

CRIME AND COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

REVIEW OF STREET PROSTITUTION

✱ HARINGEY COUNCIL ✱

APRIL 2004

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Whilst street prostitution does not constitute a major problem across the Borough, it does occur in specific areas and, where it does, its effects on local communities can be severe. It is a serious and legitimate concern of local residents in such neighbourhoods. There is no evidence of any level of growth in the level of activity. On the contrary, there is evidence that it may be diminishing as a problem in some areas. This is particularly true of the Seven Sisters NDC area. However, the distribution does appear as though it may be widening and there is a worrying and increasingly strong link with drug use, particularly crack. The vast majority of prostitutes working on the street are drug dependent. Drug use and prostitution can be mutually reinforcing and action needs to be taken to disrupt the links between them.
- 1.2 The response from agencies to problems within the Borough has varied between locations. Action in the Seven Sisters NDC area has been very effective. A concerted multi agency strategy was successfully adopted with agencies working closely with local residents. This has been greatly assisted by the availability of external grant funding. Such an approach has been successful in other areas of the country and is the one that we would recommend. However, in other areas of the Borough the response has not been co-ordinated as well and the results have been less impressive. Action should not be dependent on the availability of external grant funding. Whilst these areas are not known "beats" and unlikely to become so in the near future, co-ordinated multi agency action still needs to be taken in order to prevent the problem escalating and becoming established.
- 1.3 Borough borders represent a barrier to effective action, both in terms of enforcement and support. Action against prostitutes in one Borough can merely lead to displacement elsewhere. In addition, current support services can be difficult for women to access due to proof of residence requirements. A strategy that does not involve working with other Boroughs is therefore unlikely to be successful. Closer co-operation and a pooling of resources between neighbours needs to be developed if services are to be improved.
- 1.4 Arresting prostitutes for soliciting is generally ineffective as it tends to merely encourage them to go out to earn sufficient money to pay their fines. Its only benefit is to give local residents some temporary respite by briefly removing prostitutes from the streets. There may perhaps be merit in taking action against women who are new to an area in order to deter them from becoming established. However, enforcement action should be targeted principally at kerb crawlers who are more easily deterred and perpetuate the problems. This has generally been the focus for enforcement activity within the Borough and has been shown to be more effective, with very low rates of re-offending.
- 1.5 Most prostitutes lead chaotic lives and only seek help at times of crisis. There may be opportunities at such times for agencies to facilitate lifestyle changes and, if these can be undertaken successfully, there can be considerable benefit to the community. However, support services are currently too slow and inflexible to take advantage of these opportunities when they occur. Services need to be made available in a timely way and when the women requires them. In particular, there is a clear need for a fast track rehabilitation service that is not hampered by residence requirements.
- 1.6 There is very little or no evidence of under age women being involved in prostitution within the Borough, particularly on the street. If such problems were to occur, they

would be far more likely to happen in off street locations such as massage parlours and saunas. Concerns have been raised about possible trafficking taking place within the Borough. Such women are also unlikely to be working on the street. There has been a considerable growth in off street prostitution in recent years with most high streets having some sort of facility. Action needs to be taken to ensure that issues relating to off street locations are addressed.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

General Approach

- 1. That a systematic, concerted, continuous multi agency approach that involves working closely with local residents and their organisations be adopted in addressing issues concerning prostitution where they arise within the Borough.**
- 2. That services to address the needs of prostitutes be developed through establishing close links with neighbouring Boroughs with similar issues and that this involve a pooling of resources and the development of jointly recognised strategies.**
- 3. That joint enforcement strategies be developed with neighbouring Boroughs in order to minimise displacement that may be caused by operations in specific areas.**

Enforcement Priorities

- 4. That the priority for enforcement in addressing prostitution be to take action to disrupt links with drug dealing and, in particular, to close down crack houses.**
- 5. That appropriate measures be developed by agencies to protect vulnerable Council tenants from the use of their properties for drug use and/or dealing.**
- 6. That the current enforcement policy of targeting kerb crawlers rather than prostitutes be supported and that any action directed specifically at prostitutes be aimed at deterring women new to the area from establishing themselves.**

Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs)

- 7. That agreement be sought between partners on the Safer Communities Partnership to not pursue the option of issuing of ASBOs against prostitutes and that representations be made to the appropriate authorities about their use by local District Judges.**

Lifestyle Changes and Harm Minimisation

- 8. That, in conjunction with neighbouring Boroughs, action be taken to establish a fast track drug rehabilitation scheme for drug dependent prostitutes.**
- 9. That specific efforts be made to identify suitable permanent premises for SHOC within the Borough.**

Diversion

- 10. That consideration be given to setting up of an appropriate diversionary scheme in conjunction with neighbouring Boroughs.**

Hackney, Haringey and Islington Rapid Assessment and Response on Sex Work and Problematic Drug Use

11. That action taken by the DAAT teams of Hackney, Haringey and Islington to set up a sex workers forum, a 24 hour crisis centre and supported housing as part of their response to the cross Borough research project on sex work and problematic drug use be strongly supported.

Violence

12. That the Police Service be requested to consider the setting of performance targets for the actioning of reports of violence against prostitutes.

Trafficking

13. That a appropriate action to address the issue of prostitution in off street locations and, in particular, concerns relating to trafficking raised by the Asylum Service and the possible involvement of underage women, be considered by the Safer Communities Partnership.

3. INTRODUCTION

Background

- 3.1 Prostitution is a problem in some specific areas of the Borough and the source of considerable concern for residents affected by it. In particular, street prostitution can have serious detrimental effects on neighbourhoods due to the soliciting and kerb crawling that characterise it. Its presence can encourage other forms of crime and disorder such as vandalism, harassment, street robbery and drug dealing. Once established in an area, street prostitution can have a devastating effect and can lead to a cycle of neighbourhood decline. In particular, a large percentage of street prostitutes are drug dependent and this can encourage drug trafficking in the areas in which they are based.
- 3.2 It should be noted that prostitution is not in itself an offence although almost every conceivable way of engaging in it is illegal. Kerb crawling is an offence although there needs to be a degree of persistence to it to constitute an offence, which means that it can be difficult to collate the necessary evidence.
- 3.3 The responsibility for dealing with the issue cuts across the responsibilities of a number of agencies. Most successful action to address the problem has therefore been multi agency in nature, involving local authorities, the Police Service, health services as well as local residents. Of particular note is successful action that was taken in Luton, Southampton and Streatham. Action in one particular area can lead to displacement to another area. However, this is by no means always the case and there are several examples where this has been minimal.
- 3.4 Last year, the Panel heard of the significant success that had been achieved in the Seven Sisters New Deal for Communities (NDC) area of the Borough. Local residents had been responsible for initially raising the issue of the presence of street sex workers within the area as a matter of concern. A multi agency approach was adopted with the Council, the Primary Care Trust and the Police all working closely together with local residents. A range of measures were taken such as;
- Improving street lighting
 - “Designing out” crime
 - Use of intelligence
 - Use of enforcement powers
 - The presence of neighbourhood wardens.
- 3.5 The number of prostitutes operating in the area was reduced substantially and there had been a noticeable improvement in the quality of life for residents in the area. In particular, the fear of crime had been reduced. The suggestion was made that the Panel undertake a more in-depth study of the issue which looked at it strategically and across the whole of the Borough.
- 3.6 Our review considered the following issues:

- The extent to which street prostitution is a problem within the Borough and its effects on neighbourhoods.
- What is being done to address the issue and if there are any ways in which this could be improved.

3.7 This was achieved through:

- Looking at current practice and policy of the Council and the Safer Communities Partnership.
- Analysing key statistical data
- Interviewing the relevant Executive Member, Council officers, partners and representatives of residents associations.
- Looking at examples of successful and innovative practice within the Borough such as action taken within the Seven Sisters area.
- Assessing how the issue is dealt with successfully in areas outside of Haringey

Terms of Reference

3.8 The terms of reference for the review were as follows:

“To consider how the Council and its partners in the Safer Communities Partnership address the issue of street prostitution within the Borough and to make recommendations on any improvements that could be made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee”

Terminology

3.9 A number of different terms were used in the evidence that we received. For the sake of clarity and consistency, the term 'prostitute' has generally been used in the report as this is the one used in the majority of official documentation and is most widely understood. We appreciate, however, that the alternative term “sex worker” has value as it does not carry with it any of the negative connotations of the word “prostitute”.

Membership of the Panel

3.10 The membership of the Panel was as follows:

Councillors Bull (Chair), Dobbie, Featherstone, Millar, Patel, Q. Prescott and Simpson

Adviser to the Panel

3.11 The Panel was privileged to have the services of Professor Roger Matthews, a criminologist from Middlesex University as our adviser. He is an acknowledged authority in this field and, in particular, has acted as co-ordinator to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Prostitution.

4. KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Effects on Local Communities

4.1 Prostitution and kerb crawling can have a major effect on the quality of life of residents who live in areas where it exists. It can cause severe amounts of nuisance to local residents:

- Street prostitutes need somewhere to take their clients to. Public places and the private property of residents can be used such as alleyways, basement, sheds, gardens and open spaces.
- Noise problems such as that from car doors slamming, shouting and disturbances can be caused. As a large percentage of the activity tends to take place at night, this can cause considerable inconvenience.
- It can cause traffic problems as kerb crawlers and voyeurs are attracted to the area.
- Offensive and hazardous waste such as used condoms and needles are often left behind.
- Residents can find that the value of their property is adversely affected making it difficult for them to move away.
- Female residents can find themselves harassed by clients and kerb crawlers.
- Residents can feel intimidated by the presence of prostitutes, kerb crawlers and other handers on.

4.2 There are also significant indirect effects and it can lead to a cycle of neighbourhood decline. It increases the fear of crime as residents feel less safe on their local streets. The area often gives the appearance of being vulnerable and poorly protected and this can attract crime such as vandalism, disorder, robbery and drug dealing, particularly as a high percentage of prostitute women are drug users. Street prostitution tends to occur in areas that already had more than their fair share of problems.

4.3 Prostitution is considered a worse scourge for people affected than burglary due to its persistent nature and can have a devastating effect on the quality of life in a neighbourhood. The Amhurst Park Action Group, in its evidence to the Parliamentary Group on Prostitution in 1996, stated that “the effrontery and intimidatory behaviour imposes a curfew on local residents, particularly the elderly and women who have to endure the advances of kerb crawlers”. Local people affected have often been vociferous in their calls for action and the driving force for action to “clean up” areas. Many residents are aware of the limitations in prosecuting prostitutes as a large percentage of women involved have major problems and are “victims” themselves. They also want help, support and exit mechanisms provided for them. Their anger is normally reserved for kerb crawlers.

The Nature of Street Prostitution

- 4.4 There has been a fundamental change in the motivation behind street prostitution. It is no longer driven primarily by economic factors. It is now far more likely to be driven by drugs. Most women operating on the street are now drug dependent. Estimates of the percentage of on street prostitutes that are drug dependent in Haringey vary from 55% to 80% which corresponds with the levels reported in other research. The percentage in Kings Cross is estimated to be over 90%. Crack is a drug that is particularly attractive for sex workers. It is a good palliative for the risks and pressures inherent in sex work. Its short acting nature encourages binge use. It is now a dominating factor and has become the drug of choice for many women.
- 4.5 Prostitutes often have a range of needs including health, housing and domestic violence issues. Many are homeless. They are unlikely to be registered with a GP. Access to services is made difficult by the need to provide evidence of residence and ID. This can also provide a barrier to claiming any benefits to which there might be entitlement. They can also feel stigmatised by service providers. The chaotic lifestyle of many women means that even when appointments are made for them they frequently fail to attend. Women will generally only seek help when their level of need becomes severe.
- 4.6 Liaisons between prostitutes and their clients take place anywhere relatively quiet and deserted and this often puts them at risk of attack. A very high percentage of them have experienced a life threatening experience. Due to the attitudes of local residents, action by the Police and increasing victimisation, women who undertake such work are becoming more vulnerable and the work more dangerous.
- 4.7 Research findings have shown that it is a myth that there are significant numbers of underage girls involved. There was a high profile campaign by the Childrens Society on the issue but the numbers involved were revealed to be minuscule. Any underage women are normally taken off the street very quickly by the Police. Other prostitutes disapprove of their presence and regard them as unfair competition. They often report them to the Police if they are present for any significant length of time and no action is taken to remove them.
- 4.8 Many areas are pimp free. It is difficult to prosecute individuals for living off immoral earnings as the relationships involved are often ambiguous. There are, however, a small number of violent and aggressive men involved and the Police normally act in such cases. There are very few prostitute men that operate on the street. They mainly operate from clubs and escort agencies. Underage male prostitution is also not a significant problem.
- 4.9 The growth area in prostitution is off-street which foreign women now dominate. It is the bigger market by some considerable margin as well as the growth area. The average takings of a high street massage parlour are around £1.5 million per annum. The level of on street trade is, in contrast, stable. Due to its sheer size, the off street trade is something that the authorities may have to get to grips with.
- 4.10 There is very little movement of prostitutes from the street to off street premises. This is mainly due to the very high percentage of women working on the street that are drug dependent. Massage parlours generally like their staff to be "clean". In addition, women working on the street prefer the flexibility in working hours and comparative autonomy that this provides. The majority of foreign women in the business work in massage parlours as a reasonable command of English is required to facilitate transactions on the street.

Successful Interventions

- 4.11 It is a myth that nothing can be done to reduce the problem and that it will always be present. In several areas, it had been drastically reduced or even completely eradicated. Serious inroads can be made. For example, the Vice Squad in Luton has been disbanded due to the large reduction in activity. There are effective strategies that can be adopted. A multi agency approach is now normally used to address the issue and offers the highest chance of success.
- 4.12 Traditionally, it has been the Police that have generally been in the forefront of dealing with the problem. For most Police forces, dealing with it is not a priority and such priority that it has been given is diminishing. It is not popular work with Police officers and appointment to the Vice Squad are normally for short periods. Those who work in this area for any length of time see the vulnerability of the women involved and, in particular, their drug and housing problems. This has made them somewhat ambivalent about their role. In the past, saturation policing had been used in some areas but this has not been successful on a long-term basis as the problem either returns when the Police go away or moves elsewhere.
- 4.13 It is not an issue that the Police can deal with in isolation or without assistance from other agencies and successful strategies require a systematic, concerted, continuous multi agency approach that involves a number of co-ordinated strategies including:
- Effective policing strategies. There has to be a commitment to the long term. Most Police Services now target clients as they are less motivated and easier to deter.
 - Information flow and intelligence. Police effectiveness is largely dependent upon the flow of information from members of the local community.
 - Deterring new recruits. This eventually leads to a reduction in numbers of women involved as women leave the profession. Strong local residents groups can act as a particular deterrent
 - Effective exit strategies. The majority of women involved would leave the profession if given the opportunity so effective exit strategies are important.
 - Fast track drug rehabilitation. Successful interventions elsewhere have highlighted the benefits of having a fast track drug rehabilitation scheme in operation and providing support services that fit best with the often chaotic lifestyles of clients and are available quickly when they are needed.
 - Designing out street prostitution. Traffic management schemes have proved effective in destabilising “red light” districts although there is always danger of geographical displacement.
 - Working together with local residents and community organisations.

Case Study – Luton

- 4.14 Problems within Luton grew in the 1980s together with an increase in the numbers of complaints from residents. A traffic management scheme was introduced and the

Police made it a priority for action, particularly targeting kerb crawlers. A range of policing strategies were used, backed up by relatively high levels of fines against prostitutes and kerb crawlers. Within a two year period, the level of street prostitution and kerb crawling was significantly reduced. The number of known street prostitutes operating in Luton declined from 75 in 1987 to 25 by 1989. By 1990, numbers were down to 6 or less. The level of nuisance was significantly reduced with a minimum level of displacement. The action taken drew heavily from previous successful multi agency activity in Finsbury Park.

5. BASELINE INFORMATION

Introduction

- 5.1 We received evidence from a number of sources on the extent of on-street sex working within the Borough. This included the Police, the Courts, Neighbourhood Management and SHOC. Whilst there was some variance in the information that was received, it would appear that some general conclusions can be drawn.
- 5.2 There is generally a low level of complaints about prostitution. In particular, the Police described the level of complaints as being “very low”. However, it is frequently raised by residents at area forums/assemblies and the concerns that it can generate can be quite considerable.
- 5.3 We heard evidence of the type of problems that it can bring locally to an area from residents from streets in the Harringay “ladder”. Female residents had found themselves approached by men looking for prostitutes. Garages, gardens and stairwells had been used by the women and their clients. Unpleasant detritus was left in the area and women and their clients have used the street, gardens, garages and public areas for their activities. There were also problems with noise. There were pimps working in the area and an increased level of crime, particularly violence. Drug dealing was taking place and this was attracting drugs users to the area.
- 5.4 Despite this, there is little evidence of any general increase in the levels taking place within the Borough. The figures for clients seen by SHOC at their drop in clinic and on the street gives some approximate idea of the numbers involved. They generally see between 30 and 40 women per month, although there has been some evidence of a slight decline due in recent months. There is evidence that problems are being alleviated in particular areas of the Borough. However, the distribution of activity may be becoming wider.

Characteristics

- 5.5 There are certain characteristics shared by women involved within Haringey and these are consistent with findings from elsewhere:
 - High levels of drug dependence and, in particular, crack and heroin use. Approximately 55% of women are thought to be drug dependent. In particular, crack now appears to be the drug of choice. This has led many to lead a chaotic lifestyle that makes effective interventions difficult. Street prostitution is therefore as likely to be driven by drug addiction as by economic necessity.
 - Many women have a range of needs including housing, health and childcare issues. A large percentage do not have stable accommodation – SHOC report that 49% of their clients have “unknown” residences.
 - A high percentage of women have been subject to childhood sexual abuse or have been in care.
 - Ethnicity of women involved is generally reflective of the local community. There is no evidence of significant numbers of migrants working on the street.

- There are issues relating to the involvement of asylum seekers and it has been suggested that there is trafficking in young women. However, they are unlikely to be engaged in on street activity - such women will normally be based in off street locations.
- There are very few men operating on the street as they tend to operate from clubs and escort agencies.
- Ages of women involved range from 18 to 54, with an equal split between those over and under 30.
- It is very rare for under age women to be involved and, in such exceptional instances where this has occurred, they have been dealt with very quickly by the Police. Only two underage girls had been found in recent times and these had both been immediately taken into custody and referred onto Social Services. In addition, Social Services reported that there had been no reported cases referred to them recently.
- A high percentage - possibly as much as 75% - of women working in the Seven Sisters area come from outside of the Borough.
- There is a very high incidence of violence against women.
- There is some limited evidence of pimping. The women they control often continue to work in their absence so dealing with them does not necessarily remove the problem.

5.6 The characteristics of the women involved suggest that they are not likely to find other means of supporting themselves easily and unlikely to move elsewhere unless forced to. These findings are consistent with research findings from elsewhere.

Locations

5.7 The problem is concentrated within specific areas of the Borough, notably:

- Seven Sisters
- Green Lanes
- Northumberland Park
- West Green
- Finsbury Park

5.8 Of these, only Seven Sisters is an established area for prostitution or “beat” and has been so since the 1940s. Whilst the other areas are not “beats”, there is a risk that without effective action to address the issue they could become established as ones. Women are currently attracted to these areas principally by the ready availability of drugs. This is not to suggest that drugs is not an issue in the Seven Sisters area but its established nature means that it is more firmly embedded.

Action to Address the Issue

5.9 In the event of general issues concerning prostitution being raised, the issues are brought to the attention of the Crime Reduction Action Group. This is a multi agency group including representatives from the Safer Communities Unit, Council services,

the Police, Environmental Services, HAGA, DASH and, on occasion, the Government Office for London.

- 5.10 Enforcement operations in one Borough can impact directly on neighbouring Boroughs. The main areas where on street prostitution exists are relatively close to Borough boundaries and therefore it is easy for women to cross over the border to another Borough to avoid operations in a particular area. Issues were raised during the review about a lack of co-ordination in enforcement action between neighbouring Boroughs, particularly Hackney and Islington. The lack of cross Borough work also effects the delivery of support services such as drug and health outreach work.
- 5.11 Co-ordinated multi agency action has been taken in the Seven Sisters NDC area. Other areas of the Borough (West Green, Green Lanes) do not have the same financial resources to address the problem in the same way and consequently there has not been the same level of action. There is also considerably less evidence of partnership working.
- 5.12 The Police have repeatedly conducted operations against prostitutes and kerb crawlers within the Borough. In particular, specific operations have been taken targeting kerb crawlers as the removal of their customers can lead to the women moving on. Some operations have been run using officers as decoys. Due to their close association with prostitution in some areas of the Borough, action aimed at closing down crack houses can be effective. A drug referral scheme is in operation for women arrested. The Police work with other agencies, such as SHOC, who provide support and can assist women by working with them to make lifestyle changes.
- 5.13 The Courts reported that there were fewer prosecutions for kerb crawling than for soliciting or loitering. There was a hard core of offenders and with 330 fines outstanding for soliciting or loitering. On average, between 5 and 10 prostitutes attend court each week. Prosecutions for kerb crawling are less in number. Offenders tended to be summoned to appear in court whilst women were arrested. Kerb crawlers tended to either give a spurious defence or to plead guilty and paid quickly in order to avoid further embarrassment.
- 5.14 The Courts felt that the main benefit to the community of having prostitutes arrested was to take them off the street for the night. The offence is only punishable by either a fine or a conditional discharge. The Court tried not to give them an incentive to go out and do more soliciting by giving them a large fine. Due to the probability of them re-offending, there was little point in giving a conditional discharge as this is merely storing up trouble. Kerb crawlers are generally fined more than prostitutes - around £150 - £200 on average. There were a growing number of prosecutions for this as the Police were now focussing on them more than the prostitutes. The rate of re-offending amongst kerb crawlers is very low.
- 5.15 Criminal Anti Social Behaviour Orders have recently been issued by one particular Stipendiary Magistrate against a number of women from outside the Borough and this has led to some reduction in activity. This is not part of any specific new strategy though and has not been subject to consultation between local agencies. The view that we received from the Court Service was that ASBOs were not effective as they merely changed the offence to one of breach of an ASBO. The Police felt that the use of ASBOs was effectively criminalising something that only warranted a fine and could also have the effect of merely displacing the women. Neither Hackney or Islington use ASBOs against women.

- 5.16 It seems likely that prostitution will be made a trigger offence under the Criminal Justice Intervention Programme (CJIP) from April onwards. This will enable women to be drug tested when arrested and referred onwards for drug treatment and rehabilitation if required.
- 5.17 Action taken within the Borough to address the issue has varied between different locations. This is not only due to differences in the nature of the problems within the areas concerned but also the available funding streams to finance such work.

Seven Sisters

- 5.18 Multi agency activity in the area has led to a reduction in the numbers working in the area. The action has been funded by three major partnership initiatives:
- The Targeted Police Initiative (TPI)
 - The New Deal for Communities (NDC)
 - The Safer Seven Sisters initiative
- 5.19 In particular, the NDC initiative is investing £50 million into the area between 2001 and 2011 in order to make a number of improvements. Local residents have been responsible for determining priorities and they specifically had raised concerns regarding the issue of prostitutes in the area.
- 5.20 A range of activities have been undertaken to reduce the level of street prostitution within the area. Action was taken to design out crime through a range of initiatives such as improved street lighting, street cleaning and tree, open space and traffic management. In addition, there was considerable proactive policing in the area including specific operations to catch kerb crawlers and raids on crack houses. There was close working and collaboration with residents groups and key agencies, media publicity and a neighbourhood warden project. Funding was also provided for SHOC.
- 5.21 The initiatives led to a massive reduction in the number of women working in the area and a large reduction in the percentage of residents who saw prostitution and kerb crawling as a major problem. The percentage of residents that saw it as a problem reduced from 49% to 23% between 2000 and 2003 and there is little doubt that this has led to an improvement in the quality of life for people living in the area. There are currently roughly 25 women working in the area. Most are from outside the Borough. The main area where such activity is concentrated borders Hackney and is close to Islington. Concerns have been raised about lack of communication between Hackney and Haringey resulting in there being problems of displacement in the area. The Police Service is planning to address this issue in the next financial year.

Green Lanes

- 5.22 This area is worked by a small number of women. Concerns have constantly been raised by local residents at area assemblies and forums but there has not been a high level of complaints to the Police. The problem is felt to be closely associated with drug dealing. Gardens, garages and stairwells are being used by the women and their clients. The activities also attract traffic to the area and are associated with increased levels of violence and disorder. It is suggested that activity is linked to social clubs in the area although there was some conflicting on this point. The Police

view is that clients generally come from amongst those who come to the area to socialise. They tend to walk to the area and therefore operations aimed at targeting kerb crawlers have not been successful.

5.23 Action has been taken by the task force operating in the area and this has had some impact. This had initially been against the women but this has only had limited and temporary effect. Action to close down crack houses has been more effective. There is a multi agency strategy group that includes the Council, the Police, residents groups and traders and an action plan for the area had been drawn up. However, this does not specifically mention prostitution as a priority. There is a lack of funding for any initiatives in the area and mainstream funding has had to be utilised.

Northumberland Park

5.24 A small number of women work this area from known drug addresses. There is a task force operating in the area and this is targeting these addresses. Research undertaken by the cross Borough research project has referred to it as an “emerging area.”

West Green

5.25 This is a new location and there has been an increase in activity the past 18 months. Some Police operations have taken place there. There is also a lack of funding to undertake the sort of multi agency initiatives that were undertaken in Seven Sisters. There is a level of concern amongst some local residents although Neighbourhood Management dispute the extent of the problem. It is not currently one of the priorities for action in the area. It is suggested that the activity is partly due to displacement from the Seven Sisters area, which the area borders onto. Some of the area where it is taking place has historically been a red light area. It is thought to be strongly linked to the availability of drugs in the area.

Finsbury Park

5.26 Environment report that the park is being used by women to perform their business after picking up men in nearby streets. Some of the women working in this area are believed to have previously worked in Kings Cross and Whitechapel.

Health and Support

5.27 Most women working on the street are either using alcohol and/or drugs. It is suspected that some women may be dealing in drugs although this is disputed. Dual use can present problems as they can fall between services. The chaotic lives of drug users can cause difficulties in accessing treatment. Drug treatment is not available to non-residents of Haringey and, as many women are from outside of the Borough, this can make it difficult for them to access services. The requirement to provide proof of residence to receive treatment can also represent a barrier as a high percentage of women do not have stable addresses.

5.28 Crack use is of specific concern as it has brought a sense of desperation to many women. They are now more prepared to undercut each other and to take risks. Whilst methadone is available for heroin users, there is no alternative to crack. Absolute success in weaning individuals off drugs is rare but smaller levels of success can be achieved. Use can be reduced and therefore the need for women to work. There is a lack of funding for treatment and DASH accept that their

relationship with SHOC could be closer. It can take several weeks for clients to get an appointment. We heard that in Manchester, MASH can refer onwards very quickly. They also directly provide drugs advice.

- 5.29 The Drug Action Teams of Hackney, Haringey and Islington are not within the same commissioning clusters and this can hamper efforts to co-ordinate services with them. However, the cross Borough Sex Work Project has involved them breaking away from these and discussions are under way on collaboration to provide a range of support for sex workers within these Boroughs.
- 5.30 SHOC is an outreach service for sex workers and the services provided by it include a drop-in centre as well as a satellite service. They provide a full sexual health screening service, a needle exchange, condoms, advice and employment training. They had managed to get some clients into full-time work. SHOC are hampered by not having their own permanent premises. In particular, space is needed for offices and therapies. There is also a lack of stable long term funding. They are currently funded by the NDC but this expires at the end of this financial year. Funding is being taken over by the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) and the Primary Care Trust. There is a good working relationship with the Police, particularly in the NDC area.
- 5.31 Whilst SHOC is not primarily an “exiting” project, it has been able to develop such a service with the aid of funding from the NDC. They work with clients to develop exit strategies and alternatives to sex work. These included help on writing CVs, life coaching, interview skills, use of the telephone and IT training. Any degree of compulsion or pressure to change can prove counter productive. Not all women wish to make lifestyle changes but if there is a genuine commitment, we heard that exiting was feasible. They had managed to get 9 women into some type of work although they could not say categorically that they had stopped being prostitutes. An example was also given of a client who had managed over a number of years to obtain the qualifications necessary to gain entry to university.
- 5.32 Violence against women is very common. SHOC encourage women to report incidents to the project and to the Police and there have been some successful prosecutions. The more serious the assault, the more likely it is that the Police will investigate. Such men can easily assault women who were not sex workers. The response from the Police is variable. The Task Force working in the NDC area is normally helpful but Police in Tottenham could be less sympathetic. Training could help this situation.
- 5.33 Several areas have established “ugly mugs” schemes. This involves developing a database to collate information about known violent clients and disseminate information to women. Intelligence is kept by the Police in Haringey on violent persons but this is not circulated. Women pass on information amongst themselves and sometimes to the Police.

6. KEY ISSUES

General Approach

- 6.1 Action to address the issue of prostitution within the Borough has been variable. The work undertaken in the Seven Sisters NDC area has been very successful. This has been achieved by using the sort of systematic, concerted, continuous multi agency approach that has worked in other areas of the country and engaging with the local community. The availability of substantial amounts of external funding has also be a key factor. NDC funding will continue until 2011 and efforts will need to be made to ensure that the gains made can be sustained. Other areas of the Borough do not have quite the same problems with prostitution and, where they have occurred, there has not been the same well co-ordinated approach. A certain degree of this may be due to the lack of available funding but action should not be dependent on the availability of substantial amounts of external funding. Whilst there is only one established "beat" in the Borough, it is not impossible that it will become established elsewhere if problems are not addressed successfully.
- 6.2 Genuine multi agency action is essential as this is not an area that the Police can be expected to deal with successfully on their own. Sporadic enforcement operations merely temporarily reduce the problem or displace it. There is also a need to work closely with local residents. This encourages understanding of the difficulties that the Police and other agencies face and of the effects that the problem can have on local residents. We particularly noted that in some areas of the Borough there were quite considerable differences between the perceptions that local residents and those of the agencies. This would seem to indicate a clear need to improve communication.

Recommendation:

- ***That a systematic, concerted, continuous multi agency approach that involves working closely with local residents and their organisations be adopted in addressing issues concerning prostitution where they arise within the Borough.***
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Cross Borough Strategy

- 6.3 Borough boundaries are currently an impediment to addressing the whole issue successfully. Enforcement action by one Borough often merely results in displacement to a neighbouring Borough. This specific issue was raised by the Amhurst Park Action Group in relation to co-ordination between Haringey and Hackney. In addition, prostitutes find it difficult to access services due to the fact that they are either not a resident of a particular Borough or cannot prove residence. A policy that just involves individual Boroughs is therefore not appropriate. There needs to be links developed between Boroughs, an exchange of resources and a jointly recognised strategy. In particular, one means by which drugs services could be improved is by DAAT teams pooling resources so that any women requiring services can be dealt with by any agency within participating Boroughs. Cross Borough collaboration and the pooling of resources may provide an opportunity to provide services that would not be feasible for one Borough to provide on its own through economies of scale.

Recommendation:

- ***That services to address the needs of prostitutes be developed through establishing close links with neighbouring Boroughs with similar issues and that this involve a pooling of resources and the development of jointly recognised strategies.***
 - ***That joint enforcement strategies be developed with neighbouring Boroughs in order to minimise displacement that may be caused by operations in specific areas.***
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Enforcement

- 6.4 Drug dealing and sex work can be mutually reinforcing. Drug dealers will be attracted to areas where there are on street prostitutes as they represent a ready market and because of the amount of cash in circulation in the vicinity. Sex workers will, in addition, be attracted to areas where there are drugs available to satisfy their habit. When drug markets are established within “beats”, women do not need to leave the area to buy their drugs and can easily fund their next purchase through sex work. Dealers in such areas will normally end up receiving most of the money that is earned by women. The danger is that the two markets can merge to such a degree as to become indistinguishable. There is some evidence that there is a danger of this becoming the case in some areas of the Borough, albeit on a small scale.
- 6.5 This view is outlined in the recent Cross Borough Sex Work research undertaken by Imperial College on the support needs of prostitutes and it is one that is very convincing. Action needs to be taken to disrupt the link between drug markets and sex work. We therefore feel that that the priority in any enforcement action should be to deal firmly with crack houses. Contrary to the impression that is sometimes given, closing down crack houses is a slow process and it is often difficult to get sufficient evidence to prosecute. However, we noted that Haringey managed to close down 200 crack houses in 2002/03 and continues to be committed taking firm action against them.
- 6.6 We heard specific concerns raised in relation to vulnerable tenants being targeted by drug dealers and their premises being used for crack smoking. Sometimes premises can be completely taken over by dealers and turned into crack houses. We also received evidence of this taking place in other Boroughs and it is also referred to in the Cross Borough Sex Work research. We therefore feel that the Housing Service should develop a strategy for protecting such vulnerable tenants in order to protect them from such exploitation.
- 6.7 We heard evidence from the Courts Service about prosecutions of sex workers and the limitations of this course of action. They felt that giving women large fines was counter productive as it encouraged women to go out and work to make the necessary amounts so therefore the higher the fine, the greater the incentive to work. There was a hard core of “regulars” who dutifully paid their fines before returning to work. The only benefit that there can be for the community in this is to temporarily remove women from the street for a period of time. Fines are clearly no deterrent in such circumstances and have merely symbolic value. There may, however, be some merit in taking action against sex workers who are new to the area in an effort to divert them before they become established.

6.8 We noted that there are still a higher number of sex workers who are prosecuted than kerb crawlers and that the rate of re-offending for kerb crawlers is very low. They appear to be far more easily discouraged than sex workers. Police operations within the Borough have generally concentrated on kerb crawlers in recent times although this not appear to be mirrored in the number of cases being dealt with by the Courts yet. We nevertheless concur with this approach. It can cause an increase in the level of risk to women by reducing the number of customers and, in particular, discouraging the less dangerous and more easily deterred customers but this is a trade-off that unfortunately to be made. Consideration needs to be given to the needs of local communities as well.

Recommendations:

- ***That the priority for enforcement in addressing prostitution be to take action to disrupt links with drug dealing and, in particular, to close down crack houses.***
 - ***That appropriate measures be developed by agencies to protect vulnerable Council tenants from the use of their properties for drug use and/or dealing.***
 - ***That the current enforcement policy of targeting kerb crawlers rather than prostitutes be supported and that any action directed specifically at prostitutes be aimed at deterring women new to the area from establishing themselves.***
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Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs)

6.9 The cross Borough research project report undertaken by has commended the three commissioning Boroughs (Hackney, Haringey and Islington) for not using Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) against sex workers. However, during the course of our review we heard that a local District Judge had started to issue ASBOs against sex workers who were not Haringey residents. SHOC have since reported that action has now also been taken against women who are Haringey residents. This appears to have been done by using Section 64 of the Police Reform Act 2002 which allows courts to impose an ASBO on an offender on conviction irrespective of whether an application for an ASBO has been made. The action taken was not subject to any sort of prior local discussion and no warning was given. The ASBOs can bar women from entering the Borough from anything between two and five years. Such measures can make it difficult for them to access support services such as SHOC and DASH who play a key role in facilitating harm minimisation. It also merely moves the problem somewhere else as well as replacing one kind of offence with one – breach of an ASBO – that is considerably more serious. ASBOs were designed primarily to deal with anti social behaviour on Council estates and are an inappropriate and punitive response to this client group. We feel that representations should be made to the appropriate authorities on this matter.

Recommendation:

- ***That agreement be sought between partners on the Safer Communities Partnership to not pursue the option of issuing of ASBOs against prostitutes and that representations be made to the appropriate authorities about their use by local District Judges.***
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Lifestyle Changes and Harm Minimisation

6.10 There are clear benefits to local communities in enabling women to make appropriate lifestyle changes. However, exiting is not easy as women often have a host of problems to be resolved such as housing, health and drug issue. The women also tend to associate with individuals with similar problems and can often have family in the area. In many cases, the only way that exiting is likely to be successful is if they move completely out of the area. They often feel stigmatised and pre-judged in their dealings with support agencies whilst their criminal record can also make it difficult to find alternative employment.. If women are genuinely committed to exiting the profession, it is feasible for them to do so successfully. Even if the numbers that may successfully move on are low, the opportunities should be there. More modest levels of success can be achieved such as:

- Harm reduction in drug use such as changing from injecting to smoking
- Breaking free from an abusive relationship
- Reducing time spent engaging in sex work
- Finding permanent accommodation

6.11 Services have often been provided on a piecemeal and short-term basis. Services need to be made available to women as and when they need them. There is, from time-to-time, a “window of opportunity” when a woman makes a conscious decision to make lifestyle changes. It currently takes women too long to access the services that they need for full advantage to be taken of such openings. Services need to fit in with the chaotic lifestyles of clients rather than vice versa. Assistance needs to be provided quickly otherwise opportunities can be lost. In particular, there is a clear need for a fast track drug rehabilitation scheme. There also needs to be longer-term support to ensure that the process is completed successfully.

6.12 SHOC have a good working relationship with women and appear to have gained their trust. They also have good working relationships with a number of agencies and, in particular, the Police. They are committed to working with local communities as they realise the real concerns that prostitution can cause residents. SHOC should therefore play a clear role in any overall strategy that is being developed. In particular, they could provide a gateway for access to a range of services for prostitutes including fast track drug rehabilitation. They are currently hampered by not having their own premises. In particular, space is needed for offices and therapies. Such premises needed to be close to where their clients are likely to be found.

Recommendation:

- ***That, in conjunction with neighbouring Boroughs, action be taken to establish a fast track drug rehabilitation scheme for drug dependent prostitutes.***
 - ***That specific efforts be made to identify suitable permanent premises for SHOC within the Borough.***
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Diversionary Schemes

6.13 Members of the Panel visited Manchester to hear about the Court Diversionary Scheme in operation there which was initially funded through the Home Office

Tackling Prostitution: What Works initiative. An evaluation of the various schemes funded under this initiative is due to be published by the Home Office shortly but informal feedback suggests that the Manchester scheme was rated highly.

- 6.14 It is available for women who have been arrested for loiter prostitution. The women are given details of the scheme and bailed to appear at the Magistrates Court. At court, the Court Diversionary Worker explains the scheme and they are given the choice of whether they wish to opt onto the scheme. If they decide to go on the scheme, the case is adjourned for four weeks. In this time, they must keep two appointments. The first is with the Court Diversion Worker who does a thorough assessment covering sex work history, health issues, sexual health, drug and alcohol use, accommodation, family and relationships, education, employment and benefits. A second appointment is agreed and this will normally be with a suitable agency such as drug rehabilitation. If two appointments are kept, the case against the women is discontinued. For many of the women, merely keeping the appointments is a major achievement. According to SHOC, similar scheme was considered for Haringey but not pursued as it was felt that it was unlikely to be successful as the majority of women do not turn up for court appearances.
- 6.15 An alternative scheme has been proposed in Islington. Its aims are to reduce street offending, give offenders a clear pathway out and offer an alternative to the existing system. After arrest, the initial police process does not alter. Upon a decision being made that there is sufficient evidence to support a charge and court appearance, the individual would then be served a notice setting out that they can choose between a court appearance in the normal fashion or can elect to seek assistance from the drugs referral system. If the latter route is selected, the decision to charge will be suspended for a period of nine weeks. If an offender does not wish to take part or initially signs up with no intention of committing to the course of treatment, then other prosecution options would be considered. If the person participates in the scheme to a satisfactory level, the case can be disposed of by a caution. In the event of a decision being made to pursue the case, the court can take into account participation in the scheme when passing sentence.
- 6.16 Such schemes would bring some positive benefit from putting prostitutes through the Court system through encouraging them to make appropriate lifestyle changes. We therefore feel that the setting up a similar scheme in Haringey is worth serious consideration, possibly in conjunction with neighbouring Boroughs.

Recommendation:

- ***That consideration be given to setting up of an appropriate diversionary scheme in conjunction with neighbouring Boroughs.***

Hackney, Haringey and Islington Rapid Assessment and Response on Sex Work and Problematic Drug Use

- 6.17 We noted that the cross Borough Sex Work research project undertaken by Imperial College had now reported. This focussed in particular on the support needs of prostitutes. Whilst there are many positive recommendations aspects to the report, there are also ones that the commissioners of the report (Hackney, Haringey and Islington DAAT teams) would not necessarily endorse. At the time of writing, a response was being drafted by the DAAT team to the report. We had hoped to

receive evidence directly from the researchers on the findings of their research but unfortunately they chose to decline our invitation.

6.18 One key set of recommendations of the report concerned closer the co-operation between Boroughs that we have also recommended, particularly in respect of support for the prostitutes. Some recommendations are already being acted upon by the DAAT teams:

- A Sex Workers Strategic Forum was being set up that would include Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Camden and Tower Hamlets in order to co-ordinate services between the participating Boroughs.
- Consideration was being given to the setting up of a 24-hour crisis centre and of a supported housing scheme by participating Boroughs.

These are initiatives that we would strongly endorse.

Recommendation:

- ***That action taken by the DAAT teams of Hackney, Haringey and Islington to set up a sex workers forum, a 24 hour crisis centre and supported housing as part of their response to the cross Borough research project on sex work and problematic drug use be strongly supported.***

Tolerance or Managed Zones

6.19 Tolerance or managed zones have been suggested as an option in addressing the issue of on street prostitution. In such areas, sex workers are able to work without risk of arrest through the discretionary use of Police powers – it does not entail any change in the law. This can be linked to more stringent policing outside of the area as well as operations against drugs within the area. It has been suggested that the benefits of such zones could include facilitating interventions with women and reducing the level of violence and anti social behaviour.

6.20 The outcomes of such zones have been variable. A zone had been introduced in Plymouth and there had been no arrests for some time. The Vice Squad had now been reduced from 8 to 1 and the issue is taking up considerably less Police time. Problems are resolved by talking to the women and support workers. Results of schemes in Holland and Edinburgh have been mixed. The introduction of any scheme would need serious thought but would probably not be sustainable for any length of time. There would also be the difficulty of deciding where such zones would be. There are probably no areas of the Borough where nuisance would not be caused to sizeable numbers of residents and there would be considerable opposition from residents. It could threaten the improvements to the quality of life that have been experienced by local residents where concerted action has been successfully taken. A zone might well also act as a magnet for women from other areas of London, thus worsening the problem. We found virtually no support for the setting up of such a scheme locally.

Violence

6.21 In reference to violence against sex workers, we noted that there was training being arranged for the Police on the issue of violence against sex workers. However, the

Police need to be seen to take complaints seriously so that women are encouraged to come forward. Many currently feel that violence is just an occupational hazard. They are, however, entitled to the protection of the law. The men that commit these offences are not just a risk to prostitutes – they can also pose a threat to the wider community. We felt that where reports were submitted, performance targets should be set by the Police for the percentage of these that were acted upon.

Recommendation:

That the Police Service be requested to consider the setting of performance targets for the actioning of reports of violence against prostitutes.

Trafficking

6.22 Prostitution is an issue for the Asylum Service particularly in relation to young women who it is alleged are trafficked into the country and coerced into it. Referrals have been received following Police raids on brothels. The number of cases that have come to light is relatively small but it may be a more widespread problem. They are often controlled by men who they have been forced to work for. Such activity is unlikely to take place on-street but may be taking place in off-street locations such as saunas and massage parlours. As previously mentioned, this is the major area of growth in the area of prostitution. It is also more likely that under age women will be working here rather than on the street. It is therefore an area that warrants further investigation.

Recommendation:

- ***That appropriate action to address the issue of prostitution in off street locations and, in particular, concerns relating to trafficking raised by the Asylum Service, be considered by the Safer Communities Partnership.***
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APPENDIX

The following individuals/organisations provided evidence to the review:

The Court Service

Shaun de Souza Brady - Police Service

Luna Hadwin - Drugs Action Service Haringey (DASH)

Ian MacGregor - Haringey Advisory Service on Alcohol (HAGA)

Michelle Farley - Sexual Health on Call (SHOC)

Ron Belgrave - Safer Communities Manager, Haringey Council

Adrian Hosken – Haringey DAAT

Mike Bagnell - Housing Service, Haringey Council

Social Services

Environment Service

Gina Brooks - West Green Neighbourhood Manager

Dasos Maliotis - Green Lanes Strategy Group

Neil Hutchison and Sean Burke - The Bridge NDC Partnership

Local residents

Amhurst Park Action Group

Manchester Action on Street Health