8.1. If agencies within an area are to adopt a multi-agency response and identify agreed goals, it is important that there is an appropriate mechanism for reviewing progress against objectives. Therefore evaluating and monitoring the effectiveness of a strategic response is important.

Monitoring

8.2. Ongoing monitoring is an important part of ensuring that appropriate standards are being upheld, that objectives are being met, and that no adverse impacts are arising. It is helpful for a wide range of indicators to be used to measure performance (e.g. not just law enforcement statistics), including the measurement of 'soft outcomes'.

8.3. The OAS/S project in Brighton analyses its caseloads on a quarterly basis to assess the make up of clientele for the services, and they types of interventions delivered. A sample of their recent data is provided as an example.

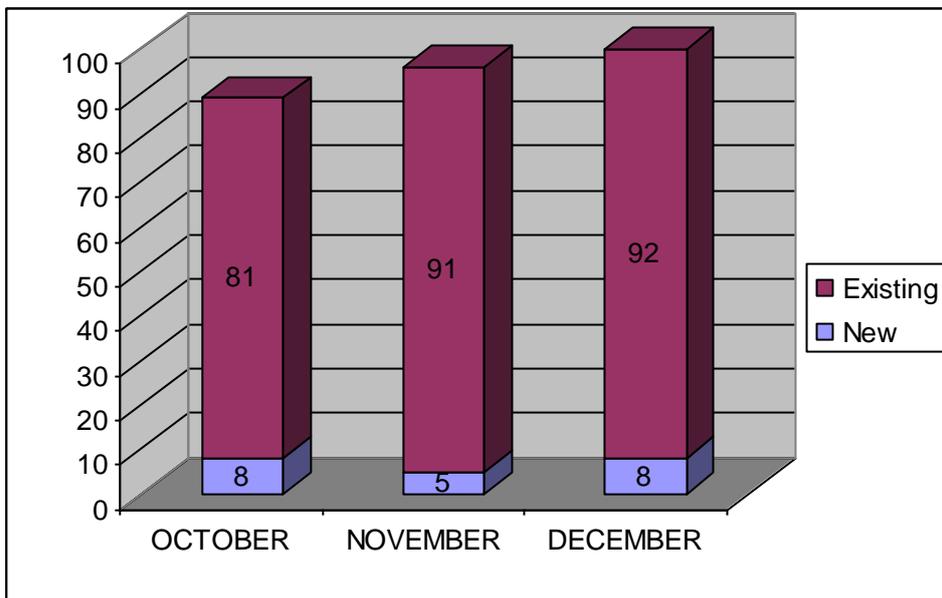
Case Study: Data monitoring in Brighton

Number of Contacts:

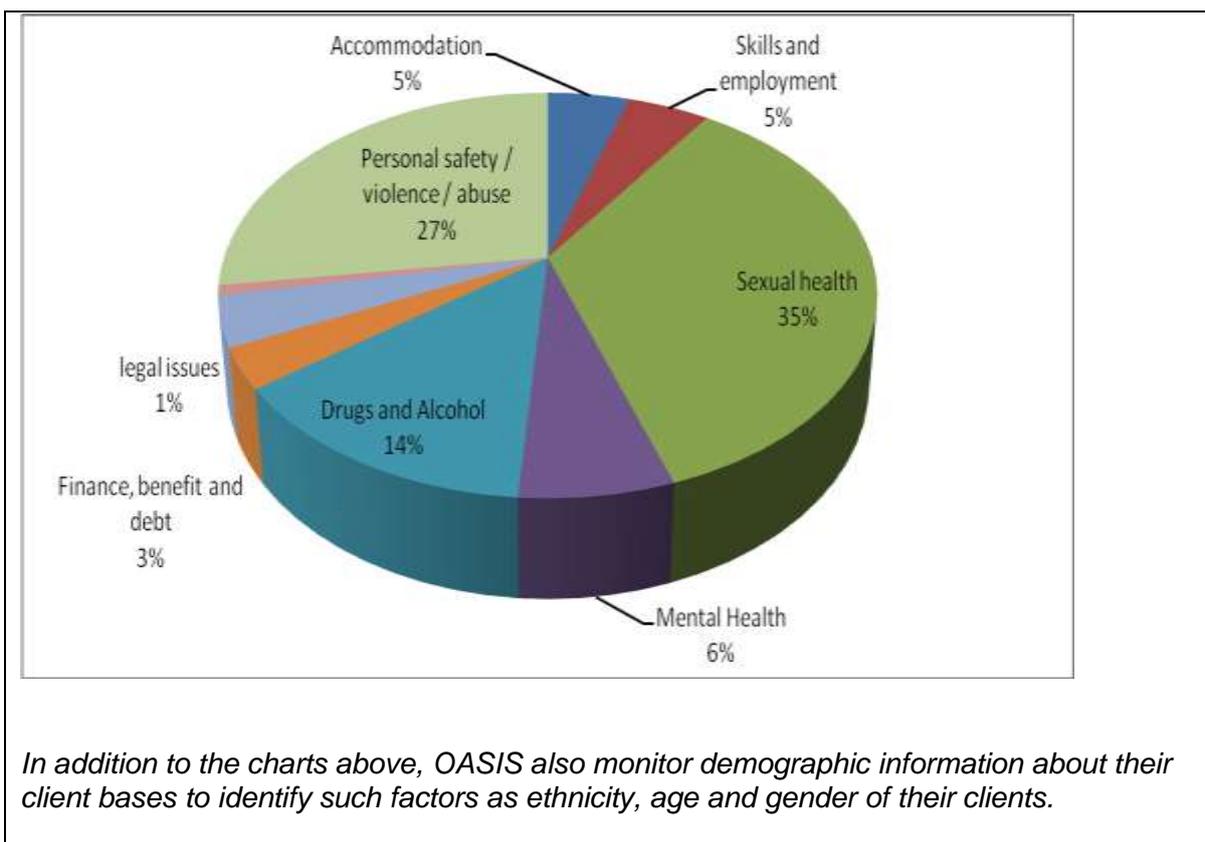
Target: 80 contacts per month; 50 individuals per month.

There were a total of 253 (new and repeat) contacts with 81 individual women during the 3 month period. Out of these, were 20 were new (first time) contacts.

No. of new and existing (repeat) contacts with the service:



The chart below shows the range of issues raised during contacts with ad hoc clients. (All women on outreach to parlours were given condoms and offered sexual health advice and information).



Quality Standards

8.4. Given the challenges in responding to the many issues associated with prostitution and the complex needs of those involved, it is helpful to consider developing quality standards to ensure that the level of care provided is professional and effective. The Charity Commission has developed a *VISIBLE Communities* standard for voluntary sector and charity organisations, which provides an example of a standard that can be adopted. Other projects work with the *Quality Care Commission*, or *QuADS* (organisational quality standards for drugs and alcohol services).

8.5. Professional standards and safeguards need to be considered and enforced by all projects, due to the vulnerability of those involved in prostitution. For example, policies should be in place to ensure that all staff and volunteers are CRB checked, and that informed consent practices are used.

Evaluation

8.6. Regular evaluations from independent or overseeing bodies are also important tools in ensuring that a strategy is effective. For example, in Hull, scrutiny from the Council is a regular part of the oversight of the Community Safety Partnership's strategy. In Ipswich, the strategy has been independently evaluated by the University of East Anglia and a further evaluation is planned. In Tower Hamlets, the Safe Exit diversion scheme has also been subject to a recent independent evaluation.

Involvement of service users

8.7. Key considerations in the response to prostitution are the needs of those involved in prostitution and receiving services. Therefore, involving service users in the development of strategies and quality standards, and providing them the opportunity to provide regular feedback on the delivery of services, are important elements of effective practice.

8.8. A number of specialist projects liaise with service user representatives. For example, a representative at *Bradford Working Women's* project conducted a survey among service users about the policing of prostitution in Bradford, and the findings were used to discuss issues with the police and help develop solutions to problems identified. As a result, the service users reported an improved response from the police and increased confidence in engaging and reporting incidents to them.

Value for Money

8.9. In order to demonstrate that community concerns are being effectively responded to, it is important that partnerships are able to demonstrate value for money and the costs and savings of a particular approach. Services may receive funding from a number of sources, which may place certain requirements in terms of monitoring and assessing value for money.

8.10. A number of agencies argued that by intervening to support those involved in prostitution – whether to ensure they receive appropriate healthcare treatment, to bring perpetrators of violence to justice, or to help people leave prostitution – they were contributing to long term savings to the criminal justice system or health services for example.

8.11. In developing this review it was noted that a number of developments are underway which will affect the commissioning landscape and the structure of local government. This will have a bearing on some of the structures and the models identified. However, the principles identified remain valid and it is important that local areas consider how to adapt to this new environment to ensure that the adherence to these principles can be maintained. Demonstrating value for money will be a feature of any new landscape, and demonstrating the benefits to the community as a whole is an important element of delivering an effective response to prostitution.

Accountability

8.12. Steering Groups who ensure strategies are implemented, reviewed and updated can help provide accountability. The Prostitution Strategic Group in the London Borough of Lambeth is an example of this. Training can assist with accountability, for example Local Authorities can commission and/or provide training for services to ensure that staff are up to date with the appropriate information to support those involved in prostitution.

Acknowledgments

The Home Office would like to thank the numerous people who participated in the development of this review.

This includes the members of the steering group which comprised representatives from: the Home Office, Department of Health, Crown Prosecution Service, Association of Chief Police Officers, Local Government Association, UK Network of Sex Work Projects, Beyond the Streets, Eaves, and the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People.

We are also very grateful to the people from the areas we visited who gave their time to provide information on their work, including representatives from: Safer Birmingham Partnership Team, West Midlands Police, Drug Action Team (Birmingham), SAFE (Birmingham), ANAWIM,(Birmingham), Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Prostitution Action Partnership, Drug Intervention Programme (Bradford), West Yorkshire Police, Sexual Health Services (Bradford), Bradford Working Women's Service, Access to Housing (Bradford), Together Women (Bradford), Community Safety Team (Bradford), Community Sussex Police, Community Safety Partnership (Brighton), OASIS (Brighton), Housing Options (Brighton), YMCA (Brighton), One25 (Bristol), Bristol Drugs Partnership, Avon and Somerset Police, Unseen UK (Bristol), Novas Scarman (Bristol), Sexual Health Services (Bristol), Safer Bristol Partnership, Cardiff City Council, StreetLife (Cardiff), NHS service planning (Cardiff), South Wales Police, Safe and Sound (Derby), Women's Work (Derby), Homerton Hospital, St Leonard's Hospital, Hackney Safeguarding Board, The Haven (Whitechapel), Operation Sapphire, Open Doors, Drug and Alcohol Team (Hackney), Royal London Hospital, Corner House (Hull), The Light House Project (Hull), Hull City Council, Suffolk Police, Government Office for the East of England, Suffolk County Council, Drug Action Team (Ipswich), Community Safety Team (Ipswich), Children's Services (Ipswich), Suffolk Primary Care Trust, Neighbourhood Watch (Ipswich), RSVP (Ipswich) ICENI (Ipswich), TRUST (Lambeth), Sexual and Reproductive Health Services (Liverpool), Merseyside Police, Liverpool Social Services, Safe Place (Liverpool), the Armistead Project (Liverpool), Manchester Action on Street Health, Greater Manchester Police, Drug and Alcohol Team (Middlesbrough), Safer Middlesbrough Partnership, SECOS (Middlesbrough), Cleveland Police, Tower Hamlets Borough Council, Safe Exit (Tower Hamlets), ISI Women's Drug Service (Tower Hamlets).

We are especially grateful to the service users at the following projects who took the time to speak of their experiences in prostitution and of having exited prostitution, and to the staff for facilitating the interviews: Bradford Working Women's Project, One25 (Bristol), Open Doors (Hackney), Royal London Hospital, ICENI (Ipswich), Manchester Action on Street Health, SECOS (Middlesbrough).

Finally we are grateful to all the individuals and organisations that attended the consultation events or provided written contributions on the initial findings of this work.

Annex A – The law relating to prostitution

Controlling and trafficking

The offences principally directed against those who exploit others through prostitution include **controlling prostitution for gain** and **causing or inciting prostitution for gain** both of which have a maximum penalty of 7 years. (Sexual Offences Act 2003).

The main offence relating to brothels is **keeping a brothel used for prostitution**, the maximum penalty for which is 7 years (section 33A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003).

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 introduced the offences of **trafficking into, within and out of the UK for sexual exploitation**. These offences cover both adults and children and carry penalties of up to 14 years.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 also introduced offences specifically in respect of the exploitation of children and young people. These are **causing or inciting child prostitution, controlling a child involved in prostitution, and arranging or facilitating child prostitution or pornography**. These offences carry a maximum penalty of 14 years.

The Policing and Crime Act 2009 amended the Sexual Offences Act 2009 to introduce closure orders. These allow a police constable to apply to a court for an order closing premises associated with specified prostitution or pornography related offences for up to three months (which can be extended by up to 3 months if the court deems it necessary). However the total period for which the order has effect must not exceed 6 months).

Paying for sex

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 has been amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2009 to introduce a new offence which makes it illegal to **pay for the sexual services of a prostitute subjected to force, threats (whether or not relating to violence) or any other form of coercion or any form of deception** of a kind likely to induce or encourage the prostitute to provide those services. It is not a valid defence for a defendant to argue that he did not know the prostitute had been subject to force etc. The maximum penalty is a level 3 fine.

In respect of the abuse of a child through prostitution, the 2003 Act introduced an offence of **paying for the sexual services of a child**, for which the maximum penalty is life when the child is under 13 and involves penetration; otherwise 14 years when the child is under 16, or 7 years if the child is 16 or 17.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 has been amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2009 to create an offence of **soliciting** a person in a street or public place for the purpose of obtaining sexual services from a prostitute. This can include a person soliciting from a vehicle in a street or public place and replaces the offences of kerb crawling and persistent soliciting found in the Sexual Offences Act 1985.

Men and women involved in street-based prostitution

The Street Offences Act 1959 (as amended by the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and the Policing and Crime Act 2009) criminalises **loitering or soliciting** for the purposes of

prostitution. It is an offence for a person persistently to solicit or loiter in a street or public place for the purposes of prostitution. Conduct is persistent, for the purposes of this offence, if it takes place on two or more occasions in any period of three months. The maximum penalty is a level 3 fine or an Engagement and Support Order.

Engagement and Support Orders

Engagement and Support Orders were introduced by the Policing and Crime Act (2009) (Section 17 amended Section 1 of the Street Offences Act (1959)). They became available on 1st April 2010. They offer an alternative penalty to a fine for those convicted of loitering or soliciting. To successfully complete the order, someone will need to attend three sessions with a supervisor appointed by the court. If an individual successfully completes an Engagement and Support Order then the conviction for which the order was made will not appear on the criminal record.

Annex B – Useful Links

Further guidance on enforcing the legislation on prostitution can be found in:

[Home Office Circular no 6 of 2010](#)

ACPO Strategy on Policing Prostitution and Sexual Exploitation. Pending (link will be inserted when document becomes publicly available).

Guidance for statutory agencies on working with voluntary sector agencies can be found at:

[Cabinet Office - resources](#)

Guidance and further information on responding to child sexual exploitation can be found in:

[Guidance issued by the Department for Education](#)