



Services for Women in and Exiting Prostitution

An Overview and Scrutiny Task Group Report

January 2010

Membership

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Chair's Foreword

This task group was established to investigate the scale and nature of prostitution in Brent, the impact that a major sporting arena would have on the sex trade and what could be done to help those involved in it or otherwise affected by it.

I believe that Brent Council and its partners have a civic duty to tackle the sex trade and thus have a positive impact on those whose lives have been blighted by it.

At the outset, I would like to thank my fellow councillors David Clues and Kanta Mistry and the representatives of partner agencies

including Andy Brown the Head of Substance Misuse at Brent Primary Care Trust and DCI Kevin Concannon and Christine Topping from Brent Police who attended our meetings as well as giving evidence.

I would also like to thank those who also gave evidence notably Helen Atkins of the Eaves *POPPY Project*, David Thrale, Brent's Director of Environmental Health, Helen Hepburn from *Make a Change Ipswich*, DCI Tim Beach of Suffolk Constabulary, DCI Kevin Hyland of the Metropolitan Police Clubs and Vice, David Blake the publishing director of Archant London and Alice Peycke the Partnership Co-ordinator of *Safe Exit* at Toynbee Hall.

I volunteered to chair this task group but didn't fully appreciate how involved I would become and what a personal journey that would entail. I had previously seen the problem primarily as a women's issue but I now believe it to be an issue which all of us should take more seriously.

In exploring the subject my fellow task group members and I have often been surprised, shocked and sometimes deeply upset by some of the evidence we have heard, particularly in relation to the impact the sex trade has on those involved. We knew from the beginning that our task group could not solve the problems of exploitation associated with prostitution and its links to organised crime but we do believe that Brent Council working with its partners can have a positive impact.

Too often society sees prostitution as something which will always be with us and which we can do nothing to tackle. I believe that attitude has led to widespread exploitation of some of our most vulnerable people, including children, the trafficking of fellow human beings and the violence which is endemic within the sex trade.

I hope this report will be a valuable contribution to changing attitudes and changing lives.

Councillor Ann John (OBE)



Executive Summary

This task group was set up following the publication of Eaves POPPY Project's¹ report *Big Brothel – A survey of the off-street sex industry in London* in August 2008 which highlighted the scale and nature of the brothel based sex industry in London. When Eaves POPPY Project looked at the number of adverts for brothels in local newspapers, Brent was identified as having the second highest number of adverts. This does not necessarily mean that the borough has the second highest number of brothels. However, as the findings were potentially significant for Brent the task group was charged with finding out the scale and nature of prostitution in Brent and what the council and partners could do.

The task group's key findings are as follows:

The Scale and Nature of Prostitution in Brent

The task group received evidence from Eaves POPPY Project, Brent police, NHS Brent and CO14 Clubs and Vice. We found that there is both on street and off street (indoor) prostitution in Brent. There are large gaps in intelligence particularly relating to off street prostitution, however the police and Eaves POPPY Project estimating between 54 and 64 brothels in Brent at any one time. The task group would like to see tackling prostitution as a higher and more co-ordinated priority and better guidance and training provided to police officers would deal with women affected by prostitution.

The Impact of a Major Sporting Arena

The task group looked at evidence relating to major international sporting events including the Olympics and World Cup. We also held discussion with CO14 Clubs and Vice and Safe Exit one of the organisations working with the five Olympic boroughs to develop a joint strategy relating to prostitution. The task group would like to ensure that Brent Council and partners continues working with these organisations to reduce the opportunities for trafficking, organised crime and prostitution associated with major sporting events. We would also like Brent Council and partners to lobby the Mayor of London to ensure that a pan London prostitution strategy is developed.

Tackling Sex industry Adverts in Brent

The Eaves POPPY Project research identified Brent has having the second highest number of adverts for brothels in London, 59. The government's publication '*Women Not for Sale*' quoted research that suggested that adverts in local newspapers are the most commonly used method used by men to make contact with women for sexual purposes. The task group was not only concerned with the number of adverts but also the wording used eg 'young',

¹ The POPPY Project provides accommodation and support for women trafficked into the UK for the purposes of sexual exploitation. www.eaves4women.co.uk/POPPY_Project/POPPY_Project.php

'new' and 'exotic' along with references to nationality or ethnicity. We talked to the Publishing Director who told us that sex industry related advertising accounts for about 10% of their income. We also found that although guidelines were available to their staff who take the adverts, these were not always followed. The task group heard a variety of different views about these adverts and ideally would like to see these adverts banned from local newspapers and would therefore add our voice to the national campaign. Meanwhile we would like the council and partners to work with local news papers to ensure they follow their own guidelines and carry a prevention and deterrent advert next to sex industry adverts.

Working in Partnership to Provide services for Women In or Exiting Prostitution

The task group talked to a number of organisations to gain a clear picture of the range of services women in or exiting prostitution would require. The predominant message we got was that the needs of this group of women were complex. However the main services could be identified as:

- Emergency medical treatment
- Sexual health
- Mental health
- Drugs and alcohol
- Immigration and asylum
- Supported housing
- Legal advice and advocacy
- Financial assistance
- Training, education and employment

We talked to Safe Exit at Toynebee Hall and Make a Change Ipswich to find out more about how their partnerships developed and worked. The task group was impressed by this approach and would like to see Brent council and partners develop a partnership approach to this issue.

Recommendations

- 1. That the Brent police make the tackling of prostitution in Brent a higher and more co-ordinated priority.**
- 2. That Brent Police:**
 - **Enhance the awareness of Brent police officers and staff about the issues faced by women involved in prostitution and those who have been potentially trafficked.**
 - **Provide appropriate training to selected police staff around how to support and deal with women affected by these issues. (This is to include for example advice about tactical options in relation to dealing with a report of a local brothel).**
 - **Provide clear guidance as to partner staff and the public about how to report a crime against a woman affected by these issues and/or other concerns.**
- 3. That Brent Council and partners, via the Crime Prevention Strategy Group, continue the work the task group has started in relation to the Olympics with the CO14, Safe Exit and other Olympic boroughs to reduce the opportunities for organised crime, trafficking and prostitution associated with major sporting events.**
- 4. That the council and partners lobby the Mayor of London to ensure a pan London strategy / approach is developed prior to the Olympics**
- 5. That the council and partners continue the task group's work and keep lines of communication open with the press to influence them to keep to their own guidelines and ensure that adverts relating to the sex industry do not include, for example:**
 - **Photographs**
 - **Information on ethnicity**
 - **Information on age**
- 6. That local newspaper groups operating in Brent agree to carry a prevention and deterrent advert next to sex industry related adverts, the contents of which will be agreed by partners but will include useful contact numbers.**
- 7 That the task group's report and the issues it raises are included in an article in Brent Magazine.**
- 8. That it is a priority for all front line local authority and partner staff to remove cards advertising sex services from public areas.**
- 9. That a Partnership Strategy on prostitution is produced which includes the development of services to help women exit.**
- 10. That a Stakeholder Event is held to bring together all relevant agencies in the borough to help develop the Partnership Strategy.**

- 11. That a Partnership Group be set up to take this work forward. This should be the responsibility of the Crime Prevention Strategy Group and include some of the task group membership to ensure continuity of developing expertise. The work of the group should include:**
 - **Identifying resources available to provide services and assistance for women exiting prostitution**
 - **Ensuring all relevant agencies know how to identify and respond to women in need of assistance.**
 - **Continue to gather and examine evidence about the scale and nature of prostitution in Brent**
 - **Develop and update a list of policy and tactical leads from partner organisations, and a map of services and pathways available to women within Brent and nationally**
- 12. That NHS Brent develops a treatment and care pathway for those women who are involved in or want to exit prostitution.**
- 13. That action against landlords is taken when a brothel is identified - eg letter to tell them they are breaking the law, and checks against council tax**

1. Introduction – Scope of the task groups work

This task group was set up following the publication of Eaves POPPY Project's² report *Big Brothel – A survey of the off-street sex industry in London* in August 2008 which highlighted the scale and nature of the brothel based sex industry in London. Their research, which was limited to adverts in local papers, identified approximately 1500 brothels in London and highlighted the prevalence of brothels in every part of London. The report also makes the link between off street prostitution and trafficked women. It suggests that the widespread availability of high risk services, such as sex without a condom, at an 'incredibly' low cost, points to a saturated market where women lack control, choice or economic alternatives.

When Eaves POPPY Project looked at the number of adverts for brothels in local newspapers, Brent was identified as having the second highest number of adverts. This does not necessarily mean that the borough has the second highest number of brothels. However, the number and nature of those adverts is of concern, particularly as in May 2008 the Newspaper Society issued guidelines on restricting the nature and publication of classified advertisement offering commercial sex acts.

These findings were potentially significant for Brent and rather than dismiss or ignore the report, we decided to tackle this issue head on. We wanted to find out if we really have got a problem in Brent and if so what can be done about it. We also wanted to find out what the impact of a major sporting arena would have on the sex trade in Brent.

The issue was raised at the Crime Prevention Strategy Group by the lead member for Crime Prevention and Public Safety, the partners involved expressed concern about the findings of Eaves POPPY Project, particularly the links made between trafficked women and brothels, and have agreed to support a review set up by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Members of the task group have undertaken this piece of work because we believe that this is the right thing to do for our local communities and for a vulnerable group of women. At the start of our work we agreed that this review was not about taking a moral stance about prostitution. However, as we have learnt more about the impact of this 'industry' on the lives of many of the women involved our views have moved on. Two of the most disturbing figures we have seen are firstly that the mortality rate for women in prostitution in London is twelve times higher than the national average³ mortality rate. Secondly, although less than 1% of children in this country are looked after by the state, 42% of young women involved in prostitution have been in local authority care at some point⁴.

There is a huge debate about whether some women chose to become prostitutes and what level of choice is really available to them. There are a myriad of different views and research available on this issue and these largely correlate to the philosophical, political or ideological stand point of the author. We do not intend to rehearse those arguments in this report, but will comment that we do believe that real choice is closely linked to life chances, ability to control your life, mental health and addiction. Recommendations in this report are not aimed

² The POPPY Project provides accommodation and support for women trafficked into the UK for the purposes of sexual exploitation. www.eaves4women.co.uk/POPPY_Project/POPPY_Project.php

³ Paying the Price, Home Office

⁴ Centre for Social Justice, DFES Children looked after in England 2005-2006

at women who work as prostitutes through real choice, have control over their life, have control over who they see and keep the money they earn. Our concern is with those women who find themselves involved in the sex trade through coercion, whether physical or emotional, addiction to drugs and alcohol, economic circumstances and lack of education, skills and opportunity. The following is an extract from the blog of Rebecca, a survivor of prostitution:

“How many voices and writings of exited prostituted women will it take until prostitution is viewed as a human rights issue.....What is ‘choice’ when it comes to being prostituted?”

- A free choice is not being prostituted in order to pay rent, to afford to care for your children.
- A free choice is not being on the receiving end of childhood abuse, whether sexual, neglect or physical.
- A free choice is not being brainwashed by the porn culture to believe that prostitution is glamorous and an easy way to make a pile of money.
- A free choice would mean the prostituted woman or girl could turn away men if they had bad feelings about them without any consequences.
- A free choice would be not being pushed by a pimp, manager or boyfriend to “just try it”.
- A free choice would mean freedom of movement and knowledge of the world outside prostitution.
- A free choice would mean there would be no need to use drink or drugs to blank out the reality.

We realise that the problems related to prostitution and its links to organised crime and trafficking cannot be solved by Brent Council and its partners alone, but we believe that by working together we can have an impact on the lives of some of the women who live or pass through Brent whose lives have been blighted by their involvement in this industry.

The scope of the review highlights the two main ways of tackling prostitution: reduce the supply of people in prostitution, and reduce the demand for their services.

Reducing Supply

Reducing supply relies on tackling trafficking, preventing women entering prostitution through other avenues and supporting women to exit prostitution.

Women involved in prostitution face a number of problems that impact on their health and life chances. These include:

- Violence
- Substance dependencies
- High risk to sexual health,
- Wider health issues including mental health, and
- Lack of education and skills
- Marginalisation / social vulnerabilities / stigma

Key findings from pilots funded by the Government's Crime Reduction Programme highlighted that enforcement alone merely displaces prostitution and support services are needed to have any impact in helping women.

Finding routes out of prostitution can be a difficult and lengthy process, particularly given the disparate and complex needs of the women involved. Eaves POPPY Project estimate that it can take up to seven years or longer for women to completely exit prostitution. This is compounded when women have been trafficked or are economic migrants with no recourse to public funds and therefore cannot access most public services.

Reducing Demand

Apart from the measures introduced in the Policing & Crime Act 2009 to outlaw paying for sex with someone who is controlled for gain which is discussed later in this report, one way of reducing demand for the service offered from brothels is to reduce the information available on how to access them. As Eaves POPPY Project report highlighted the high levels of adverts for brothels in our local press, it is proposed that this review will investigate this issue and see how the number of adverts for brothels and prostitutes in Brent can be reduced.

The Task Groups key findings are focussed on the following areas:

- The scale and nature of prostitution in Brent
- The impact of a Major Sporting Arena
- Tackling local advertising for sex services in Brent
- Working in partnership to provide services for women in exiting prostitution in Brent

2. Task Group Membership

Councillor Ann John OBE (Chair)

Councillor David Clues

Councillor Kanta Mistry

Andy Brown – Head of Substance Misuse NHS Brent

DCI Kevin Concannon – Met Police Brent

Christine Topping – Violence Against the Person Focus Desk Manager, Brent

Policy support was provided by Jacqueline Casson, Senior Policy Officer, Policy & Regeneration.

3. Methodology

In order to complete the work identified in the scope, and produce a set of recommendations that will start to tackle some of the issues related to prostitution in Brent and the needs of women who wish to exit, the task group gathered evidence from a wide range of sources. These were:

- Helen Atkins – Eaves R&D POPPY Project on prostitution and trafficking with a focus on the London Borough of Brent
- David Thrale – Director of Environmental Health on the licensing of massage parlours
- Andy Brown – Head of Substance Misuse, NHS Brent about local themes and perspectives on substance misuse and the sex industry
- Christine Topping – Violence Against the Person Focus Desk Manager, Brent Police, provided an snapshot of police intelligence relating to prostitution in Brent
- Helen Hepburn Development Manager, Make a Change Ipswich, and DCI Tim Beach, Suffolk Constabulary explained how the Make a Change projects had started following the murders of women involved in prostitution in Ipswich, the barriers they faced and their current work in developing an off street prostitution strategy.
- DCI Kevin Hyland CO14, Clubs and Vice, Metropolitan police
- David Blake, Publishing Director, Archant London
- Alice Peycke, Partnership Co-ordinator, Safe Exit, Toynbee Hall, Tower Hamlets told us about a court diversion initiative which aims to provide better services for women involved in prostitution
- The Chair of the task group attended the *Solace Human Trafficking Conference* which launched their report into the role of local authorities in addressing human trafficking.
- The Chair of the task group attended the Developments in Prostitution Policy conference organised by the Eaves the parent organisation for the Poppy Project. Information brought back to the task group included:
 - Taking a human rights based approach to prostitution – Cate Briddick, Rights for Women
 - Parliamentary developments on legislation against demand for prostitution – Fiona Mactaggart MP
 - GAPS Newcastle, sexual exploitation and sex work in Tyne & Wear – Laura Seebohm & Kelle Holliday
 - Successful demand prevention in Nordic Countries – Gunilla Ekberg CATW international

Individual members of the task group reviewed a great deal of literature and academic research in relation to this subject area and a list of references is set out at the end of this

report. Ultimately though, the task group was keen to ensure that this report focused on Brent and produced locally implementable recommendations.

4. Context

Local

Prostitution and the implications of the sex trade have not previously emerged as a major community safety issue in Brent. The council and partners were aware of a relatively small amount of on-street prostitution in the south of the borough, and a number of services, particularly relating to drugs and alcohol are commissioned by Brent Primary Care Trust and based in that area. A number of voluntary organisations, such as Women's Aid also provide services to women who work in the on-street sex trade.

Less was known about the off-street (in door) sex trade in Brent, which largely takes place in flats, houses and massage parlours. This was partly because it is not as visible as on-street and partly because the organised nature of much of trade means that brothels can close and reopen in a different premises very quickly. There have been a number of national initiatives aimed at disrupting the off street sex trade with particular focus on trafficking, these include: Pentameter, Pentameter2 and Operation Tolerance. Pentameter was the first proactive policing operation in the UK involving all fifty five forces. The aims of Pentameter included identifying the scale of the problem and the recovery of victims. Brent's local police, were involved in these initiatives and had some success Pentameter, which resulted in 10 brothels being closed, though the majority did re-open soon after in different locations.

As set out earlier in this report the results of research conducted by the Eaves POPPY Project⁵ in August 2008 and set out in their report *Big Brothel – A survey of the off-street sex industry in London* highlighted the scale and nature of the brothel industry in London. Approximately 1500 brothels were identified in London. Brent was identified as having the second highest number of adverts (59) in local news papers for brothels. The highest number of adverts for brothels was Westminster with 71 and the lowest Southwark with 8. Although this does not necessarily mean that Brent has the second highest number of brothels, it should be of concern to the council. The report also makes the link between off-street prostitution and trafficked women. It suggests that the widespread availability of high risk services at an 'incredibly' low cost, points to a saturated market where women lack control, choice or economic alternatives.

International, National & London

A number of countries have experimented with different approaches to dealing with prostitution. In Europe as a whole there is a move towards tighter regulation of the sex trade. Sweden, Iceland and Norway have tackled demand by making it illegal to purchase

⁵ The POPPY Project provides accommodation and support for women trafficked into the UK for the purposes of sexual exploitation. www.eaves4women.co.uk/POPPY_Project/POPPY_Project.php

sex, while ensuring that the women involved are offered support. Other countries such as the Netherlands and New Zealand have legalised or decriminalised the sale and purchase of sex acts in the hope that this would sever the links between prostitution and organised crime.

The British government's coordinated strategy on prostitution *Paying the Price* was published in January 2006. One of the aims of the strategy is to disrupt the sex market and provide appropriate protection and exit routes for those involved.

In January 2008 the Government launched a review into demand for prostitution visiting several European countries, including the Netherlands and Sweden, to explore different legislative approaches to tackling prostitution issues. In November 2008 the Government announced that it would outlaw paying for sex with a woman "controlled for another person's gain" - such as a pimp or brothel owner. In addition, men who pay for a sexual act with someone who has been trafficked into the country could face rape charges. In November 2009 the Policing and Crime Act was passed, which lays out the new proposals in Part 2 Clause 14.

SOLACE recently produced a report⁶ which explores how local authorities can improve their response to human trafficking including women trafficked into the sex trade. This report was produced in the context of the Council for Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings⁷ which came into force in the UK on 1st April 2009. The report identifies five 'core competences' local authorities need to focus on and offers practical ways in which local authorities can help. These are:

- Victim identification
- Victim support
- Assistance with repatriation of victims
- Prevention of Human Trafficking
- Partnership Working

In April 2009 the Mayor of London launched *The Way Forward: A call for action to end violence against women*⁸ a consultation on proposed set of actions for dealing with all forms of violence against women in London. This includes prostitution, trafficking, rape and sexual violence.

The existing legislative framework that relates to the sex trade is wide and includes:

- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002
- Serious Organised Crime Act 2005
- Proceeds of Crime Act 2002
- Asylum and Immigration Act 2004

In addition the protection of women is also included in a number of European and UN Conventions and declarations. These include:

⁶ The role of local authorities in addressing human trafficking www.solace.org.uk

⁷ www.coe.int

⁸ A consultation on a proposed programme of action can be found at www.london.go.uk/mayor/crime/waw

- European Convention on Human Rights 1950
- UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women 1994
- European Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings 2005

5. Key Findings

The Scale and Nature of Prostitution in Brent

The existence of on street prostitution in the south of the borough was, by its nature, well known to the council and its partners. So when ascertaining the scale and nature of prostitution in Brent the main focus of the task group was to find out more about where off street prostitution was located.

A presentation by the police categorised the types of prostitution in Brent as:

- Street prostitution – drug users / criminal networks (on street)
- Commercial premises – saunas / massage parlours (off street)
 - Controlled multi-occupancy – 2 types (off street)
 - Transient work force / strict control with a large number of girls involved who are transported to and from the venue. There is an employed receptionist and security guards. This is where trafficked women are most likely to be found and therefore criminal networks
 - Small number of girls in a less oppressive environment
- Self Controlled – Professional residential home (off street)

We heard from the police that there are distinct clusters of premises in the borough. They told us that they believed that data collected in February 2009 showed that there were an estimated 54-64 brothels in Brent at any one time. However, they also said that this figure could be significantly higher or lower as premises move around, though they tended to be clustered in main shopping areas and are generally in flats above shops. Figures from the police show slightly more premises in the north of the borough, 37 than the south 33.

The table below shows the number of identified/believed premises being used as brothels within each of the hotspot areas.

HOTSPOT AREA	NUMBER OF PREMISES
Kingsbury	16
Sudbury and Wembley	10
Harlesden	5
Willesden	6
Kilburn and Brondesbury	4
Cricklewood	11

Eaves POPPY Project's research, which took place between October 2007 and March 2008, found 59 advertised premises in Brent with at least 121 women working in them. This

compares with the highest number of 71 in Westminster, and the lowest of 8 in Southwark. Their research identified 45% of premises as flats, 36% houses and 19% massage parlours or saunas. A snapshot undertaken by CO14, Clubs and Vice on one day found 15 premises in Brent. As differing methodologies were used and premises move around these figures should not be seen as definitive and can only provide a snapshot. A hotspot map produced by Brent Police is attached at appendix A

The Director of Environmental Health told us that there are four licensed massage parlours in Brent and historically there has never been more than four. These licences are called special licences and are issued under the London Local Authorities Act 1990 – 2000. The vast majority of London boroughs, including Brent, have established a special treatments group to ensure consistency and agree a list of special treatments. This list of special treatments is extensive and includes: acupuncture, body massage, facials, reflexology and tattooing. Licences are issued subject to a number of conditions which include the applicant and therapists passing a fit and proper persons test, qualifications check and an inspection. The location of the massage parlours largely correlate with the commercial hotspots identified by the police in relation to brothels. We heard that these massage parlours are inspected annually and receive few complaints. The inspections focus on compliance with health and safety issues and infection control. The inspections are unannounced and the inspectors check the identity of those present with the qualification certificates provided with the licence application, though he agreed that qualifications could be forged. The inspectors can talk to the women present and if they suspect anything they would inform the police Clubs and Vice Unit CO14.

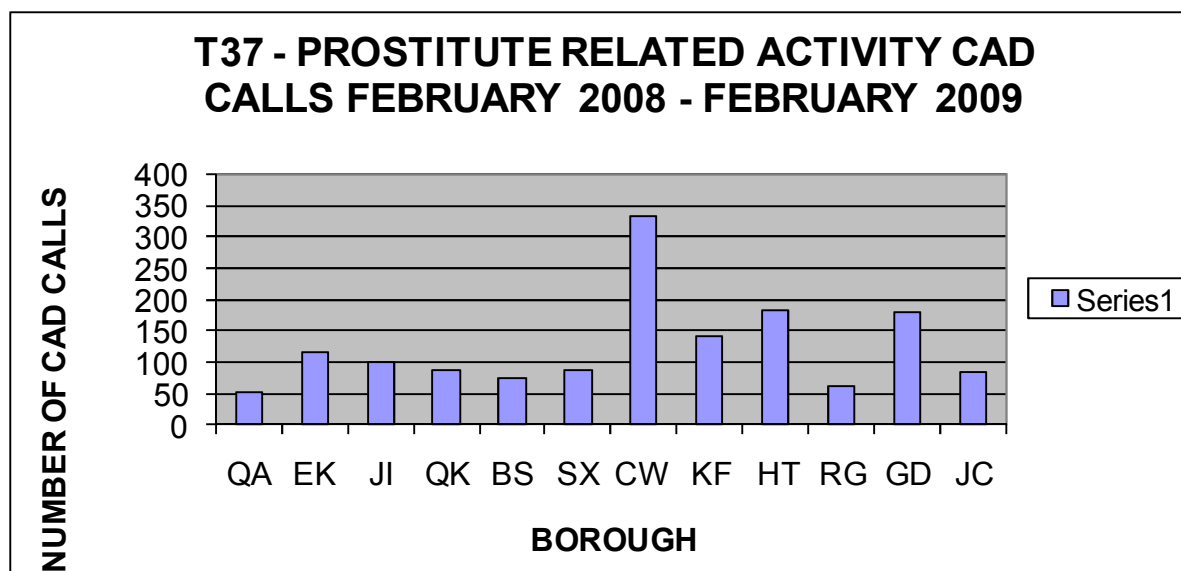
Eaves POPPY Project told us that there had been 13 referrals of trafficked women from Brent between April 2004 and January 2009. This meant that Brent was in the middle in terms of London Borough referrals, Westminster has the highest number of referrals at 109, Bexley has the lowest at 1. The women referred from Brent were aged between 18 and 43 from nine countries and three continents. The top three countries of origin nationally were Nigeria, Lithuania and China. In Brent the top two were Romania and Lithuania. CO14 told us that in London the top two nationalities are Lithuania and Latvia. The sources of referrals to Eaves POPPY Project from Brent included local NGO's, Willesden Police Station, Individual PCs, the Sapphire Unit and the Lithuanian Embassy.

The police provided a breakdown of Computer Aided Despatch reports (CAD), during the twelve months between February 2008 and February 2009, which related to prostitution. Fifty per cent of all calls were received during the weekend (Friday – Sunday) and sixty three per cent were received between 8pm and 8am. There were slightly more calls in the north of the borough than the south of the borough. The task group believes that the greater prevalence of calls from the north of the borough could be because people in the more affluent north of the borough are more likely to be proactive and complain.

Police custody reports covering the twelve months between 1st April 2008 and 31st March 2009 show a total of 21 arrests in relation to prostitution:

- Controlling a prostitute for gain – 3 arrests
- Keeping / Managing a brothel – 3 arrests
- Managing / assisting the management of a brothel – 4 arrests
- Placing adverts for prostitution - 10 arrests

Information on prostitution related CAD Call for other London boroughs is set out below.



KEY TO BOROUGHES AND TOTALS	
QA – Harrow	52
EK – Camden	116
JI – Redbridge	99
QK – Brent	86
BS – Kensington & Chelsea	75
SX – Barnet	87
CW – Westminster	334
KF – Newham	142
HT – Tower Hamlets – Olympic Borough	184
RG – Greenwich – Olympic Borough	60
GD – Hackney – Olympic Borough	178
JC – Waltham Forest – Olympic Borough	84

NHS Brent told us about the link between the sex industry and drugs. A short survey they conducted with alcohol and drug services they commissioned suggested that between five and 10% of women accessing services are involved in the sex industry, mainly on street work. This would translate into 50 and 125 problem drug users involved in the sex industry, though it is difficult to get exact numbers. The main drugs of choice for this group are heroin and/or crack cocaine. The highly addictive nature of crack cocaine means that addicts need to spend £200 - £300 per day. Many women in this situation are selling sex to support their own and in some cases their 'boyfriend's' or pimp's addiction as well.

Brent police told us that prostitution was not high on their list of priorities current top priorities are burglary and violence, though this does include violence against women. They admitted that there are gaps in their intelligence relating to the sex industry in Brent and gaps in training about how to deal with the women they encounter in this situation. The task group is concerned that by not having this as a high priority a space is created within which organised crime could become established and violence against women remain invisible. We are particularly concerned about the impact of a major sporting arena and the Olympics on demand for prostitution, this is dealt with in the next section of the report.

We heard from CO14 that they are able to provide training to Safer Neighbourhood Team's, which Brent Police are now in the process of arranging. The Association of Chief Police Officers, which leads on vice also provide a 4 day residential course to sergeants. In addition CO14 provide advice to the police on their website and are in the process of producing cards and a booklet which will contain useful information including referral routes. This will be available from December 2009.

Recommendations

That the Brent police make tackling prostitution in Brent a higher and more co-ordinated priority.

That Brent Police:

- **Enhance the awareness of Brent police officers and staff about the issues faced by women involved in prostitution and those who have been potentially trafficked.**
- **Provide appropriate training to selected police staff around how to support and deal with women affected by these issues. (This is to include for example advice about tactical options in relation to dealing with a report of a local brothel).**
- **Provide clear guidance as to how to report a crime against a woman affected by these issues and/or other concerns.**

The Impact of a Major Sporting Arena

The task group was keen to learn more about the impact that a big sporting arena would have on demand for prostitution and opportunities for organised crime. Wembley regularly hosts sporting and entertainment events and will be used to host events during the Olympics.

A report produced by the Future Group entitled *Faster, Higher, Stronger: Preventing Human Trafficking at the 2010 (winter) Olympics*⁹ was published in 2007 and investigated the impact that the Winter Olympics in Vancouver would have on rates of human trafficking particularly women trafficked for prostitution. The report highlighted that according to the Greek Ministry of Public Safety's data there had been a 95% increase in the number of identified human trafficking victims during the 2004 Athens Olympics. In 2005 the number had declined by 24% but was still 47% higher than it was in the year preceding the Olympics. In addition it was reported that the German Government told the Council of the European Union in 2007 that the demand for prostitution in and around venues did increase during the 2006 World Cup, though this increase was short lived.

CO14 informed us that evidence of increased prostitution was already being seen around some of the Olympic construction sites. DI Hyland believed that Brent should take action now to prevent any increase taking hold because in his view once an increase in organised crime occurs it is difficult to reduce it. We were informed that a new Olympic vice team was being created to work with the five Olympic boroughs and he would ensure that Brent was included in this work.

During our visit to Safe Exit¹⁰ we were told that they were working with the five Olympic boroughs to develop a joint strategy relating to prostitution and that a conference would be held later in the year. The chair of the task group asked Safe Exit to ensure that Brent was included in any future work. The task group asked the interim Head of Community Safety to attend the Prostitution and Olympic Summit which was held on 29th September 2009.

While we would like to see Brent Council and its partners continue working with the other Olympic boroughs we realise that this is a London wide issue. Olympic visitors will stay throughout London, not just confined to areas around the venues. We would therefore recommend at the council and its partners lobby the Mayor of London to ensure that a pan London prostitution strategy is developed.

Recommendations

That Brent Council and partners, via the crime prevention strategy group, continue the work the task group has started with the CO14, Safe Exit and other Olympic boroughs to reduce the opportunities for organised crime, trafficking and prostitution associated with major sporting events.

That the council and partners lobby the Mayor of London to ensure a pan London strategy / approach is developed prior to the Olympics

⁹ The Future Group is a Canadian based organisation www.thefuturegroup.org

¹⁰ An initiative set up by Toynbee Hall, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, the Metropolitan Police and Providence Row Charity to develop better services for women in prostitution.

Tackling Sex Industry Adverts in Brent

As already stated the catalyst for this review was Eaves POPPY Project's Big Brothel report that identified Brent as having the second highest number of adverts for brothels in London. This does not mean that Brent has the second highest number of brothels or the second largest prostitution problem in London but the information available to us does indicate that there are pockets of on and off street prostitution in the borough.

Reducing demand for the purchase of sex in Brent would make the sex industry less lucrative for organised criminals and reduce the demand for women. We heard from CO14 that one flat in Soho could generate as much as 1 million pounds a year. To our great surprise we learnt from CO14 that the only person in the sex market chain who could not be prosecuted was the man who purchased sex, unless he was kerb crawling. Those who can be prosecuted include: the person who controls the women, the landlord of the premises, the person that prints the cards, the person who places the cards, the maid and the women,

The government is trying to tackle demand by making it an offence to pay for sex from someone who is controlled for another person's gain. The Mayor of London's proposed strategy on violence against women¹¹ suggests working with partners including local authorities to develop a public awareness campaign aimed at deterring paying for sex. We would urge Brent Council and its partners to take the opportunity to take part in any campaign that is aimed at reducing demand for the purchase of sex services.

During the course of our investigation we have heard more about the ways that the organised sex industry advertises its trade. These include:

- Local newspapers
- Newsagents window
- Phone cards
- And internet sites

Like any industry, advertising the availability of a 'service' in an area brings those wishing to purchase it into the area if it didn't advert, cards etc would simply not exist. Research suggests that advertisements placed in local newspapers are the most commonly used method men will use to make contact with women for sexual purposes¹². A government report, *Women Not for Sale* produced by the government Equalities Office 2008, estimates that nationally this type of advert accounts for £44m of advertising revenue this equates to 2% of total classified ads revenue¹³. This report also identified London as one of the regions with a particularly high concentration of this type of advert. In addition there is concern about how explicit the adverts are and the wording used. For instance words like 'young', 'new' and 'exotic' are used along with reference to the nationality of the women advertised.

The Publishing Director of Archant London told us that the revenue from this type of advertising accounts for around £1.5 million annually which is about 10% of income. The

¹¹ The Way Forward- a call for action on violence against women April 2009

www.london.gov.uk/mayor/crime/vaw/

¹² 'its just like going to the supermarket': men buying sex in East London; Kelly et al: Child & Women Abuse Studies Unit 2007. As quoted in 'Women Not for Sale, Government Equalities Office, 2008

¹³ Women Not for Sale, government Equalities Office, 2008

percentage has increased recently mainly because income from other core categories of advertising such as property and motoring has reduced. He told us that those placing this type of advert usually pay in cash and the newspaper asked them to sign to say that the premises being advertised is only offering massage, though they realised that this was unlikely to be true. The Publishing Director told us that guidelines were available to those members of staff taking the adverts so that words relating to ethnicity or age were not included. When challenged with examples from a recent edition of the local paper he said that some adverts containing these words do get through but he will raise the issue with his staff. He also informed us that there had, in recent years, been a shift toward internet advertising, but agreed that the number of adverts placed regularly and the fact that those placing them get upset if there is a misprint in the advert suggests that this form of advertising worked.

The task group heard that there has been an ongoing debate within the Archant group about carrying this type of advert, with a huge difference of opinion, but in the end it was a commercial decision for the group to continue to carry them. We also heard that residents in the Ham & High area, another Archant owned local newspaper serving an area close to Brent had successfully campaigned to remove boxed adverts with photographs with line adverts with toned down language. The task group was uncomfortable that a largely middle class campaign could have this result while Brent's local newspaper still had wording that the publisher itself said should not be appearing.

The task group has considered the issues around advertising in the local press very carefully. We have heard the view that the adverts are a good source of intelligence and that they should be toned down rather than removed. We have also heard from CO14 and Eaves POPPY Project that the adverts fuel demand and are frequently situated near the sports pages, the pages most likely to be read by young people, particularly young men. One powerful argument put to us was – you would not find it acceptable for adverts to appear about where to buy drugs or which houses were empty to burgle, so why are these adverts acceptable? We understand that the Crown Prosecution Service is currently exploring ways to make carrying this type of advertising an offence.

We have heard so many times about the links between the organised sex industry, drugs and other forms of organised crime and the plight of the women who become a commodity to trade that we are convinced that it is right to oppose these adverts. Our ultimate aim therefore would be for this type of advert to be banned from local newspapers and would add our voice to that campaign. Meanwhile we would like the council and partners to keep lines of communication open with the local press to influence the content of the adverts, so that pictures and information about ethnicity and age of the women are not included. We would also call on the newspaper publishers to carry a prevention and deterrent advert alongside sex industry adverts. This advert should include useful contact telephone numbers. Similarly prostitution related articles in the local press should also carry these contact numbers.

The Mayor of London and CO14 are working together to talk to telephone companies about blocking the telephone numbers used in adverts and dealing with printers who produce the cards found in telephone boxes and other locations. We believe that the council and

partners could also contribute to this by making it a priority for all front line staff, whether street sweepers or policemen to remove these cards wherever they are found.

Recommendations

That the council and partners continue the task group's work and keep lines of communication open with the press to influence them to keep to their own guidelines and ensure that adverts relating to the sex industry do not include, for example:

- **Photographs**
- **Information on ethnicity**
- **Information on age**

That local newspaper groups operating in Brent agree to carry a prevention and deterrent advert next to sex industry related adverts, the contents of which will be agreed by partners but will include useful contact numbers.

That it is a priority for all front line local authority and partner staff to remove cards advertising sex services from public area.

Working in Partnership to Provide Services for Women In and Exiting Prostitution

To gain a clear picture of the types and range of services that should be available for women wanting to exit the sex industry we talked to a number of organisations. Locally we heard from NHS Brent that they do currently provide drug and alcohol services that were mainly focussed on the drug hotspots in Brent, which largely correlate with areas of on-street prostitution. We also talked to some voluntary groups, like Women's Aid and the Asian Women's Resource Centre who operate in Brent and have been approached by women for help.

The predominant message we got from all of the organisations we talked to was that the needs of the women were complex. Eaves POPPY Project told us that there was a wide range of services required and Safe Exit, who work with mainly street sex workers confirmed that a holistic approach is needed as women have many interlinked problems. Overall services identified by the organisations we talked to were:

- Emergency medical treatment
- Sexual health
- Mental health
- Drugs and alcohol
- Immigration and asylum
- Supported housing
- Legal advice and advocacy
- Financial assistance
- Training, education and employment

We heard that prior to Safe Exit being set up at Toynebee Hall (Tower Hamlets) a stakeholder event was held which showed that lots of different organisations were operating in the area but that there was no co-ordination. A partnership steering group was set up to bring together voluntary and statutory agencies including the police and the local authority. This is chaired by a local councillor. There is a larger forum that operates on a thematic approach and is open to anyone to attend. The initiative is funded by the David Isaacs fund and the Tower Hamlets Partnership.

The Make a Change project was set up just over two years ago following the murders of women involved in prostitution in Ipswich. The Police, Probation Service, DAAT and the local authority came together to develop a clear set of strategic priorities that because they are intertwined needed to be delivered using a multi-agency approach. Strategic priorities included:

- Clear and agreed vision
- Intelligence gathering
- Developing routes out
- Tackling Demand
- Prevention of Children under 18 being abused through sexual exploitation
- Community Intelligence

And more recently:

- Coercive Adults
- Off-Street Prostitution

They did experience some barriers to getting the project going, such as different organisational cultures, commitment and ability to share information, but they are adamant that a strategy owned by all relevant partners provided the leadership and focus that this problem required. They believed that the backing of the council's leadership was key to this approach working.

The Make a Change team have undertaken a lot of awareness raising activities particularly with childcare teams who were not previously looking for sexual exploitation of 13 -15 year olds. Since then the numbers of children being supported have increased from 5 to 35. The team have identified that the same men (some women are involved) are involved in grooming children and adults. Local residents have taken an interest in this work, with public meetings held in affected areas. The team has gained a lot of intelligence this way. They have also gained recognition that prostitution is not 'here to stay or 'part of life'.

At the start of this report we highlighted that a large proportion of young women involved in prostitution had been looked after children. A report recently produced by Barnardo's, *Whose Child Now*¹⁴ highlights the issues around sexual exploitation particularly the links between children who frequently go missing and sexual exploitation and trafficking within the UK. We understand that the local safeguarding children's board has children that go missing as one of its three priorities for the year ahead. We would like to ensure that this issue is highlighted across the partnership.

¹⁴ Whose child now was published by Barnardos in November 2009

Ipswich are now starting to develop an off street prostitution strategy, but recognises that off street work requires links with different organisations like the fire service and trading standards. Emerging priorities for their strategy include: trafficking, exploitation and young people.

The task group was impressed by the partnership approach to developing a joint prostitution strategy and believes that this is the best way to tackle this problem and develop routes out of prostitution for women in or passing through Brent.

One of the main problems all of the agencies we talked to identified was housing, whether to get women away from situations that were unhealthy like 'crack houses' or to get them away from manipulative 'boyfriends' or criminal gangs.

The task group is aware when talking to organisations like Safe Exit and Make a Change Ipswich that they are mainly dealing with on street prostitution, where the women are visible and are largely British nationals with recourse to public funds. A large proportion of the sex industry in Brent is off street, which, as we have heard is more likely to include foreign nationals and possibly trafficked women, many of whom may not have recourse to public funds.

The Solace report mentioned earlier in this report, *The role of local authorities in addressing trafficking*, says that although many adult trafficked women may not have recourse to public funds local authorities can provide services on a discretionary basis. We believe that this could also apply to local authority partners. Upon identifying a women who may have been trafficked, local authorities or partners should contact Eaves POPPY project or another specialist organisation such as the UK Human Trafficking Centre for advice and assistance

The task group was keen to explore other practical measures that the council and partners could take to disrupt the sex industry in the borough. One option put forward by CO14 was suggested that if a brothel was being run in the area council could write to the Landlord or letting agent and tell them they are breaking the law. CO14 can assist with this by helping to develop a standard letter. It should also be possible to make checks against council tax to check whether the property is listed as domestic or business and to see if incorrect declarations are being made.

Recommendation

That a Partnership Strategy on prostitution is produced which includes the development of services to help women exit.

That a Stakeholder Event is held to bring together all relevant agencies in the borough, to help develop the Partnership Strategy.

That a Partnership Group be set up to take this work forward. This should be the responsibility of the Local Strategic Partnership and include some of the task group membership to ensure continuity of developing expertise. The work of the group should include:

- **Identifying resources available to provide services and assistance for women exiting prostitution**

- **Ensuring all relevant agencies know how to identify and respond to women in need of assistance.**
- **Continue to gather and examine evidence about the scale and nature of prostitution in Brent**
- **Develop and update a list of policy and tactical leads from partner organisations, and a map of services and pathways available to women within Brent and nationally**

That action against landlords is taken when a brothel is identified - eg letter to tell them they are breaking the law, and checks against council tax

That NHS Brent develops a treatment and care pathway for those women who are involved or want to exit prostitution.

References

The task group referred to a number of reports in the course of its work. Key documents include:

The Poppy Project (2008) Big Brothel A survey of the Off-Street Sex Industry in London, Eaves: London

Sandra Dickson, The Poppy Project (2003). Mapping Commercial Sex Across London, Eaves: London

Julie Bindell, The Poppy Project (2006). No Escape? An investigation into London's Service Provision for Women Involved in the Sex Industry, Eaves: London

Home Office (2004) Paying the Price a consultation paper on prostitution

Home Office (2006) A Co-ordinated Prostitution Strategy and a summary of responses to paying the price

Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership Ipswich, Street Prostitution Strategy 2007 - 2012

Shelter (2004) Off the streets – tackling homelessness amongst female street-based sex workers

Centre for Social Justice, DFES Children looked after in England 2005-2006

Solace (2009) The role of local authorities in addressing human trafficking

Mayor of London (2009) The way forward – A call for action to end violence against women

The Future Group (2007) Faster, Higher, Stronger – preventing human trafficking at the 2010 Olympics

Government Equalities Office (2008) Women not for sale