

## **Key Document 6**

Presumed final version of University of Luton Evaluation Report

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Margaret Melrose  
July 2003

## **Tackling Prostitution: What Works? (Young People)** **Evaluation of Projects in Bristol and Sheffield**

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*What Works in Tackling the Problems of Young People Involved in Commercial Sexual Exploitation?*

**Summary of Key Findings**

The findings from this evaluation suggest that in order to be successful in working with young people, projects should provide the following as a minimum standard:

- ◆ Welfare-based rather than criminal justice-based interventions
- ◆ Dedicated and/or mainstreamed services that take an holistic view of the young people and provide long-term intensive support delivered through non-standard interventions – i.e. outreach, drop-in, youth service based responses
- ◆ Someone to ‘be there’ for the young person. A consistent, named worker who is non-judgemental
- ◆ Out-of-hours support
- ◆ Proper co-ordination of projects with clear accountability and management structures providing diverse but joined-up and seamless services – e.g. sexual health, drug advice/treatment, counselling, education/training, housing advice and provision, advice in relation to welfare benefits
- ◆ Clear protocols for data collection, sharing and working practices
- ◆ Early intervention/preventative work with those identified as ‘at risk’
- ◆ Training for practitioners from a variety of agencies
- ◆ A two-pronged approach that can support the young people and protect them from further abuse while at the same time targeting abusive adults
- ◆ Customs/immigration services should increase their involvement and be alert to the increase in trafficking in children for the purpose of sexual exploitation

## **Final Report: Tackling Prostitution: What Works for Young People?**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This report provides a thematic overview and synthesis of data gathered in the course of the evaluation of young people's projects in Bristol and Sheffield. It includes discussion of the following elements:

- ◆ Literature review
- ◆ Methodology and methodological issues encountered during the evaluation
- ◆ Partnership working
- ◆ The context of project work
- ◆ Achievements of the projects
- ◆ What more needs to be done?
- ◆ What works? Tackling crime and disorder related to prostitution in relation to young people

### **SECTION ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### *Introduction*

The purpose of this literature review is to describe what we know from available data about the following aspects of young people's involvement in commercial sexual exploitation:

- ◆ The scale of the problem
- ◆ Who is involved
- ◆ What leads young people to become involved
- ◆ Models of involvement
- ◆ The legal situation
- ◆ The international context
- ◆ Responding to young people involved in commercial sexual exploitation

Before discussing these aspects, however, the review offers a definition of prostitution and explores the terminology in which the issue of young people<sup>1</sup> involved in prostitution is currently discussed.

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<sup>1</sup> This discussion employs definitions of 'a child', 'children' and 'young people' as legally constituted by The Children Act 1989 – that is, anyone up to the age of eighteen. These terms are therefore used interchangeably.

### *Defining Prostitution*

'Prostitution' refers to 'a variety of activities performed under different terms and conditions' (O'Connell-Davidson 1995). It is usually understood to mean, 'the provision of sexual services for some form of payment' (Green 1992). This way of conceptualising prostitution, however, has recently been objected to on the grounds that it commits the same fallacy as the notion that 'employers buy labour power from their workers' (O'Connell-Davidson 1998:9). This notion, it is suggested, is a 'political fiction'. Rather than the use of workers' services or labour, the employment contract provides employers with 'the right of command over the use of the worker's labour, that is to say, over self, person and body of the worker during the period set down in the employment contract' (Pateman 1988:202-3). Employers therefore purchase the *power to labour* from their employees. For this reason, O'Connell-Davidson (1998:9) suggests that prostitution is better conceptualised as, 'an institution which allows certain powers of sexual command over one person's body to be exercised by another'. For the purpose of this report, this is the definition adopted in this discussion.

### *Current Terminology in Relation to the 'Child Prostitution' Debate*

The problem of young people who are involved in prostitution, and the need to distinguish between adults and children who are involved, has been officially acknowledged by the introduction of new Government guidance in relation to the treatment of and response to the young people concerned (DoH/HO/DFEE 2000). In practice, this has effected a paradigm shift from a 'punishment' to a 'welfare' model (Ayre and Barrett 2000) and means that practitioners are now encouraged to respond to these young people as 'victims' of abuse rather than as wilful 'villains'. It is now widely accepted that young people's involvement in prostitution does not result from a 'free economic or moral choice' rather, it is indicative of 'coercion or desperation' (DoH/HO/DFEE 2000).

As a result of this new understanding, the language and terminology we employ to discuss these young people have necessarily changed (Melrose 2002, Melrose and Barrett forthcoming 2004). This is not because children and young people occupy some 'niche position' in the prostitution market but recognises that because they are

children, they are vulnerable in ways that adults are not (O'Connell-Davidson 1998). It is now widely accepted that young people cannot be associated actively with activities related to prostitution, and that they cannot consent to their own abuse. They are acknowledged to be children who 'suffer at the hands of men who desire, fantasise and buy sex with children' (Green *et. al.* 1997). It is therefore now more common to refer to them as 'young people abused through prostitution' (Barnardos 1998) or as 'young people involved in commercial sexual exploitation' (Pearce *et. al.* 2000a, 2000b) rather than as 'child prostitutes' or 'young sex workers'.

It is now recognised that there are a number of potential sites in which young people may be abused in the contemporary sex industry. These may include, for example, through pornography, by distribution of pornographic images over the internet, by using 'chat rooms' to 'groom' children through the internet, by sex tourism and by trafficking in children for the purpose of prostitution (DoH/HO 2001). The available evidence demonstrates that when young people are at risk of, or involved in commercial sexual exploitation, they become vulnerable to other forms of exploitation – sexual and otherwise – for example, sexual assault, rape and drug abuse (Melrose and Barrett forthcoming 2004).

#### *The Scale of the Problem*

The clandestine nature of the problem of young people abused through prostitution means that we are not clear about the national or international scale of it. Much of the data that is available is drawn from small-scale local agency populations (Shaw and Butler 1998). This means that the evidence that is available, although highly valid, is not necessarily reliable and a national picture is not available. Although estimates of prevalence vary (Shaw and Butler 1998, McNeish 1998) indications from various sources suggest that the numbers involved have increased in recent years (Green 1992, Kershaw 1999, Melrose *et. al.* 1999). It is authoritatively suggested that in Britain, up to 5,000 young people may be involved at any one time (Thompson 1995, Barrett 1998, Crosby and Barrett 1999) with a female/male ratio of 4:1 (Barrett 1998). Although the figures for Britain are alarming, they compare quite favourable with other parts of the world: in Asia, for example, it is estimated that 650,000 children are involved in prostitution, in the USA the figure is 300,000 and in Paris, 8,000. Globally it is estimated that over a million children enter the sex trade each year (Williams 1999, Brown 2000).

What we do know is that in Britain, children are involved in commercial sexual exploitation in many towns and cities and that this is not a problem confined to major metropolitan or urban areas (Brain *et. al.* 1998, Melrose *et. al.* 1999, Melrose and Barrett 2004). There is a relationship between the provision of dedicated services to respond to the problem and the increase in knowledge of children being exploited in this way. Once services are in place, needs can be identified (The Children's Society 2003) and where services are developed, the extent of the problem becomes clearer. Police pilot studies of this issue in Nottinghamshire and Wolverhampton, for example, have shown that the problem is both more widespread and complex than had previously been imagined (Brain *et. al.* 1998).

#### *Who Is Involved?*

The abuse of young people through prostitution may take place through street prostitution or in less visible locations, in flats, saunas and/or massage parlours. Since street prostitution is most visible, it is the area we tend to know most about (Lee and O'Brien 1995). In recent years, our conceptualisation of 'prostitution' has expanded and it is now accepted that boys and young men also become involved (Donovan 1991, Gibson 1995, Barrett 1997, Kershaw 1999, Aggleton 1999, Palmer 2001). Most research, however, tends to have focused on the involvement of girls and young women (Green 1992, O'Neill *et. al.* 1995, Barrett 1997, Barnardos 1998, O'Connell-Davidson 1998, Melrose *et. al.* 1999, Pearce *et. al.* 2000a, 2000b, Phoenix 2001, Brown and Barrett 2002).

Although differences between young women and young men in terms of their working practices may exist (Barnard *et. al.* 1990), there does not appear to be a great deal of difference in the factors that lead young men and women to become involved (Melrose *et. al.* 1999). These factors involve an interaction between some or all of the following and are elaborated on in the next section:

- ◆ Poverty
- ◆ Experiences of previous abuse (especially within the family)
- ◆ Experiences of conflict within families
- ◆ Experiences of being looked after in the care system
- ◆ Experiences of going missing from home and/or care



- ◆ Experiences of violence and/or sexual assault from partners, punters and/or pimps
- ◆ Homelessness
- ◆ Drug use/dependence
- ◆ Association with peers who are already involved
- ◆ Educational disaffection

It has been suggested that for young men, prostitution may be a means of exploring issues around sexuality (Altman 1999, Palmer 2001, Melrose *et. al.* 2002, Melrose and Barrett 2004). This, nevertheless, may be an over-simplification and requires more empirically based research in order to verify or refute it. The available literature does highlight some differences in young men's and young women's involvement and these are summarised below.

- ◆ Young women and girls appear to be far more likely to be targeted by an abusing adult or 'pimp' according to some of the literature (Barnardos 1998). This may, however, result from gender stereotyping in which young women are constructed as passive, dependent, vulnerable and helpless. This is not to say that young men are never coerced into prostitution. Palmer (2001), for example, suggests that young men are likely to be targeted by 'paedophiles' who condition the child into prostitution activity from an early age.
- ◆ Young women involved in street prostitution are likely to be more visible than young men are. Because of the stigma that attaches to homosexuality, young men tend to work more covertly and share more of a group culture than young women (Palmer 2001, Kershaw 1999).
- ◆ It has been suggested that on average young men tend to become involved in commercial sexual exploitation at younger ages than young women (Palmer 2001, Melrose *et. al.* 1999). Girls and young women, however, tend to remain involved for longer.
- ◆ Some evidence suggests that young women are more confident than young men are when it comes to negotiations with punters (Barnard *et. al.* 1990, Palmer 2001).

*What leads young people to become involved?*

Our understandings of the factors that lead young people to prostitution have developed a great deal in the past five years. Theoretically, perspectives that tend to

emphasise the power of adults over children and young people have informed perspectives on the commercial sexual exploitation of children and young people (McMullen 1987, Barnardos 1998). It has also been argued that the commercial sexual exploitation of young people, like that of adults, should be understood within the context of male violence and male power (O'Neill 1994, 1997) and gendered economic inequalities (O'Connell-Davidson 1998, Phoenix 2001).

We know that these young people are desperately vulnerable and experience a complex range of interconnected problems. In short, the evidence shows that young people become involved in prostitution through a series of complex and inter-related variables that are almost impossible to disentangle (Cockrell and Hoffman 1989, O'Neill *et. al.* 1995, Green *et. al.* 1997, Melrose *et. al.* 1999). As Phoenix (2002:362) has recently argued, 'there exists a multiplicity of social factors that correlate with involvement in prostitution and funnel opportunities in such a way as to make that involvement plausible'. These social factors involve elements of both 'push' and 'pull'. The available evidence also shows that young people who become involved are usually socially isolated and, as Pitts (1997:150) shows, disadvantaged in two related ways:

'On the one hand they have usually received a poor education, they have few marketable skills, they are casualties of family conflict, and they are homeless and impoverished. [.....] On the other hand, however, unlike some of their similarly disadvantaged contemporaries, these young people also often lack relationships of kinship or friendship rooted in a geographical place, and the networks of relatives, friends or other adults who can introduce them to legitimate occupational or educational opportunities or serve as a source of support and solace where otherwise there are none'

#### *Push Factors*

The link between poverty and prostitution has been well established by previous research (Green 1992, O'Neill *et. al.* 1995, O'Neill 1997, Pitts 1997, O'Connell-Davidson 1998, Melrose *et. al.* 1999, Melrose and Barrett 2001, Phoenix 2001, Melrose and Ayre 2002, Melrose and Barrett 2004). It has recently been argued however, that, as well as being a causal factor in young people's involvement in prostitution, their involvement in prostitution further entrenches their impoverishment (Phoenix 2001).

It is also known that homelessness, going missing from home or care, experiences of being looked after and previous experiences of sexual abuse are highly significant features in the lives of those young people who become involved (Jesson 1991, O'Neill *et. al.* 1995, Pitts 1997, Swann 1998, Crosby and Barrett 1999, Melrose *et. al.* 1999, Friedberg 2000, O'Neill 2001, Melrose and Barrett 2001, Melrose *et. al.* 2002). Research in San Francisco, for example, found that of the 200 prostitutes studied, 60% had previously been sexually abused (Silbert and Pines 1981 cited in Pitts 1997). Other work also suggests that large numbers of adults working in the sex industry have been sexually abused as children (Melrose *et. al.* 1999, Faugier and Cranfield 1994, Foster 1991). There are however, disagreements about whether the correlation is direct or indirect. Some commentators suggest a direct causation between sexual abuse and involvement in prostitution. Such abuse is said to result in damage to self-identity and self esteem (McMullen 1987). In turn, this renders the young person vulnerable to feeling that they have little value and nothing left to lose – particularly when they are confronted with an economic situation which appears to offer them little or no alternative (Pitts 1997). Others suggest a less direct link and instead suggest that abuse triggers a train of events, running away for example, which in turn can lead to prostitution (Seng 1989, West and de Villiers 1992, Widom and Ames 1994, Nadon *et. al.* 1998).

Increasingly, drug use is also an important component in young people's involvement in commercial sexual exploitation and many who are involved have substance misuse problems – particularly in relation to heroin and/or crack-cocaine. It is not uncommon for young people to become involved in prostitution to support their own or another's drug habit or for them to be involved in 'swapping' sexual favours for drugs (O'Neill *et. al.* 1995, Crosby and Barrett 1999, Curran and Sinclair 1998, Melrose *et. al.* 1999, Pettitway 1999, Melrose and Barrett 2004). Practitioners acknowledge that drugs are a major complicating factor in trying to work with these young people to effect their exit from prostitution (Melrose and Barrett 2004).

#### *Pull Factors*

Just as there are 'push' factors to take into account in relation to young people's involvement in commercial sexual exploitation, so there are 'pull' factors which may make prostitution appear attractive and/or which serve to explain their continued

involvement. Amongst these, drugs, 'power', money, 'excitement' are present in many accounts (Melrose *et. al.* 1999). For many of these young people, vulnerability, neglect and abuse have been central features of their childhood. Through prostitution, they are able to regain 'control' in that they perceive they have 'power' over the punters and have money to satisfy their own needs. They view their income as a measure of their success and gain a sense of self-worth because they are being paid for the service they provide (Weisberg 1985, Kershaw 1999, Melrose *et. al.* 1999). In these situations, young people are able to 'shake off the mood of fatalism which dogs them and experience themselves as active agents controlling events in the world' (Matza 1964 cited in Pitts 1997:151). Additionally, the friends and contacts they make while on the streets constitute a form of extended, surrogate family; one they may feel they could not replicate if they were to leave prostitution and return to 'straight' society (Melrose *et. al.* 1999).

#### *Models of Involvement*

In terms of understanding the methods through which young people become involved in prostitution, there are two predominate models. On the one hand, young people are said to 'drift' into prostitution as a result of peer group networks (Jesson 1991, Jesson 1993, Crosby and Barrett 1999, Melrose *et. al.* 1999). On the other hand, young people are said to be 'groomed' and 'pimped' into prostitution by older, abusive, adults (Barnardos 1998).

The former model tends to explain young people's involvement in terms of structural factors such as poverty in conjunction with personal experience and local conditions. In this model, young people are coerced into prostitution not by an abusive adult but by the circumstances of their lives. For these commentators, the 'bottom line' in prostitution is economic need combined with emotional vulnerability (O'Neill 1997, ECP 1997, O'Connell-Davidson 1998, Melrose *et. al.* 1999, Phoenix 2001).

The 'pimping and grooming' model, on the other hand, derives from a discourse of 'childhood' that dominates western thinking about children and young people and which defines them as innocent, asexual and dependent (Pilcher 1996). In this model, parasitic and abusive older men prey on emotionally needy and vulnerable young people (predominately women) (Barnardos 1998).

The young woman is said to be unaware of the fact that she is being 'groomed' as she believes herself to be 'in love' with the adult concerned and he with her. This model neatly side-steps questions about the structural conditions that may give rise to child prostitution by substituting 'poverty' with 'paedophiles' in the chain of causal explanations. It also tends to obscure the fact that most child sexual abuse occurs within the family – especially in families where there is a stepfather (Pitts 1997). Another difficulty with this model is that 'pimps' are invariably understood to be men but evidence has shown that this is not always or necessarily so (Melrose *et. al.* 1999).

The issue of pimps and their role in prostitution is a matter of some controversy and there are different estimates of the extent to which 'pimping' actually occurs. Some commentators have claimed that 'between 80 per cent and 95 per cent of prostitution is pimp controlled' (Barry 1885 cited in Faugier and Sargeant 1997:121) but this assertion is contradicted by other evidence. Armstrong (1983) for example, concluded that pimps played a minor role in recruiting women into prostitution. McKeganey and Barnard (1992) found in their study of prostitution in Glasgow that there was little evidence to suggest that the women were working for pimps. Melrose and colleagues (1999) found in their national study that the women were at pains to assert their independence from men and just one fifth of those interviewed said they had been forced into prostitution by another.

This suggests that the nature of street prostitution may be changing at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first and/or that there may be regional variations in the way that sex markets operate and are organised. Recently it has been argued that the arrival of new technologies (mobile phones, the internet) and new drugs such as crack cocaine have fundamentally altered the prostitution labour market (Faugier and Sargeant 1997). It is claimed that the impact of crack-cocaine 'has directly and indirectly affected the drugs/prostitution nexus' (Goldstein *et. al.* 1992 cited in Faugier and Sargeant 1997). Miller (1995) found that the women to whom she spoke believed that drugs had replaced pimps in most women's lives. Inciardi and colleagues (1993), Ratner (1993) and Melrose and colleagues (1999) have reported similar findings, being told on numerous occasions, 'the drug is the pimp these days' (Melrose *et. al.* 1999).

### *The Legal Situation*

Government guidance now recommends that young people involved in commercial sexual exploitation should be responded to as 'children in need' and provided with support to enable them to exit from prostitution. This represents a major step forward in this area of practice. Nevertheless, the legal framework has not fundamentally changed and under particular conditions, the Street Offences Act 1959 can still be applied (but only to young women) (Scambler and Scambler 1997) from the age of ten (Lee and O'Brien 1995, Aitchison and O'Brien 1997, Edwards 1998). The activities of boys and young men are regulated by the Sexual Offences Act 1956 (Aitchison and O'Brien 1997).

The conditions in which young people involved in commercial sexual exploitation may still be subject to the Street Offences Act 1959 or the Sexual Offences Act 1956 are when they are deemed to be 'persistently and voluntarily' returning to prostitution. In these circumstances, the guidelines recommend that young people be processed through the criminal justice system in the way that other young offenders are – after the practitioners concerned have satisfied themselves that the young person is not being forced into prostitution by another (DoH/HO/DFEE 2000).

The guidelines therefore appear to employ the two mutually exclusive models of entry into prostitution described above and result in some glaring contradictions. On the one hand, we are told that children's involvement in prostitution does not result from a 'free economic or moral choice'. On the other hand, we are told that those who 'voluntarily' return to prostitution should be offered a criminal justice, rather than a welfare-based intervention, when attempts at diversion fail. This invites a lack of consistency in professional responses to these young people because the concept of 'persistence' is open to interpretation, which means that the guidance can be interpreted differently in different areas of the country. Additionally, the guidance frames young people involved in prostitution as 'potentially' victims of (sexual) abuse but the provision for treating those who persist in returning to it as 'young offenders' suggests that what these children experience is *not* sexual abuse (Phoenix 2002).

The guidance also appears to overlook the fact that it is *precisely* those who are most vulnerable, and most in need of support, who will be the most difficult to 'save'

through diversion from prostitution. In other words, it is those who are most vulnerable and 'damaged' who are most likely to return to prostitution (Melrose and Barrett 1999, Melrose and Ayre 2002). The more a child 'persists' in prostitution, the more at risk of significant harm they become. To respond to these young people by punishing, rather than protecting them, is simply not an adequate response.

It has also been pointed out that the guidance effectively introduces 'new' types of child abuse into the child protection system 'at a time when there is a central expectation of refocusing wherever possible cases away from the formal child protection system, based both on the clients' experience of the service and the significant resource constraints facing mainstream social services' (Calder 2001).

#### *The International Context*

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a problem of international proportions. Increasingly, young people are trafficked explicitly for this purpose. In Europe, problems associated with trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children have increased as the boundaries between Western Europe and central and Eastern Europe have come down (Brown and Shah 2000). In Britain, the problem of young people being trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation within and across national boundaries is of increasing concern (Hill 1999, Hill 2000, Kelly and Regan 2000, Barrett 2000, Melrose *et. al.* 2002, Melrose and Brown 2002).

The context for this development is the transnationalisation of the sex industry, globalisation and inequality between the rich, advanced industrial nations and those countries where poverty is endemic (Sangera 1998, Foundation of Women's Studies 1998, Kelly and Regan 2000). As poverty has been feminised in recent years, so too have processes of migration. It is estimated, for example, that more than 50% of migrants are women (Anderson 1997). Women and children from less developed regions of the world have been described by one commentator as 'the new human cash crop' (Sangera 1998). The flow of traffic in women and children, whether within or across national boundaries, is generally from low-density areas of capital to high-density areas, from rural to urban regions and from less developed to more developed areas of the world.

Emerging evidence suggests that the UK is increasingly important as both a transit country and a country of destination (Kelly and Regan 2000) especially for young women from Eastern Europe and East and West Africa (ECPAT 2001). Many of these are minors who are transported to Britain before being removed to countries such as Italy. For the past eight years police and social services personnel have been aware of a problem relating to unaccompanied asylum seekers 'disappearing' from social services care homes in Sussex (ECPAT 2001). It is thought that these young people work predominately in off-street locations where they are hidden from the view of police and social workers. Since Sussex is the only local authority to record the 'disappearance' of unaccompanied minors, it is suspected that the problem is actually much more widespread (ECPAT 2001). It was recently reported that a Romanian girl of 15 had been trafficked and abused through prostitution in six European countries before arriving in Britain. The man responsible for trafficking her was arrested by police but prosecutors were unable to find any law against trafficking the girl as a 'sex slave', 'except for living off immoral earnings, which usually carries a two year jail sentence' (The Times 6.7.02). Evidently, legal responses to this problem leave much to be desired.

*Responding to young people involved in commercial sexual exploitation*

Generally, there is a lack of provision for young people involved in commercial sexual exploitation. Provision of services thus far has primarily come from the voluntary sector. The CRP initiative, therefore, is very much to be welcomed. Appropriate means to intervene and support these young people are still being developed (Melrose and Barrett 2004). In the past, interventions have fallen short of what would ideally be required (Melrose *et. al.* 1999, Melrose and Brodie 1999, Ayre and Barrett 2000). We have argued previously that 'ideal type' projects would provide street based, young person centred services. They would offer opportunities for counselling to explore the young person's victimisation and offer long-term support. Services would also provide educational and training facilities, careers guidance, help with housing and welfare benefits and help with childcare where appropriate. Young people should also be provided with help in relation to drug misuse issues, detoxification and needle exchange facilities where they are needed (Melrose *et. al.* 1999, Melrose 2001). It is clear therefore, that multi-agency approaches to this problem are essential if the very complex problems these young people confront are to be tackled effectively (Browne and Falshaw 1998, Melrose and Brodie 1999). In



this respect, projects supported by the Crime Reduction Programme represent an important opportunity to develop and extend practice and to facilitate joined up working in this field.

### *Conclusions*

There have been a number of changes in recent years in relation to our understandings of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and young people. We now have much more empirical evidence upon which to draw, thus demonstrating the important role of research in contributing to our knowledge base in this field. As a result of these enhanced understandings, a number of important policy changes have occurred – most importantly the recognition that these children are ‘at risk’ and/or ‘in need’ and therefore worthy of care and protection. As a result of this policy change and our greater understanding of the needs of these young people, a number of important changes in practice have also occurred. Because we now understand more about how and why young people become involved, we are now in a better position to respond effectively to them in practice.

There remain, nevertheless, some gaps in our understandings and there is no room for complacency. There is a need to understand more, for example, about the organisation and operation of trafficking networks and to develop legal responses and penalties that are appropriate to the severity of the crimes committed. There is also a need for more empirical work to ‘test’ the validity of models of entry with which we currently work. This is important for developing practice as different mechanisms and motivations for entry will require radically different policy responses.

## **SECTION TWO: METHODOLOGY AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES ENCOUNTERED IN THE EVALUATION**

Barton (2002: 372) has argued that there is a propensity to view evaluation research as a ‘technical exercise whose goal is the furthering of policy making’. In this ‘exercise’, he argues,

*‘there is a tendency to assume that the contractual nature of the relationship between the professional researcher and those who commissioned the research assures a passive and detached approach to the research task with ambivalence towards the findings’.*

Evaluation, however, like any other area of research, is not a neutral or value-free activity and in relation to the projects in Bristol and Sheffield, the evaluators should declare an interest. The evaluation team have argued for some time now that projects such as these should be established to support young people at risk or involved in commercial sexual exploitation (Melrose *et. al.* 1999, Melrose and Brodie 1999, Melrose and Barrett 2001, 2002). The team therefore has an interest in wanting to see the projects succeed in their undertakings. However, we also have an interest in best practice and therefore an interest in looking critically at how projects might need to improve in order to support these young people most effectively.

In order to access the data required to complete the evaluation successfully, the evaluation team has had to work in partnership with the projects. This has not necessarily been an easy partnership since the goal of evaluators is to appraise critically the work of the projects. The goal of practitioners on the other hand, is to get on with their 'front-line' work. Those working in projects may therefore be defensive and/or sensitive to the presence of evaluators and where they are unhappy with the way in which their work is assessed, access to necessary data may be considerably complicated.

Having said all this, practitioners at both sites have, for the most part, co-operated fully in the evaluation process in terms of meeting and welcoming members of the evaluation team and supplying requested data. Although the evaluation has been primarily qualitative in its approach, it has combined a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods and accessed data in a number of ways:

- ◆ Formal, structured interviews with practitioners and young people involved in the projects
- ◆ Questionnaires administered to practitioners and young people
- ◆ Informal conversations with practitioners
- ◆ Observation of 'red light' areas where these are known to exist
- ◆ Observation of meetings and training events held in each of the areas
- ◆ Quantitative and qualitative data provided by each of the projects –e.g. numbers of young people worked with, interventions received, reports on the work of various agencies involved in the partnerships

Qualitative data has been gathered through interviews with practitioners and small numbers of young people at each of the sites. In Sheffield, approximately 12 practitioners were interviewed while in Bristol the figure was 17. Most practitioners have been interviewed on a number of occasions – at the outset of project work, while engaged in project work and towards the end of the life of the projects. Some practitioners have been met on more than five occasions and by different members of the evaluation team.

In Sheffield, practitioners from the following agencies were interviewed:

- ◆ Social Services
- ◆ Youth Services
- ◆ Sheffield Young Person's Drug Agency (SHED)
- ◆ Police

In Bristol, interviews were conducted with practitioners from the following agencies

- ◆ Barnardos BASE
- ◆ Social Services
- ◆ Bristol Drug Project
- ◆ Terrence Higgins Trust
- ◆ ONE25 Limited
- ◆ Bristol Police
- ◆ Sexual health services
- ◆ Bristol City Council Community Safety

Practitioners were selected for interview based on their knowledge of and involvement in each project in the respective areas.

Initial interviews, at the project start-up stage, explored with practitioners what they believed led young people to become involved in commercial sexual exploitation, how well they thought the projects were achieving their goals and any difficulties they had encountered in working in a multi-agency context. These interviews identified discursive themes that were common to practitioners in both areas. The themes identified were:

- ◆ The need to support the young people and 'plug' gaps in existing provision
- ◆ The desire to enable young people to 'regain their life and take control'

- ◆ The low self-esteem of the young people involved in projects
- ◆ The 'chaotic' lifestyles many of the young people lead
- ◆ The difficulties of engaging the young people
- ◆ The link between drug use and young people's involvement in commercial sexual exploitation
- ◆ The extent to which young people are 'in denial' about what they are involved in
- ◆ The need to provide young people with 'holistic' care<sup>2</sup>

Subsequent interviews were conducted after projects went 'live' to establish what practitioners believed the projects were achieving, any difficulties encountered in the work and how well they thought the projects were reaching their goals. Interviews were again conducted towards the end of the projects' lives to establish what practitioners felt they had achieved, how the work might be developed and what else practitioners believed might need to be provided to move young people away from involvement in commercial sexual exploitation.

Questionnaires were distributed to practitioners at each site towards the end of the project life. These were to explore retrospectively what practitioners thought had been achieved; what worked well; what they thought might have been improved; what else projects might have provided; and what helped or did not help the work of the projects. The questionnaires also asked about what practitioners thought they might do differently if they were to set up such projects again, how they thought the work might develop in the future and what they felt they had learned from involvement in the projects. (*Typical examples are attached at Appendix 1*)

Quantitative data has been collected in relation to the numbers of young people being contacted and/or 'worked with' in each of the projects, the number of interventions each young person has received and the outcomes of those interventions. Given the complexity of the needs and problems of the young people being worked with, it is obviously unrealistic to expect positive outcomes to be achieved in the short term. What the projects have done, as we see below, is to provide positive changes in the short term that will hopefully lead to positive outcomes over the long term. The police

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<sup>2</sup> These themes are elaborated fully in the report submitted in July 2001.

have also supplied some statistical data in relation to associated crime and disorder in each of the areas.

The quantitative data is of variable quality and reflects the ways in which different agencies collect their data. There is a lack of consistency across agencies in the way in which data is recorded despite development work that provided templates to encourage recording of data about young people and the services and/or referrals they received. For the most part, these templates appear not to have been used. We have learned from this that methods for collecting and compiling data need to be agreed at the very outset of the projects and would suggest that the means for doing so should be specified in tenders and should be a condition of funding. In fact, pro-forma could be developed by the funding body for each agency involved in the partnership and each agency should agree to complete data returns regularly and in the manner required as a condition of receiving funding.

Because practitioners often do not appear to see the value of collecting data, they are often reluctant to undertake this exercise at the behest of evaluators. We would therefore suggest that these conditions are imposed by the funding agency (in this instance the Home Office). We would also suggest that someone should be responsible for collating the data centrally in each project. At the moment, agencies submit their own data in their own formats to evaluators and, to some extent, this militates against developing an overview of what the projects as a whole are achieving. Because individual agencies record their data in different ways, this also complicates the task of making comparisons between projects. We have noticed some inconsistencies between agencies in relation to the way in which data is collected and recorded. The time frames, for example, may vary with some data being recorded in calendar years at one point but in financial years at others. The categories under which data is recorded may also lack consistency across time.

Nevertheless, combining qualitative and quantitative research techniques has enabled the evaluation team to engage in 'extensive' and 'intensive' research. That is, these methods have enabled us to identify 'regularities and common patterns' and to gather data through discussion with those who have been targeted by the intervention (Matthews and Pitts 2000:138). This latter data has been essential in enabling us to understand what it is about a particular intervention that may have led to changes in

the young person's behaviour. It has, to some extent, enabled us to understand what it is about a specific intervention that achieves a given outcome (Tilley 2000). This issue is discussed later in the report.

### *Accessing the young people*

The projects have been working with what in research and practice terms is described as a 'difficult to access' population. Researching with young people who are involved in commercial sexual exploitation requires particular ethical considerations on the part of the research team (Melrose 2002). These are discussed more fully below. It has also meant that the evaluation team has had to rely on practitioners as gatekeepers and the use of gatekeepers can itself be 'hazardous' in research terms (Lee 1993).

In relation to young people engaged in the projects, our original intention had been to interview them at the start of their involvement with projects and then to interview them again towards the end of their involvement. Our access to young people, however, has not been as straightforward as we might have hoped and very few repeat interviews have been conducted. This is because the projects have been, in many instances, still working to engage the young people and/or to move them away from the situations in which practitioners have originally encountered them. This can often be an extremely long process, as the young people tend to be mistrustful of adults and therefore difficult to engage (Pearce *et. al.* 2001). Where or if a controlling or abusive adult is present, young people are almost certainly discouraged from engaging with practitioners and projects.

Practitioners are concerned to work with the young people to move them away from the abusive situations in which they are involved. Their first priority is therefore not to ask the young person to meet with fieldworkers for the purpose of evaluation. A young person, for example, may arrive at a project and report a multiple rape; it would *necessarily* be a long time before the practitioner could ask the young person to participate in the interview process. The practitioner, understandably, is immediately concerned with relieving the distress of the young person. It has previously been pointed out in relation to the evaluation of projects similar to those established by the Crime Reduction Programme, that

*'The distressing nature of the young women's life experiences is such that asking them to portray what has brought them to this point in their lives would require a longer term approach in order to conduct the evaluation in an ethical manner. It is doubtful whether it could ever be described as ethical to attempt to lead a young person through a non-therapeutic interview to generate case study material in these circumstances'* (Liabo et. al. 2001).

It is also the case that many of the young people are 'in denial' about what it is they are involved in. Where the young person is involved, for example, in 'swapping' sex for drugs or other favours in kind (a roof over their head, food and so on) – or what they perceive to be 'kindness' - the young person does not necessarily define what they are doing as 'prostitution'. In such circumstances, the young person may eventually come to see that they are/were being 'exploited'. A young person from Sheffield, for example, when asked if she knew why she had been referred to the project, said it was because,

*'I was putting myself at risk'*

In such cases, it can be difficult for fieldworkers to ask the young person about the extent to which their involvement with the project has changed their perception of the relationships in which they were involved and therefore their behaviour. The young person referred to above, when asked if she wanted to talk about how she was putting herself at risk, declined to do so. This was also the case in other instances when young people met with fieldworkers – they often chose not to discuss the events that led them to be referred to the projects.

On other occasions, where young people had agreed to meet with fieldworkers for interviews, the young people did not turn up at the agreed time or place despite the best efforts of practitioners to ensure that they did. There is also variability in the data collected through interviews with the young people, as the young people were more or less talkative – some provided monosyllabic answers to questions while others were more elaborate in their replies. *(Typical examples are attached in Appendix 2)*

Although most practitioners co-operated with the evaluation in attempting to facilitate access to the young people, a number of concerns were raised. These included concerns that participating in an interview might in some way be detrimental to the

young person's well-being and/or that interviewing the young person may constitute further abuse or exploitation. Concerns were also expressed that obtaining consent for the young person to be interviewed might prove difficult (especially where the parent or guardian was considered to be colluding in the abuse). Further concerns were expressed about the difficulties of arranging interviews with young people who tend to lead such 'chaotic' lifestyles and/or that the intended research questions might raise feelings that the young person was not necessarily in a position to deal with.

The research team acknowledges that it is not uncommon to encounter such concerns in this field of research and recognises that the concerns of practitioners are ethically informed and, to some extent, valid. In the absence of interviews with the young people, we decided to develop questionnaires but the response rate has been extremely disappointing. It is fair to say that where outreach is the predominant form of contact with many young people (in Bristol for example) this is not particularly conducive to arranging interviews or distributing questionnaires on behalf of evaluators.

It should also be acknowledged that young people who did agree to be interviewed were those who were most positive about the projects and the support they received from them. It was, in other words, those young people who had been successfully engaged by projects who agreed to be interviewed. Those with less positive views of what projects provided would not agree to be interviewed. In all, 10 young people were interviewed across the two sites with one young person agreeing to be interviewed for a second time. 2 young people returned questionnaires.

Other methodological issues encountered were in relation to the definitions routinely employed by project workers in practice situations. We found, for example, that in different projects, the concept of 'engagement' with the young person was employed in different ways. In some instances, 'engagement' referred to an initial contact with the young person. In others it referred to the fact that the young person had been willing to receive support and had been consistently meeting with their appointed worker. Such definitional problems lead to problems with data gathering and complicate the task of comparison across projects.



**SECTION THREE: PARTNERSHIP WORKING** (*A representation of the agencies involved in each partnership and the way partners work together, is provided at Appendix 3*).

It has been suggested that partnership working represents one of the most significant developments in crime prevention work in the past decade (Crawford 1998).

However, it has also been argued that a 'partnership' is a 'vague and imprecise' term that may mean different things to different people and may often be used interchangeably with 'team' working (Harrison *et. al.* 2002). There are, nevertheless, some important distinctions to be made between 'partnership' working and 'team working'. Perhaps the most important of these is that a 'partnership' as opposed to a 'team' has no clear leader unless members of the partnership agree to elect someone as their 'leader'. There may therefore be some contradictions between partnership working and clearly defined management and accountability structures.

Equally important is the fact that in a partnership, no one has the power to exercise authority over other members of the partnership unless the parties to the partnership agree to invest an individual with that power (Harrison *et. al.* 2002). This may mean that hierarchies in partnerships tend to operate implicitly or covertly, rather than explicitly or overtly. Where members of the partnership do not elect a leader or agree to invest an individual with the power to exercise authority over other members, partnerships may be working in a state resembling anarchy. This can be both challenging and terrifying for those involved in the partnership. It can also mean that no one takes overall responsibility for delivering the services that the partnership has been established to provide.

Partnership working involves bringing together representatives from different agencies in pursuit of a common goal (Crawford 1998). In multi-agency partnerships, agencies come together without it significantly affecting the work they do in their own organisations. The multi-agency work is 'grafted onto existing practices or existing practices are redefined' and although 'the same tasks are conducted in co-operation with others', 'the role of various partners remains distinct' (Crawford 1998).

The organisations that form the partnership come from different value bases, bring together different sorts of expertise and may have different or even conflicting goals.

Different agencies may have different success criteria and 'what works' may be measured differently (Barton 1999). The goals of individual agencies involved in partnerships may not be over-ridden by the collective purpose of the partnership but the partnership does allow a holistic approach to be developed, which is problem focused rather than bureaucratically driven (Crawford 1998).

The difficulties for agencies with different value bases working together to achieve a collective goal may be especially pronounced in partnerships that aim to address and meet the needs of young people. It may be that one agency assumes the 'lead role' in the partnership because they believe that they have the 'right' way to work with young people. It may also be the case that the different agencies involved employ different definitions of 'young people'. The youth service, for example, works with 'young people' up to the age of 25 while social services can provide services to 'young people' up to the age of 21 where they are care leavers. The police on the other hand, may view a 'young person' as anyone under the age of 16. These differences mean that it is possible for many tensions to arise in partnerships that aim to provide interventions for 'young people'. It is also possible in such partnerships that conflicts may arise between child protection and harm minimisation in the work. For example, if a young person is involved in sex work, a harm minimisation approach would suggest that they be given condoms so that the risk of harm from their activities is minimised. A child protection approach, on the other hand, might suggest that by providing condoms, the practitioner is encouraging or colluding in the abuse of the young person. In the projects generally, such differences have been overcome by a shared commitment to a common goal – that of preventing young people's entry into prostitution and/or facilitating their exit if they are already involved.

In both Bristol and Sheffield, some frictions between agencies involved in the partnerships were detected at an early stage of project work. These frictions resulted from a number of issues. Firstly, some workers in the partnerships felt that representatives from other agencies were not as committed to the work as they felt they should be. A worker from Sheffield, for example, said,

*Police don't always attend practitioners meetings because they have other priorities. Residential social workers have also been an issue*

In Bristol we were told by one worker that she felt there were 'too many' agencies involved and that they were not necessarily committed to the work but were involved in order to 'get a piece of the cake'. Some practitioners felt that there were too many agencies involved, while others felt that there were not enough. In Bristol, for example, it was felt that in retrospect, it would have been appropriate to have education and housing services involved in the partnership.

The issue of confidentiality on the one hand, and the need to share information about young people with whom projects were working on the other, were also sources of friction. Balancing these different demands created some tensions and proved a vexing question for many of the agencies involved in the partnerships in the different areas. A worker from Sheffield, for example, said,

*Confidentiality and information sharing are sometimes an issue. I sometimes have difficulty keeping things from the young people. For example, with the 14-year-old, I know they are thinking about care proceedings but I haven't disclosed that to her. I'm treading a fine line asking the young person to trust me and open up to me on the one hand but keeping things from them on the other.*

A worker from Bristol said,

*I'm aware that other organisations think we are OTT on the issue of confidentiality*

During the lives of the projects, difficulties that were initially encountered were overcome through discussion and negotiation and the partnerships were thus able to work effectively. By the end of the project life, it was felt that the partnerships had consolidated into structures that could take the work forward – they were not just dependent on personalities working well together or the enthusiasm of particular individuals. All agencies were genuinely committed to working in partnership, as they were aware that this was the most appropriate way to secure the best interests of the child. All partners also found partnership working a rewarding experience. It had afforded individuals a greater understanding of the work of other agencies and had promoted tolerance and understanding between agencies that might normally not have a great deal of contact with each other.

Given what has been said above about the potential challenges to partnership working, the role of the co-ordinator is evidently crucial to the success of the partnership. Ideally, the co-ordinator would act to resolve any conflicts that might arise between agencies in the partnership, to foster relations of trust between partners, to facilitate data sharing and the collation of data. The co-ordinator also provides a vital link between the partner agencies and the evaluation team. Both projects have realised with hindsight that they had underestimated the amount of work that would be involved for project co-ordinators and given that co-ordination of projects was 'grafted on' to ordinary day jobs, they have sometimes felt overwhelmed by the demands of the work. We would suggest therefore that to ensure the successful co-ordination of projects, the co-ordinator's post should be fully funded so that they can be 'bought out' of their usual day roles. This would ensure that they could fulfil their role in the 'ideal' manner described above.

#### **SECTION FOUR: THE CONTEXT OF PROJECT WORK**

The aim of this section of the report is to describe the similarities and the differences in the contexts in which projects are working. It aims to provide a background and an understanding of the local conditions in which the projects have been implemented.

There are both 'macro' and 'micro' contexts to consider when discussing the work of the projects. The macro context frames the work of both projects and the micro context refers to local differences and similarities in which the work takes place. In terms of the macro context, it is important to take into account family and neighbourhood poverty and the situation of young people in relation to their lack of welfare rights, youth unemployment and youth homelessness (France 1996, Dean 1997, Coles and Craig 1999, Melrose *et. al.* 1999). Many young people across the country commonly encounter these problems but they are particularly salient in discussions of young people involved in commercial sexual exploitation (Melrose *et. al.* 1999, Melrose and Barrett 2001, Melrose and Ayre 2002). It has been argued for example that 'the prostitution labour market is populated by those two groups for whom welfare provision is wholly inadequate or completely absent – women who are single parent mothers and children of both sexes' (O'Connell-Davidson 1998:71).

In terms of the macro context of the work, the extent and intensity of deprivation is higher in Sheffield than it is in Bristol (Department of Transport, Environment and the

Regions, Indices of Deprivation 2001). The ethnic composition of both areas is also different. African-Caribbeans constitute the single largest ethnic group in Bristol and comprise 1.6% of the total population. In Sheffield, on the other hand, the largest single ethnic group is Pakistani at 1.8% of the population. Other indicators of the macro context in which the work of the projects is undertaken is summarised in the table below.

*Table 1: Indicators of macro context in which project work occurs\**

Indicator	Bristol	Sheffield
Young People under 18 years	23%	22.5%
Children Looked After as result of Abuse/Neglect	49.1%	63.9%**
Children Receiving Services as result of Abuse/Neglect	28.5%	41.4%
Children in Need	35 per 1000	18 per 1000***
Children on Child Protection Registrars	33 per 10,000	38 per 10,000****

\* Adapted from Department of Health 2000, Department of Health 2001a, 2001b, 2001c

\*\* Of 0-18 population.

\*\*\*These figures may be distorted by the inclusion of asylum seeking children and those receiving subsidised day care

\*\*\*\* These figures are higher than for England as a whole for which the figure is 27 per 10,000

#### *The importance of context for sex markets*

In relation to the micro context of project work, there may be regional variations in the organisation and operation of sex markets. In some areas, for example, drug use may be a more important influencing factor in young people's involvement than it is in others. Similarly, pimps may be more important in some areas than in others (Barnardos 1998, Faugier and Sargeant 1997, Melrose *et. al.* 1999, May *et. al.* 1999). In some areas, 'red light' districts may exist where on and/or off street prostitution

occurs. These areas may have long established histories; in other areas, however, such districts may not exist. In some areas, sex work may take place predominately in 'off-street' locations, in others sex markets may be predominately 'on-street'. Additionally, male prostitution may be more prevalent in some areas than it is in others

Below the similarities between the projects, and the context in which they work, are described before the differences are described.

### *Similarities and differences between Bristol and Sheffield*

#### *Similarities*

##### *The young people*

The problem of young people at risk or involved in commercial sexual exploitation is complex and multi-faceted and therefore beyond the scope of one agency to respond to it alone (O'Neill and Barbaret 2000, Barter 2001). To this end, both projects funded under the Crime Reduction Programme initiative are working in partnership to address the problem and respond effectively to the needs of the young people concerned.

Caroline, a 16-year-old from Sheffield, provides a typical example of the sorts of difficulties these young people confront. When we met, she was living in sheltered accommodation in the care of the local authority. *(See Appendix 4 for typical case study examples of the sorts of difficulties the young people confront).*

Caroline and her younger sister had been taken into care at the age of [REDACTED] because her mother was in an extremely violent relationship. Caroline became pregnant at 13 and had a baby when she was 14. She had been involved in a violent relationship with the baby's father. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Prior to her involvement with the project, she frequently went missing [REDACTED]. She had not attended school [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. During her time in care, Caroline had experienced [REDACTED] placements in different children's homes and/or foster carers. [REDACTED]

████████████████████ Caroline received £42.70 per week in benefits to cover all her living expenses and household bills. She found the support she received from project workers invaluable and since being referred to the project had managed to stabilise her life to some extent. She had reflected on her situation and realised that she had to change to improve her prospects for the future. When we met she was no longer involved in offending behaviour and was considering returning to college to gain some qualifications.

*The scale of the problem*

There is no certainty about the scale of the problem of young people being abused through prostitution as no national data exists. Both projects had previously undertaken some analysis of the problem in their area and both initially thought they would be dealing with a limited number of young people. The bid document for the Pandora project suggested that there were 30 young people to be targeted in Bristol. Practitioners now recognise that this was a gross under-estimation of the extent of the problem.

In Bristol, previous research had identified open sex and drug markets in an area of central Bristol (May *et. al.* 1999). Bristol Prostitution Forum acknowledged that the number of young people involved in prostitution was 'commonly underestimated' (Pandora bid document) and the research found that 50% of those interviewed admitted that they had become involved in prostitution as juveniles (May *et. al.* 1999 cited in bid document). By December 2001, as a result of partnership working through the Pandora project, the police reported that they were aware of three times as many young people as they had previously been.

In Sheffield, *Operation Insight*, a previous joint initiative between police and social services, identified 80 young people (all under 18) who were considered to be at risk. Of these, 12 were known to be involved in soliciting and 2 of these were involved with pimps. 24 were known to be involved with pimps, 16 were involved in drug use and six were involved in sauna work. Eight were known to be involved with pimps *and* drug use. Two were working in saunas *and* known to be involved with pimps. The local authority had looked after 22 and nearly all (57) had been missing from home or care at some point (some of the young women may appear in more than one category).

Both projects have reported that the scale of the problem is much greater than they had anticipated when projects were established. This is not because projects had failed to analyse the problem accurately but because 'the problem' had not previously been defined as requiring intervention and dedicated services had not previously existed. This has been found in other areas (The Children's Society 2003, Brain *et. al.* 1998). Once services are in place and projects becomes established, practitioners in other fields (such as education, for example) become aware of the services available. Through training events, such as those delivered by the Sheffield project, and involvement in multi-agency partnerships, practitioners become more aware of the existence of the problem and the signs that may indicate that a young person is involved in commercial sexual exploitation. Referrals therefore tend to increase as more practitioners become sensitised to the existence of the problem. Young people also become aware, often through word of mouth, that there is a 'good' project that can help them.

#### *The interventions*

Prior to the interventions being developed under the CRP initiative, no dedicated services existed for this client group. It is not therefore possible to 'measure' improvements in terms of the situation that existed prior to the projects being established. Both projects have been consistent in implementing welfare-based interventions in line with government guidance (DoH/HO/DFEE 2000). To this extent, it could be argued that there might be a degree of incompatibility between the outcomes sought by the Home Office and those sought by the projects. The Home Office understandably requires criminal justice outcomes (crime reduction) while the projects require welfare outcomes (to ensure the best interests of the child). The former may therefore be unintended, rather than intended, outcomes of the latter.

Both projects are concerned with associated crime and trying to reduce it, but when we are dealing with young people who are sexually exploited through prostitution it is necessary to acknowledge that they are the *victims* of crime. Some may, nevertheless, also be perpetrators of crimes such as shoplifting, theft, drug use and 'clipping' (taking money from 'clients' without delivering the promised 'service'). As we shall see from evidence presented later in this report, the projects appear to have achieved



both welfare-based and criminal justice based outcomes for the young people with whom they have been working. These appear to be consistent across both projects.

#### *Models of involvement in prostitution*

The literature review described two competing paradigms that seek to explain how young people become involved in prostitution – either through ‘drift’ or coercion by another. Both projects adhere predominately to the latter model. This has implications for the sorts of interventions that are developed to respond to the young people. If a young person is being ‘pimped’ and/or ‘groomed’ by an abusive adult, for example, the intervention required will differ from that required if the young person is entering prostitution as a result of their own volition and/or peer influences. Additionally, it might be said that to some extent there has been a blurring of the distinction between sexual exploitation and *commercial* sexual exploitation in the work of the projects. Sexually exploitative relationships do not necessarily or inevitably lead to *commercial* sexual exploitation. It may be a thin line between the two but if this distinction is blurred or if the definition of ‘at risk’ is expanded too far, the concept becomes meaningless and practitioners will identify a much larger problem than they might have anticipated. Having said, this, however, evidence from the projects, combined with other research findings, point to the effectiveness of early intervention with those involved in sexually exploitative relationships if they are to be successfully diverted from involvement in commercial sexual exploitation (Pearce *et. al.* 2003).

#### *Location of sex markets*

Both Sheffield and Bristol have geographically defined ‘red light’ areas that are associated with both juvenile and adult prostitution. In Bristol the main red light area is in the centre of the city and adjacent to an open drug market. In Sheffield, the main red light area is in the centre of the city in a non-residential area. Both areas tend to attract sex workers from other areas. In Bristol, young people are attracted from Cardiff, Swindon and Bath. In Sheffield, young people tend to come from Rotherham and other surrounding smaller towns. It is thought that the youngest and most vulnerable women working on the streets in Sheffield are from Rotherham (Interview with Sheffield police 2001).

#### *Sex and drug markets*

Our initial impressions were that the local context in which each of the projects was working was quite different. In Bristol, a well-established drug market in crack-cocaine and heroin appeared to be a major factor in young people becoming involved in commercial sexual exploitation. Practitioners reported that young women were being taken, or going, to 'crack houses' where they were being 'passed around' between several different men and experiencing multiple rapes and/or serious sexual assaults. Young people were also reported to be working on the streets in a well-established 'red light' area, situated adjacent to an open drug market.

In Sheffield, the situation initially appeared quite different. Practitioners in this area reported early on that drug abuse was not a major factor in young people becoming involved in commercial sexual exploitation. This project tended to be working with a younger age group for whom drug abuse had not yet become a major problem. These young people tended to be referred into the project before they had become so involved in commercial sexual exploitation that they were 'working' on the streets and the project appeared to be working with those who were considered to be 'at risk' of involvement rather than already involved. Young people were deemed to be 'at risk' if they were in relationships with older men, going missing from home or care, not attending school and/or disengaging from friends/family.

Practitioners in both areas, however, acknowledged from an early stage the increasing significance of drugs in young people becoming involved in prostitution. For example,

*I think the connection with drugs is becoming more entrenched. Here in Bristol at the minute the strongest connection (between young people becoming involved) is the drugs (Residential Care Manager, Bristol)*

*When they are on the streets, the 16 and 17 year olds all have established drug habits – using heroin and crack. It's often difficult to see what came first, the drug habit or the working (Social Worker, Sheffield).*

There were, however, some contradictory accounts from Sheffield. For example,

*We're not noticing drug use – the ones we are working with are too young. Drug use is not coming to light; generally, drugs are not an issue. They're not*

*doing it for money for drugs and they're not involved as a result of drugs*  
(Youth Worker, Sheffield).

In 2001, Bristol police launched *Operation Atrium* to tackle the men believed to be involved in supplying drugs. Many were believed to be Jamaican nationals who were in the country illegally. By December 2001, 50 men had been arrested and 12 deported, however, this initiative had little impact in terms of significantly reducing the problem (Community Safety Manager, Bristol, *c.f.* Thompson 2003).

By early 2003, the situation appeared to have changed and circumstances in Sheffield seemed to have become quite similar to those in Bristol. At this time, both projects reported that they were seeing fewer young girls on the streets and that the problem had become more hidden. In Sheffield, it appeared that a crack problem had been incubating and practitioners reported that young girls were being taken to crack houses where they were experiencing sexual assaults, rapes and similar abuses to the young people in Bristol (Interviews with Sheffield police and project administrative staff December 2002). Both projects tended to think that the problem had become more 'hidden' as a result of police activity. Of course, if the problem becomes more hidden, young people are more difficult to access and engaging them in projects becomes more problematic.

Towards the end of the CRP funding initiative, both projects were reporting that there was a small number of men in each area who were allegedly involved in drug dealing. These men were believed to have links with each other and with the young girls with whom the projects were working. In some instances, the girls also had links with each other. Both projects were reporting that the girls appeared to be 'swapping' sexual favours in return for drugs (crack and/or heroin). Towards the end of the project life, therefore, there appeared to be more similarities than differences in relation to the micro context of project work.

#### *Young people and their social needs*

Housing and appropriate accommodation for young people was identified as problematic across both projects. Young people are housed inappropriately in hostels where older adults prey on them. When young people are in the care of the local authority, out of city placements have sometimes been employed. This practice,

although expedient in the short term, does not provide a long-term solution. Workers have difficulty in maintaining contact with the young people, the young people occasionally go missing and there are problems associated with reintegrating the young person when they come back to their normal place of residence. In addition, the young person should not suffer a sense of 'loss' or 'punishment' (by being 'removed' as the result of seeking an intervention).

#### *Funding to projects*

The issue of funding has been identified as a common concern in both projects. All practitioners acknowledge that it has taken the young people a while to get to where they are and all recognise that it will take a while to move them to somewhere else. Both projects feel that the short-term nature of the funding they have received under the CRP initiative, although welcome, does not enable them to develop solutions to what are in fact long-term problems. Practitioners also feel that there are issues of moral/ethical responsibility towards the young people that projects have engaged and are concerned about what might happen to them when there is no money to continue the work. Some practitioners feel that the young people have been treated 'like guinea pigs'. It is also the case that funding for new initiatives may displace or marginalise existing provision. This may lead to tensions and/or rivalries amongst partners and may mean that young people are left with less provision than might previously have existed. Temporary or insecure funding also makes it difficult to plan or develop the projects for the future. Secure funding is necessary in order to ensure consistency in delivery of the programme. It avoids a high turnover of personnel and ensures that there is a consistent person for the young person. Some of the young people, such as Caroline (cited above) have experienced so many changes in those working with them, they do not want to go to projects where the workers they encounter are continually changing.

#### *Differences*

##### *Target groups*

Both projects share similar goals – to prevent young people from becoming involved in commercial sexual exploitation, to provide those who are already involved with viable exit routes and to raise awareness of the problem amongst professionals working with young people. The mechanisms through which they aim to achieve their goals, however, are different. The focus in Bristol has been on working directly with

the young people to effect exit/prevent involvement. In Sheffield on the other hand, the focus has been on preventative work, raising awareness of the issue amongst other professionals and agencies and working directly with young people at risk or involved. Similarly, both projects are working with different age groups. In Bristol, the intervention has targeted young people, male and female, up to the age of 21. In Sheffield on the other hand, the intervention has only targeted young women up to the age of 18. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the young people in Bristol may be more entrenched in sex work and drug use than those in Sheffield are. The Pandora project provides a service to young men as well as young women. It has therefore necessarily needed to devise different ways of working with the young people than the Sheffield project because the needs, situations and contexts of involvement of young men may be different to those of young women.

#### *The partnerships*

As well as these differences, the basis of the intervention is different in each area. In Sheffield, the intervention is primarily a statutory sector based response involving the youth service and social services. The Pandora project on the other hand, is primarily a voluntary sector based response involving Barnardos, Terrence Higgins Trust and ONE25 as well as statutory agencies. The aims of the projects are also different. In Bristol the project aimed to work directly with young people and improve the system of referrals for them. In Sheffield the project aimed to work with young people through a youth service intervention (*Taking Stock*) but also to develop strategy and to raise awareness through training professionals from other agencies. Each project therefore had a slightly different focus and therefore different expected impacts and outcomes.

Although both projects are delivering their services through multi-agency partnerships, these tend to be different in each of the areas. In Bristol, for example, the partnership involves members of the local authority community safety team, health services, the police, social services and voluntary agencies (Barnardos, Terrence Higgins Trust and ONE25 Limited). The Pandora partnership has developed out of the work of the Bristol Prostitution Forum and is located within Community Safety. It hoped to establish a multi-agency team with the specific aim of providing outreach and appropriate referrals to other services and, generally, to improve the system of referrals for these young people.

In Sheffield, partnership arrangements exist between social services, the police, youth services and a local drug project (SHED). The service has been developed to respond to the needs of young women involved in commercial sexual exploitation.

Practitioners have nevertheless identified a need to develop the service to respond to the needs of young men. For example,

*I don't think we're touching on the young males at all. It's certainly an issue of young men being exploited in the area but we just don't know enough about it* (Detective Sergeant, Sheffield)

*A possible problem with young men has been identified through the ACPC reference group but the problem with boys and young men is more hidden* (Social Worker, Sheffield)

No dedicated resource currently exists to work directly with young men but the overall project would work with them to provide the same level of support as that provided to young women.

The Sheffield project aimed to provide training and awareness raising sessions for practitioners across a variety of agencies, multi-agency planning sessions, strategy co-ordination and development and youth work based interventions for young women. Whereas in Bristol the project is located within the Community Safety Team, in Sheffield it is located within the Area Child Protection Committee. The Sheffield project links to Community Safety through its representation on the Sheffield Prostitution Forum under the umbrella of Sheffield First for Safety.

#### *Access to the projects*

There are differences in the way young people may access projects in each area. In Sheffield, young people are referred to the project through social services – there is no drop-in facility or outreach work undertaken. In Bristol, on the other hand, young people are able to self-refer to the project and/or they could be referred through an outreach worker. In Sheffield, project workers are reliant on other practitioners to identify warning signs and refer young people to social services. This may result in fewer young people accessing the service than in Bristol where young people can go along to the project under their own volition or may be actively sought out by outreach workers. Ideally, projects would employ *both* means for accessing young

people. There should be a formal system for referrals but young people should also be able to self-refer to the service should they feel they are in need of it. Overall, Sheffield appear to have worked with fewer young people than Bristol and this may be because the former project relies on other practitioners identifying signs of 'risk' behaviour and making an appropriate referral. It may be that greater numbers of young people might have been contacted if they had been able to self-refer and/or if an outreach facility were available. On the other hand, the smaller number of young people worked with in Sheffield may be a reflection of the fact that the problem is not as extensive in Sheffield as it is in Bristol. This would require further investigation over time. *(Please see Appendix 5 for a summary of the key similarities and differences between the projects).*

## **SECTION FIVE: ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PROJECTS**

### *What the practitioners say*

This section of the report draws on data generated through interviews with, and questionnaires completed by, practitioners as well as data supplied by the agencies involved in the partnerships to describe their interventions and outcomes. Although both partnerships were consulted about their interventions and the outcomes expected from them, and agencies agreed to provide data in the format requested by which these could be measured, this data has not necessarily been supplied as it was requested and there are therefore some gaps. Because of the differences in the work of each of the projects, the interventions and outcomes are discussed for each project. Following this, a discussion of what practitioners across both projects say about their work is provided.

### ***Bristol Pandora Project***

The overall aim of the Pandora project was to establish a multi-agency team and through this to improve the system of referrals for young people at risk or involved in prostitution. This was to be achieved through a diverse partnership of voluntary and statutory sector organisations. The project aimed to work with young people (men and women) up to the age of 21. This was to be achieved by the following interventions:

- ◆ Outreach support to young people
- ◆ General support to young people
- ◆ Sexual health services for young people
- ◆ Dedicated drug worker for young people

- ◆ Development of inter-agency data systems and information sharing protocols
- ◆ Action to tackle kerb crawlers

These interventions were to be delivered through the following agencies involved in the partnership:

- ◆ Bristol City Council Community Safety (co-ordination of project)
- ◆ Avon Health Services (provision of sexual health services at Milne Centre and Nurses based at Barnardos BASE premises)
- ◆ Barnardos BASE (services to young people)
- ◆ Terrence Higgins Trust (services to young men)
- ◆ ONE25 Ltd.(services predominately to adult sex workers with specialist provision for young people)
- ◆ Bristol Police (child protection worker)
- ◆ Bristol Drug Project (left the partnership in summer 2002)

The interventions delivered, their expected outcomes and how they were to be measured are detailed in the table below

**Table 2: Interventions, Expected Outcomes and How Measured: Bristol Pandora Project**

Intervention	Expected Outcome	How Measured
Outreach support to young people	Beginning process of engagement with project and young people moving on to use drop-in and other services provided by Barnardos, ONE25 and THT	Statistical data from relevant agencies detailing new and on-going contacts per month combined with interviews with relevant agency staff
General support to young people	To provide necessary support to young people to enable them to make life changes over time. To enable young people to see the harm they face in continuing in their present way of life	Statistical data detailing numbers of new and on-going cases using drop-in per month. Interviews with relevant personnel to explore the nature of the work undertaken with the young people. Interviews with young people to explore their experience of engagement with



		project
Sexual Health Services to Young People	Reduction in risk of STDs. Increased awareness of dangers they face in terms of sexual health by continuing with current practices and reduction in risk behaviour	Statistical data from relevant agencies detailing number of new and on-going young people using the service per month. Interviews with relevant personnel to explore rates of STDs before and after engagement with sexual health services. Interviews with young people to determine value of intervention from their perspective
Dedicated drug worker for young people	Begin process of examining drug taking activity and making moves towards treatment and abstinence	Statistical data from relevant agency detailing number of new and on-going young people using the service per month. Interviews with young people to explore positive benefits of engagement with drug treatment services
Development of inter-agency data systems and information sharing protocols	Enhanced information exchange and referral system for young people	Statistical information relating to number of agencies signed into protocol. Interviews with relevant personnel to determine improved system of referral. Interviews with young people to explore improvements to referral system before and after intervention
Action to tackle kerb crawlers	Prosecution of those involved in sexual exploitation of young people	Statistical data from police in relation to numbers of arrests, prosecutions and investigations of men involved in abusing young women Number of warning letters sent by police per month for new and/or repeat cases (kerb crawling). Interviews with

		police personnel to determine perceptions of effectiveness of this intervention
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Much of the statistical data required to measure the effectiveness of different interventions has not been provided as requested from projects. For example, we have not been provided with information concerning the number of new and repeat young people making use of drug services per month. We have not been provided with information relating to the numbers of letters sent to kerb crawlers per month and we have not been provided with data about the number of men under investigation for abusing young women.

Since funding to the projects was extended, Barnardos has ceased to undertake outreach work as the worker's contract expired prior to receiving confirmation that funding was to be extended. Instead of outreach, since 2002, Barnardos BASE provides a drop-in facility at its premises on two evenings per week. We do not know the numbers of young people who have made use of this facility, how many might be new contacts or how many are repeats.

Between October 2002 and March 2003, 20 outreach sessions were undertaken by Barnardos BASE to assess the extent of street prostitution and the effect of police interventions to reduce street prostitution. As a result of these sessions, workers reported that there are appeared to be fewer young women on the streets and although there had been a high police presence in the affected areas, street prostitution was still visible (Bristol Base 2003). We have not been provided with data on the number of young people contacted on these sessions. ONE25 also undertakes outreach work. This is primarily focused on adult women but a youth worker provides support to young women (up to 21 years) where necessary. These outreach sessions are undertaken four times a week using a specially equipped van and once a fortnight on foot. Individual support is provided as requested to young women contacted through outreach or who use the drop-in at their premises. THT provides outreach support to young men and individual support as required to young men with whom workers engage and/or who use their drop-in facilities.

In the period March 2001- March 2003, Pandora has made 544 contacts through outreach work (we cannot say how many of these are repeat contacts). These are broken down as follows:

**Table 3: Pandora Outreach Contacts March 2001 – March 2003**

Organisation	Number of outreach contacts
◆ BASE	132*
◆ ONE25	252**
◆ THT	165

\* Outreach work stopped in 2002. Figures are therefore for 2001/2002

\*\* From August 2001 – March 2003. We do not know how many of these may be repeat contacts. We also do not know whether both Barnardos BASE and ONE25 may have been contacting the same individuals through outreach

On outreach sessions, young people are provided with advice and information about the service available to them through Pandora and provided with the name of a worker they can contact in one of the organisations involved in the partnership. The evidence suggests that the project has been successful in contacting young people through outreach although we do not know how many of these have then engaged with the services available through Pandora.

The services provided through each agency in the Pandora project, the number of sessions provided and the contacts yielded are summarised in the table below

**Table 4: Services provided through Pandora, frequency and number of contacts**

Agency	Services	No. of Sessions	Contacts
ONE25	Outreach	4 per week	252
	Detached Youth Work	1 per fortnight	52*
	Drop-in	4 per week	59**
	One-to-one support	-	36***
THT	Outreach	136****	165*****
	Direct Support	214****	78*****
BASE	Outreach	-	132#
	Direct Support	105	15##
MILNE CENTRE	Sexual Health	-	267###

\* Figures for 2002-2003

\*\* Of which 13 were new cases in 2002-2003

\*\*\* Of which 12 were new cases in 2002-2003

\*\*\*\* Figures are for Jan-Dec 2002

\*\*\*\*\* Figures are for March 2001- Dec 2002

\*\*\*\*\* Of which 49 were new cases in 2002

# Figures are for March 2001-April 2002

## Figures are for April 2002-March 2003

### Figures are for April 2001-February 2003. Figures refer to number of visits made and not to the individuals who made them

ONE25 joined the Pandora partnership in August 2001 when they began a specific service for young women. In terms of their outreach contacts, the average was 44 women contacted for each quarter in 2002/03. ONE25 estimate that between 34% and 60% of those contacted were new to the service in each quarter. Since its involvement in Pandora, ONE25 has provided support on a one-to-one basis to 36 young women of whom 12 were new contacts during 2002-2003. During 2002-2003, the following referrals were made:

Housing	4
Drug Services	5
Health Services	5
Other	4

The types of support the young women have been provided with are:

- ◆ Prison correspondence
- ◆ Family liaison
- ◆ Support re: bullying
- ◆ Support after attacks/sexual assaults
- ◆ Advice and information re: housing, drugs, health and benefits
- ◆ Liaison with solicitors
- ◆ Support in court
- ◆ Advocacy with Social Services (Horton 2003)

The contacts THT made in the period March 2001-December 2002, were not all with young people involved in sex work as THT also provides advice to 'punters' and 'cruisers' (men seeking sex for free). In the period January 1<sup>st</sup> – December 31<sup>st</sup> 2002, a total of 136 detached outreach sessions took place in 6 locations. The agency provided direct support to 78 clients of whom 49, or almost two-thirds (62%) were

new cases. 46 cases were closed during the year (3 due to death) and by the end of 2002, THT was directly supporting 31 clients. The most common support required is around accessing appropriate accommodation, however, THT also report that the majority of clients they work with have drug dependency issues. Depending on the needs of the clients, different interventions and support services are provided and many receive more than one intervention and/or source of support. In the case of clients under the age of 18, referrals are made to Freedom Youth, a young gay and lesbian project, where young men can explore issues of sexuality and meet peers in a safe setting. THT Street Team workers report that after such referrals, the young men are not usually seen on the streets again. THT has also established direct links with Connexions and Bristol YOT.

Typically, referrals from THT are made to homelessness organisations, benefits agencies, sexual health services, drug treatment services and agencies from where young people (under 18) might be provided with peer support (usually Freedom Youth). Typical interventions the clients received were, peer support, support in completing forms for benefits, support in completing forms for housing applications, appointments made at drug treatment services and appointments made at sexual health clinics.

After working with and supporting their clients, the THT Street Team workers undertook an assessment of whether their clients were still considered to be at risk. The results of these assessments are summarised below for each age group.

**Table 5: THT Male Clients at risk Jan – Dec 2002: Assessment by age group-**

Age	% Still at risk	% Not known if still at risk	% No longer at risk
16	None	None	100%
17	16%	16%	68%
18	48%	28.5%	23.5%
19	25%	33%	42%
20	50%	33%	17%
21	66%	17%	17%

This demonstrates that in general terms, the agency appears to have had greatest success in working with the younger age groups – that is, those aged 17 and younger

and least success with those aged 18 and over. This is possibly because those in the older age groups are more entrenched in the behaviours in which they have become involved. This demonstrates the importance of early intervention with this client group if they are not to become entrenched in sex work and drug use. Where workers do not know if clients are still at risk, this is because they tend to disappear from the 'scene' or are not spotted by outreach workers when they are doing their work.

Overall, just over a quarter (28%) of the total client group was still considered to be at risk while workers were unsure about approximately one fifth (20.5%) of those they had worked with. This suggests that 52% of all clients THT worked with since Pandora began were no longer considered to be at risk. Workers at THT made these assessments based on their observations during outreach work and information received from other clients on outreach sessions.

In the period March 2001 – April 2002, Barnardos BASE (Bristol Against Sexual Exploitation) made 132 outreach contacts with young people (predominately young women) aged between 13 and 18 years. The outreach facility stopped in April 2002<sup>3</sup>. After the outreach work stopped, a drop-in on two evenings per week was established. We have not been provided with figures for the number of people who made use of this facility.

As with the young men who accessed services through THT, the young people with whom Barnardos have worked have been provided with a number of interventions. For example, a seventeen-year-old with whom the agency worked referred herself to the project. She had issues with alcohol and drugs, was homeless and sleeping on a park bench and had a history of sexual abuse. The workers at Barnardos referred her to sexual health services, and ensured that she received support from a YOT worker in relation to her offending. Through her involvement with BASE, she was also provided with support in relation to her housing situation from the Emergency Duty Team (Social Services) and received support from BASE workers to come to terms with the abuse she had experienced. In another case, a sixteen year old described by BASE as a 'runaway' and a crack and heroin user was engaging with BASE workers and had been provided with sexual health services and a drugs worker. The services to which

<sup>3</sup> As explained previously, because the outreach worker's contract expired before extension of funding became available

those engaging with BASE are typically referred are housing services, drug services, sexual health services and the services of the Emergency Duty Team (Social Services). BASE has not undertaken an assessment of the extent to which the young people with whom they have worked are still considered to be at risk.

An innovative part of the service delivered by the Pandora project has been to provide sexual health services on the premises at Barnardos BASE. This has proved to be very popular with the young people who make use of the services offered by Barnardos but apparently not so popular with clients using the services provided by THT – when referred to BASE, clients from THT often refuse the offer of an appointment. These clients tend to prefer to use the sexual health services provided at the Milne centre. This may be because they feel that the latter is more anonymous or on the other hand, because their perception is that Barnardos (BASE) provides services for ‘children’ and they do not define themselves as ‘children’.

In the period March 2002 – February 2003, 44 young people first attended the sexual health service provided at BASE (some of these will have made original contact in 2001/2002 but we have not been provided with figures for how many were new contacts). The minimum number of visits made by an individual during this period was one and the maximum 14. The nurses at BASE provide information and advice, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections and contraceptive services. The number of visits made by young people to the sexual health clinic at BASE demonstrates that the service is able to sustain relationships with young people who would arguably not have attended mainstream services. If they had attended mainstream services, it is probable that they would not have maintained the level of contact achieved by the nurses. The young people who have accessed the service through BASE would not have been existing clients of the sexual health service provided at the Milne Centre and therefore, comparison of rates of infection prior to the establishment of this service with current rates are likely to be of little value. Additionally, sexually transmitted infections have increased throughout the population in the period in which the Pandora project has been running and these would skew the figures (Milne Centre Report 2003).

The evidence presented above demonstrates the Pandora project has successfully achieved its aim of engaging young people who are at risk or involved in prostitution

and improving the system of referrals for them. These young people are now better able to access housing advice and services, sexual health services and drug treatment services. In the short term, this improved system of referrals improves the health and well being of the young people concerned and enables them to stabilise the situations in which they are living. In the long term, these interventions are likely to improve their sense of self-esteem and self-confidence. Where young people are able to access drug treatment services, they are able to reduce their involvement in sex work and/or other offending behaviour because they are no longer indulging in such activities to fund their drug use. According to practitioners and the young people themselves, when they are able to access appropriate housing, the young people are able to start to feel settled and make plans for the future rather than drifting aimlessly from day to day. Having said that, it should be noted that a lack of appropriate housing for these vulnerable young people remains a major concern in Bristol where homelessness amongst the client group worked with through Pandora is a major issue.

#### *Sheffield ACPC Sexual Exploitation Project*

The aims of the Sheffield ACPC Sexual Exploitation Project were twofold. On the one hand, this project aimed to support young women (up to age 18) involved, or at risk of involvement, in prostitution while on the other, it also aimed to raise awareness of this issue and provide training around it to other agencies and practitioners.

Additionally, the project hoped to provide a facility to work with young women in schools. The project also hoped to make full use of interagency procedures and to trial a missing person's scheme through a police database. These aims were to be realised through the following interventions:

- ◆ Provision of sexual health services to young people
- ◆ Production and implementation of data tracking system for young people referred to the project
- ◆ Multi-agency training events
- ◆ Multi-agency planning sessions for professionals
- ◆ Development of interagency data systems and information sharing protocols
- ◆ Group work in residential unit/schools and one-to-one work with young people through youth service based intervention
- ◆ General advice and support to young people referred to the project



- ◆ Support to parents whose children are involved, or considered to be at risk of involvement in commercial sexual exploitation

These interventions were to be delivered by the following agencies:

- ◆ Sheffield Education and Youth Services – co-ordination of project and provision of direct support to young people through 'Taking Stock' (youth service based service). 'Taking Stock' was also develop preventative work for group work with young in schools and residential homes
- ◆ Sheffield Social Services – administration of project work, facilitation of case conferences, multi-agency planning and strategy meetings and practitioner meetings
- ◆ Sheffield Police – Development of 'tracking' system to 'track' young girls referred to the project
- ◆ Sheffield Young Persons' Drug Project (SHED) – to support young people with substance misuse issues and provide a 'fast-track' service for those referred to the project
- ◆ Sheffield Social Services and Sheffield Education and Youth Service – to develop training for managers and practitioners in multi-agency contexts

The interventions delivered, their expected outcomes and how they would be measured are summarised in the table below

**Table 6: Sheffield ACPC Sexual Exploitation Project: Interventions, Expected Outcomes and How Measured**

<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Expected Outcome</b>	<b>How Measured</b>
Provision of sexual health services to young people	Reduction in risk of STDs. Increased awareness of dangers they face in terms of sexual health by continuing with current practices and reduction in risk behaviour	Statistical data from relevant agencies detailing number of new and on-going young people using the service per month. Interviews with relevant personnel to explore rates of STDs before and after engagement with sexual health services. Interviews with young people to determine value of intervention from their perspective
Production and implementation	Early identification of young	Statistical data from police to

of data tracking system for young people referred	people at risk	identify number of times system used by police per month and number of young people tracked per month
Mutli-agency training	Greater awareness and improved practice across variety of agencies	Statistical data to show number of sessions delivered per month and number of people attending. Interviews with those receiving training to determine ways in which awareness has been raised and practices improved
Multi-agency planning sessions for professionals	Improvements in information sharing and referral system	Statistical data to detail number of planning systems held per month and interviews to determine how these have improved service delivery to the client group
Development of interagency data systems and information sharing protocols	Enhanced information on young people at risk	Statistical information on number of agencies using system per month and number of agencies signed up to information sharing protocols
Group work in residential units/schools and one-to-one work with young people	Raised awareness of young people in relation to dangers of exploitative relationships and prevention of such relationships developing	Number of sessions delivered per month and number of young people receiving them. Interviews with young people to determine from their perspective the value of these sessions. Number of new and on-going young people worked with per month. Interviews with young people to determine value of one-to-one work
General advice/support to young people	Movement away from risky behaviour and/or involvement in sexually exploitative relationships	Statistical data relating to numbers of young people provided with support and advice per month (new and on-going cases). Interviews with young people to determine the value of the support they have received and with professionals

		to explore their perceptions of changes in the young person's behaviour
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We have not been provided with statistical information in relation to the number of young people referred to sexual health services, the number of times the tracking system might have been accessed or the number of young people tracked per month. In addition, we are unable to say how many agencies use the interagency data systems or the number that are signed up to data sharing protocols.

The Sheffield project has developed an extensive definition of sexual exploitation and distinguishes between young women who are involved in commercial sexual exploitation (prostitution) and those who are considered to be at risk of becoming involved (the 'grooming' process) (Lucas 2002). As we have noted previously, there is a danger here of expanding the definition to the extent that all young women who are involved in 'risky' sexual practices are considered to be at risk of involvement in commercial sexual exploitation. This may or may not be the case. When a referral is made, an assessment is carried out to establish whether risk of commercial sexual exploitation is present or not. Many young people have come to the attention of the project as a result of other agencies noticing early indications of risk.

Recent research has suggested three categories of young people who are at risk of or involved in commercial sexual exploitation (Pearce *et. al.* 2003). The categories identified were

- i) Sexualised risk taking (e.g. getting in cars with strangers)
- ii) 'Swapping' sexual favours for some form of gain (often associated with going missing and might involve a roof for the night, a meal, drugs etc.)
- iii) Self-defined as 'prostitute' (usually working from the street)

This report identified the importance of intervention at stages one and two if young people were to be prevented from becoming fully involved in sex work. Evidence from Bristol and Sheffield appears to support this classification system and the importance of early intervention.

Young people are referred to the project, predominately through social services, and cannot self-refer. Social services may be alerted to concerns about a young person by practitioners involved in the multi-agency planning group – these include educational

welfare and child protection officers, YOT workers, housing workers, drug service workers, police and youth services.

In the period March 2001-March 2003, a total of 97 young people have been referred to the project. The majority of these are young women although a small number of young men have been referred. The age of the young people worked with and the percentage of each age group for all those referred to the project are summarised in the table below:

*Table 7: Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Project: Ages of Young People Referred March 2001- March 2003*

Age	No. in each age group	% of those worked with*
11	1	1%
12	8	8%
13	16	16%
14	27	28%
15	27	28%
16	10 (incl 1 male)	10%
17	8	8%
18	0	0

\* Figures are rounded up or down to nearest whole number

These figures demonstrate that the majority (79, or 81%) of young people with whom the project has worked in this period are 15 years old or younger. This reflects the project's focus on preventative work and early intervention.

Of these 97, 30 were new referrals in the period April 2002 to March 2003. In the same period, a total of 110 strategy meetings have been held. These strategy meetings enable multi-agency plans to be put into place to support the young women referred. They also allow for the systematic gathering of intelligence about the young people, their associations with each other and with adult offenders. This has enabled the police to identify targets for prosecution.

Of the strategy meetings held in the period April 2002 – March 2003:

- ◆ 30 were new referrals
- ◆ 70 were reviews

- ◆ 5 were re-referrals
- ◆ 5 were special ACPC meetings (held to discuss concerns regarding groups of young people and possible offenders)

Of the 30 new referrals in the period April 2002-March 2003, 3 young people were the subject of child protection conferences, which resulted in:

- ◆ 1 registration (for neglect)
- ◆ 2 not registered

Two of these young people had previously been on the child protection register as a result of abuse within the family. Of the 30 new referrals, 3 young women entered the child protection system. Prior to coming to the attention of the sexual exploitation project, 8 of these young people had previously been the subject of child protection conferences.

In the period March 2001-March 2003, the young people with whom the project has worked have been provided with the following interventions:

**Table 8: Interventions provided for young people in Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Project March 2001-March 2003(except where indicated)**

<b>Number of Young People</b>	<b>Interventions received*</b>
34	Youth Service (Taking Stock: one-to-one work)
31	Family Support Worker
30	Learning mentors
24	Teachers for special needs assessment
19	Child Protection Liaison Teachers
17	EWOs
14	SHED (Vol. Sector drug project) (2002-2003)
12	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
10	Child protection case conference leading to registration
6	School Nurse
5	Accommodated under Section 20 (2002-2003)
5	Care Order/Interim care order (2002- 2003)
4	BASE 10 (ed. provision for excludees)
4	Youth Offending Worker

3

Adolescent Unit

1

Supervision Order (2002 – 2003)

\* Some young people receive more than one intervention

Additionally, standard letters warning offenders that they face prosecution should they continue their association with the young person have been developed and procedures for serving these by the police or social services have been agreed. By February 2002, 8 of these letters had been served. We have not been provided with data on the number of letters served in the period March 2002 – March 2003. The Child Abduction legislation is set to become part of the police general orders in Sheffield thus ensuring that this legislation is used consistently. Links have also been established with the CPS and the project is working with them on methods to achieve prosecutions against adult offenders without the young women being required to give evidence in court. At the time of writing, no prosecutions against the men involved in abusing the young women are pending – primarily because although the young women are encouraged to make complaints to the police, they are unwilling to give evidence in court.

All the young people have received a police service intervention in the sense that the police attend the strategy meetings concerning the young people and all are entered into the police tracking system. This enables young people to be flagged up as vulnerable should they go missing. All the young people also receive a social service intervention in the sense that strategy meetings are convened in relation to all of those who are referred.

Of the 14 young people seen by SHED (Young People's Drug Service) in 2002 - 2003, 5 have engaged with the worker. One young woman referred herself to SHED and is currently part of the ACPC project referral process. We do not have figures for the number of young women referred to SHED in 2001/2002 – this may be because workers considered that drug misuse was not particularly an issue for the young people they were working with – many were too young to have developed drug misuse problems. The project has also established a 'fast-track' to the GU clinic for the young people with whom they are working. Of the 34 young people worked with on a one-to-one basis by Taking Stock (youth service provision), 11 have attended the