

Key Document 38

CROP's Response to 'Paying the Price' Prostitution Consultation

CROP

A voluntary organisation working to end the sexual exploitation of children and young people by pimps and traffickers

PAYING THE PRICE:

a consultation paper on prostitution, July 2004

A Response by CROP

Introduction

CROP warmly welcomes this document as a serious attempt to engage with many issues surrounding prostitution and as a sign of a genuine willingness to consult. We do, however, have three major concerns that run through our responses to specific questions. One is the document's concentration on street prostitution; our experience leads us to believe that there is very serious violence and abuse which is not related to street prostitution and we would urge that this is more adequately addressed. CROP is keen to work with the Home Office to find ways to address the other, and numerically much bigger, areas of prostitution. The second area of concern is that there is too little consideration of the family aspect and the third is insufficient emphasis on prosecuting pimps, although we are pleased that this need is recognised.

Question 1. What is the role for schools in raising awareness of this issue? Do you have examples of good practice?

From our experience in assisting parents and their children, CROP concludes that the role of schools in prevention is crucial. CROP is looking forward to working closely with the Poppy Project and Womankind on prevention in schools in the near future. We are impressed with one school in Nottingham, which made considerable efforts to offer home tuition to a child in one of the families with whom CROP is working. The child suffered horrendous sexual abuse from gangs of men and could not easily return to school – particularly in the immediate area because the men who abused her know her previous school. Not only do they know her school, they have ongoing links with boys who are still attending the same school. There is a major problem in schools concerning peer pressure and verbal abuse by other pupils to young girls who are being sexually exploited by adult men. The men who abused our client's daughter have not been prosecuted for their crimes against her.

We are concerned that children who have been sexually exploited can be grouped with 'problem' children without a multi-agency approach to remove the perpetrators who are the cause of the girls' problems. Being placed in a separate unit for disruptive pupils exacerbates the situation and continues to lower the young person's self esteem. One girl that we have supported stated: 'I may have been disruptive in the past but that was because I was hurting and trying to cope with the situation and the abuse I was suffering. Prior to this abuse I was a "normal" pupil and loved going to school. I didn't choose to be abused. I trusted them and thought they were my friends.'

CROP has encountered difficulties in trying to work with schools. In some places we know that men wait outside school gates in their cars so that they can more effectively lure children into contact with them. Although we have offered to provide a service for parents in such schools, this has been resisted because it would 'put parents off' from sending their children to those schools at a time of falling rolls. This offer was made to schools in the Keighley area working within the Keighley Strategy Group.

Another issue is that of mixed messages about parental responsibility. We have cases where parents have physically taken their children to school each morning only to find that they have then absconded during the day. One school in Bingley, West Yorkshire, stated that it is not their problem. Their response was that the school is not a prison and the staff cannot make their pupils stay in school; if the young person chooses to leave during school time, that is their responsibility. During a meeting at the school, the CROP worker asked who would be responsible after her parents had taken their 14 year old daughter into school if she absconded and was then knocked down by a car and killed. The Head replied the child would be.

CROP supported another parent who received letters from the local education department threatening legal action if her daughter continued to truant from school. Although the parent on numerous occasions tried to contact the head teacher by phone to discuss the matter, he was never available. CROP helped this parent draft a letter asking for a joint meeting and received an immediate response. The CROP worker went with the parent to the meeting, at which the head teacher acknowledged the support the parent was trying to offer her daughter and agreed that they would work together in the future. He offered various options to try to keep her daughter in education and threats of legal action stopped. This is an example where without the support of CROP it would have been difficult to find a way forward. Families in this situation need help and support, not the compounding of their pain by the school's abdicating responsibility and by the threat of legal action.

We would encourage the specialist issues of targeting and grooming to be raised in teacher training courses, in-service training and in Ofsted inspections. Work with parent teacher associations also could be fruitful. CROP would be willing to be involved in further work on this with relevant partners and would welcome networking suggestions as a result of this Home Office consultation. CROP is being funded from charitable trusts to make a three-year appointment of a policy and research worker who could contribute to this educational process.

Question 2. What can be done to ensure that those who go to prostitutes are fully aware of the implications of their activities?

We would commend the Kerb Crawlers re-education programmes, including publication in the local press of the details of offenders. By contributing to the Kerb Crawlers Re-education Programme in Leeds, CROP found in this and other training events that increased use of stories, both from young people and from families, is a powerful tool to help offenders see the reality of what they are doing. It is essential to work for cultural change, which prevents children and others working in prostitution from being perceived as objects rather than people with the normal gamut of emotions and needs. The phrase 'using' prostitutes is in itself revealing, as the same word is

used for drugs, which are genuinely inanimate objects. The word is revealing because it expresses exactly what the users of prostitutes do, and the view they take of them.

Question 3. How do we ensure that it is clearly understood that those using young people under 18 for sex are guilty of child abuse?

This is a crucial area of work and again demands great changes in working practices and culture. Who needs to understand? In the first place it needs to be understood by all those working in relevant agencies. From our now considerable experience with over 80 cases, the current reality is that once a child reaches 16, or often 15, public authorities are no longer interested and react as if s/he is now old enough to make their own decisions. We have several examples where the police or social services visited a young girl and interviewed her in the presence of her 'partner' (boyfriend/pimp) and then reported back to the parent that 'she appears to be quite happy'. Another family we are supporting has two daughters in prostitution. One, just turned 18 years, already has a child to her older 'boyfriend'. Her sister, aged 17, is pregnant [REDACTED]. Although the elder daughter has been given a court guardian, she only visits when her 'boyfriend' is there. The court guardian has since said in her reports that she thinks he is a very nice man. When abuse is possible or suspected, the practice of interviewing in the presence of the suspected abuser is widely understood to be bad practice, for example with domestic violence. Good practice guidelines are needed to extend this understanding to the grooming and prostitution of children.

Multi-agency work also needs the introduction of specific good practice guidelines and educational inputs. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Although health service staff expresses concern about the child, there appears to be no response from social services. All too often, in practice, there seems to be no intelligent understanding of the power and control through emotional and physical violence that these men exercise – and the violent criminality in which they are engaged. These factors affect what their victims say, particularly when interviewed in the presence of their abusers.

More successful prosecutions would lead to a greater understanding of the reality of child abuse. The lack of prosecutions relating to abuse in the families of the 80+ parents assisted by CROP, leads to the conclusion that it is essential that there is an increase in the prosecution of pimps. In the experience of CROP, these men can present themselves as boyfriends but actually be part of extensive gangs and sophisticated organisations. To ensure that it is clearly understood that those using young people under 18 for sex are guilty of child abuse, the current law must be actively enforced. If those working in agencies do not implement the law, then the perpetrators of abuse, are unlikely to understand they are guilty of child abuse.

Question 4. Does this paper present an accurate picture of the models of prostitution in England and Wales in the 21st century? Is there further information, particularly on pimps and those who go to prostitutes, which could help inform policy and practice?

CROP welcomes the description of the pimp in 2:12 – 2:15 and acknowledges that although there are many classic pimps, other ways of working may be more common.

Multiple types of violence and abuse characterises all forms of pimping. CROP does, however, consider that there is too much concentration on street prostitution in this consultation document and that the prostitution scene is much more mixed than this would suggest.

The major part of our current work is supporting parents whose young daughters, usually aged 13 to 14, are 'befriended' by young men who are either of a similar age or just a few years older. The girls are led to believe that they are involved in customary boy - girl relationships, only to find that within weeks they are caught up in demands for sexual favours. One young girl of 15 years accepted a can of pop, a cigarette & a short lift in what she thought was her boyfriend's car. Next time she saw him she was told she owed him £30, and a week later that went up to £120. As she could not pay him back and was frightened to tell her parents, she performed sex acts firstly on him and then, when further pressure was put on her, his friends. One young man later told her that he thought £150 was cheap for the sex they had had the previous week. That was the first time she thought about prostitution. Most of these young girls do not realise that these men pay to have sex with them as they never see any cash transactions or receive any money.

The models of prostitution in this chapter of the consultation document do not highlight the role of sophisticated criminal networks that operate to induct and maintain children in prostitution. (See article in CROP Annual Review page 8-9 enclosed). The work of CROP has unearthed complex local and regional hierarchies in pimping organisations. These may start with specially trained young men, often in their teens and some still at school, frequenting places such as shopping malls or arcades where teenagers will be unaccompanied by their parents. They hang around specific areas the young girls frequent, chatting them up before taking them outside for some usually, initially minor, sexual activities, such as kissing, intimate touching above and beneath clothes. They then suggest meeting again in town. The girls think they have a new boyfriend. Eventually the girls are introduced to the next rung up in the hierarchy, an older man. They are lured into an exciting life style with a 'boy friend' who has a car, and gives them cigarettes, drinks, mobile phones and offers them lifts. It is only later when they are told that they owe the men money for the lifts, etc., that they begin to realise that there is a darker side to this 'friendship'. At some stage they are introduced to drugs, and later could be gang raped.

Examples from the work of CROP involving girls associated with organised prostitution networks include the following:

- a. A 13 year old was taken to a car park where she was gang raped and photographed while it happened via a mobile phone by another man. As with other cases, there has been no prosecution.
- b. Another young girl, 15 years, was driven to a remote location in the dark. She was told to get out and her 'boyfriend' took away her shoes. She had no idea where she was and had no means of communication. He came back later laughing and took her home. The same girl has had a gun put to her head on many occasions. She would not press charges as she was in fear of her own and the lives of other family members.
- c. Another young girl supported by CROP was kidnapped at gunpoint by her 'boyfriend' and his mother then demanded ransom money. The police were

not contacted and the girl ended up living with the 'boyfriend' at his mother's house.

- d. Another mother supported by CROP was desperate as her daughter had been gang raped and plied with drugs. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The mother was convinced that if something did not happen her daughter would soon be found dead. After pressure was exerted on the police and social services with the help of CROP, her daughter was placed in a secure unit. No charges have ever been brought against any of these men.

Criminal networks can be highly organised 'family businesses' involving brothers, cousins and other relatives. In Yorkshire, for instance, the Rotherham and Keighley areas is controlled by an Asian network, whereas Sheffield central is run mainly by an African Caribbean criminal network. This is not a racist statement; CROP is quite clear that we are dealing with criminality not race issues, but this is factually as it is in these areas. We would expect research to uncover criminal networks elsewhere that are run by people of other ethnicities. In our experience it seems that the ethnic dimension can lead to less enthusiasm for prosecution in some cases. We have details of the men involved – as have the police – and we would urge more sustained investigation, evidence gathering and prosecution. Our efforts to achieve sustained police attention to be given to highly organised criminal networks continue to be unsuccessful.

Question 5. Is there further information on the numbers, ages, ethnicity and circumstances of children abused through prostitution, and methods of coercion, which could inform policy and practice?

Ages

The ages of girls of the 80+ parents at the time CROP became involved with their families are usually 14 to 15 years, although we are working with one family [REDACTED] daughter aged 11 is beginning to be groomed. The ages of the girls at the time parents began to be concerned as a result of changed behaviour by their daughters begins as early as 11 when children move to secondary school. Serious involvement with pimps begins at age 13 or 14 when the law has less severe penalties and statutory authorities are less proactive in protecting children from sexual exploitation.

Ethnicity

The ethnicity of the girls CROP is involved with come from the culturally majority white or mixed race population.

Numbers

Direct work is being, or has been undertaken with parents or grandparents in the 71 families that have contacted the CROP help line. Since may 2002.. Parents may be suspicious or know for certain that their daughters are, or have been, groomed for and sexually exploited through prostitution. Twenty-seven families have 30 girls who definitely have been pimped and within these families we have worked with 21 girls. Amongst these families, four girls have exited during the time CROP has been involved. Additionally there are 10 families where girls are with older men and exhibiting behaviour problems raising suspicions of grooming. There are an additional 10 families where parents are deeply concerned as their daughters are with

older men, but the girls who were all under 16 years at the time they began to live or associate with these adult men are not exhibiting signs of grooming and prostitution at the moment. The remaining 21 family help line contacts involved a wide range of other issues, such as familial sexual abuse, internet abuse, a woman in prostitution who wanted to get in touch with her children, a woman who had exited prostitution and lived in an area of street prostitution had concerns about her adolescent daughters, an Asian mother feared that her son in London had been pimped and was now pimping young boys. Telephone calls have come from all over the UK – amongst other areas from Manchester, Edinburgh, Bristol, London, Norfolk, St. Austell, Solihull, Leicester, Boston and Swansea.

Numbers and circumstances

We also wish to discuss the issue of numbers in connection with circumstances in order to expose one of the problems professionals may have that can influence professional interventions in responding to girls and their families.

CROP is concerned that all too often the working model held by professionals is of children entering prostitution from local authority care or from dysfunctional families. Obviously this will be true for some, but not the majority. A recent small study by the Lighthouse in Hull found that 34% of those involved in prostitution were victims of familial child abuse, which means that 66% were not. This is similar to the statistics quoted in Appendix C of this consultation document, e.g. Boyle (1994)¹ where one-third were in care, and in other studies the number is up to one-half, which means that between 50% to 67% did not enter prostitution from local authority care. CROP has two concerns. Firstly that the reinforcement of current stereotypes will lead to the belief by parents that it could not happen in their family. We know this is far from the reality. It could happen to anyone and families need to be alerted. Secondly, thorough interrogation of the numbers and their meaning could lead to a greater understanding of the diverse routes by which girls enter prostitution. The lack of this interrogation can lead agencies to assume that the parents and families of young people in prostitution are themselves problematic, even the cause of the children's problem. Once this conclusion is drawn, it follows that parents cannot have reliable knowledge or any practical contribution to make in solving the problems that have arisen.

CROP is aware that our clientele is self-selective and we are likely to be contacted by parents who are desperately concerned about their child. While we recognise that not all parents are like this, from the 80+ parents with whom we have so far had direct dealings, none of the children has been in local authority care at the point when problems started. CROP is currently supporting three families who have daughters [REDACTED] as a direct request from parents seeking protection for their children. CROP is also supporting eight other parents where social services are or were involved in child protection, although in most of these cases, because the child is aged 15 or over, very little is being done.

Other examples given throughout this Response to the consultation document provides further information on circumstances.

¹ Boyle, S. (1994) *Working Girls and Their Men*, Smith Gryphon: London.

Methods of coercion

As already stated, in CROP's experience the families with whom we are working should not be described as particularly dysfunctional. CROP takes the view that there is a danger of confusing cause and effect, which may lead to this conclusion. In Appendix C of this consultation document there are useful figures relating to truancy and drug use. Our experience is that these outcomes are the *result* of being targeted and groomed by a pimp and not the cause. One family CROP is supporting [REDACTED] has a daughter who was introduced to drugs and prostitution by her 'boyfriend'. [REDACTED]

For the first time in many years her mother thought she had a chance of survival and a better life. [REDACTED] within days she was back working on the streets and using drugs. She will be 21 [REDACTED].

The pattern that we have observed is that children are ensnared by methods described in our answer to Question 4, and that behaviour patterns, such as drug use and truancy from school, follow. They constitute part of the grooming process. We have described some of the early symptoms of grooming and entry into prostitution in the CROP booklet, *Advice to Parents* – now being updated for its third reprint. It is a truism that teenage is a vulnerable stage of life for everyone. In our experience, additional vulnerability in a stable family may be triggered by some event, which can happen in any family, such as a change to a new school or bullying at school or a loss of a relative. One mother we are supporting saw a distinct change in the attitude of her daughter following [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] She was targeted and groomed into prostitution and stated that her new 'boyfriend' cared more about her than her parents. The mother has had to cope with [REDACTED] and at the same time the 'loss' of her daughter.

And finally, we were disappointed that Irene Ivison's book, *Fiona's Story*², and CROP's booklet, *Denying the Pimp* (2003) were not included in the bibliography. The latter includes the stories of two parents; another is in our *Annual Review 2003-2004* (pages 6-7). We have found experiential accounts to be a powerful tool in increasing understanding of methods of coercion.

A further suggestion to inform policy and practice

To further inform policy and practice, CROP suggests the adoption of the model of public enquiry that may follow the death of a child as a result of familial child abuse. Looking more deeply into some of these desperate cases would be a way of increasing understanding of the processes of inducing into and maintaining children in prostitution. Our worker is supporting four families whose daughters have attempted to commit suicide as a direct result of their abuse by sexually exploiting men. One girl said that if she was no longer around her family would stop being threatened and they could get on with their lives. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Both suicides and homicides occur with child

² Ivison, I (1997; reprinted 1999) *Fiona's Story*, London: Virago.

prostitutes. We are working with [REDACTED] but due to lack of evidence no criminal charges could be brought. The role of the pimp and agency responses to him could be explored through a public enquiry. Relying solely on prosecutions of offenders to understand what happened and why a child died not only provides an inadequate explanation, it also furthers the silence around how the child came to be in prostitution and implicitly implies an unproblematic acceptance of it.

Question 6. How can we most effectively identify those at risk and what are the most effective measures to prevent the abuse of children through prostitution? What role should schools play in a preventative strategy?

Effective measures

CROP recognises all the factors described in this chapter. We are, however concerned, that the list given in 3:8 puts the emphasis back on to the child and/or his/her family. The work of CROP suggests that we really need to *start* with the work of the pimp and the cultural contexts that are conducive to his success. We need to put energy into exposing this sustained and ingenious criminality and also to address the issue of the punters. As discussed in previous questions, some of the causes listed in 3.8 are the *result* of the targeting and grooming process and not the *cause* of entering prostitution, (e.g. truanting, running away from home; drug use). From our experience in assisting parents and their children we conclude that there needs to be a cultural move from putting the responsibility onto the child and placing it on the exploiting adult where it belongs. We know that this would involve a major cultural change – but we could at a minimum begin moving in that direction. Prosecution of pimps and punters can be an effective measure.

Identifying those at risk

A very important risk factor is non-prosecution of pimps and punters, which spreads the risk of sexual exploitation to a larger number of girls. As we explained in Question 5, any girl can be at risk. Particular attention needs to be given to those places where young teenagers gather on their own without any adult supervision.

Role of schools

In answer to question 1 we have already stated that we think schools have a large role to play, such as developing educational inputs for staff and pupils that identify risks and methods of being targeted by pimps, and a greater willingness to work collaboratively with other agencies that have identified prostitution grooming activities directed at their school pupils. We have also found through offering to speak at meetings of general organisations, such as church groups or other meeting places including youth groups, that many people have a serious concern once their awareness is raised, as there are parents in most of these groups. Expansion of responsible media coverage is also vital. CROP has taken part in television and radio programmes which have resulted in further useful work with parents and families.

Question 7. How can we warn parents/carers of the methods of coercion into prostitution so that they are aware of early warning signs – and what more can we do to provide them with support and advice?

Our simple answer to this question is to enable CROP to do more, since it has effectively pioneered work precisely in this area. CROP is a very small organisation, but with more staff we could develop further the use of our help line, and offer more direct parent support and written material. Our one worker is at the edge of what is possible in responding to parents and given the growing number of parents seeking our assistance we may soon have to refuse help to new parents. This would be a disaster given that there is really nowhere else for 'our' parents to go.

We are deeply concerned at the lack of ongoing Government support given Government policy and the unique role of CROP. Unfortunately we have been unsuccessful in our bid to the Parenting Fund for continuation funding from the DfES, and CROP will be left without ongoing statutory support once the current contract with DfES ends in May 2005. We have built up considerable expertise, which is greatly appreciated by those to whom we can offer it. One quote amongst many such statements made by parents in the 2004 evaluation of CROP work by Barnardos was, 'Without Carole's help, my daughter would be dead'.

CROP's booklet, Advice to Parents, is being updated and reprinted for the third time. It has an extensive section on warning signs. The development of the National Parent Network has allowed parents to meet in a safe non-judgemental environment where they can share their experiences and know they are not alone. Changing a judgmental attitude, commonly met by parents from professionals and the general public, would decrease the sense of isolation amongst parents and enable them more readily to ask for help. But the help needs to come from those who really understand – and few professionals have an understanding necessary for this non-judgmental approach. Another aspect that would help parents is to recognise them as the experts they have had to become as they are the ones who cope with the issues 24 hours a day. It does not make sense to marginalize parents from discussions about their daughters or to treat them as part of the problem without serious prior investigation.

There is clearly a need for more public education, through a whole variety of media coverage, through seminars, videos, books and specialised material for specific groups. Training material should be available for professionals such as teachers, social workers, health professionals, the police, CPS, magistrates, judges and communicators generally. Professional education is required. We should not rely on assumption that staff in statutory agencies are sufficiently knowledgeable to be able to assist in warning parents of the methods of coercion and the early warning signs.

Question 8. What is the best way to close off routes into prostitution for the young and the vulnerable? Do we have good examples of working with target groups, for example those in residential homes or unaccompanied asylum seekers?

In the experience of CROP, we conclude that more attention should be given to tackling the issue of the perpetrator - both pimp and punter - and removing the focus from vulnerable young people. CROP is currently exploring the possibility of producing a video to be shown in shopping malls, which we have identified as a

definite starting place for the targeting and grooming of young teenagers. (See response to Question 4) A new initiative CROP is keen to discuss with Safer Community Partnerships is the use of door stickers informing the general public that grooming is now an offence. These could be placed, for instance, in public toilets, male and female, and in other places such as shopping malls and pubs. The security personnel at shopping centres are often aware of what is going on and finding ways to involve them in potential solutions could close off routes into prostitution for the young and vulnerable. Again, use of personal experiences, such as Fiona's Story, has been effective in enabling people with no experience of how the whole system works to be alerted to the power of exploitative people who are usually, but not exclusively, men. (See CROP publications; Stopping the Pimp 1998; Denying the Pimp 2003 and Annual Review 2004).

Thus far, CROP has no experience of working with those in residential homes or unaccompanied asylum seekers.

Question 9. How can we ensure that early prevention measures are delivered in a culturally sensitive way?

This is an issue that affects people from all backgrounds – e.g. class, ethnicity and faith. Engaging people from these backgrounds is the most effective method to ensure early prevention measures are delivered in a culturally sensitive way. Small under-resourced organisations experience difficulty in making all the necessary links with different cultures, but that does not minimise the importance of doing so. In all groups it is necessary to challenge the view that 'it doesn't happen here'. It does. When we are addressing issues of Asian pimping networks we have found it particularly helpful to have an Asian woman attending our management committee meetings. She is quite clear that in this context Asian people can more easily say what needs to be said. CROP has recently linked with two workers from the Sheffield Black drugs group who have offered to provide further information on how to reach Black and ethnic minority groups.

Cultural sensitivity is complex. One group of young people that may be particularly vulnerable are those from a mixed race background as questions of identity may be added to normal teenage uncertainties. Another aspect is that many pimping network members are from different ethnic backgrounds from those who are targeted. This adds "buzz" to the initial contacts. Girls are taught a new street-wise language, and sometimes the actual first language of their 'boyfriends', which adds to the initial pleasure they experience during the early grooming process.

Question 10. How do we reach children in need of protection from abuse through prostitution? Are there further examples of good models that have proven success in helping young people abused through prostitution to move on?

Reaching children

Children can be reached by assisting parents. If parents have some continuing contact with their child, and most do, she will eventually be seen and enter into conversation with the CROP parental support worker. For example, recently a 13 year old thought to be at risk, and who would not respond to any agency or worker, talked openly to the CROP parent support worker for over 45 minutes. When she was informed that

the CROP worker was not there about her but to see her mother, she immediately relaxed, dropping her defensive attitude. Through visits to her mother one of the objectives is to build up further trust with this young girl. Through effective work with parents, CROP has supported all family members and this has helped some young people to exit from prostitution – although they remain vulnerable to being drawn back in. Very intensive support is required.

Good models for moving on

CROP is currently supporting four families whose daughters have exited prostitution. Continual support and raising self-esteem is crucial to their future away from prostitution. Providing them with self-belief and developing their skills through asking them for input into our work, listening to their ideas and acting on them when appropriate, have been positive in motivating girls to move on. It is only too easy to go back rather than confront what is really happening. We have also taken some of these young women out for days to develop their social skills and to show them that they too have a right to ‘normal’ things, such as a pub meal, a visit to a garden centre, a country park or the seaside. We now have one young woman who is writing her story for CROP to use in preventative work and awareness raising. Two young women who have exited have been willing to go with the CROP worker to talk to young girls who are being groomed and speak from their experience on the reality of the dangers.

Issues relevant to moving on from prostitution

CROP has many questions about exiting. The Home Office funded research by Marianne Hester and Nicole Westmorland (2004) provides useful information on exiting.³ There is, however, nothing about working with families as an exiting strategy. This is an important gap in research on exiting which affects children and also, in the experience of CROP, adult women as well. CROP is beginning to make a contribution here and hopes to do more when its policy and research worker is in post. Questions remain, such as what actually has to be in place for exiting to be achieved? What ongoing support should/could be available because of the long term damaging effects of having worked in prostitution? By long term we mean ten or fifteen years or more after exiting. Although every support needs to be given to women while they are in prostitution, should not much more effort be put into actively encouraging and enabling exiting? Women who have exited have said they wanted to do so much earlier, but it did not seem possible.

There are currently many practical obstacles to exiting. One is that the woman’s criminal record as Schedule A sex offenders means that many lines of employment are barred to those who have exited. One young woman, for instance, wanted to train as a nursery nurse and in our view would have been excellent. As a Schedule A sex offender she could not. This obstacle applies, regardless of the circumstances, including coercion that has resulted in the criminal record, and regardless of the reality of the exit. Many of the women want to work in preventative work and could be an asset in this field – but cannot work in schools, etc. This issue should be addressed. In what sense are these women sex offenders in the way that, for example, child abusers are?

³ Hester, M and Westmorland, N (2004) *Tackling Street Prostitution: Towards an Holistic approach*. London: Home Office

CROP is working with one family which is about to move to another European country because they can see no other solution given the lack of investigation, evidence gathering and prosecution of their daughter's multiple abusers. In the 1970s women with persistent domestic violence abusers not only had to move to a new area, but even on occasion had to leave the UK to secure safety. Given more proactive law enforcement, over time this has become less necessary. CROP argues that child and adult prostitution should be approached in the same way as domestic violence. More effort should be put into making it possible for women to move on by removing the stigma from them and placing it with the perpetrator where it belongs.

We also would like to endorse the comment made at the bottom of Page 11 that adult prostitutes, who very often entered prostitution as children, are extremely vulnerable and usually in receipt of severe violence and abuse. CROP is currently working with one family where the daughter is now [REDACTED] years old and herself the mother of [REDACTED] children. The daughter, due to extreme violence and manipulation by a pimp/boyfriend over many years, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Because of her experience she is unable to trust anyone and assumes they will all be against her in some way. Her parents continue to be a major source of support. They are the only people who have maintained a relationship with her since she began an abusive relationship with her pimp at age 14. [REDACTED] as a result of her exploitation means that her parents continue on occasion to endure extreme verbal abuse from their daughter even though she exited prostitution several years ago and, in many ways, her life has improved. We understand and endorse the recent concentration on the abuse of children but urge that issues of adult vulnerability and the long-term effects of being involved in prostitution be kept on the agenda.

Question 11. How are services (for example, sexual health services) best tailored to meet the specific needs of children and adolescents involved in prostitution?

CROP welcomes the statements made in 4:9, but suggests that much further work is needed to make these services a reality. There needs to be far greater understanding of the way in which targeting and grooming coercion works. This would involve more training of professionals so that there can be a moving away from the 'you must take responsibility' approach to the young person. Of course personal responsibility is important, but it must be against the background of the intense power of the perpetrators. Although this may be recognised at some levels within statutory services, it is all too often not recognised at operational levels.

Consideration should be given to ways of communicating effectively and sensitively with young people. For example, one of our families recently went with their daughter, aged 15, to a meeting to discuss her future education needs. On entering the room they were unexpectedly faced with a room full of adults most of whom they had not previously met. One professional asked the girl how she felt about things. Bearing in mind that for the past year she has had little contact with anyone other than her family; faced with a room full of strangers she went to pieces and had to leave with her mother. If some thought had been given to how to communicate with this girl, she might have been asked to provide a written statement on how she felt and what she

wanted or prior to the meeting. She might have been informed about who would be present at the meeting and why.

Question 12. How can we best support the families of children and young people abused through prostitution?

The most effective way to support parents and grandparents would be to take them seriously and recognise that all too often they and not the professionals are the real experts on the reality of the situation. They often deal with it 24 hours a day. Yet CROP, the only organisation as far as we know which is specifically set up to work with families has only one short-term funded full-time parent support worker. The number of referrals is rising rapidly and the organisation is greatly overstretched. Many opportunities for further direct work and other strategic work is therefore being lost.

Agencies need to have time to listen and not be clock watching. For example, at one case conference in Rotherham the parents were asked to give their account of the situation. As the girl's father started to speak he was asked to hurry up as they only had the room for an hour. At the time both the family and daughter had received threats of severe violence. In 3:34 it states that 'they are encouraged to seek help and advice from their local social services department or voluntary organisation if they are concerned.' Sadly our experience is that real help is all too often not forthcoming and parents are regarded as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. An extract from the CROP *Annual Review*, (2004) reads:

'A couple of weeks later she (my daughter) went out with a friend and didn't come back. It got to 1am and I got a phone call from a phone box saying they didn't know where they were and that they had been dropped on a street. She sounded like she had been drinking so I told her to get a taxi back home; this cost me well in excess of £20. They had been drinking a lot of alcohol - at least one litre bottle of vodka. It would appear that whilst the girls are still standing the men give them more. She didn't say much, but after that incident she went missing many times. When she came back or was brought back home by the police she wouldn't tell me anything. I reported things to the police and social services but when she found out she stopped talking to me. The police told me that if my daughter was not willing to make a complaint there was not a crime to report. As a parent I could not do anything to protect my child from this abuse. The police informed me that as she was 13 she would be the one that would have to give evidence. I told my daughter I would take her to the police station but she just said that if she didn't talk there was nothing anyone could do. By this time she knew the law better than me and it was obvious these men had told her. My daughter had been taught what to say and what not to say by the men. For the next year I just had a continuous battle.'

In para 4:16 social services is not listed and that is usually the first port of call for parents. Many of our parents are extremely traumatised when personal details about their past health and relationships are discussed and made available in written reports to whoever might be invited to their child's case conference. In almost every instance where we have supported a parent at a case conference that is the first opportunity they have to see the report. They are given little if any opportunity to challenge

statements in the reports, which have been read by all the professionals. For example, Rotherham Social Services said that they expect parents to be given the written report two days prior to the meeting. But at a recent meeting one mother was given additional reports about her other two children to read as she sat waiting to go into the meeting. When the social worker was challenged about this she said that she had not realised that they would be discussing the other two children in the family as well. As one mother said, ‘they are allowed to take these very personal statements/reports away with them. How do I know that that information isn’t being shared with others?’ For most people health issues are discussed between themselves and their doctor and not given freely to anyone from school, health, drug agencies, etc. In CROP’s experience most parents have never met the professionals attending these meetings and, if they have, the contact is limited to 30 minutes at the most.

Another mother is extremely traumatised as social services constantly refer to her past mental health problems, which occurred with the breakdown of her marriage, as the explanation for why her daughter is being drawn into prostitution. The meetings make her feel that she is a bad mother, even though she does not go out to work preferring to be at home for her children. The social worker regularly makes comments about her lack of self-esteem and has even said that if she got a job her daughter might respect her more. So one very practical step forward would be to encourage social services in particular, through more training, to work more co-operatively with parents, treating them as equals rather than as problematic clients and working with them at trying to find solutions. Giving parents status and respect would in itself offer much support. Of course there are some instances where this does happen, but sadly it is not the norm. In CROP’s experience, working with over 80 parents, virtually all of them have had difficulties to a greater or lesser degree with social services. There are exceptions where we have found greater understanding, for example in Sheffield or more recently in Calderdale.

Question 15. How should we tackle the links between sex and drug markets?

CROP welcomes the coherent approach cited in para 5:3 – particularly the reference to bringing pimps to justice. CROP also recognises the new patterns of pimping described in para 5:23. This has, however, to be balanced by the recognition of major pimping networks, which run very sophisticated businesses involving both drugs and sex. (See the Criminal Pimping Networks article in CROP’s *Annual Review*) Serious investigation of these criminal networks, which the police acknowledge exist, would tackle a major aspect of this linkage.

An example of the links between sex and drugs is provided by a further extract from *A Parent’s Story*: (Annual Review)

‘When my other daughter was coming up to 13 she used to ask me how her sister could go off with these men. But then her attitude changed shortly after her 13th birthday. Once again as with her sister, her way of thinking became their way of thinking. They would tell her that I was old and that I didn’t want her to have any fun. They wanted her to go in their cars with them. It took them a bit longer to get her because she had seen what happened to her sister, but on the day she got in one of the cars I lost my second daughter. They made her feel so special and gave her a mobile. They would pull up at school and wait for her.

It looked good having smart boyfriends who played rap music loud from their cars. The girls are into that. They also drank and smoked spliffs. My daughter then started going out with one of these men. She didn't think she was doing anything wrong - she was doing what she was told. I talked to her about what had happened to her sister but she just said he was not like that. This 19-year-old man stayed with her for two months then passed her on to another group of men. She would stay out very late and crawl home in the early hours. When I tried to talk to her the following day she could hardly remember where she had been, who with or what had happened to her. I later found out she was being spiked with GHB - the date rape drug.'

Surely ways could be found within the criminal justice system to use the body of evidence gathered by parents.

We welcome para 5:12 on teenage pregnancy. We suspect that it is often unrecognised that pregnancy is a further means of control by sexually exploiting men. We are currently supporting three families whose daughters have had children by pimps. We also are supporting three other families whose daughter's main aim in life is to have a child by their 'boyfriend' pimp. They are all under 16 years. In our experience pimps often make the girl have an abortion, or use the baby as a further means of control. We have examples of pimps/boyfriends kidnapping the child and refusing to return him/her without large payments. Again these offences are not prosecuted. The reaction of the police when one baby was reported missing was, 'What is the problem? He has just gone out with his father.'

Question 18. How do we increase confidence in the criminal justice system of those involved in prostitution?

From our perspective there will be no increase in trust until there is more serious investigation and prosecution of pimps. We recognise that this will involve painstaking evidence gathering and unless this is given a higher priority and included in police targets, it will not happen. There are, however, examples of good practice. The Nottinghamshire police force has adopted a proactive approach to the prosecution of pimps and punters and this has had the effect of reducing other crime as well. We would urge that this practice is adopted by other police forces. In Sheffield, effective use has been made of child abduction letters, using the Child Abduction Act 1984, Section 2.

In discussion with some police forces, we note existing policy for child protection issues relate exclusively to intra-familial abuse. All the abuse that CROP is dealing with is child abuse, and very violent abuse, by a non-familial third party, but at present there may be no police mandate specifically dedicated to this type of crime. The same problem can apply to social services. One social services department informed CROP that they would not necessarily hold a case conference if their initial investigations into the family showed no inter-familial abuse.

The organisation of policing may add to the difficulties if it impedes the ability of the police to work across divisional and force boundaries. As criminal networks work across divisional and force boundaries, these limitations can make it more difficult for police to recognise criminal networks and to respond effectively. Another reason for

parental distrust of the effectiveness of policing is the lack of dedicated officers within many police forces. This means that all too often families are dealing with a new officer each time they contact the police and are required to tell the long complicated story over and over again. In instances where there have been dedicated officers who know the family and the background to the case, much more trust has been possible.

Serious mistakes can play an important part in non-prosecution. For example, CROP is supporting one family where the police lost clothes that were to be used as vital evidence after their daughter was gang raped. To cover up the error, police officers came to the family home and said that DNA samples could not have been taken from the clothing as this had to be done immediately afterwards and the clothing arrived in the police station too late for DNA testing to be carried out.

There is another even bigger problem and this is collusion with current practices. The 'users' of prostitutes can be in the criminal justice system – as well as from all other walks of life. This is commonly reported when speaking to women in prostitution. When a woman is in court after having been 'used' by the presiding magistrate on the preceding evening, she experiences little respect for the criminal justice system.

Courts need to address the time when prostitution cases are heard. When a girl has been up all night and been given drugs by their pimp as well, it is highly unlikely that she will attend a court at 10.00am. CROP supported one family's daughter charged with soliciting. She also had a drug habit. We arranged to support her when attending the magistrates court. She was expected to be there for the start of the day's hearings at 10.00am, but did not appear. When the parent support worker spoke to her later she said she had intended to go, but had been working and using all night and was fast asleep most of the day. Although on this occasion the magistrate was sympathetic and expressed his thanks for our attendance, he said he had no other option but to make a warrant for her arrest. At a later date she was given a custodial sentence and sent to Doncaster prison.

The non-prosecution of pimps has serious outcomes. It makes the loosening of the grip of pimps on their child victims very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. Effective prosecution of pimps offers the most likely way that the misery of children and their families can be reduced and many other aspects of serious criminality can be cleared up. We are aware that this work is time intensive in investigation and evidence gathering, but in places where police time is invested, as in Nottingham, other related crimes also are addressed. In CROP's experience it is the non-prosecution that leads families to despair of ever seeing justice in relation to the severe violence to their child that they are observing.

CROP examples of the continuing problems caused by non-prosecution are as follows:

- a. One young girl in Rotherham, aged 13, was gang raped by [REDACTED] young adult men. She dropped her complaint due to intimidation. After being raped again by other men, she made a formal complaint. The CPS recently decided not to prosecute as 'it would be her word against theirs' and they believed she would be an unreliable witness. Both she and her parents have vowed never to go to the police again.

- b. Although most parents report their child as missing persons when they do not come home, we are currently working with two other families who have lost faith in the police. The reasons they give are that the police take too long to respond and that when they do, they begin by searching the houses of the families.
- c. Another mother in Rotherham, after reporting her child as missing, was woken by the police at 1am to be told that at present they had no officer available to look into the case.
- d. Another mother in Huddersfield reported to us that a pimp was seen on CCTV going into a local hotel with her daughter, a young girl of 14. As the child was on the child protection register, social services asked why the police had not charged him. After looking into the matter, the mother has just been told that he cannot be prosecuted.

There is also frustration at the way in which the CPS appears not to encourage the use of existing legislation. In 1998, at the first CROP conference, Ben Nolan QC listed all the legislation that could be used. Since then the Sex Offences Act and the Criminal Justice Act have greatly strengthened the law. CROP's experience, however, is that the determination to implement the law in order to bring prosecutions is still lacking.

We also ask that the reliance on statements of all over 13 year olds be reconsidered. If Nottinghamshire police have found a way to achieve prosecutions that do not rely on the statements of girls others could follow suit. While girls are under the power of the pimp, and both 'in love with' and frightened of him, it is unlikely that they will be considered to be reliable witnesses. Serious crimes then remain untouched. CROP recognises the value of police forces that are trying to convict pimps on other criminal offences e.g. drugs offences, as this means sexually exploited girls do not need to provide statements and attend court as witnesses.

CROP recommends that a performance indicator be introduced for the investigation, charging and prosecution of those who sexually exploit and abuse children through grooming and prostitution. A performance indicator would increase the attention given to these crimes and thereby increase confidence in the criminal justice system.

Question 20 Are there new ways in which the criminal law could be used?

CROP welcomes much of the new legislation and in general believes that the issues are more to do with implementation and cultural change than with the present legal framework.

There are, however, anomalies that need to be addressed. The Street Offences Act still allows for prosecution for soliciting from the age of 10. Although this would rarely if ever be implemented at that age today, it needs to be repealed. (para 7:24). There are several issues. Exploited children do not need a criminal record. For adult women too, the imposition of fines, which they pay through more prostitution, appears to have little value. Legally defining children from 10 years as criminally responsible, while at the same time defining them as victims of sexual crime, sends an ambiguous message to professionals in the criminal justice system, health and social services as well as to the general public, including men who buy sex. This ambiguity needs to be eliminated in order to achieve a systematic focus on pimps/procurers and

those who exploit children through purchase of their bodies. As stated in response to earlier questions, we believe that there could be a much more creative use of legislation both by police and by the CPS if there were a will to protect children and adults from exploitation through prostitution.

This would involve the possibility of using hearsay evidence and also providing evidence on the number of complaints made against men and then subsequently withdrawn by the girls. Some police officers have many, many pages of very serious complaints made against particular men by different girls, but all were withdrawn, because of delays in the legal process and opportunities this gave for witness intimidation. New ways of using the criminal law should include evidence given by parents, combined with use of other investigations, such as social security or cheque card fraud, or sale of drugs. It should not be difficult – although it might be time consuming – to build up sufficient evidence from different sources.

Major issues remain about children over 13 being required to make statements before any action is taken against pimps. A 13 year old is a child and it can be unreasonable and self-defeating to demand that children make statements - particularly when they are in the grip of an adult abuser. As with domestic violence, even adult women are not always expected to make statements and evidence is sought in other ways. CROP requests that serious consideration be given to a greater role for parents in making statements, particularly using the provision in the Criminal Justice Act for the use of 'hearsay' evidence.

At present if a child is 15 years old and has gone away with an older man prosecutions under the Child Abduction Act 1984 are rare. The law makes this a serious offence. To issue letters for the return of the child to parents requires the name and address of the man and on many occasions this is not readily available. While it requires investigation to obtain the address, the law needs to be enforced, both for the sake of the victim and to maintain respect for the law in general.

Question 21. Are there models of good investigative practice to be adopted to ensure that users and abusers are brought to justice, and victims supported further?

Sheffield police have effectively used the Child Abduction Act, issuing letters to be served on men who have removed underage girls from the parental home requiring him to return the child to her parents. The Nottinghamshire practice is described in this consultation response and we strongly endorse proactive criminal investigation and evidence gathering of sexual exploitation of children.

Question 22 Do you have good models of support for (a) child and (b) adult witnesses to assist them through the criminal justice system?

CROP has yet to come across good models of support for either child or adult witnesses to assist them through the criminal justice system. Although we recognise that in many cases this will not be relevant, where possible a good model of support would be to give or allow parents a much greater role to support their children. For example, police filmed video evidence of one 14 year old girl after she had been raped. Her mother was not allowed to go with her and her daughter told her later that

one of the police officers, who was not filmed on camera, asked her, ‘come on A tell us what you have to do to give a decent blow job’. The officer continued to make faces off camera, which made the girl laugh. The laughter resulted in video evidence that made her look as if she had enjoyed being raped. It did not demonstrate that she had been seriously harmed, mentally and physically. CPS decided not to take the case forward. If the mother had been allowed to go with her daughter not only into the building, but also into the room where the video was being made, it would have reassured her daughter who was nervous and unsure of herself.

Question 23 How do we ensure that illegal activity does not continue to take place behind the façade of legal businesses?

CROP welcomes the recognition that most prostitution is off street and that it is important to ensure that illegal activity does not continue behind the façade of legal businesses. CROP has evidence that work in saunas and massage parlours can be very unsafe.(6:15). Many of the women working in saunas and massage parlours are being pimped in various forms and therefore unlikely to receive much from their considerable earnings. They are also subject to oppressive control at work and considerable violence when they leave. CROP is concerned to note the dramatic decline of prosecutions of brothel keepers reported in Appendix B. This is very significant but is not discussed, explained or questioned anywhere in the text of the consultation document. We urge that the steep decline in prosecutions of brothel keepers be reversed (Annex B).

When illegal activities are hidden under the façade of legal businesses, it is important to ensure that sufficient safe housing is in place and perhaps transport arranged for the women to return to it. Although even in safe housing, CROP has evidence of young women being harassed by manipulative pimps who have found creative access to ‘safe’ houses during the night to beat young women until all the money is handed over.

We are pleased that the Home Office is working with Local Authorities to address this issue of illegal activity being conducted under the façade of legal business.

Question 25 How can civil measures be used most effectively? We would be interested in examples of where ABCs, injunctions or ASBOs have been used effectively in respect of those involved in prostitution, kerb crawlers and others.

The Kerb Crawlers School in Leeds had some success and it was unfortunate that funding for it did not continue. More recently, a campaign run by a local newspaper in Leeds has printed photos of kerb crawlers, which provides public education and is possibly an excellent deterrent. The media have a key role to play. It may be worthwhile to examine transposing aspects of perpetrator domestic violence programmes to those who abuse and use girls and women in prostitution. CROP would welcome the use of ASBOs and other civil law legislation to deter kerb crawlers. However, placing ASBOs, injunctions, etc. on women in prostitution can exclude them from their usual area, which in our experience, also can be where they live. Placing this type of additional pressure on women does not assist exiting from prostitution. Having to find alternative housing and possibly schools for their

children, if they live with them, reinforces their vulnerability, thus making women easy prey again for pimps.

In other instances, CROP has supported parents who attempted to initiate civil law cases when the CPS refused to take the case forward on the grounds of lack of evidence. Parents who have attempted to take this route to obtain justice have not found it easy. One mother went to the civil court, but was told that by doing this she could put the criminal investigation in jeopardy. In another situation a family spent £10,000 in legal costs with little positive outcome in support of their daughter who had been groomed by an older man. Help should be available within the criminal justice system for desperate parents.

Question 28 We would welcome views on the role the criminal law should play in relation to children abused through prostitution.

We have already given CROP's conclusion that the Street Offences Act should repeal the section relating to the prosecution of children from 10 years upwards. (see Question 20). The criminal law should focus on perpetrators which is much more likely to offer effective protection to children.

Question 31 How can we use intelligence led policing to investigate the links between prostitution and other serious crime?

CROP welcomes the recognition in 8:13 that trafficking is both international and in-country and also the expressed determination to tackle major criminal enterprises. We are keen to see the development of intelligence led policing applied to international and national crimes of sexual exploitation.

In our experience, however, there are serious difficulties militating against this in current police practice. There needs to be both regional and national teams who work across divisions and also forces. The work cannot be left to the crime manager of a particular division. We have evidence of criminal pimping networks crossing divisional and force boundaries. Although we have shared this information with police forces, we are told that the resources do not exist to follow this up on the scale that is required. This clearly works to the advantage of the criminal and is deeply frustrating and damaging to the families with whom we are working.

CROP suggests the question is not how we can use intelligence led policing to investigate the links between prostitution and other serious crime, but whether it will be adopted for this type of crime.

Question 32 Should our response to street based prostitution involving adults accept or challenge its existence?

All prostitution should be challenged, but this requires a huge shift in culture and in sexual habits. At present the collusion and 'use' of prostitutes by men from all social classes means this is a huge task. The current situation objectifies children and women and does not respect their unique personhood. When talking to women who have exited, whatever they might have said while still working, they acknowledge that

their self-worth and self-respect was in practice completely undermined through prostitution – sadly almost permanently.

Question 33 Is there a case for designating managed areas at a local level? What would be the resource implications of such a move; what regulatory and health requirements should be placed on those operating in a managed zone; and how would such areas be identified?

We do not conclude that there is a case for designated areas. Evidence from The Netherlands is largely negative. Based on evidence gained from CROP's intensive work with parents and children, we conclude that the only model likely to reduce induction into prostitution is the Swedish model. In the view of CROP to set up designated areas is to condone the abuse and exploitation of young people and vulnerable adults. To further the exploitation by pimps and punters, all that would be required is a designated area deemed acceptable for men to buy sex and for pimps to take girls there. For example, CROP recently met with a community group in Leeds whose neighbourhood has become a new location for street prostitution. People living in this neighbourhood have observed the activities of punters and the violence that pimps mete out to 'their' women. While a common story, the people who live in this neighbourhood experience street prostitution through their observation to be psychologically harmful; it increases their fears for the safety of their own children and it damages girls and women in the sex trade. CROP, therefore, unequivocally supports the development of the Swedish model.

Question 34 Is it ever acceptable for sex to be sold from private premises? If so, what safeguards should be put in place?

CROP does not support the selling of sex from private premises. Private premises can hide extreme violence. We know of one location in South Yorkshire where a pimp has gradually bought an entire street and other separate houses so that his activities can go unheeded and unchecked. This is not acceptable.

Question 35 Would registration help safeguard public health?

We might learn something from the work of Josephine Butler in the 19th century. She led a campaign against the criminal focus in garrison towns on women believed to transmit sexual disease through prostitution. Men who used prostitutes were not seen as transmitting sexual disease and were therefore exempt from coercive medical examinations and imprisonment. While the worst state-sponsored medical and penal abuses against women were successfully curtailed, the legacy of holding women and girls responsible and ignoring their victimisation continued into the 20th and now into the 21st centuries. In the view of CROP, registration of women and girls is not the way forward to safeguard public health. However, if registration is pursued, then men who sexually use women also should be registered.

Key Document 39

Archived Record from Home Office Media Handling Database

Call Log

Created: 18/11/2005 at 15:54 by
[REDACTED]

Title

Comment about a report by an organisation called crop, coalition from the removal of pimps, girls

Contact

[REDACTED] - Times Educational Supplement
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Background

Comment about a report by an organisation called crop, coalition from the removal of pimps, girls as young as 12 being targeted into prostitution, charity based in Leeds. keen to get comment.

How widespread is the issue and what steps are we taking to tackle
[REDACTED]

Lines To Take

Numbers of children abused through prostitution

As a general pattern, young people's involvement in prostitution, although sometimes visible through work on the street, is often also hidden away in brothels, massage parlours and saunas. This makes it extremely difficult to quantify. Research commissioned by the Department of Health in 2002 shows that children are known to suffer this form of abuse in 111 (of 146) Area Child Protection Committee districts ? an average of 19 girls and 3 boys in each area

What can parents/teachers do to protect children?

The current prostitution review is looking at the support/information available to parents, teachers and other practitioners to enable them to identify the early warning signs and protect those vulnerable to this form of abuse.

Children's charities have made considerable efforts to identify the ways in which children and young people are targeted by groomers and other coercers so that there has been an increasing awareness of the ways in which they can be drawn into this type of abuse. Recent research has pointed to a common set of risk factors, including experience of living in care, or running away from home; truancy or exclusion; and experience of violence or abuse in the home. There are a range of valuable schools programmes available that build on this understanding and aim to raise awareness amongst young people of the risks of being involved in prostitution. Many of these programmes are delivered locally by projects working with young people abused through prostitution. Examples are available on Teachernet (www.teachernet.gov.uk).

What steps are the Home Office taking to tackle the problem?

The Sex Offences Act 2003 considerably strengthened the law in this area, creating for the first time a specific set of offences with tough penalties to deal with the sexual exploitation of children (protecting children of both sexes up to the age of 18). The new offences include:

- paying for the sexual services of a child
- causing or inciting child prostitution
- controlling a child prostitute
- trafficking into, out of and within the UK for sexual exploitation

The criminal law has a key role to

play but children and young people abused through prostitution require protection and support. Government guidance on Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution (2001) stresses the need for a proactive approach from Area Child Protection Committees to identify whether child prostitution is a local problem. The guidance is also aimed at ensuring that there are effective multi-agency protocols in place to respond where such a child is identified.

We are also in the middle of a comprehensive review of prostitution ? which is considering the issues affecting both adults and children. We ran a public consultation last year and will publish a coordinated strategy based on the responses we received (if pushed, in the new year).

Lead Official

High priority: No

Status: Closed

Related desks: CJ, Newsdesk

Other documents:



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