



## Information

# Policing Prostitution and HT of Sex Workers Strategy

### Aim:

Surrey Police is committed to protecting vulnerable people from human trafficking and sexual exploitation. This strategy aims to provide a consistent and holistic approach to policing prostitution that keeps in balance the three essential elements of individual, community and the investigation and prosecution of those who exploit and abuse.

### Introduction

- 1.1 The policing of prostitution continues to present difficult challenges for those involved. This is understandable but needs to be addressed. The tragic episode of the 'Ipswich murders' of five female on-street sex workers in late 2006 has led to many policing lessons being learnt.
- 1.2 There are many factors at play, which can be summarised under two main headings. The first is the continual association between on-street prostitution and addiction to illegal drugs, often heroin and crack cocaine. This is not known to be issue within Surrey at present. The second is the off-street prostitution linked to organised crime – a lucrative business for those in charge.
- 1.3 This strategy supports the understanding that policing of prostitution will at best only achieve short-term results unless there is effective partnership at the local and strategic level to support victimised individuals and communities with appropriate legislation and enforcement resources.
- 1.4 The most obvious, but generally the most neglected, victim is the sex worker. In most cases in England and Wales today this will be an adult woman, but may also be a man, a child or a transperson. The physical and emotional damage prostitution can cause to vulnerable individuals should be at the forefront of operational policing
- 1.5 The impact of the crimes committed against adults trafficked for sexual exploitation is considerable. Intimidation of trafficked humans is likely to be a significant inhibition on seeking help to exit or provide evidence against those who have abused and exploited.
- 1.6 This strategy is informed by and should be read in conjunction with the following national guidance:
  - ACPO Strategy & Supporting Operational Guidance for Policing Prostitution and Sexual Exploitation (2011)
  - Department for Children Schools and Families' guidance Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation, supplementary guidance to 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2009)
  - Human Trafficking: the Government's Strategy (2011)
  - Home Office Review of Effective Practice in Responding to Prostitution (2011)

## 2. Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking – Surrey Police strategy

- 2.1 Sexual Exploitation may take many forms including the exploitation of adults who are vulnerable because of a recognised disability, substance addiction or emotional immaturity to those who are 'trafficked' into prostitution and forced to work in the sex industry.
- 2.2 Surrey Police acknowledge that there are some adults who choose to work in the sex industry and are not vulnerable or under duress.
- 2.3 People who are exploited for whatever vulnerability or are under duress and those who have made their own choices about working in the sex industry deserve fair, equal and proportionate treatment when they are a victim of crime or come to the notice of police.

- 2.4 In conjunction with partners, Surrey Police will proactively police those who are involved in the management of brothels where there is information that sex workers are the subject of human trafficking or organised crime. Additionally, appropriate police action will be taken where there is documented evidence that a brothel is causing anti-social behaviour or other negative impact on the local community, again in conjunction with our partners at an early stage.

### **3. Strategic Principles**

- 3.1 A set of key principles has been established upon which to base this strategy.

- 3.2 These may be summarised as:

- Prostitution is victim-centred, not victimless;
- Individuals and communities can be victimised;
- Enforcement alone is an inadequate solution;
- As a law enforcement agency, the safety of people engaged in sex work must be paramount to the police service;
- The main ethos behind this strategy is to reduce harm and increase public confidence, utilising an approach that considers risk, threat and harm to all;
- Prostitution can only be successfully tackled in partnership with other key agencies, organisations, individuals and local communities by addressing each motivating factor.
- This strategy supports partner organisations and projects offering support services to sex workers and those offering support to sexually exploited children and young people, including those that offer prevention/diversion from entry, health, social care and exit support;
- The strategy supports health and education initiatives, especially those which diminish or eliminate dependence on illegal drugs and which promote more mainstream lifestyles and careers;
- The strategy embraces everyone, regardless of age, gender or sexual orientation but the response to child victims of sexual exploitation is necessarily different to the response to adults involved in prostitution;
- The strategy treats all children and young people abused through prostitution as victims of child abuse.

### **4. Individuals**

- 4.1 A key aim must be to ensure that individuals do not become involved in prostitution in the first place. While people are engaged in prostitution, they should receive the normal protection in law for crimes committed against them and they should be able to access the health, social care, housing, safety and drug treatment support necessary to address their needs and to minimise risk, threat and harm to them.

- 4.2 Another key aim must be to ensure that where they are involved, opportunities should be created and appropriate interventions provided for them to leave prostitution. Enforcement should help to create exit opportunities for individual sex workers, and prosecution should usually only be used where there is evidence of a persistent and voluntary return to prostitution after exit opportunities have been provided.

- 4.3 These aims will be achieved by:

- Establishing links with key partners to create partnerships to create opportunities for sex workers to access holistic support including; healthcare (particularly, sexual health services & primary care), emotional support & counselling, housing advice and support, training & education, drugs harm reduction, treatment and rehabilitation services, safety advice & support for victims of rape and sexual assault, and opportunities for individuals to exit from prostitution;
- Creating a bespoke intelligence "picture" for each local area of active sex workers, which includes new sex workers to the area and exploiters/coercers;
- Ensuring consideration is given to the possibility of providing safe housing and witness protection to sex workers who wish to provide intelligence and evidence against individuals, who abuse, exploit and coerce;

- To deal with violent and sexual crimes / incidents on sex workers in the same vein as a 'Hate Crime / Incident'
- Thoroughly investigating reports of violence and sexual offences made by sex workers (these reports most emphatically must not be treated as "occupational hazards");
- Supporting new and established local "Ugly Mugs" schemes as well as supporting the introduction of a UK wide "Ugly Mugs" scheme;
- Supporting health, welfare, education and peer-led organisations in promoting safe sex practice by sex workers;
- With reference to Project Acumen, Setting the Record, treating foreign nationals as potential victims of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation unless and until it becomes clear that they have not been trafficked into the UK;
- Establishing investigative and intelligence-building partnerships and information exchange protocols with key partners, including NCA, CSP's, LSCBs, etc;
- Ensuring staff are fully briefed on the issues and understand their obligations to protect vulnerable and intimidated victims and witnesses.

## **5. Community issues**

- 5.1 The confidence and satisfaction of the public is important to the success and legitimacy of Surrey Police. A key aim is the implementation of successful, sustainable strategies that eliminate or substantially reduce prostitution which can increase community confidence and decrease the opportunities for other related forms of crime and disorder to emerge.
- 5.2 Another key aim is for sustainable, long term solutions to be developed as "Crackdowns" on either sex workers or brothels are at best likely to prove only short-term palliatives and may result in displacement to other areas. Displacement is not a solution.
- 5.3 These aims will be achieved by:
  - Surrey Police possessing a clear enforcement strategy for action against all parties involved in prostitution and sexual exploitation;
  - Using local NIM assessments and CSP audits and surveys to establish the scale of off- and on-street prostitution activity, and community concerns and expectations;
  - Engaging with community representatives in creating problem solving opportunities, but avoiding displacement-only options;
  - Supporting partners in establishing or maintaining diversion and exit support services, including drop-in centres, safe-houses, outreach workers, vocational training, health and educational welfare schemes;
  - Using partners in local authorities to monitor and potentially close down off-street activity i.e. massage parlours and saunas acting as brothels, following local risk assessments that take into account the risk and threat posed by the premises and to the individual sex workers as a result of any closure.

## **6. Links between organised crime and prostitution**

- 6.1 Prostitution has traditionally been a component of the business carried out by criminal organisations. Along with dealing in drugs and firearms, extortion, "protection" and illegal gambling, the sale of sex on a large scale is potentially extremely lucrative to semi-legitimate businesses and criminal organisations that align their trade according to customers' demands.
- 6.2 However organised prostitution remains a relatively underdeveloped police area of concern. This, therefore, offers an opportunity for police forces to dismantle organised crime: any complacency on the part of the criminals is an opportunity for police forces to bring about their downfall; targeting their weakest defences and using the resulting intelligence to bring down entire organisations.
- 6.3 The potential lines of investigation include financial investigation, immigration and taxation offences, and the use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS). The Regulation of Investigatory Procedures Act 2000 (RIPA) and the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) provide valuable legal tools through which to attack organised criminality associated with prostitution.

## **7. Sexual exploitation**

- 7.1 Given the opportunities for high profit from organised prostitution, criminals are likely to protect their assets using extreme measures: turf wars, murder or other critical incidents are a potential development. Surrey Police, therefore, aim to proactively identify, disrupt and detect this form of organised crime.
- 7.2 Organised off-street prostitution can be big business, with significant profits being made in a highly organised and businesslike manner. Properly focused financial investigations therefore have the capacity not only to create opportunities for prosecution but also to hit at the profits being made. Surrey Police will therefore aim to ensure that proactive intelligence means be used, providing full force area problem profiles that can be used at all three levels of the NIM and be proactive in the use of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA).
- 7.3 These aims will be achieved by:
- Setting specific intelligence requirements to create proactive intelligence gathering capabilities within the force by:
    - 7.3.1. Imaginatively using all intelligence gathering techniques
    - 7.3.2. Coordinating intelligence gathering through NIM
    - 7.3.3. Building an intelligence picture of:
      - Controllers, exploiters, abusers and supporting associates (including those in the control and exploitation chain who manage and administer prostitution related activity, when acting as so-called madams and maids etc);
      - Users and abusers of sex workers (i.e. people who pay for sexual services).

## **8. Human Trafficking for sexual exploitation**

- 8.1 Victims trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation have been identified throughout the UK. In practice, any off-street sex establishment in Surrey may be employing trafficking victims. Demand for sexual services remains strong, with the off-street sex trade employing an increasing number of foreign women, girls and men, some of who are human trafficking victims.
- 8.2 Much of the demand for victims appears to be generated by the criminals controlling them. They can make greater profits by forcing victims under their control to work longer hours and provide a wider range of sexual services, while allowing them to keep only a small fraction of their earnings. It is certain that fear of violence and intimidation from their criminal controllers makes many victims reluctant or unable to come forward.
- 8.3 Victims of gangs who operate sex workers will, naturally, be fearful of brutal retaliation by the organisation should they break away from their exploiters. This fear is the lifeblood of the criminal organisation, and Surrey Police will strive to do whatever it can to reduce or eliminate it and to encourage victims to come forward to give evidence that would secure a conviction and bring these brutal organisations to justice.

## **9. Operational management**

- 9.1 The strategy will be achieved by:
- Fully investigating allegations of assaults, sexual abuse and other crimes made by sex worker victims;
  - Instigate financial investigation and asset seizure through the use of POCA;
  - Ensuring consideration is given to implementing witness protection schemes to protect vulnerable victims via the South East Regional Witness Protection Unit (SERWPU) as appropriate;
  - Using alternative charges where appropriate, e.g. Perverting the Course of Justice, Conspiracy, False Imprisonment, etc;
  - Ensuring operational security (with significant risks being run by organized crime gangs and a highly vulnerable witnesses, it is essential that the integrity of operations is maintained at all times).

- Developing a local procedure which complements this strategy and outlines how the aims will be achieved in practice.

## **10. Summary**

- 10.1 Running through the whole strategy is the risk, threat and harm of all involved in prostitution and, the principle of partnership. Without partnerships at the appropriate level this strategy will not work, progress will not be made and risk, threat and harm will not be reduced. The onus to create effective partnerships rests with all responsible elements, particularly those who have a statutory requirement under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and not simply the police. The police however are often in a place to act as a catalyst and wherever possible should seek to use their expertise and resources to create and maintain effective partnerships. The victimised individuals and communities will benefit if we do.

**See Also:**

## **Document Meta Data**

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