

**Key Document 11**

Letter from Former Home Office Official to Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council regarding Evaluation Termination



# Home Office

Research, Development and Statistics Directorate

Policing and Crime Reduction Unit  
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Telephone: [REDACTED]

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Dear Christine,

**Re: Home Office Evaluation of the Crime Reduction Programme (CRP) project on tackling crime and disorder related to prostitution (managed by Risky Business and CROP).**

I am writing to notify you that following much consideration the Home Office is closing the evaluation of the CRP funded project within 'Risky Business' with immediate effect.

There are three evaluation programmes underway in relation to the CRP projects on the crime and disorder related to prostitution. These are related to policing projects, exiting and support projects and young people's projects. The Rotherham project was part of the young people's project evaluation undertaken by the University of Luton.

The reasons for the decision to close the evaluation are as follows:

1. The evaluation teams were due to submit their draft final reports on the 30 June 2002 with final reports due on 30th September. The evaluation of the CRP element of the Risky Business Project has been seriously delayed because of project concerns about the evaluation process, the project's failure to forward requested data, as well as difficulties with the interview schedules. A series of joint evaluation and project meetings have been held to resolve these issues but unfortunately difficulties still remain, and as a result, significant elements of the evaluation remain outstanding. Given the current timeframe, a meaningful outcome evaluation is now impossible, and even if the timetable were extended it would still be difficult (if not impossible) for the evaluation to be completed.

2. There is also some concern regarding the accuracy of some data submitted to the evaluation team, primarily the case studies. These were given to the evaluation team at the joint project/evaluation team meeting in March 2002. The accuracy of the data detailed in the case studies has been questioned at a number of meetings involving officers from the Government Office, the Home Office, the evaluation team, staff at Rotherham M.B.C. and the Risky Business Steering Group. It remains unclear as to whether the data needs to be amended or not.
3. This evaluation, like all evaluations, is reliant upon the co-operation of the project and the steering group, as well as having access to accurate data. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, some officers at Rotherham M. B. Council and on the steering group of the Risky Business Project are not comfortable with the evaluation process, and appear to be unclear as to how far they are able to co-operate with the evaluation.

As a result of the above, I have asked the evaluation team to cease new work in relation to evaluation of the Risky Business Project. However, the following actions will be taken:

- (i) Where possible, information relating to the Risky Business project will be included in the overview of the young peoples' evaluation group (where there is supporting evidence available)
- (ii) A site report (based upon the available data) will be completed and will be forwarded to the project for information.

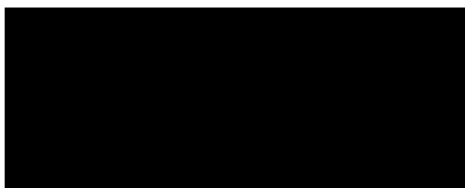
I would like to request that any outstanding data that is currently available is forwarded to the evaluation team in the next week.

I would also like to remind the project that this decision does not alter the conditions of grant aid and that the Home Office still "own" the data related to this project. If you want to publish data relating to the project (for example, in publications, presentations, at seminars or conferences) you need to make a formal request to the Home Office before doing so.

I would like to stress that the decision to end the evaluation process has not been taken lightly, and there has been a lot of effort made to resolve all of the difficulties. The Crime Reduction Programme was established to fund local interventions and test out "what works" so we could inform development of good practice. The project funded in Rotherham was potentially ground breaking and is unique in its focus on targeting pimps, looking to enhance evidence gathering as well as supporting the young women involved. Therefore, it is with great regret that we have had to cease the evaluation.

If you have any questions regarding this issue, or would like to discuss it further then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Violence Against Women Initiative Team

Copied to:

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|------------------|--|
|                  | Project Officer, Risky Business                        |
|                  | NSPCC (Chair, Project Steering Group)                  |
|                  | Rotherham M.B.C. (Project Steering Group)              |
| Jalna Hamner     | Supervisor to Project Officer (Project Steering Group) |
| Di Billups       | Director of Education, Culture and Leisure Services    |
| Jackie Jenkinson | Director of Social Services                            |
| Margaret Melrose | University of Luton                                    |
|                  | S.O.U. Home Office                                     |
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|                  | Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber         |
|                  | P.C.R.U. Home Office                                   |

## **Key Document 12**

University of Luton Interim 'Process Report'

**Tackling Crime and Disorder Associated with Prostitution: What Works?  
(Young People)**

**Interim Process Report**

**August 2001**

**Margaret Melrose, University of Luton**

**Part One**

**Introduction**

Previous research into young people who were involved in commercial sexual exploitation, conducted by members of this evaluation team, has highlighted a lack of provision specifically for young people involved in the sex industry (Melrose *et. al.* 1999). In this respect, funding of projects in Sheffield, Rotherham and Bristol to support young people involved in, or at risk of involvement, in commercial sexual exploitation under the Crime Reduction Programme is very welcome and, indeed, very necessary. Our previous work has recommended that, 'ideal type' projects would provide young people with 'street based, young person centred services that provide opportunities for counselling, a chance to explore victimisation and offer long term support' (Melrose *et. al.* 1999:87). 'Educational facilities, careers guidance, help with housing and welfare benefits, help with drugs and childcare, detoxification facilities and needle exchange schemes' were also recommended (Melrose *et. al.* 1999:88).

This report relies primarily on quantitative data to provide a background to the evaluation of young people's projects in Bristol, Sheffield and Rotherham. It aims to provide a context for understanding the social environments in which the projects are working by describing the local conditions in terms of environmental, community and historical factors and is primarily concerned with process.

The report draws on various quantitative data to identify 'regularities and common patterns' (Matthews and Pitts 2000:138) across project areas. These include, for example, demographic data, Local Authority ward deprivation scores, data from the drug misuse database as well as statistics on the numbers of young people looked after, on child protection registers and children in need. The report also provides information on previous initiatives to tackle the problem of child sexual exploitation in each area (where this is available), the numbers of people to which each project is

providing services and the types of services they provide. In addition, the report describes the ways in which the projects have been implemented and assesses the extent to which they have been implemented in accordance with their original design.

At the time of writing, very little qualitative work has been conducted but the report does draw on data generated from visits to projects as well as conversations and communication with project workers and observations at the different sites. A full evaluation report will of course be dependent on qualitative data gathered from interviews with workers and young people involved in the projects. Such qualitative data is essential if we are to understand what it is about any particular intervention that works to change a young person's behaviour. It is by combining such qualitative data with quantifiable data, such as the numbers of young people receiving a service from any particular project that will enable us to identify 'causal processes within broader patterns of difference' (Matthews and Pitts 2000).

We have also begun to rethink our methodological approach to the qualitative aspects of the evaluation because in some instances, the young people are not necessarily fully informed of the reasons for their referrals to projects. For example, in one project a young woman was told by her mother that she was being referred because she had not been attending school. The project refused to accept the young woman and told the mother she would only be accepted if the mother were honest with her about the reasons for her referral. In situations such as these, it may not be appropriate to discuss with the young women their involvement in commercial child sexual exploitation but it may be possible to talk to them about their involvement in the projects and what they feel they have gained from it. Developers are continuing to work with projects on this element of practice and it is discussed more fully later in the report.

As well as these difficulties, there are ethical considerations to make in terms of including young women in the projects as research subjects (Melrose *et. al.* 1999, Melrose 2001). As other researchers in this field have recently argued:

*'...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).

### **The Projects: Common Issues**

All the projects concerned with young people share similar goals – that is, to reduce the numbers of young people becoming involved in prostitution and, where appropriate, to encourage those who are already involved to exit from the lifestyle. As a result of the shortcomings of national data on young people involved in commercial sexual exploitation, no one knows how many young people may be involved at any one time (McNeish 1998, Shaw and Butler 1998, Barrett 1999, Ayre and Barrett 2000). The evidence we do have to date is primarily based on small-scale agency studies (Shaw and Butler 1998) and although this may be highly valid, it is not necessarily statistically reliable. In this sense, all projects are working in a context where we are unaware of the scale of the problem to be tackled.

All projects are concerned to reduce the crime and nuisance associated with prostitution and to provide support for the young people concerned. In this sort of crime prevention, a problem arises because young people who are sexually exploited through their involvement in prostitution are *victims* of crime by the men who seek to buy their services (Department of Health/Home Office 2000). At the same time, however, these young people may also be the perpetrators of crime. They may, for example, be involved in drug use and/or dealing, 'clipping' (i.e. taking money from men without providing them with the services they have paid for), street robberies and other sorts of crime. In terms of Young's model of the 'square of crime' (Young 1992:27 cited in Crawford 1998:26), therefore, the victims and the offenders may be the same people.

Despite their similar goals, all projects employ different *mechanisms* in order to achieve them. While some focus on working directly with the young people to effect exit strategies (Bristol), others focus on preventative work with the young people at the same time as trying to raise the awareness of professionals who may be involved in their care, for example, teachers, social workers and health professionals (Sheffield). On the other hand, in Rotherham, the focus of the work is on the abusers



and trying to protect the young women from their potentially malevolent influence while at the same time working to support the young women concerned.

Some projects are therefore more focused on preventative work while others are focused on responding to the young people once they have become involved while others are focused on the men who abuse and exploit these vulnerable young women. Because of these differences and the different local contexts in which they are all working, comparability is problematic. What works in one area may not work in another because the nature and character of sex markets may change geographically (May *et. al.* 2000). In addition, 'what works' for one young person may not necessarily work for another.

All projects are implemented in contexts where the historical, social and economic environments that allow child sex markets to flourish are variable. In Sheffield and Bristol, for example, the 'red light' district is located in a defined geographical area and in both cities, sites have been identified as being associated with both adult and child prostitution. In Bristol, this is identified as various sites in the town centre whereas in Sheffield a previous initiative by social services and the police to explore the problem of child sexual exploitation identified a particular area of the town centre as of concern in relation to young people. In Sheffield, there is also a 'red light' district where adults involved in the sex industry work. This is not the case in Rotherham. Here there is no geographically defined area where (adult) street prostitution exists and no geographically defined site where child prostitution occurs has been identified. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many young women from Rotherham are taken to Sheffield in order to work. This means that in Rotherham, the nuisance associated with prostitution, for local residents, for example, is less of an issue than it might be in other areas.

The different areas in which projects are implemented may also experience differences in terms of the formal labour market and training opportunities available to young people as well as differences in the informal or illicit opportunities available to them. We know, for example, that in relation to child prostitution it is individual factors -- such as sexual abuse, family conflict, the experience of residential care in conjunction with environmental factors, such as the numbers of women working in an

area, that create the conditions for young people to become involved in prostitution (O'Neill 1997).

### **Some Cautionary Notes**

Although this report is concerned with process and not with cost-effectiveness it is worth noting that because all projects have different mechanisms of implementation and are being implemented in different contexts and with a variable focus, determining the 'cost-effectiveness' of outcomes is not an easy task and comparison across projects may not always be appropriate. For example, an initiative that attempts to reduce child sexual exploitation by tackling the men involved is not directly comparable to an initiative that attempts to tackle the problem by working directly with the young people concerned. In this instance, we are not comparing like with like.

In addition to these difficulties, some projects are extensions of existing provision while some are completely new developments. This will lead to differences in client base and difficulties with separating out the impact of CRP provision from that of others. In Bristol, for example, one project worker said that it would be almost impossible to detect the impact of CRP funding in terms of addressing the concerns of local residents as other local initiatives (non CRP funded) have been developed to tackle those concerns.

It is also worth noting that the data we would ideally like is often incomplete and even where we do have relevant data in statistical form, it does not tell its own story. It is important to bear in mind that statistical data are limited by the categories in which they are collected and by the systems, and even humans, by which they are collected. Official statistics of recorded crime, for example, are just as likely to reflect local policing concerns and priorities as they are the behaviour they purport to measure (Lee 1993).

As the discussion above has indicated, there is a lack of statistical baselines to work from when it comes to estimating the scale of young people's involvement in commercial sexual exploitation. It is estimated that up to 5,000 young people may be involved at any one time with a female/male ratio of 4:1 (Barrett 1999, Ayre and

Barrett 2000). It is important to bear in mind, however, that different estimates of prevalence may reflect the moral concerns of different interest groups, or alternatively, different definitions of what 'child prostitution' or 'commercial child sexual exploitation' involves.

The following section of the report examines demographic and other data to provide an indication of the different socio-economic contexts in which the projects operate.

## **Part Two: The social context of project work**

### **Demography**

This section of the report draws on national, regional and local statistics to provide a socio-economic picture of the contexts in which the different projects are working. In terms of population size, Sheffield is the largest area with a resident population of 531,100 in mid 1998. This compares to 254,400 in Rotherham and 402,300 in Bristol (Office for National Statistics 2001a). With 24.5% of its population aged 18 or under (62,575), however, Rotherham has the largest proportion of young people aged 18 or under. This compares with 23% (92,922) of this age group in Bristol and 22.5% (119,493) in Sheffield (Department of Health 2001a)<sup>1</sup>. All three areas are ethnically diverse although there are differences in the ethnic profile of the areas. In Bristol, the largest single ethnic group (at 1.6% of the total population) is African-Caribbean. In Sheffield and Rotherham, on the other hand, the largest single ethnic group, at 1.8% and 1.3% respectively of the total population, is Pakistani (Office for National Statistics 2001b)<sup>2</sup>.

### **Deprivation**

The two regions in which the projects are located, Yorkshire and Humberside and the South West, share similar characteristics on the one hand but are very different from each other on the other. In terms of their regional profiles, the South West generally appears to experience fewer social problems than the region of Yorkshire and Humberside. This is evidenced in terms of the key indicators in the following regional data:

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<sup>1</sup> These figures are based on June 1999 estimate

<sup>2</sup> The figures for ethnic populations are based on 1991 Census data

**Table 1***Cross Sectional Data Yorkshire and Humberside and the South West 1996-1999*

Indicator	Yorks & Humberside	South West	UK
Standardised Mortality Ratio (1998)	103	89	100
Infant Mortality 1997 - 1999*	6.5	5.1	5.8
% pupils with 5 or more A-C grades @ GCSE 1998/99	41.9	52.8	49.1
Economic Activity Rate Spring 1999 (%)**	77.6%	82.1%	78.4%
Average Gross Weekly Earnings Male F/T April 1999	£395.80	£402.90	£440.70
Average Gross Weekly Earning Female F/T April 1999	£297.90	£297.80	£325.60
Recorded Crime Rate 1998-99 (notifiable offences per 100,000 population)***	11,770	8201	9785
Average Weekly Household Income 1996:99****	£390	£411	£430
Households in receipt of Family Credit Income Support 1998-99 (%)*****	18	12	15

\* Deaths of infants under 1 year per 1000 live births

\*\* For people of working age: men 16-64, women 16-59

\*\*\* For England and Wales

\*\*\*\* Combined years 1996-97, 1997-98, 1998-99

\*\*\*\*\* For Great Britain

(Source: Regional Trends 35, 2000 Edition)

These regional profiles indicate that the South West area is below the national average for standardised mortality rates, infant mortality rates, recorded crime and households in receipt of income support/family credit whereas the Yorkshire and Humberside region is above the national average on all of these indicators.

On the other hand, the South West is above the national average on the percentage of pupils receiving 5 or more grades at GCSE and economic activity rate whereas the Yorkshire and Humberside region is below the national average on both of these indicators. Both regions are below the national average in terms of average gross weekly earnings and average weekly household income (Regional Trends 35, Office for National Statistics 2000).

Data from the Labour Force Survey (February 2001-April 2001) show International Labour Organisation (ILO) unemployment rates (measured as a percentage of those who are economically active) for the regions to be 5.4% in Yorkshire and Humberside and 3.7% in the South West. This compares with a rate of 5% for the United Kingdom as a whole (Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics 2001c).

Looking at the claimant count for the three areas (using 1998 ward boundaries) the data suggest that Rotherham has the highest number of people claiming unemployment related benefits. At November 2000, the rate in Rotherham was 5.7% of whom 2.9% were female. In Sheffield, 5% of the workforce were claiming such benefits, of whom 2.4% were female. In Bristol, 2.8% were claiming unemployment related benefits, of whom 1.5% were female<sup>3</sup> (Office for National Statistics 2001d). When we look at indices of deprivation, Rotherham appears to be the most deprived area in terms of the rank of average of ward deprivation scores (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Indices of Deprivation 2000). On this measure, with a score of 37.79, Rotherham is ranked 48 out of 354 districts. Sheffield, with a score of 34, is ranked 60 and Bristol, scoring 28.47 is ranked 94. Different measures of deprivation, however, provide a slightly different picture.

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<sup>3</sup> The claimant count represents the number of people claiming unemployment related benefits. All those eligible for and claiming Job Seeker's Allowance and those claiming National Insurance Credits

In terms of the rank of income scale, for example, out of 354 districts, Sheffield and Bristol, ranked at 6 and 13 respectively, are more deprived than Rotherham which is ranked 32. When we look at how these areas are ranked in terms of the extent of deprivation experienced, Sheffield again comes out as most deprived. Out of 354 districts it is ranked 48, Rotherham is ranked 60 while Bristol is ranked 83. A similar pattern emerges when we examine the local concentration of deprivation. On this measure, out of 354 districts, Sheffield is ranked 14, Rotherham 31 and Bristol 71 (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Indices of Deprivation 2000).

### ***Vulnerable and Needy Young People***

Another indication of the types of social and economic problems faced by the different areas and the sorts of contexts in which the projects are working is provided by the numbers of young people being looked after in each region, the numbers of young people on child protection registers and the numbers of young people defined as 'in need' in each area. Bristol, Rotherham and Sheffield all have similar proportions of young people under the age of 18 being looked after. In Bristol, at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2000, 0.59% (556) of those aged 18 and under were being looked after in the care of the local authority; in Rotherham the proportion was 0.59% (371) and in Sheffield 0.58% (695) (Department of Health 2001a).

In Yorkshire and Humberside as a whole, 63.6% of all children looked after are looked after as a result of abuse and/or neglect. This compares with 54.1% who are looked after in the South West for these reasons and 55.4% looked after for these reasons in England as whole (Department of Health 2001b). This data therefore demonstrates that in Yorkshire and Humberside the rate of young people looked after as a result of abuse and/or neglect is higher than the rate being looked after for these reasons in the south west and higher than the figure for England as a whole. When we disaggregate these regional figures, we find that in Sheffield, 63.9% of all children looked after are looked after as a result of abuse and/or neglect compared to 58.8% of young people looked after in Rotherham and 49.1% of young people looked after in Bristol (Department of Health 2001b).

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are included in the monthly count. The count rate is calculated by expressing the number of claimants as a percentage of the estimated total workforce.

When we look at the incidence of children in need in each area, however, another picture emerges. In February 2000, 3,275 young people (3.5% of those aged 18 or under) were defined as 'children in need' and receiving services from the local authority in Bristol. Of these young people, 28.5% were receiving services as a result of abuse and/or neglect. In the same period, 2,167 (1.8% of those aged 18 or under) young people under 18 were defined as 'children in need' and receiving services in Sheffield. Of these, 41.4% were receiving services as a result of abuse and/or neglect. In Rotherham in the same period, 1,581 young people were defined as 'children in need' and receiving a service (2.5% of all young people aged 18 or under) and of these, 45.4% were receiving services as a result of abuse and/or neglect. With 35 young people defined as 'children in need' per 1000 of the 0-18 population, Bristol has the highest incidence of 'children in need' of the three areas. The rate in Rotherham is 25 per 1000 and in Sheffield, 18 per 1000 (of the 0-18 population) (Department of Health 2001c) <sup>4</sup>.

In terms of the rate per 10,000 population of young people on child protection registers, Yorkshire and Humberside as a whole at 29 per 10,000 is higher than the South West at 23 per 10,000 and higher than the average for England as whole at 27 per 10,000. These data show that the Yorkshire and Humberside region have higher rates of children on child protection registers than the average for England as a whole while the South West has lower rates than the average for England as a whole. When these regional statistics are broken down, however, we see that each of the areas in which the projects are operating has significantly higher numbers of young people on child protection registers than the average for England as a whole. In Sheffield, at March 31<sup>st</sup> 2000, 38 per 10,000 population were on child protection registers. This compares with 37 per 10,000 population in Bristol and 33 per 10,000 in Rotherham (Department of Health 2000a).

Yorkshire and Humberside also experience a much higher rate of teenage pregnancies than the South West region. In the former, there were 5596 births to women aged 15-19 in 1998 while in the latter there were 3535. When this is translated into births per

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<sup>4</sup> Children in need statistics may be distorted by the inclusion of children in asylum seeking families and those receiving subsidised day care

1000 women in the age group, Yorkshire and Humberside experience 37 births per 1000 people in the age group and the South West experiences 25 births per 1000. The figure for the UK as a whole is 28 per 1000 in the age group. This indicates that Yorkshire and Humberside are considerably above the national average on this measure while the South West region is considerably below (Regional Trends 35, 2000).

### *Young People and Drug Use*

Another indication of the sorts of difficulties experienced by the young people living in these areas is provided by data from the Drug Misuse Database. An examination of these data suggest that Rotherham has a higher proportion of young people (aged 20 or under) who are experiencing problems with drug use than the other two regions. Data by regional office area and health authority of treatment during 1<sup>st</sup> October 1999 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2000 show that of those experiencing drug problems in Rotherham, 21.6% were aged 20 or under compared to 17.3% in Sheffield and 12.9% in Bristol. Heroin use would also appear to be more prevalent in Rotherham than in the other two areas. Of those reporting to agencies with drug problems in Rotherham in the period October 1999-March 2000, 86% reported problems with heroin compared to 78% in Sheffield and 72% in the Avon Health Authority region. All areas have roughly similar proportions of males and females reporting problems with drugs – approximately 75% male and 25% female (Department of Health 2000b).

The data presented above suggests that the three areas in which projects are operating experience similar problems in terms of the numbers of young people looked after, children in need and young people identified as 'at risk'. While Rotherham appears to be the most deprived area in terms of its rank of average of ward deprivation scores, we have seen that in terms of the *extent* and *intensity* (concentration) of deprivation, Sheffield could be described as the most deprived area.

The next section of this report looks in more detail at the projects themselves. It describes what the projects have set out to achieve, what they have achieved so far, the extent to which the implementation of the projects accords with the original plans, any difficulties the projects have encountered in implementing their plans and what they feel still needs to be done.



## **The projects**

### ***Sheffield: Multi-agency bid to address young women and sexual exploitation***

#### *Introduction*

As a result of previous work undertaken by Sheffield police and social services, (Operation Insight), concerns were raised about young women who were being sexually exploited by older men. Over the course of four months, (March – June 2000) this previous initiative identified 80 young women who were considered to be ‘at risk’ of involvement in commercial sexual exploitation and of these, 42.5% (34) were known to be involved. All the young women were aged between 14 and 20 years of age. Of the 34 identified, almost two thirds (22) were involved in soliciting (street prostitution) while the remainder were involved in work in saunas or with escort agencies. In the former group, 10 were aged under 16. All those involved in soliciting were known to have drug dependency problems.

Over the years, the Sheffield Prostitution Forum (SPF) has initiated various interventions aimed at tackling the problem of (adult) street prostitution but the focus on young people who are involved in commercial sexual exploitation is something of a new departure in Sheffield. The Sheffield Project is a multi-agency partnership involving Sheffield City Council Youth Services, Social Services, the Police and a local drug project (SHED). The project is overseen by the Sheffield Area Child Protection Committee and aims to raise awareness amongst professionals involved in working with, or caring for, young women. In addition, using a cognitive-behavioural model, the project undertakes one-to-one work with young women considered to be at risk of commercial sexual exploitation to make them address their behaviour and prevent them from becoming involved in commercial sexual exploitation. Where young women have already become involved, the project aims to facilitate exit strategies for the young women and/or to influence a harm reduction approach.

Since 1998, Sheffield City Council has implemented new Government guidance on young people involved in commercial child sexual exploitation. The result of this has been that young women (under 18) who do become involved in prostitution and sexual exploitation are treated as ‘children in need’ rather than as ‘criminals’. The

young women are regarded as victims of sexual abuse rather than the perpetrators of crime (Department of Health/Home Office 2000).

The CRP funded initiative has three strands:

- A youth work based project to work with young women on a one-to-one or collective basis (depending on which is the more appropriate for the young women concerned)
- Training for professionals and practitioners working with young people in order to raise their awareness of this issue
- To develop an effective multi-agency response to young people at risk of commercial child sexual exploitation.

#### *What 's Been Achieved?*

The project has been established since February 2001. In that time, a number of things have been achieved including the following:

- A full staff complement with clear management structures
- An outline of the work to be undertaken with the young women has been produced and shared across agencies ('Taking Stock')
- Referral mechanisms for the young women have been agreed and referral forms produced
- One-to-one work has been undertaken with young women referred to the project
- Training materials for awareness raising amongst professionals have been produced
- Guidance on working with young people involved in commercial sexual exploitation have been formally agreed
- An appropriate model for drug advice sessions has been identified
- Strategy and multi-agency case planning meetings have been held as have monthly meetings of the ACPC Child Sexual Exploitation Practitioners Group and quarterly meetings of the ACPC Reference Group
- Reference Group and Practitioner Group terms of reference and protocols have been established
- A police tracking system for young people with whom the project is in touch has been developed

- A manager's training session for agencies involved in working with the young women has been held
- Clear and effective multi-agency protocols and inter-agency responses to young people at risk have been established
- Counselling support for youth workers undertaking one-to-one work with the young women has been established
- Headed paper and cards to advertise the project have been produced

Young women are referred to the project through social services and as at the beginning of July 2001, 26 young women had been referred to the project. The project at that time was working with 7 young women and 19 were 'in the process' of being engaged. In addition to this work, the project has undertaken group work with young women in a residential care home and another group of young women in a school. As yet, we do not have data about what has happened to young women who have completed the course offered by the project.

The training session for managers from various agencies involved in working with young women was observed by Margaret Melrose. It was well attended by managers from both statutory and voluntary sector agencies. It reported on the findings from Operation Insight and alerted workers to the sorts of behaviours that may indicate that a young woman is at risk of involvement in commercial sexual exploitation, or alternatively, already involved. These behaviours include:

- going missing from home or care situations
- links with older men
- secretiveness and hostility in relationships
- possession of money without plausible explanation and acquisition of clothing or other possessions without adequate explanation
- association with other young people or adults who are known to be associated with prostitution
- reports that the young person has been seen frequently in locations known to be used for the purposes of prostitution (Sheffield Area Child Protection Committee June 2001)

The training material developed for direct work with the young women takes a youth service approach and aims to work with the young women 'from where they are'. It takes a cognitive-behavioural approach, encouraging young women to examine their behaviour and explore issues around self-identity and self-esteem. The police tracking mechanism for young people with whom the project is working promises to be an extremely valuable tool in 'tracking' and monitoring the young women engaged in the project. It is able to identify whether the young person has been reported missing. The system can also identify whether the young people concerned have been in contact with any statutory agencies (police, health services).

At the time of writing, we do not have any data regarding referrals to drug services and very little case study material about the young girls with whom the project is working – for example, their ages, their ethnic backgrounds, their family situation – whether they are being looked after or whether they are living in their families of origin. We hope to rectify this situation in the next couple of months.

*What changes have there been to the original plan?*

The major difference from the original project plan in the Sheffield project is that the plan to undertake group work with the young women has been abandoned in favour of one-to-one work with the young women. The reason for this is that the young women are at different stages of involvement in commercial sexual exploitation and it was felt inappropriate to introduce young women who were on the periphery of involvement to those who are more deeply entrenched in a lifestyle that is ultimately damaging. This seems to us to be a very sensible development. Group work is being undertaken, however, with young women in a residential home and another group of young women in a school who have been identified as 'at risk'. Apart from this change, the project appears, fundamentally, to have been implemented in accordance with its original design.

*What difficulties have the project encountered?*

Changes in police personnel have meant that the tracking system has taken longer to establish than had originally been anticipated. This appears to have been an early teething problem and the tracking system is now on-line to be effective. Representatives from the project have reported that the major difficulty they have

encountered has been in engaging the young women in the project. This is because the young women do not regard their behaviour as problematic and appear to resent the involvement of 'interfering adults'. Some of the young women have ambitions to become 'porn stars'. In these circumstances, it is obviously difficult to engage the young women and successfully encourage them to appreciate the risks they are taking. Overall, however, project workers express satisfaction with the way the project has developed to date. As a result of awareness training sessions amongst professionals and effective data sharing and referral processes being established, more young women are coming to the attention of the project and the message that this is an issue to be taken seriously has been successfully achieved.

*What remains to be done?*

The project has yet to run its training sessions for practitioners involved in working with young women who may be at risk. It is thought that this will take place in the autumn. The young women have still to be 'tracked' through the project and case studies of those with whom the project is working are still to be undertaken. The project hopes to explore other ways of working with the young women (for example, alternatives to one-to-one work). It is hoped that at some point in the future it may be possible to establish a drop-in centre to which young women could self-refer as well as being referred through other agencies. We would strongly support this initiative but it will of course have resource implications.

***Rotherham – The Risky Business Project***

*Introduction*

The CRP funded initiative in Rotherham represents an extension to an already existing, voluntary sector project, 'Risky Business', that works to support girls and young women involved, or at risk of involvement, in commercial sexual exploitation. The CRP funded initiative takes place within the wider context of the work of Risky Business. Youth workers and housing support workers first raised concerns that young women in Rotherham were becoming involved in commercial sexual exploitation in 1996. As a result, Rotherham Social Services investigated the sexual exploitation of young women by taxi drivers in the area. At the time of writing, we are unclear about what these investigations revealed.

Risky Business was established in 1997 and an inter-agency network was developed by voluntary and statutory agencies. In 1998, a small survey identified 70 young women and 11 young men (all under 18) who were known by various agencies to be at risk of involvement in commercial sexual exploitation. As has been noted earlier, there is no identified 'red light' district in Rotherham and it was therefore felt that many of these young people were being 'pimped' or groomed into prostitution. There is some anecdotal evidence that young women from Rotherham are trafficked to Sheffield and other areas in the region to work (Doncaster, Barnsley). Trying to establish hard data on this is obviously very difficult, however, the research and development worker from Rotherham is liaising with members of Sheffield vice squad in an attempt to produce some concrete data around this.

New government guidance on responding to and managing young people involved in commercial sexual exploitation (Department of Health/Home Office 2000) were adopted in Rotherham in 2000. Multi-agency protocols for responding to young women considered to be at risk of commercial sexual exploitation appear therefore to be in their infancy in this area.

The focus of the CRP funded initiative in Rotherham is quite different to the initiatives in Sheffield and Bristol. Whereas the latter two initiatives focus on work with young people and on raising the awareness of professionals involved in working with them, the focus of the work in Rotherham is on the men who coerce or exploit the young women concerned. We would suggest that this is a very important area of work because, at the time of writing, so little is known about the men who pay to use the services of young people who are involved in commercial sexual exploitation or the people who may force them to become involved. However, given the very different focus of the work, it is obviously problematic to compare the work being undertaken in Rotherham with that being undertaken in Sheffield and Bristol. We would suggest that in terms of the national intervention classifications and themes being developed within the Home Office, the projects in Sheffield and Bristol could be classified as 'Youth Initiatives' whereas the project in Rotherham might be more appropriately defined as 'Specialist operations using intelligence'. Any direct work

with the young people involved in Rotherham is undertaken by the Risky Business project and is not CRP funded.

The CRP funded initiative, termed a 'pilot' by those working in the project, has four strands:

- Funding for a research and development worker
- Funding for IT equipment on which to record and collate data from various agencies involved in Risky Business about young girls who are at risk and the men who abuse them (Information Communication Technology) (ICT database)
- A specialist foster training scheme in order to place young women who are at risk in safe placements
- Funding for 'keep safe' equipment for the young women and their carers

*What's been achieved?*

A number of things have so far been achieved in Rotherham. Amongst them are:

- Clear management and accountability structures
- Employment of a research and development officer
- An extensive literature review has been undertaken
- Inter-agency information sharing protocols for collecting and sharing information on young people at risk are in the process of being developed
- Effective inter-agency partnerships have been established between Rotherham youth services, social services and the police
- Social workers in the foster care team have received some awareness raising training
- A presentation has been made to a foster carer's support group
- Leaflets on 'Advice to Parents' have been distributed
- 3 families have been provided with resources from the 'Keep Safe' project
- The Information Communication Technology (ICT) equipment has been purchased
- A schedule of criminal and civil law for targeting men involved in coercing young women into commercial sexual exploitation has been developed
- Multi-agency planning and strategy meetings have taken place

- A warning letter to target men involved in sexually exploiting young women has been drafted
- Specialist foster carers have been recruited
- Two young women have been placed with specialist foster carers
- Visits to Sheffield to observe and establish the extent of trafficking from Rotherham to Sheffield have taken place
- Case studies of ten young women aged 10-17 are under way. As a result of these, 5 men have been identified as coercers that are linked to the young women who are the subject of the case studies. The police are planning surveillance operations.

The research and development officer for the project was appointed full time to the post on 30<sup>th</sup> April. Prior to this, she was involved in the project on a part-time basis while she worked her notice period for her previous employer. As a result of delays in appointing this key worker, the project is perhaps not as far advanced in its work as we would ideally have hoped at this stage. However, as evidenced in the bullet list above, a number of things have already been achieved.

The main role of the research and development worker is to develop an effective mechanism to target and disrupt the activities of those men involved in targeting and sexually exploiting young women. She aims to do this in several ways:

- By developing inter-agency links and a protocol for sharing relevant information. This information will be used to enhance evidence gathered by the police
- By working with the police to explore ways to use existing legislation to target the adults involved in sexually exploiting young people and secure convictions against them
- Establishment of an ICT database to identify patterns of behaviour and links between the young people and men concerned
- By visiting other projects (e.g. Wolverhampton) to learn more about how they have overcome problems in relation to targeting abusers

The work undertaken to date has been successful in raising awareness amongst agencies with the aim of consistent data collection and sharing. It has also begun successfully to establish with other agencies that the commercial sexual exploitation



of children and young people is a child protection issue. Workers from the Risky Business project appear to have thought that in the past, this issue has not been accepted by the police as a child protection issue. The case study work undertaken has suggested the possibility of links between the young women concerned and other towns, drugs, taxi drivers and takeaways. Monthly meetings have taken place with the police and witness protection issues have been clarified – this is essential if the young women concerned are to be used to give evidence against the abusing men.

*What changes have there been to the original plan?*

Although the letter to target male abusers has been drafted, a decision not to use this at the current time has been taken. This is because it is considered that this would place the young women at further risk because, as yet, the systems necessary to support them are not in place. Originally, it was intended that the young women would not be told that they were the subjects of case studies. After taking advice from a variety of professionals and the consultants engaged in project development, however, the development worker has come to the conclusion that these young people 'have been exploited enough' and that to look at their records without their permission might constitute further exploitation. A decision has therefore been made to ask the girls to talk about the relationships they are involved in and to ask their permission to look at their case records. The young women will be able to choose whether or not they want to participate in this.

Similarly, the original intention of project workers was not to inform the young women that the specialist foster carers were part of the project. Again, this was because of concerns about the safety of the girls and fears that the information might find its way back to the abusers before there had been an opportunity to do anything practical in terms of tackling the behaviour of the men concerned. After discussion with the development consultants, who were concerned that there were ethical problems, and possibly legal implications, of withholding information in this way (it might constitute a violation of the young person's rights under section 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child), it was agreed that in some instances the young women could be informed of the involvement of foster carers in the project. To date, of the two young women who have been placed in specialist foster placements, one is aware of the foster carer's involvement in the project while the other is not.

Whilst the development consultants and evaluation team are sensitive to the reasons for withholding such information from the young women concerned, our concerns about this element of practice remain.

We appreciate that to some extent the project workers are caught in a 'Catch-22' situation: if the young women are fully informed, there is the danger that the information will be relayed to the men who are abusing them and may place the young women at further risk. On the other hand, if the young women are not informed, there is a concern that their rights are being violated. Also, if the young women should become aware of the work that is being undertaken to protect them from these men (who are often considered by the young women to be 'boyfriends') they may simply disengage from the project or go missing. This is not an easy circle to square and we feel that decisions about informing the young women are most appropriately taken by those who are working 'on the ground' with the young women concerned.

*What difficulties have the project encountered?*

The delay in appointing the research and development worker has meant that the project is perhaps not as far advanced at this stage as it might have been. A further difficulty has been encountered in locating suitable premises for the research and development worker. To some degree, this has hindered her ability to be in constant contact with other agencies. Perhaps more importantly, the lack of premises has meant that there has been no input into the ICT database because its home has not been agreed. It is hoped that the issue of office space can be resolved within the next couple of weeks. There have been some difficulties in persuading the police to accept that child sexual exploitation is a child protection issue and at the time of writing, efforts are being made in this direction. Project workers are optimistic that things will be moved forward very soon. To our knowledge, there has been no contact or negotiations with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to date although people within the service have been identified and will be approached soon. It is obviously crucial that these discussions take place as soon as possible. Having the police and CPS acknowledge that commercial child sexual exploitation *is* a child protection issue will be crucial to achieving successful prosecutions against the men involved in abusing the young women and therefore in allowing the project to achieve its goals.

The development consultants continue to work with the partners in the project towards accomplishing these ends.

It is obviously hard to gather information about the extent to which pimping and grooming of young women may be occurring in Rotherham because of the covert nature of the child sex market in this area and because many of the young women involved are unwilling to make complaints about the men concerned (regarding them as boyfriends' with whom they are 'in love'). In this respect, the work of the project is extremely difficult although so far, reasonable progress appears to have been made. The situation is of course dynamic and steps towards further progress are being taken at the time of writing. It is obviously also difficult to work with the young people in an ethical way when there are concerns that they will provide information to the abusers and/or fears that they would be put at greater risk. It is also difficult to secure evidence that might lead to successful prosecutions against the male abusers when the young women themselves are unwilling to make any complaints. These are difficulties to which, unfortunately, there are no straightforward or simple solutions. The use of child abduction laws, however, may offer the promise of some success in this direction. We shall continue to work with the project to try to overcome these difficulties so that it can achieve its goals in the most efficient and effective way.

*What remains to be done?*

Project workers in Rotherham will continue to work closely with the police to establish the importance of commercial child sexual exploitation as a child protection issue and to gather enhanced evidence to target the men who have been identified through case study material as having links to the young women considered to be at risk. They have still to establish and develop working relationships within the Crown Prosecution Service to raise awareness around relevant legislation and to look at how enhanced evidence gathering may be used in a court of law. They have still to establish their ICT database. It is hoped that some progress will be made in all of these areas during the current quarter. The project also plans to bring more specialist foster carers on board in the future and plans to run more presentations to foster carers support groups in the autumn. It is also planned to distribute the 'Advice to Parents' leaflets to foster carers.

### ***Bristol: The Pandora Project***

#### *Introduction*

The Bristol Pandora project is a multi-agency project on behalf of the Bristol Prostitution Forum (BPF). It involves a partnership between voluntary and statutory sector agencies and aims to target young people (under 21) who are involved, or at risk of involvement, in commercial sexual exploitation. The agencies involved in this partnership are Bristol City Council, Bristol Drug Project, Barnardos, One 25 Limited, Terrence Higgins Trust, Milne Sexual Health Centre (Avon Health Authority), Bristol Social Services and Avon and Somerset constabulary. The Pandora project became operational in January 2001.

The project aims are twofold; to improve the coordination of services across the city for young people involved in commercial sexual exploitation and to work with young people to prevent them from becoming involved. Where young people are already involved, the project aims to work with them to provide exit strategies.

New government guidance in relation to the treatment and management of young people involved in commercial sexual exploitation was formally adopted in Bristol in 1999. Previous research in the area has demonstrated that many of those involved in prostitution often became involved as minors (Bristol Prostitution Forum 2000). There remains, however, a lack of clarity about the extent of the problem. Other work previously undertaken in Bristol has looked at male sex work in the area and an 'environmental scan' was undertaken during the period May to July 1997. At the time of writing we do not know the scale of the problem this work identified although several recommendations were made including:

- The Gay Men's Project (part of Terrence Higgins Trust) works with Freedom to include issues of exploitation and sex work in their social education agenda
- The Gay Men's Project works with other services to establish a one-stop-shop youth service for marginalised and homeless young people in the city centre
- The Gay Men's Project continue its involvement in the Social Services Child Protection 'Child Prostitution Working Group', particularly for the purpose of putting forward issues for young men (Aled Jones Trust 1997).

Due to funding constraints within the Aled Richards Trust, no long-term work was undertaken with young men until 2000.

There is a defined 'red light' district in Bristol in the city centre and this area is thought to attract young people from across the city who are involved in or at risk of involvement in commercial sexual exploitation (Bristol Prostitution Forum 2000). In this area, an overlap between sex and drug markets has previously been identified (May *et. al.* 1999 cited in Bristol Prostitution Forum 2000).

Most of the young people involved in commercial sexual exploitation appear to come from within Bristol itself although anecdotal evidence suggests there may be mobility routes between Bristol, Cardiff and Swindon. Those young people from Bristol who are involved appear to come from deprived areas of the city. They are in a mixture of home and care situations. Workers from various agencies (for example, Terrence Higgins Trust) are noticing increasing numbers of young men becoming involved. The Pandora project acknowledges that some of the agencies involved in the project have seriously underestimated the numbers of young men involved in selling sex to men. It is thought that many of those involved, male and female, have drug misuse problems. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many of those entrenched in sex work are using heroin but there is also a lot of 'crack' use. Project workers suggest that the street scene is becoming increasingly dangerous.

Housing for the young people concerned has been mentioned as a priority issue in Bristol. It is felt that vulnerable young people are being inappropriately housed in hostels where they become easy targets for men who want to exploit them.

Additionally, where work has been undertaken with young people to move them away from commercial sexual exploitation, it is felt that the work is very quickly undone by placing them in housing situations that may place them at further risk. The Terrence Higgins Trust estimates that only 20% of the young people with whom they are working will be registered under the Housing Act. Many have been declared intentionally homeless and have sought alternative means to find accommodation. The Pandora project itself does not have the resources to respond to this level of need amongst the young people.

*What's Been Achieved?*

The combined efforts of Bristol Barnardo's, Terrence Higgins Trust and the Bristol Drugs Project under the auspices of the Pandora Project, have achieved a great deal in a relatively short period of time. These include:

- A project steering committee and clear management structures
- Refurbishment of a suit, specifically for Pandora's use, in Barnardo's BASE
- A framework for the self-evaluation of the Project
- A number of planning sessions have taken place
- Terrence Higgins Trust is providing services to 7 young men (under 18) and 22 young men aged 18-21 (at 15 June 2001)
- Appointment of 2 part-time outreach workers (18.5 hours each) – one working for Barnardo's BASE and the other for Bristol Drugs Project (since January 2001)
- A Pandora information leaflet has been produced
- Between April and June 2001, Barnardos have made contact with 22 young people (21 female and 1 male)
- Provision of sexual health services through the Milne Sexual Health Centre
- Development of effective inter-agency working and responses to young people involved in commercial sexual exploitation
- Provision of the services of a nurse at Barnardo's BASE location every afternoon
- Data gathering and sharing protocols between agencies involved in the Pandora Project are in the process of being refined (i.e. Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Barnardo's BASE, Bristol Drugs Project, Bristol City Council, Terrence Higgins Trust and Avon Health Authority – Milne Sexual Health Project)
- Agreed protocols for working with young people involved in commercial sexual exploitation or those considered to be at risk have been established
- Effective referral mechanisms between agencies to ensure that young people are provided with appropriate services have been developed
- Multi-agency strategy meetings have been held

Anecdotal evidence from Barnardo's workers in Bristol suggests that there are connections between young women considered to be at risk or involved in commercial sexual exploitation and 'Yardies' (thought to be involved in supplying 'crack'). These men are in turn thought to have links to London. In the 'off-street' sex

market (saunas and so on), there has been the suggestion that there are possibly links to other areas of the country and to other forms of criminality. Workers also suggest that street-based sex markets are becoming more dangerous. A 14-year girl who has been subject to violence and sexual assault and who had previously been arrested approximately 10 ten times has come to the attention of the Barnardo's workers. The police had previously failed to discover her real age. She has now been admitted to a secure unit.

The Pandora project has provided for the services of a nurse at Barnardo's every afternoon of the week. Project workers report small numbers of young women taking up this service but when they do, and when there is a need for them to be referred to a doctor, they are fast-tracked through the system to a consultant at the Milne Sexual Health Centre. The nurse provides regular hepatitis B vaccinations and sexual health advice. The majority of the young women using the services of the nurse are from community homes or are in the looked after system.

The outreach sessions provided by Barnardo's BASE and Bristol Drugs Project provide two evening sessions and one day time session weekly. The workers came into post in January 2001. These outreach sessions are split between three working areas – one around a trading estate that is renowned for working women and the other around two roads that are thought to be central to the 'red light' district. The other area is around a hostel that houses Schedule One offenders. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the hostel is overcrowded and there are 3 or 4 men to a room. It is thought that young women are going to the hostel or taken to the hostel and 'servicing' all the men in one room at once. This will be followed up with more detailed interviewing of the worker concerned.

Between April and June 2001, Barnardo's BASE has made contact with 22 young people (21 female and one male) involved in commercial sexual exploitation. Of these 22, only 16 have been engaged by the project and are therefore receiving services. The six who have refused to engage are all under 16. At the time of writing there is some lack of clarity about the ages of the 16 the project is working with (although all are under 21) but work is in progress to clarify this.

At the time of writing, the Terrence Higgins Trust is providing services to 7 young men who are known to be involved in selling sex. They are all under 18. Some of these (3) are in frequent contact with the agency (at least 3 times per month) while the other four are in infrequent contact (less than once a month or one contact only). The Terrence Higgins Trust report that there are frequent attacks on gay or bisexual men perpetrated by one individual. Many of the victims, however, are worried about the consequences of reporting such crimes to the police and reluctant to do so for fear that they may be 'outed' or that their names may be made known.

In total, since January 2001, the Pandora Project, through Barnardo's BASE and the Terrence Higgins Trust, have provided services to 19 young women and 15 young men – a total of 34 young people. The Bristol Drug Project is providing services to 9 of these young people (aged 15-19 years).

Outreach workers from Barnardo's and the Bristol Drug Project are also in contact with adult women involved in the sex industry and they hope, through these women, to publicise the services Pandora provides for young women, as well as to gain information about young women who are involved. Information about the involvement of young women has not filtered through as the workers would have hoped and workers report that it has been more difficult to engage the young women than the young men.

The police data from Bristol indicate that there have been 42 crimes committed by sex workers in the period January to March 2001. Of these, 3 were carried out by girls under 18 and 3 by girls under 21. A total of 18 sex workers have been arrested in the same period. Two of these were aged under 21. In the period January to March 2001, a total of 17 offences have been recorded against sex workers. At the time of writing, we do not know the numbers of these who may have been under 18. In the same time period, 15 kerb crawler letters have been sent and 2 kerb crawlers have been reported for summons.

A number of locations have been identified as areas in which sex work (male and female) is taking place. These include public toilets, train station, bus station and an



area within the city centre. Future observations of these areas by researchers on the evaluation team shall seek to establish the scale of the problem.

*What changes have taken place to the original plan?*

By and large, the Pandora project has been implemented in accordance with its original intention and there have been no significant changes except for the fact that the number of young men being worked with is far higher than had originally been anticipated. It was originally felt that there might be 10-12 young men who might require a service, but as we have seen above, there are 7 under 18 and 22 aged 18-21. The only other change has been that the project intended directly to employ a health consultant. It has now been decided however that this was a less efficient use of resources than to fast-track the young women through and to use the consultant as and when he/she is required. Plans to employ a consultant directly have therefore been abandoned.

*What difficulties has the project encountered?*

The project reports no significant difficulties in establishing and running the project. They have found that co-operation between agencies has been extremely high. Initially, there was some feeling that some of the agencies involved in the project may have underestimated the time and resources participation in the project would require. There was a feeling that some of the voluntary sector agencies were not being supported internally (lack of administrative support). This made it difficult for some members to attend meetings on a regular basis. These initial 'teething difficulties' appear now to have been rectified and representatives from most agencies are attending project meetings on a regular basis. The time scale in which the project is working does provide some difficulties. As discussed earlier, the length of time required to identify and engage young people, means that achieving the desired outcomes in the time available may be difficult.

The project co-ordinator has had a prolonged period of sickness absence but this does not appear to have negatively affected the overall operation of the project. Sickness absence by specialist workers, with no one to replace them, however, has presented a few challenges.

*What remains to be done?*

Over the next few months, workers hope to establish a comprehensive understanding of the scale of the problem of commercial child sexual exploitation in the Bristol area. They hope to develop their relationships with the young men and women involved in the project and to work to engage those who have been identified but who have not as yet taken up the services on offer. In addition, the project hopes to make new contacts and to look at new strategies for contacting and working with these young people. Systems for sharing and collating data held by various agencies are being refined and developed. As a result of sickness absence and other pressures of work, the project co-ordinator has, as yet, been unable to collate the second quarter data from the various agencies involved in the project. The data presented above, therefore, has relied on direct reports from agencies involved in the project.

**Preliminary reflections**

The discussion above has demonstrated that, with minor exceptions, all the projects are being implemented in accordance with their original plans. Where changes have been made, these have usually been sensible responses to particular issues that have arisen in the course of the work being undertaken. Overall, the projects appear to have enabled and facilitated different agencies to work together in the best interests of the young people who are involved, or at risk of involvement, in commercial sexual exploitation. Where different agencies are involved in working together in partnership, difficulties can sometimes arise over issues of 'ownership' and certain agencies may feel that they are the 'experts' when it comes to working with young people. The CRP funded initiative appears to have helped project partners overcome these divisions and has thus facilitated 'joined up practice'.

Having said that, all the projects face similar difficulties in achieving their goals. These are primarily determined by the time scales and funding contexts in which they are working. Now that the projects are up and running smoothly, they are beginning to make progress either in engaging and working with young people or in gathering information that may lead to successful convictions of men involved in coercing them into prostitution. It is important to appreciate that engaging these vulnerable and often marginalised young people, gaining their trust and being able to work towards positive outcomes for them, as well as evidence gathering against the men involved,

can take a considerable amount of time. It is also important that the young people are provided with long-term support – in this sense it would be a great shame if funding is stopped after a relatively short period of time.

In order to provide the ‘ideal type’ service outlined in the introduction, more resources, to provide help with education/training/careers guidance and help with housing, would be required.

There are also some contradictions within the law that do not make the work of the projects any easier – for example, a young woman cannot consent to sex until she is 16 but if she is deemed to be ‘Gillick competent’ she can be provided with contraception before this age. Equally, a young woman cannot consent to sex until she is 16 but there is no power of arrest for unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl aged between 13-16. This is clearly a hindrance to work with young women in between this age. Contradictions are also generated by the fact that young people are defined as children until they are 18 under the terms of the Children Act (1989). This means that if a young woman of 17, who is legally old enough to consent to sex, is indulging in sexual relationships which are considered ‘inappropriate’ by the parents, carers or professionals charged with the care of the young person, she may still be considered to be ‘at risk’. These contradictions in the law constitute a confusing context for practitioners who may come from different perspectives to the problem of commercial child sexual exploitation (for example the ‘welfare’ or ‘punishment’ paradigm).

In terms of providing an effective evaluation, the evaluation team still needs to look at case study material on the young people concerned, talk to the young people and the project workers to determine what has happened as a result of project interventions. This will be undertaken during the autumn.

In the meantime, based on what we have learned so far we would offer the following recommendations:

- That the time scales in which projects are being asked to achieve their goals should be reconsidered

- That attention should be paid to other factors in the young person's life such as education and housing needs
- That ambiguities and contradictions in the law should be ironed out
- That practitioner training and awareness raising should be conducted for a variety of professionals working at a range of levels. This will ensure that commitment to working within new government guidelines in relation to young people who are involved, or at risk of involvement, in commercial child sexual exploitation is not only made by senior managers.

Margaret Melrose

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