

Living and working in areas of street sex work



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Living and working in areas of street sex work

From conflict to coexistence

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Summary

This study set out to consider whether residential streets could serve as shared spaces where residents and sex workers could coexist, drawing on research in residential neighbourhoods in five cities in England and Scotland, termed Eastside, Westside, Riverside, Central and Southside. Residents in most of the areas perceived a reduction in women working on the street, which may reflect changes in women's working patterns, with women working less visibly – through the use of mobile phones, for example – and sometimes being dispersed to other neighbourhoods. The overall result of this was that residents' concerns about street sex work in four areas appeared to have lessened in recent years. The exception was Riverside, where the closure of an informal tolerance zone with little consultation had led to the dispersal of street sex work across a wider residential area.

For many residents across all five areas, sex work was not considered a high priority in terms of their overall quality of life, particularly since for some its visibility was low. Nonetheless, many identified specific issues of concern, centring on the visibility of sex workers and associated noise and debris, particularly discarded condoms. Nearly all the street sex workers interviewed used drugs, particularly crack and/or heroin. Drug dealing and discarded needles were also therefore a concern to some residents.

Street sex work and kerb crawling had also impacted on some residents' feelings of personal safety, although wider concerns over crime often outweighed concerns relating specifically to sex work in discussions with residents. Physical violence was a concern for nearly all sex workers interviewed, reflecting the fact that many of them had personally experienced violence and abuse, particularly from clients, but also from some residents or

passers-by. One of the most widespread concerns for residents was that street sex working impinged negatively on their use of public space: for instance, some felt unsafe walking home. Many sex workers regarded certain public spaces, such as parks, as dangerous, indicating wider concerns over the perceived safety of some areas.

A minority of residents viewed enforcement as being most appropriate for removing sex workers and kerb crawlers from the area. Most residents and service representatives, however, were in favour of a more holistic approach, whereby any enforcement activities would be balanced with services for sex workers, including support for women 'moving on'.

Community responses to street sex work ranged from sympathy and engaging with working women, to action to displace them from local streets. Westside and Riverside had experienced the most active opposition to street sex work. In these areas, some residents' groups were involved in street patrols, although not all residents interviewed were in favour of such action. It appeared that these patrols were partly a response to perceived inaction by the authorities. Opposition from residents had also disrupted some project services, resulting in a reduction in services to sex workers. In Southside, responses were more mixed, ranging from active opposition to concern for the women. In Central, a low level of complaints from residents may have related to women being encouraged to work in the City Central beat, where there were fewer residents. In Eastside, residents had been involved in negotiations with sex work projects, leading to greater understanding between all parties.

While coexistence appeared to be greatest in Eastside and Central, across all five areas there

were mixed responses and examples of coexistence and dialogue between sex workers and residents. Greater tolerance appeared to reflect the extent to which sex workers lived in the area and were perceived as members of the community; the degree of communication between individual residents and sex workers; and the relative visibility of sex workers and their clients. Many of the sex workers interviewed also attempted to reduce the levels of nuisance to residents caused by their work.

Local authority and police responses often centred on attempts to reduce crime or move sex workers and kerb crawlers away from particular streets. There was considerable variation between the five areas in the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), Criminal Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and other measures to target and restrict the movements of sex workers. Concern was expressed by stakeholders over the restrictiveness of enforcement orders, their applicability in the absence of specific antisocial behaviour; and the potential for sex workers to be dispersed to other areas as a result. Sex workers noted that ASBOs had impacted on their movement, for example, in restricting their use of support services. The lack of support and appropriate care packages for women served with an ASBO was also a concern across the sites, although court diversion schemes in Central and Eastside gave sex workers an opportunity to engage with support projects and other services as an alternative to penalties.

Practical initiatives such as clean-up activities were felt to make a substantial difference to residents. Initiatives such as gating, CCTV and landscaping changes had also provided some reassurance. In many cases, such measures had caused sex workers to move to other areas to operate. If ill considered, these measures could reduce people's access to certain spaces and could diminish the quality of the local environment.

For many, a managed zone away from residential areas had much appeal, particularly as it was seen to reduce nuisance to communities and potentially to improve working conditions for sex workers. Agency staff stressed that regulations would need to be agreed and regular clean-up activities

undertaken, as well as mechanisms put in place to ensure sex workers' safety.

A key finding was the importance of consultation and involvement of all stakeholders in decisions regarding responses to street sex work. Most residents and agency representatives acknowledged that awareness raising and mediation activity could help to improve relationships between residents and sex workers. Such work through projects and other agencies had led to a more constructive dialogue with residents in several areas and had helped to raise awareness of the circumstances of sex workers. The need for multi-agency working to pursue longer-term strategies was widely recognised, although the degree of strategic co-operation and actors involved varied across the five sites. Where it worked well, this offered increased capacity, opportunity and the resources to pursue joint interests.

The authors conclude that there is considerable scope for improving relations between residents and street sex workers in local neighbourhoods, particularly through mediation and awareness raising as part of an integrated strategy involving a range of partners, including sex work projects; and where multi-agency working favours alternatives to increased enforcement, such as court diversion schemes. It is important that any strategy concerning street sex work within local neighbourhoods involves wide consultation and considers the potential for encouragement of shared space between different groups, as well as other options such as safety zones.

A national shift in focus towards increased support and services rather than penalties for street sex workers would be required to facilitate this model of dialogue. National policy also needs to accommodate exploration within each locality of a range of options for managing the issue, to enable local negotiation and consideration of shared interests to influence the way forward.

Introduction

This research project examines how residential streets in urban communities in England and Scotland characterised as areas of female street sex work are used and shared. While sex work may be seen as a relatively new feature in some areas, in others it has been a part of the urban street scene for many years. Inevitably, some residents are less content than others with this state of affairs, with some feeling that the presence of sex work restricts their use of public spaces at particular times.

The aims of this study were therefore:

- to assess the range of community responses to street sex work, identifying why and how groups in some areas have sought to 'reclaim' the streets by excluding sex workers, while others exhibit greater tolerance;
- to identify policies that may reduce tension and conflict in areas of sex work; and
- to explore whether residential streets can become shared spaces where residents and sex workers can coexist.

The research forms part of the wider Joseph Rowntree Foundation 'Public spaces, shared places?' programme, which is concerned with developing our understanding of social relations and interactions within public spaces, to help inform policymakers and practitioners about how public spaces function and what this might mean for the design and management of these spaces.

The context and research methodology for this study are outlined in this chapter. Chapter Two outlines the characteristics of the case study areas explored in this project. Chapter Three considers the experiences of sex workers and explores community responses to sex work. Chapter Four analyses agency responses to street sex work in the case study areas and

stakeholders' views on future responses to street sex work and Chapter Five considers the conclusions and policy and practice implications arising from the findings.

Research design

The report draws on a detailed study of street sex work in five cities in England and Scotland carried out between July 2004 and September 2005. The study involved a literature review and fieldwork in five major urban centres, identified here as Eastside, Westside, Southside, Riverside and Central. The approach included:

- interviews with project staff and volunteers working with street sex workers;
- interviews and discussions with staff in public services, including the police, local authorities and drug treatment agencies;
- attendance and observation at meetings, including local prostitution forums, police liaison meetings and community meetings;
- observation of sex work project activities, including outreach sessions;
- five focus groups with agency representatives and four with community representatives;
- interviews with 36 sex working women; and
- interviews with 69 residents, and community and business representatives.

The study therefore took into account a wide range of views and the findings presented here reflect this. Further details of the methods and approach are provided in the Appendix at the end of this report.

Background

Street sex markets in Britain

The significance of street sex markets in Britain is hard to gauge, although sex work is a fact of life in many of our cities. As there have been no national multi-site audits of street sex work, it is extremely difficult to estimate the numbers of women who sell sex on the streets of British cities with any reliability or accuracy. A Scottish Executive report suggests that there are 1,400 women involved and 180 on the streets of the four large cities in Scotland on a typical night (Scottish Executive, 2005). There is no equivalent national estimate in England and Wales of the numbers of street-based sex workers, but the Home Office cites an example of 635 women working on the streets in London in 1997 in a six-month period, with 118 estimated to be on the streets in any one night (Home Office, 2004). Matthews (2005), drawing on police data for 2004 in 18 cities in England and Wales (excluding London), found the number of street sex workers with whom the police had come into contact over the past 12 months ranged from 30 to 300 according to the city context (although smaller numbers, ranging from 10 in one small beat to 150 in a large city, were thought to be currently active). The average number of women per night ranged from five to 25 depending on the location, with over half the locations reporting 10 or fewer working in their area on any one night. This estimate is complicated by the fact that some women move between locations and different agencies and groups may have different methods of recording numbers. Individual project statistics and studies in specific locations suggest that official figures may underestimate the numbers of women working in the sex industry (Sanders, 2004b).

Although there is no real certainty regarding numbers, it is generally agreed, however, that the street sex market is diminishing in importance as mobile phones and the internet provide new ways of making contact with clients. Nonetheless, street sex markets are well established in many UK towns and cities, providing perhaps the most visible manifestation of sex work (and one continuing to attract significant numbers of clients). Furthermore, while indoor working may be an

option for many, this may not be feasible for all because of problems such as homelessness and drug use (Sanders, 2004b; Galatowicz et al, 2005). Some sex workers also exhibit 'occupational mobility', moving between indoor and outdoor working as circumstances dictate, making the overall picture of markets in different cities a dynamic and shifting one (Hubbard and Sanders, 2003).

Street sex workers can be a vulnerable and marginalised group. Research shows high levels of violence and robbery against street sex workers, perpetuated by clients, passers-by, 'pimps' or managers and, on occasion, local residents who object to the selling of sex in their neighbourhoods (McKeganey and Barnard, 1996; Phoenix, 2002; Hester and Westmarland, 2004). Street sex workers may also be vulnerable to exploitation from drug dealers, as many drug-using women sell sex to fund their drug use. The prevalence of crack cocaine in street drug markets has also led to increased risk taking and extended working hours for some sex workers, increasing their exposure to violence (May et al, 1999, 2001; Becker and Duffy, 2002). In light of these concerns, public spaces may become sites of risk and exploitation for some street sex workers, raising the importance of increasing our understanding of this issue to ensure appropriate responses to address their needs, while responding to the legitimate concerns of the wider community about street sex work.

Community space, public space

If city life entails a 'being together of strangers' (Young, 1990, p 237), public space, including our civic centres and neighbourhood streets, should be a place where people's differences can be expressed and celebrated and where all may gather, free from exclusionary violence (Mitchell, 1996; CABE, 2004). However, the introduction of new surveillance technologies (CCTV), neighbourhood watch, the gating of communities and new public order legislation all undermine the idea of free space open to all and are an indicator of the conflicts that can occur between different users of public spaces. Indeed, the extent to which public space has ever been truly public or enjoyed by all members of the community is questionable. Public spaces can, in fact, become sites where

tensions between different norms of acceptable behaviour are exposed and can become sites of social conflict.

These observations on public space are particularly relevant to understanding the experiences of sex workers. Sex workers are, of course, residents in neighbourhoods, sometimes the very neighbourhoods in which they work. Some have family in and/or historical connections to the area. Even when they do not reside in the area, they inevitably contribute to the local economy and may be welcomed by publicans, café owners and shopkeepers. Their social relationships with others in the neighbourhood are often very strong. Yet, as a marginalised and stigmatised group they are rarely – if ever – consulted in the processes of developing or renewing urban public spaces and both resident and agency responses to them show that they are not always welcome (O'Neill et al, 2000).

Street sex work and local communities

To date, there has been surprisingly little research on the conflicts emerging over the use of neighbourhood street space for sex work and limited research on residential experiences of living in areas of street sex work. In several communities, however, residents have felt that the effects of street sex work have reached intolerable levels and have canvassed agencies, predominantly the police or local authorities, to take action against it. In some cases, residents have taken matters into their own hands and have organised street patrols to remove sex work from their neighbourhood, occasionally responding to sex workers with abuse and violence (Hubbard 2002; Sanders 2004a). In some areas, a formal Street Watch group has been formed to monitor activity, often with support from local agencies, including the police. Originally, Street Watch was conceived as a general crime prevention programme, but in practice it has tended to become focused on particular illegal or antisocial activities or groups of individuals, such as street sex workers (Sagar, 2005).

Such community campaigns suggest a high degree of antipathy towards sex work in residential areas (Salt 1987; O'Neill and Campbell 2001). Not all communities have

responded to street sex work in the same way, however, with some communities appearing more tolerant and attempting to accommodate sex work and militate against its negative consequences rather than displace it elsewhere (Campbell and Hancock, 1998). This project seeks to examine how community responses have differed in five cities in Britain, to examine why these differences exist and what can be learnt for local and national policy from different approaches to the issue.

The national policy context

Currently, selling sex is not criminalised in Britain, and is regarded as a private transaction conducted between two consenting adults. There are, however, many pieces of legislation that seek to regulate and 'limit certain undesirable effects of prostitution while maintaining low levels of criminalisation' (Matthews and O'Neill, 2002, p xvii). Table 1.1 outlines the main legislation currently relating specifically to street sex work in England, Wales and Scotland¹.

In practice, the legislative framework creates a paradoxical situation where, although sex work may not be illegal, it is impossible for women to sell sex without breaking a number of laws while working. For instance, street sex workers routinely commit the offence of soliciting in public or quasi-public spaces (under the terms of the 1959 Street Offences Act and 1982 Civic Government (Scotland) Act), while their clients may be arrested for kerb crawling (under the terms of the 1985 Sexual Offences Act and 2001 Criminal Justice and Police Act). Yet these laws are enforced selectively and inconsistently by the police, who have favoured a form of regulation whereby sex work is spatially contained and informally tolerated as long as public complaints or political priorities do not demand a 'zero tolerance' crackdown (Matthews, 2005).

¹ There is also other legislation that might be invoked, for example in relation to procurement, buying sexual services from a minor and living off the earnings of prostitution, but these apply equally to indoor sex work.

Table 1.1: Key legislation pertaining to street sex work, England, Wales and Scotland

Offence	Act	Maximum penalty
England and Wales		
Soliciting or loitering for purposes of prostitution	1959 Street Offences Act	A fine
Causing or inciting prostitution for gain	1956 Sexual Offences Act; 2003 Sexual Offences Act	Six months' imprisonment or fine (magistrate's court) to seven years' imprisonment (crown court)
Kerb crawling (with persistence and in a manner likely to cause annoyance)	1985 Sexual Offences Act; 2001 Criminal Justice and Police Act; 2003 Sexual Offences Act	Arrestable offence: seizure of vehicle or driving ban
Antisocial behaviour	1998 Crime and Disorder Act	Serving of Anti-Social Behaviour Order, with up to five years' imprisonment or up to six months' imprisonment plus fine for breach
Scotland		
Any person loitering, soliciting or importuning in a public place for purposes of prostitution	1982 Civic Government (Scotland) Act, s.46	On summary conviction, a fine not exceeding £50
Men persistently soliciting or importuning for immoral purposes	1995 Criminal Law (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act, s.11(1)(b)	On summary conviction, six months' imprisonment or on indictment, two years
Antisocial behaviour	2004 Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act, s.4 and s.7 (repeals s.19 of 1998 Crime and Disorder Act)	Serving of Anti-Social Behaviour Order, breach of which results in: six months' imprisonment on summary conviction and/or a fine and on indictment to five years' imprisonment and/or a fine

The regulatory framework is a changing one, however, and in instances where the authorities are able to identify individual sex workers or their clients as causing persistent annoyance to communities, they may now be served with Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), Criminal Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (CRASBOs)² or injunctions. Such orders are becoming widespread, making it impossible for some individuals to sell sex without breaching an order, and hence becoming liable to arrest and imprisonment.

² ASBOs are civil orders made in court for which the police, local authorities and registered landlords can apply. Their aim is to protect neighbourhoods from anti-social behaviour that causes distress and harassment. An ASBO might prohibit a sex worker from entering a specific area. Breach of an order is a criminal offence. CRASBOs are added on to a criminal conviction and may be accompanied by restrictions, for example, on loitering. See www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/antisocialbehaviour/orders.

Partly in light of the regulatory difficulties in dealing with sex work and to consider the needs of both sex workers and wider communities, both the Home Office and Scottish Executive began reviews of their legislation and policy in 2004. The aim was to prompt a public debate on how to deal with the issues raised and to develop a coordinated strategy. Additionally, two pieces of Home Office-funded research have recently been completed that will shape policy responses to street sex work: *Tackling street prostitution: Towards a holistic approach* (Hester and Westmarland, 2004) and *Solutions and strategies: Drug problems and street sex markets* (Hunter and May, 2004), both of which advocate an integrated and multi-faceted approach to street sex work.

The Home Office published its Coordinated Prostitution Strategy and a summary of responses to the review of legislation and

policy, *Paying the price*, in January 2006. The strategy focuses on five key areas: prevention, tackling demand, developing routes out of prostitution, ensuring justice and tackling off-street prostitution. Proposals in the strategy include the introduction of new Intervention Orders to be attached to ASBOs and revision of the law on street offences to 'provide a penalty specifically tailored to the needs of men and women in prostitution' (Home Office, 2006, p 37). The strategy does not support the creation of managed areas.

The Scottish Executive also established an expert group to review the 'legal, policing, health and social justice issues surrounding prostitution in Scotland'. The first phase of the group's work focused on street-based prostitution involving women. The group's report, *Being outside: Constructing a response to street prostitution* (Scottish Executive, 2005), provided the basis for public consultation. The response of the executive to the consultation indicates that it expects local authorities to take a lead in developing approaches to street prostitution tailored to local need, in order to 'ensure community safety, to reduce the harm caused, and with the ultimate aim of supporting women to exit'. Street prostitution is considered to be a form of abuse against women and the policy goal is seen to fit with broader policies of tackling violence against women. The introduction of statutory tolerance zones is not supported by the executive. It proposes to replace the existing soliciting offence with a new offence focusing on the 'nuisance or harm arising from street prostitution-related activities, whether caused by seller or purchaser'. However, it does not give any guidance on the appropriateness of the use of ASBOs.

Local policy responses

At the local level, multi-agency responses to street sex work have appeared since the late 1980s in response to conflicting interests and tensions around the needs of communities, sex workers and agencies supporting sex workers. Prior to this, agency interaction with the issue centred on police or other criminal justice interventions at a local level (Matthews, 2005). For many women, this was characterised by regular arrests and fines from the police, with

the result that they usually returned to the street to earn the money to pay these fines. However, as public health became a more prominent national priority, there was a shift in emphasis and health-based and voluntary sector organisations evolved, providing services focusing on drug misuse, welfare and the well-being of sex workers; and local area child protection panels were set up to support the needs of children and young people exploited and abused through prostitution. Multi-agency prostitution forums have now developed in many cities to address these issues and may drive forms of intervention with differing priorities, levels of effectiveness and impact, often making explicit links to Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships.

In some cities, the crime and health agendas have come together with the establishment of arrest referral or court diversion schemes, which steer sex workers towards support services after arrest as an alternative to receiving a fine or other penalty. Crucially, some schemes have been run by sex worker support projects that have successfully engaged sex workers and gained their trust through outreach work (Aris and Pitcher, 2004). The merging of different agendas may have the effect of encouraging more holistic responses to the needs of sex workers in some cases, but the policy regarding ASBOs may pull in a different direction.

Conclusion

As this chapter establishes, public spaces are a forum where the tensions between local communities and sex workers play out, exposing some of the problems inherent in attempting to balance the needs and interests of different parts of the community. Both the Home Office and the Scottish Executive have initiated reviews of their policy in this area, in light of current concerns. The next chapter provides a profile of the five case study areas examined in detail in this project, setting out the differing context for community relations in areas of street sex work in each location.

2

Sex work, communities and policy responses in the case study areas

Introduction

The five areas chosen for this study, each in a different city in the UK, were selected to reflect a range of responses to street sex work. They were areas where researchers already had working relationships with local agencies, community organisations and projects offering services to sex workers. Each represented an established area of street sex working in a medium-sized to large conurbation (all cities had a resident population of more than a quarter of a million). In most instances, the case study areas represented the current principal area of female street sex working in the city. While male sex work was also reported to be present in at least two of the cities, the issues raised around male sex work are not considered in this report, because of differences in its nature and scope.

This section provides a profile of each of the areas in turn, considering: the sex workers' beat; neighbourhood characteristics; the sex worker population; local support projects; enforcement activities; and strategic multi-agency responses. It then considers the changing nature of street sex work and the nature of the community in the five areas.

The five case study areas

Eastside

The beat: The main beat area of Eastside is located just outside the centre of an average-sized city. The area has been a focus for regeneration activities over recent years. High-

rise flats are being demolished and replaced with alternative accommodation in the locality and some properties are being turned into student accommodation. While the area is primarily residential, there is also a parade of local shops and a small industrial site.

Neighbourhood characteristics: Using census sources (2001), the estimated residential population in Eastside is just over 4,300, of whom nearly two thirds are white, a quarter Asian and around 6% black. Only a quarter of the population live in owner-occupied accommodation, with more than a third in social rented housing and 20% in private rented accommodation. People of working age comprised nearly three quarters of the total population in 2001, of whom nearly 10% were unemployed. Over a quarter of the population were in receipt of benefit. A number of asylum seekers have been located in the area over the past few years; many are young, single men from former Eastern Europe and other countries.

The sex worker population: Street sex work has been a feature of this area for more than 40 years. A number of women sex workers live in or near to Eastside, while others come from other towns to work in the area periodically. Some five years ago, police estimated that there were approximately 70 women working on the streets of the area, about 15 of whom were thought to work on a regular basis. While the number of women on the street appears to have decreased slightly in recent years, it fluctuates in response to different factors such as residential action or enforcement activities. Indoor working is also a feature of this city, although generally outside the main street-working area. Most of the women street

workers in this area have had periods of homelessness and many are currently homeless.

Local support projects: Three projects work with street sex workers in the area, all of which are based in the voluntary sector. One of the projects (project A) offers a range of provision, through outreach and drop-in services, including sexual health advice and support, drugs prevention activities and, more recently, a court diversion scheme. It works with a number of different agencies within the city and has acted as mediator between the women and local communities. There is no formal 'zone of tolerance' in the area, but project A parks its outreach van in the industrial area two nights a week and there is informal agreement that the police will allow women to visit the van on these occasions. The other two voluntary projects are run by religious organisations and provide outreach and drop-in facilities and other support such as education and pastoral care.

Enforcement activities: Occasional police operations targeting street sex workers or kerb crawlers take place, but levels of activity are relatively low compared with some other cities in the vicinity. A small number of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) or Criminal Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (CRASBOs) have been issued against sex workers (a total of six by mid-2005), but these have tended to be primarily in the case of 'repeat offenders' who do not appear to be engaging with the support projects and none had been issued in recent months of fieldwork. Police generally notify project A prior to issuing a CRASBO and the local Drug Intervention Programme (DIP) team is also involved in service provision, but there is no care 'package' as such in place to accompany ASBOs.

Multi-agency responses: There is no city-wide prostitution forum and to an extent this may reflect the fact that the number of complaints from the local community has been fairly low, particularly since the sex worker support project began to undertake mediation activities. Up until recently, the main forum between local communities and statutory agencies in Eastside was the police liaison meeting, which has also been attended by sex work projects. When *Paying the price* (Home Office, 2004) was

issued, a community meeting was set up, facilitated by a local council officer, to formulate a response. This was attended by local residents, representatives from local agencies, sex worker support projects and some women who were, or had been, sex workers in the area. The response, while outlining residents' concerns, was also largely supportive of women sex workers locally. The community sex work forum that evolved from this has continued to meet in order to take some of the issues forward.

Westside

The beat: The Westside beat area is mainly in residential streets, around two miles to the west of a large city centre, which has a major entertainment centre, where there are many clubs, restaurants, bars and lap-dancing clubs. In the immediate vicinity is a busy main road, with a number of hotels that may be seen as a source of trade for the sex industry. Establishments such as saunas are also based on this road.

Neighbourhood characteristics: The census indicates that while many of the residents are retired professionals, there is also a significant population of working age. An increasing number of students live in the area and asylum seekers have also been located nearby in some of the flats and hostels. In 2001, the resident population of the area was just over 7,000, of whom more than half were white, nearly 30% Asian and 11% black. Compared with the other four sites, this was a relatively affluent area: 45% of households lived in owner-occupied accommodation, with around a quarter in each of the social rented and private rented sectors. People of working age comprised nearly 80% of the total population, of whom just over 5% were unemployed.

The sex worker population: Although there is some contention regarding when sex workers started working in Westside, it does appear that the problems were exacerbated in the mid-1990s when a number of street sex workers moved into the area as a result of the activity of residents in another area of the city where on- and off-street sex work had traditionally taken place. Police and project estimates suggest that there were between 70 and 100 women

working on the streets of Westside at that time (with weekly numbers in the region of 30). It appears that the number of visible street sex workers in Westside has dropped significantly in recent years, although some of the women seem to have been dispersed more widely to surrounding areas.

Local support projects: There are two main projects offering support to women working on the street. One is funded by a statutory agency and was established with a focus on sexual health issues, but within a package of holistic support. This project operates an outreach service to street sex workers, as well as having a drop-in facility and specialist clinics. The second project is based within the voluntary sector, with a religious ethos. Outreach is undertaken regularly by this project and drop-in facilities are also available.

Enforcement activities: Agency responses to street sex work have included a high number of ASBOs and injunctions issued against women street sex workers in the city and actions against kerb crawlers. More than 30 ASBOs have been issued against women working in the Westside beat area and civil proceedings have been initiated against more than 20 women. These should be accompanied by provision and support from local projects and services, but there is a resource issue here and it is not clear whether projects have always been involved as a matter of course.

Multi-agency responses: There is a city-wide multi-agency prostitution forum that meets regularly and has representation from key agencies such as the local authority Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP), police, housing and probation; sex work projects; and two active residents' groups from the Westside area. There was some antagonism between residents and sex work projects during the initial years of the forum but the forum has also brought an opportunity for increased multi-agency cooperation. Although the terms of inclusion of sex work projects appear to have been set within a formal framework of 'no tolerance', there is now greater recognition of the work of sex work projects within the forum, which appears to be moving on from the earlier enforcement-dominated approach and increasingly focusing on multi-agency initiatives to support sex workers in moving

on. It seems unlikely that the move towards support and exit will necessarily extend to a relaxation of the policy on zero tolerance or negotiation of sharing space, but there may be opportunities for reflection and encouragement of inter-agency cooperation and resources for work to meet sex workers' needs.

Riverside

The beat: Sex work has been historically associated with Riverside, a district to the north of a large city where soliciting has taken place around the main streets and environs of the nearby port area. In an effort to manage street sex work and to provide effective outreach support and health provision, an informal tolerance zone was set up by key agencies in the city in the mid-1990s in light of the HIV crisis. The area changed in the wake of redevelopment and increased complaints brought pressure to bear on the 'arrangement'. This resulted in the zone being closed and relocated to a street nearby. There appeared to be little consultation on this move and complaints were again received from residents in the immediate area, which led to the swift closure of the zone and increased enforcement activities resulting in the dispersal of women sex workers. The beat therefore now extends over a much wider area than before and includes a number of residential streets. There is an active residents' group in the area, which, since the zone's relocation, has organised media campaigns, community patrols and lobbying activities against street sex work in the area.

Neighbourhood characteristics: Overall, around 1,200 residents live in Riverside. The previous zone of informal tolerance had fewer residents but exhibited higher levels of multiple deprivation (according to the 2001 census) than some of the streets in which sex work now occurs. Owner-occupation was lower in the tolerance area (at around 40%) than in the newly affected areas, where it averages just over 50%. There were some pockets of extreme deprivation, including one area where 60% of those of working age were unemployed (with 40% long-term unemployed). The population in Riverside is predominantly white.

The sex worker population: Currently street sex work accounts for less than 10% of the city's overall sex industry. The number of women working in street sex work was estimated by local authorities to be around 100, with 40 to 60 expected to be working each night. These figures have been queried by the main support service and fieldwork suggests a much lower figure in recent months (never more than 20 women on the street between 8pm and 12pm and on some occasions only a handful).

Local support projects: There is one voluntary sector sex work project in the area, established in the late 1980s, which provides outreach and support in both street and indoor locations. Its focus is on prevention, harm reduction and other support to sex workers. The closure of the zone resulted in the loss of an established drop-in centre in the area. While the project continues to receive some financial support, a cut in funding means that its capacity for service provision has been greatly reduced.

Enforcement activities: There were initial attempts at dialogue between the support project and the residents in the aftermath of the zone closure and at the height of the resident patrols, but this was largely unsuccessful and the relationship has been at times highly polarised. Since then, the police have held community meetings with residents and authorities. Responses in the main have been in the form of increased arrests, increased patrols and a limited use of ASBOs (only two or three had been issued at the time of fieldwork, but many more were pending), although agencies are beginning to seek to develop a longer-term strategy.

Multi-agency responses: Responsibility for policy in the area lies with the city council, which produced a strategy in 2002. It proposed a number of possible interventions, including ASBOs, mediation and environmental measures. There has recently been an effort to establish a multi-agency strategy for the city, but there has been some disagreement regarding the overall philosophy and it is currently unclear whether what will emerge will be a shared vision.

Central

The beat: Street sex work takes place in three distinct street walking beats in this large city. The city also has a large indoor sex work scene with approximately 70 establishments. The three street beats are not interlinked, but are discrete areas separated from each other geographically within the city, with their own histories of street sex work. In this study, we focused on two of the three street beats.

City Central: The most active beat is immediately to the east of the city centre (we refer to this as the City Central beat). During a one-month period in 2004, the outreach project had contact with nearly 60 street sex workers and of these, nearly three quarters worked the City Central beat. This area is primarily an industrial area, close to a mainline station. There is a very small residential population in this area of just over 400, three quarters of whom are white. While renting is the norm, there are some housing developments associated with young professionals, although a significant number of residents also work in routine and manual forms of work. There is no official policy of 'zoning' in the City Central beat, but the police refer to the area as the 'area of lesser complaint' and encourage women to work in that area within certain hours rather than in other city centre areas. There has historically been a street sex working beat in the city centre: in the late 1990s, female street sex workers were encouraged to move from the previous site to City Central following increasing complaints from residents and businesses in the wake of regeneration. Complaints from the small number of residents and local businesses currently in the area are minimal. A Police Prostitution Liaison Officer has been in place for some years and if complaints are made, this officer will initially mediate between the community, street sex workers and the project. The officer liaises closely with the sex worker support project to encourage and follow up reports of violence. City Central beat itself is now earmarked for major regeneration over the next five to 10 years and already a large new city centre student accommodation development has opened on the edge of the area.

South Central: In this city, we also examined the beat to the south of the city centre, which we refer to as the South Central area. South Central constitutes a small beat, of around a half-mile radius. The area is residential, with some wide tree-lined streets and many large Victorian properties and has been known as an area of street sex work for more than 30 years. We estimate that around 1,100 people live in South Central. The population is ethnically diverse, with 58% white, a quarter Asian and around 9% black residents. Around 40% of households are owner-occupied, 20% social rented and 39% private rented. Around 80% of the population are of working age, with 7% unemployed. The area has undergone significant regeneration, with many properties being purchased by incoming professionals. Only a very small number of women continue to solicit in the area and those who do tend to live in or adjacent to the area. During the mid-to late 1990s there was a very active residents' group in South Central, which campaigned against street sex work in the area. This led to a range of police operations, some of them sustained and intense over recent years. Currently, there are no residents' groups that come together specifically to lobby or protest about street sex work.

Enforcement activities: The number of ASBOs served against women sex workers has been very small (one against a sex worker in the Central beat area and one against a sex worker in the South Central beat area): both relate to antisocial behaviour than sex work activities per se.

Local support projects: There is one dedicated street sex work project in the city. This voluntary sector project provides an outreach harm reduction service to all the three beats in the city by mobile car outreach. A large purpose-built mobile unit is also located in the Central beat several nights per week and a range of partner agencies attend to offer services and facilitate referrals. There is a fast track to the city's drug treatment service, which also provides a structured day care programme for women drug users and, through this, offers a range of exit support. The sex work project has a central role in a court diversion scheme.

Multi-agency responses: The city wide multi-agency forum was established in 1998 by the

city council in order to bring together a range of statutory and voluntary sector agencies to take a multi-agency response to prostitution. It has a wide range of agency members, is chaired by a city councillor and reports into CDRP structures. Residential or community groups are not represented on the forum, but community issues are fed in via the police and community safety representatives. The forum has a set of stated aims and a philosophy, which is to take 'a practical, non-judgemental view of adult prostitution'.

Southside

The beat: The Southside beat is an area a mile south of the centre of a medium-sized city. Sex work has been located for in this area for more than 50 years. By the late 1990s, street sex work had also become dispersed into other adjacent areas. In all these areas, the majority of streets where the women work are residential, with a small number of exceptions; they encompass large areas of small terraces with back alleyways and occasional blocks of flats.

Neighbourhood characteristics: Southside has a population of nearly 4,000 (2001), with just under a third white, 6% Asian and 6% black. At the time of the census, around 39% of households were owner-occupied, with 38% social rented and 17% private rented. Just over 70% of the population was of working age, of whom 9% were unemployed.

The sex worker population: In 2002-03, the statutory project contacted more than 90 women working on the streets, but numbers had declined to less than 50 by 2005. A significant proportion of the women contacted lived in the local city, with others coming into the area from surrounding towns and cities.

Local support projects: Targeted outreach to sex workers has been delivered for 10 years by a statutory-led support project, with a focus on sexual health and harm reduction. An additional voluntary sector project also carries out work with young people aged under 18 at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation. This service provides drop-in space one evening a week for adults. A supported hostel also offers support to female ex-drug users, the

majority of whom had previously been involved in street sex work.

Enforcement activities: There are currently no residents' groups that come together specifically to lobby or protest about street sex work, although the issue of sex work is still a matter of concern to a number of community forums and groups. In response to residents' complaints, the police in Southside pursued a policy of imposing ASBOs and CRASBOs against street sex workers, with 13 orders having been issued in total at the time of fieldwork. Running concurrently to the imposition of ASBOs against street sex workers, the police have also targeted men who pay for sex for kerb-crawling offences.

Multi-agency responses: A multi-agency forum was in existence in Southside from the late 1990s and was very active until late 2001. While the forum has met since then, chaired and administered by the police, and formal membership has been wide-ranging and included residential and community groups as well as statutory and voluntary sector partners, attendance of agency partners, including community representatives has been erratic and often poor. The group did not have any formalised aims and objectives. The forum met in late January 2005 and at that meeting it was agreed that no further meeting dates would be set because prostitution was to be addressed under new community partnership structures.

Street sex work in the areas

The sections above show a range of areas affected by street sex work and give an indication of differing responses by service providers. It should be noted that the context for responses was a dynamic one, as the street sex markets operating in these areas were often fluid and shifting. Many respondents reported a decrease in the number of women working on the streets and it was apparent that some women had changed their working patterns, for example through increasing use of mobile phones and in some cases moving to indoor working.

Changing working patterns

Residents in most of the areas reported some decline in the numbers of women working on the street over the past five years. While the numbers had reportedly declined in South Central, there had been no apparent change in the City Central beat. It also appeared that in some areas there were fluctuations in the numbers working. A project worker in Eastside felt that perception that the beat was 'quieter' might also be a result of some women working in a less visible manner, although the project was still seeing them on outreach. In Southside and Westside, agency staff attributed the apparent reduction in the numbers of women working in the area to changes in women's methods of working and their dispersal to other parts of the city as a result of enforcement.

In Riverside, it was perceived by some agencies and residents, as well as the sex work project, that the closure of the zone had resulted in removal of support services in the immediate vicinity. Women had also been dispersed to other areas and there was evidence that some women were working in isolation, with greater exposure to violence. Some of the women also referred to the impact of violence and harassment from some residents affecting their working methods and relative safety in Westside.

Sex workers also reported changes to their beats over the past five to 10 years. For example, client numbers had reduced because of the threat of enforcement in some areas, resulting in some women extending their working hours. In addition to moving out of their traditional beat as a response to enforcement activities, sex workers sometimes changed working locations within the beat and problems for residents could re-emerge in particular streets after a period of low activity, leading to periodic increases in complaints.

In some areas, project staff and some sex workers suggested that drug dealers had taken over the management of sex work from the traditional 'pimp'. While in some instances the relationship was seen as one of violence and coercion, in others relationships were becoming more covertly controlling, through reliance on drugs. In each of the areas, there

were also many women who described themselves as working independently, confirming research by May et al (2000), which found that while adult street sex workers were more likely than those working indoors to have a pimp, a large proportion and possibly a majority do not.

Movement between sectors of sex work

Many of the women interviewed were either in the process of moving on, with support from agencies and projects, or expressed a wish either to be out of sex work altogether, or to move off the streets into what was perceived by many as a more secure form of work. Some of the women had worked in other sectors of sex work, such as saunas or massage parlours, and some had worked from houses or flats, either on their own or with others. Using the phone to make arrangements also seemed to be an increasingly preferred mode of working, particularly as a means of avoiding being picked up by the police or encountering hostility from residents.

While indoor working was perceived to be a safer option by some residents and agency staff, others, including project workers, sounded a cautionary note. There were acknowledged to be barriers to entering establishments: for example, many indoor venues have strict regulations about drug use on the premises. There is also an implicit operational hierarchy, with on-street workers perceived as lower in status by some indoor workers. Indoor working was not safer in all cases, particularly for women who were drug-dependent and who would not be able to work in an establishment but may start working on their own or with friends from a house or flat and sometimes become isolated from services.

While some sex workers were positive about indoor working, others preferred to work outside, because they felt they had more autonomy on the street compared with working in managed establishments. The long hours, particularly in saunas and massage parlours, being told when to work, having less choice over the number of clients, sexual acts performed and sexual health issues, and having to hand over a large proportion of their earnings were all cited as negative aspects of

working in such establishments. For example, a worker in Riverside who had worked in both sectors expressed a preference for working on the street because “your money’s your own”.

Drug use, street sex work and communities

In most areas, there was reportedly an increase in drug use among street sex workers, although it should be noted that not all the current sex workers interviewed in this study were drug users. While crack cocaine appeared to be the main drug used by sex workers in most of the areas, in Riverside heroin use still appeared to predominate. Some residents and agency staff commented on the problems for neighbourhoods associated with drug use, such as discarded needles and evidence of crack use in public places, as well as increased levels of noise. One of the associated issues in some areas was the presence of crack houses. In Westside and Southside, for example, they could be set up in flats or houses in residential streets, creating a culture of fear for people living in the vicinity. In Riverside and Central, this was perceived to be less of a problem than in the other areas.

While some residents and other local representatives felt that drug use was a matter of choice, others expressed sympathy and understanding for the women. Crack use was seen to keep sex workers in their situation and also prevent them from engaging with services, because their concentration was affected and also because they became less visible to projects. It was also felt to impact on working practices and women’s sexual health and safety, as a result of extended working hours and increased risk taking. Some agency staff expressed concern that women with nowhere else to go were staying in crack houses, thus reinforcing their dependency.

Previous research has found that drugs and street sex markets may often coexist, but that the nature of the relationship is likely to differ according to individual areas, requiring holistic solutions tailored to the specific needs of each area (May et al, 1999; Pitcher and Aris, 2003; Hunter and May, 2004; Matthews, 2005). Drug and sex markets were seen by some residents and agency staff in our study as being interdependent, adding to fear and anxiety,

although there was also acknowledgement that drug dealing sometimes operated independently of the sex work scene. In the City Central beat, for example, there was perceived to be a separation between the two markets and it was acknowledged by some residents in Eastside that drugs had been a separate issue in the past and that not everything could be “blamed on sex workers”.

The communities in the case study areas

Before turning to consider the relationships between sex workers and the communities of which they sometimes form a part, it is important to understand the nature of the communities in the five sites. The areas exhibited some common characteristics in terms of social diversity; and although some, particularly Westside and much of Riverside, were comparatively affluent, all had pockets of deprivation.

The areas were under varying degrees of pressure from changes such as regeneration and population turnover. For example, Eastside’s social diversity appeared to have been increased by a recent influx of students, with the number of houses in multiple occupancy perceived to be placing considerable pressure on the local housing market. There also appeared to be limited interaction between long-term residents and the student population. In the Central South, Eastside and Southside areas, and to a lesser extent, Westside, the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees over recent years was perceived to have added to the tensions and complexity of community relations, while also providing diversity. The fact that new arrivals tended to live in specific housing developments meant that they were often perceived as a distinctive community, although many residents stressed that the established community was accepting of new populations. There was recognition in Eastside that recent migrants had played a significant part in regenerating the local area, for example, through revitalising local shops. Nonetheless, it was clear that there had been instances of racism in several of the case study areas. For example, one Eastside respondent reported multiple instances of graffiti on the

local mosque, while egg throwing and verbal abuse were accepted as a ‘normal’ experience.

Perhaps the most significant recent change in our study areas was associated with the construction of new housing, often on abandoned industrial sites. In most of the areas, this regeneration had been piecemeal, though in Central, Eastside and Riverside it had been encouraged as part of major local authority regeneration initiatives. In Riverside, the council-led regeneration of the docks area was perceived to have had negative impacts on the community in terms of “fragmenting what was ... essentially one identity” (resident, Riverside). The divide between relatively affluent and more deprived people in this area was suggested to have a clear spatial expression, with local agency workers stressing the persistence of ‘pockets’ of poverty existing cheek by jowl with “ludicrously expensive properties” (agency representative, Riverside).

In the Central and Westside areas, residents also often spoke of gentrification, though here it was associated primarily with the improvement of the existing housing stock and the rise of buy-to-let properties. The latter was also identified as significant in encouraging the sub-division of larger houses in Westside and South Central, potentially driving out families and bringing more young, single workers to the area. Such ‘gentrification’ was perceived by local stakeholders to have ambivalent effects, making “housing in this area inaccessible for first-time buyers” (resident, Westside), but also improving the built environment, including the quality of some public spaces.

Academic commentators have suggested that gentrification is often associated with campaigns designed to displace sex work (Papayanis, 2000; Kerkin, 2003). Residents, agencies and police confirmed that this was the case in several of our study areas. For example, in South Central, a decline in the prevalence of sex work was seen to be related to the involvement of new entrants in lobbying and community action against it. Similarly, in Riverside, regeneration was seen to be the main factor in displacing sex work from a zone of informal tolerance to another part of the district.

The quality-of-life concerns raised across the study areas tended to be remarkably similar, with crime, antisocial behaviour, environmental quality, quality of housing and lack of local facilities and shops identified as main priorities. All residents mentioned crime as an issue affecting neighbourhood quality, suggesting that it impinged on their life in a variety of ways. While burglary and car crime concerned many, safety on the streets was considered a more significant issue. Most residents were able to recount instances where local people had been attacked. In both South Central and Southside, there was also some concern articulated about gun crime and gang culture. Concern about antisocial behaviour was associated with young people on the streets at night, although several local stakeholders suggested that complaints about (for example) people playing football in the street were symptomatic of an increasingly intolerant society. Though of lesser importance nationally, the prevalence of drugs (and drug dealers) was a concern in all our study areas, with problematic alcohol use being cited as more prevalent and of significant concern in Riverside and South Central. For many, sex work was considered a separate (and *unique*) issue that was rarely a priority in quality-of-life terms, particularly since the visibility of sex workers appeared to have lessened in many of the areas.

Conclusion

As this chapter has highlighted, the five sites exhibited many common characteristics, particularly in including pockets of deprivation alongside considerable social diversity; and in residents' concerns over quality of life, especially regarding crime. While the nature of street sex work was changing in some similar ways across the areas, with reports of decreasing numbers working on the street, the fora for communication between services, residents and sex workers and the policy approach of agencies varied considerably and showed differing levels of tolerance in each location. The divergence of community responses to street sex work and the issues raised by residents and sex workers are explored further in the next chapter.

Community responses to street sex work

Introduction

This chapter explores residents' views and responses to street sex work across the five case study areas. These ranged from no tolerance and direct action in opposition to sex work to instances of tolerance, proactive support and coexistence. The chapter also considers the conflicts arising from the presence of street sex work in local areas, the impact of this on use of public spaces and the consequences of different community responses to street sex work.

Community views on street sex work and the potential for coexistence

Across the five areas we found a range of views that can be situated along a continuum of no tolerance or empathy, through some levels of sympathy towards the women themselves but low levels of tolerance to street sex work in the local area, to greater levels of tolerance and sympathy. Residents' perceptions were informed by a range of factors, including personal friendships with women workers, the extent to which sex workers were seen as part of the community, direct experience of some of the impacts of street sex work and sometimes preconceptions based on information received from sources such as the media. The majority of resident views were situated mid-way along the continuum: they were aware and understood the issues, but they wanted street sex work to be managed appropriately. For example, a Westside faith leader said: "I felt very torn between the sympathy that was provoked by what we heard about [in a

meeting] but also awareness of the problems that it produced for the local community".

The following table sets out the continuum of views expressed in interviews with residents across the five areas. While mixed views and some sympathy were most common among residents, a minority remained adamant that there was no scope for coexistence and that only visible police activity would suffice in addressing the issue. For example, one resident in Westside felt strongly that "I don't think for one moment that you can honestly think that normal abiding lawful people, residents, can expect to have prostitutes and what it leads to ... [accepted in their area]". For such residents, the main way forward was to remove sex workers from residential spaces through enforcement activities directed at the women, kerb crawlers and others, such as drug dealers and those involved in the management of street sex work. Some local representatives who had consulted with residents also voiced the opinion that sex work was not compatible with residential areas, although in their view potential responses also had to include an element of support and 'rehabilitation' for the women.

The complexities of the responses of local communities in each area are explored in more detail through the rest of this chapter.

Sex workers as part of the community

We asked residents about whether they regarded sex workers as part of their 'community'. In doing so, we also asked them to define what they saw as the criteria for community membership. Our findings illustrate

Table 3.1: A typology of residents' views

Overall perspective	Responses to sex work	Residents' views on policy solutions
Extreme/proactive intolerance	<p>Predominantly in Riverside and Westside with some examples in Southside. Sex work is seen as degrading women and the communities where it takes place. Views included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anger that taxpayers' money is going into support projects; • anger at associated crime; • no sympathy: "They are a health hazard ... we don't want them, full stop"; • a lack of interest in the welfare of sex workers; • an assumption that women have chosen to enter sex work and can choose to stop: "What it means really is that the majority of these women have made a lifestyle choice". <p>Responses can include vigilantism or organisation of street patrols.</p>	<p>Zero tolerance of sex work is seen as the only option. Enforcement and environmental measures to combat the issue are considered necessary.</p>
Modest intolerance	<p>Found in all areas to some extent. Primarily hostility to sex work and wanting sex work out of the area. Sex work sometimes seen as unacceptable on religious/moral grounds. Little interest in the broader issues but some willingness to consider prevention and exiting. Responses can include lobbying against sex work, pity for 'victims' and support for exit strategies and 'rehabilitation'.</p>	<p>Zero tolerance is seen as necessary in residential areas, as well as initiatives to re-educate and rehabilitate sex workers.</p>
Mixed views – both some sympathy and limited tolerance	<p>The majority of resident responses fell into this category and included a mix of sympathy and concern based on perception of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the vulnerability of the women and the presence of under-age girls; • violence and safety of sex workers; • the exploitation of women by pimps and drug dealers; • sex work as a familiar aspect of living in the area (eg through growing up there). <p>Tolerance is limited by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concerns over the security of residents being undermined by the presence of sex workers; • feeling of a lack of 'control' over private and public spaces; • wider anxiety and concern over authority responses and a frustration if no-one appears to be listening; • dislike of the nuisance created by sex work. 	<p>Residents favour a managed zone or off-street premises and improved services. Action and patrols are not seen as the answer. Support for taking action against people supplying drugs and kerb crawlers. Support for projects working with sex workers with a focus on prevention, assistance and encouraging exiting for sex workers. People favour raising public awareness, information, communication and dialogue.</p>

(continued)

Table 3.1: A typology of residents' views (continued)

Overall perspective	Responses to sex work	Residents' views on policy solutions
Modest tolerance	Some residents showed more tolerance together with feelings of sympathy. A less judgemental approach was sometimes a result of personal involvement. Views included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a need to inform people of women's needs and issues; • a tendency not to judge sex workers on a personal level; • tolerance can be limited to local women only; 'outsiders' can be seen as creating the problem. 	Accommodation of some level of coexistence, but with certain areas or times of day considered 'out of bounds'. Tolerance zones could be an option. Prevention, awareness raising, education and mediation activities are important.
Proactive tolerance/ support	Proactive tolerance manifests itself in getting involved in activities to address the issues. Across all areas, but particularly Eastside and Central. Here people inform others of women's needs, issues and rights and tend not to see sex work as a problem: "I have worked with women working on the streets, heard about their lives, and overall, my views are around the sorts of services/support women might need, safety issues for women" (resident, Central).	Coexistence seen as possible. Views focus on acceptance, tolerance and supported exit. Tolerance zones could also be an option. People value or get involved in supportive forums.

the following definitions of what constituted community from those interviewed:

- living in the area;
- being part of the networks/part of the area (schools, shops, faith groups);
- being involved in community activities;
- being involved in a system of rights that creates community living;
- being involved in communities of interest (for example, volunteering, sports activities); and
- working in communities (businesses, factories, schools, restaurants, etc).

For some street sex workers who were also residents, the definition of being part of the community mirrored that of other residents. Membership involved living in the area, being part of the networks of schools and shops, taking part in community activities and community living and having friends locally. For example: "I used to do a lot ... I used to help with the kids in the youth clubs and things like that" (Eastside sex worker). "I have friends here. I think I'm part of the community" (Southside sex worker). Others did not perceive themselves as part of the community; mainly those who did not live in the local area, but also some who did live locally. For example, an Eastside sex worker, who had lived in the area at one time, said: "I didn't feel part of anything. I was just there". A worker in Southside stated that being part of the community would mean, "Not being a prostitute and not being a drug addict", particularly because of the abuse and labelling she received.

For those residents who could be described as tolerant, or of limited tolerance, increased information and communication between residents, projects and responsible authorities had made a difference to them.

Something I always highlight to the residents and they're always really receptive to is the fact that an awful lot of these women are part of their community. They live in Eastside. They've grown up in Eastside often. They have relatives there.... And I think that was something that has served to break down a lot of barriers because when I first started going in it

was obvious that this group of women were seen as other. They were not part of the community. (Project worker, Eastside)

For a faith leader in Southside it was important to be aware that street sex workers are part of the community and the community's future: "This is our future and if we want our future right we must solve [it] with ... their cooperation".

Such inclusive views were not shared by all residents. For some, sex workers were outside society and antithetical to community, defined as 'despicable', referred to by one resident in Southside as 'it'.

They're anti-community. To belong to a community there has got to be a recognition that other people have rights and other people have freedoms and an essential quality required for successful community living is compromise. Well these street walkers are not stakeholders in the communities [where] they work. (Resident, Riverside)

These varying views on sex workers' part in the community could colour residents' reactions and sympathy towards them.

Impacts on quality of life in residential spaces

For many residents, sex work was not considered a high priority in terms of their overall quality of life, particularly since, as some suggested, "most of it is during the night time when it can't be seen" (resident, Eastside). This may also have related to perceptions of reduced numbers of sex workers in many areas at this time. Nevertheless, at least some of our respondents felt it needed to be eradicated, while others expressed severe reservations about specific forms of sex work.

Residents across all sites identified the following as matters of concern in relation to the issue (listed in order of significance):

- the visibility of sex work in public spaces;
- the prevalence of nuisance/incivilities;
- impacts on the reputation of the area;
- personal safety and security;
- lack of control of street sex workers by responsible authorities (associated with the feeling that no-one is listening to residents' concerns);
- lack of control over public and private spaces; and
- the emotional impact of living in areas of street sex work.

Our interviews suggest that one of the most widespread concerns for residents was that street sex working impinged negatively on their use of public space. Several areas (notably public parks) were regarded as 'no-go areas' by residents, as they were perceived to be areas where they would potentially be accosted by sex workers or clients. Such areas were also characterised as spaces prone to be littered by condoms and/or drug paraphernalia. Some residents also reported anxiety about a range of pseudo-public spaces (including stairwells, drying areas, car parks and porches).

For the majority of residents, sex work did not create 'no-go areas', but encouraged them to adopt selective strategies of avoidance, such as exercising greater caution when out at night. Characteristically, men expressed less anxiety than women about walking along the street at night, but often stressed the 'dangers' faced by the women they knew. Some men reported that they would make sure to pick up their daughters and other female members of their family rather than let them walk around the neighbourhood after dark. Against this, one woman suggested she felt 'safer' knowing that there were sex workers on the street, as she felt that they would draw unwelcome attention away from her.

While high visibility and displays of sexual activity were a major concern for some, the visible impact of clients in the area and kerb crawling (described as a 'rat run' in Westside and Southside) as well as the detritus and paraphernalia of street sex work activity were significant issues for residents. Condoms, needles and human waste were identified with filth and disgust, compounding the moral anxiety residents felt around the visibility of sex

work in specific neighbourhoods. There was a tendency in some cases to attribute all nuisance such as discarded needles and condoms to sex work in the area, whereas, as one Eastside resident pointed out, “it doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s a prostitute that’s used them ... but it’s automatically assumed that it is one of those ‘druggy prostitutes’, you know”.

Nuisance and related issues included “banging doors, punters, men trying to pick other people up in the street” (resident, Westside). Nuisance and lack of tolerance was for some directly related to numbers and the concentrated presence of street sex workers in residential areas. For some residents, and in business areas, there were higher degrees of tolerance. Some business representatives, for example in Riverside, saw the potential for coexistence because of different times of business, although not all businesses were as tolerant. Problems had sometimes been encountered in some industrial sites, particularly where discarded condoms became a nuisance to business owners and staff.

The labelling of specific neighbourhoods as areas of street sex work, which in some instances was felt to be perpetuated by media attention, was perceived by many of those interviewed as having a negative impact on the reputation of the area and, for some, on the value of property. There was also seen to be a negative impact on young people growing up in the area and the “general feel of an area adds to the malaise” (agency representative, Westside).

Personal safety and security of residents was a theme in the interviews, linked to risk, crime and disorder and (lack of) social control. A few, particularly in Riverside and Westside, reported instances when they had directly experienced personal abuse from sex workers, although other residents in these areas perceived that this might be in part a response to a more confrontational approach to the women. As well as drug use, associated criminal activities such as burglary and antisocial behaviour were documented for some residents as issues associated with street sex work. For instance, in South Central, a resident suggested that “when you deal with the issue like prostitution ... then other crimes tend to tail off as well ... that’s what we’ve

found” (resident, South Central). It is important to note, however, that available crime figures do not support the assertion that reductions in street sex work are accompanied by declines in other crimes. In fact, the opposite may sometimes be true, with the presence of sex workers on the street actually enhancing levels of surveillance.

Nonetheless, the perception that sex work forms part of a street scene in which drugs, crime and alcohol are entwined exercises a powerful influence on relations between sex workers, agencies and the wider community. A sense of lack of social and moral order in the spatial organisation of the neighbourhood and of not being in control emerged in our findings, for example: being accosted or followed, and shared public and also private spaces being used as areas where sexual activity takes place. Some residents described feeling abused and fearful and some felt as if they were under curfew. One woman commented: “You didn’t really want to come home because you had to ... throw the gauntlet down every time you came up the road. And I was ... quite amazed how it got me down. It really, really got me down” (resident, Westside). An agency representative in the same area stated that “this is a hugely personal crime”.

In noting these fears of public space, it is important to emphasise that sex workers also regarded many public spaces as dangerous, and exercised similar discretion in their choice of beats. For instance, an Eastside worker stated: “I don’t go near the park, because that’s where a lot of stuff seems to happen, a lot of beatings and that”. Some women avoided spaces where they had experienced intimidation by residents or vigilante groups.

Violence was seen as an everyday risk by nearly all the sex workers interviewed, and many had personally experienced violence or abuse, particularly from clients, but also from some residents or passers-by. For example, a woman sex worker in Central, when asked if she had ever been attacked by a member of the public or a passer-by said, “Yes, you get eggs, potatoes thrown at you, abuse, it’s a once-a-week thing”. In some eyes, being a drug user and sex worker ‘depersonalised’ the women and thus they were seen as inviting such consequences.

Basically people think because you're working and you're on drugs you are not a person and they can treat you how they want. That's how you lose heart. You're not looked at as a person. You're just looked at as a thing. A piece of meat. (Sex worker, Westside)

While some sex workers were sympathetic to those local residents who complained about their presence, most expressed their right to sell sex, particularly if they were not creating a nuisance for residents: "If you wanna walk along the street and stand on that street corner and sell your body, as long as you're not hassling anyone else, then you've got a right to be there and do what you want" (sex worker, Eastside). Many of the women sex workers we spoke to felt that they were endeavouring to reduce levels of nuisance to residents, although they acknowledged that other women might not be as aware of the aggravation caused to residents by their presence. For example, some did not solicit in front of houses when working and others tried not to be "sleazy out on the beat", as one sex worker in Eastside described it. A sex worker in Central spoke of how, when she worked in residential areas, she would have "a little carrier bag with me in my handbag, I put all the condoms in there and then used to throw them away". Safety was a key consideration when choosing areas to solicit and in some areas, such as Eastside, it appeared to be easier to find working locations that were close to small industrial sites or pubs, yet not a great distance from other people. Some of the sex workers in Central had moved from residential areas to the City Central beat to avoid conflict with residents.

There was also an important distinction drawn by sex workers who were resident or had family in the area of street sex work as to whether they were actually working or just going about their 'daily' lives as local residents and/or consumers. While most understood why some residents might oppose street soliciting, sex workers asserted their right to access public space when not working, and expressed concerns about being harassed when not engaged in work.

I'd got my little son with me [at about half past six in the evening] and I was

only trying to get on the bus with my son and have a nice day out in the park. We went down to get a drink and ... not one of my punters would dream of pulling over, but [a residents' patrol] did. (Sex worker, Westside)

Community responses to street sex work

Distinctions in community responses between each site were related to the particular demographics, history, management and spatial organisation of street sex work in the various sites. Responses ranged from engagement with working women to action to displace them from local streets.

In **Westside**, community responses were among the most hostile. Here, the community was described as:

... extremely angry. And what they wanted was the street prostitution to go away.... They were frightened to leave their houses. Their families were affected.... And it was all the associations with street prostitution that they wanted removed. (Local councillor, Westside)

A Street Watch group in the area was actively collecting evidence "of women and the cars they get into or the lorries they get into or whatever" (resident, Westside). This Street Watch group provided evidence to the police to be used in enforcement activities to remove street sex work from the area, whereas other groups took a wider community safety role that included monitoring sex work and reporting to the police as necessary, but not taking action themselves.

A faith leader described the Street Watch action as having short-term beneficial impact but "it's just moved it to another area". It appeared that the residents' patrols began as a result of lack of action by the authorities. As their involvement in partnership working increased, there began to be what an agency representative in Westside described as a complex shift in understanding over time from 'nimbyism' to focusing on the wider issues.

Riverside residents also responded with street patrols and what is described by some as direct action and by others as vigilante action. One street activist described the activities as “embarrassing them to move on a bit” (resident, Riverside). One agency representative described some of the residents involved in protests as ‘level-headed’ but when you are “directly exposed to those sorts of things night in, night out ... people don’t always behave rationally”. Concern by the police that some protesters’ behaviour was becoming increasingly intimidating, combined with efforts to address residents’ concerns, for example through the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), led the group to suspend its patrols.

There were mixed views among residents regarding this action. Of those involved in street patrols, a feeling of the benefits of “people power” (business representative, Riverside) was evident. Those involved in the action explained their involvement as resulting from the lack of agency responses. One respondent felt that lack of consultation with residents (before moving women into one particular area after the managed zone was closed) was a trigger to community action. Other residents disagreed with the more direct street patrols and vigilante action. A resident who had not attended the meetings said there was no sign of drug taking in the area and that this was a driver “for getting at the prostitutes” (resident, Riverside). Another resident did not attend meetings for fear of being ‘shouted down’. Other residents found the activities of street patrols ‘unpleasant’, ‘bigoted’ and “distasteful. I don’t think it’s very helpful actually.... I don’t think that kind of confrontational approach is going to help, perhaps make matters worse actually.... It just moves around”.

In **Southside**, responses included public meetings, residents’ patrols and action in support of ASBOs. A very clear message from Southside was that communities need to be involved in finding solutions “because they know more about that area than anyone. I think it makes a massive difference” (resident, Southside). Another resident noted that lack of response by the police and authorities led to them taking matters into their own hands through resident patrols – this was described

as taking “leadership” (resident Southside). A Southside sex worker described her experience of the hypocrisy she experienced from some residents involved in the street patrols (this was echoed by sex workers in other areas):

I don’t understand it, one minute they’re calling me a slag and chasing me out of the area and then they’re asking for me to give them oral. (Sex worker, Southside)

In Riverside and Westside, and, to a lesser extent, South Central, residents’ groups had actively campaigned, not only against sex workers in their area but against the activities of sex work projects, although relations in Westside appeared to have improved recently. Outreach and frontline harm reduction work was more likely to be an area for concern and criticism, with some individual residents and community representatives expressing the view that these activities condoned street sex work and made it more comfortable for the women, and were responsible for bringing in or perpetuating street sex work in the area. In Riverside, a residents’ action group had contributed to high-profile media coverage making such claims. In Westside, residents’ lobbying of authorities had for a period led to the cessation of mobile outreach in the area.

Interviews with agencies and communities in **Central** show few complaints documented by the local area partnership. It was looking at the possibility of a resident helpline, “but that didn’t happen because there weren’t enough complaints” (project worker, Central). The way forward was described by one resident as putting pressure on agencies to do their job: “And also the feeling that there are agencies who should be doing this. So the attitude is much more encourage the agencies to do the job. For example, get the reports through, then the police will then see it as being a problem and will then start prioritising it” (resident, Central). To an extent, the lessening in community complaints may have been as a result of women being encouraged to work in the City Central beat, where there were fewer residents.

While in the 1980s **Eastside** was documented by one resident as being involved in more a direct action approach such as ‘throwing paint

after the punters cars' and protesting outside a police meeting, currently residents felt more organised and involved through residents' associations and forums. Degrees of tolerance depended on the context in which sex work took place:

They are a community that is very accepting of people and ... if you can create that bridge between other groups and them they're happy to listen to you.... [Eastside] they've had a beat for over 30 years. People have always known it's been associated with it so it's kind of part of the local landscape. And yes they don't want it outside their house and they don't want to have to explain it to their children. (Project worker, Eastside)

In Eastside, the sex work projects had a considerable level of community support, with limited vocal opposition, although it is important to note that in the other areas the views of active residents' groups were not always shared by other residents.

While coexistence thus appeared to be greatest in Eastside and Central, across all our areas there were individual examples of coexistence and dialogue between sex workers and residents. For example, in Westside, a sex worker described making friends with a resident, helping her across the road and sharing a cigarette. A sex worker in Eastside spoke of residents who were "really, really sound.... There's one guy I know makes the women tea and sandwiches and all that". A business representative in Riverside engaged in regular conversations with the women and expressed concerns for their safety. A resident in Westside found that "they appreciate being just treated normally and talked to as a person". This sentiment was echoed by a resident in Southside. Several Eastside residents and some in Southside knew some of the sex workers who both worked and lived in the area and treated them as neighbours: "... you have got your locals and they are part of the community.... They all talk to me and I talk to them. They're friends, you know" (resident, Southside). Some were keen to emphasise the separation between the work of sex workers and who they were as individuals.

Higher degrees of coexistence could be attributed to a range of factors. These included greater tolerance of diversity among communities, greater levels of support where sex workers lived as well as worked in the area and less antagonism where communication between individual community members and sex workers was more developed. The structure of the neighbourhood may also have been a consideration, particularly in areas such as Central and Eastside, where there were seen to be opportunities to solicit in comparative safety away from people's houses; and thus there were lower levels of noise and aggravation caused to residents and sex workers were less visible in residential streets. The role of projects and other agencies was also a contributing factor to building relations between sex workers and residents and this is discussed later.

Conclusion

A key research question was whether street sex workers can coexist with residents in residential areas. Our findings suggest that without doubt, street sex work becomes problematic for many when it is poorly managed. For some residents, zero tolerance was seen as the only option, whereas many expressed concern for the welfare of sex workers in the locality. While sex workers had experienced antipathy from some residents and passers-by across the case study areas, this appeared to be greatest in the areas where residential groups had been established to displace them from the local streets, which, in turn, was often a result of perceived inaction by local agencies in responding to resident concerns over the impact of the issues on the street scene. Many examples were given of coexistence and friendly relationships between individual sex workers and residents, although residents were keen to emphasise that tolerance was of the women themselves and not of the problems associated with sex work, such as debris and visible sexual activity. This points to the need to develop appropriate responses to alleviate the nuisance caused to some residents by street sex work and to consider the siting of this activity. These and other policy responses are discussed in the next chapter.

Organisational responses to street sex work and the challenges for managing public spaces

Introduction

Organisational responses to sex work tended to centre either on the harm reduction and health concerns of organisations working with sex workers, or police and local authority attempts to reduce crime through ‘target-hardening’ measures and enforcement activity against sex workers. These differing priorities could sometimes work against each other in responding to the issue. This section first discusses the current activities and policy within the five case study areas towards street sex work and then offers suggestions for future strategies to improve relations between sex workers and local communities. These suggestions draw on comments put forward by all the different stakeholders during the research as well as analysis of the different approaches for managing the issue.

Environmental and other practical measures

Efforts to ‘reclaim’ space from sex workers in response to community complaints took different forms in our study areas. One notable method was the modification of public spaces seen as settings for soliciting, transacting and kerb crawling. This included gating; the installation of CCTV systems; the removal of foliage that might provide seclusion; closing off certain streets; the demolition of public toilet blocks and disused buildings used by sex workers and drug dealers; and the removal of

street furniture (in particular, benches and phone boxes):

One of the car parks ... was used by the prostitutes.... I think the mosque bought the land. It was just bushes and a car park. And then they fenced it off and put all trees around it. They bought this piece of land and they cut all the trees back and tarmacked it and put a big palisade fence up. So that removed the prostitution ... that is how they dealt with that one. (Resident, Southside)

Steps taken to ‘target harden’ specific public spaces had clearly provided some reassurance to affected populations in the localities, particularly in terms of reducing the volume of cars circulating the area. Yet even those supportive of such measures noted that this did not represent a long-term solution, and had merely caused local displacement. It was also suggested that such strategies sometimes diminished the quality of public space. This ambivalence was registered in comments over the removal of a pavilion from a park in Westside:

We lost a pavilion ... a pavilion which was not a very good pavilion but children and young adults could get washed and changed you know from the football on Saturday.... Prostitutes and drug takers and pimps were hanging around, and the punters also got to know so they were hanging

around. And in fairness, by taking it [down], they returned the park to the community. But the downside is that we have now lost a facility that we'll never have back again. (Resident, Westside)

The contrast between 'target-hardening' approaches to antisocial behaviour, which reduce the quality of public space, and 'place-making', which is intended to address such activities but enhance the quality of spaces, has been noted (CABE, 2004). The latter approach would engage different community members, including those 'creating the problems'.

Rather than action to displace sex workers from local areas, some respondents in our study pointed to the benefits of dealing with the nuisance factors caused by sex work. Clean-up activities had taken place in some areas, for example in Eastside, involving wardens, other council representatives, community members and sometimes sex work projects and these appeared to make a significant difference to residents living near sites where discarded condoms and needles were visible. The closure of crack houses in Westside, which provided substantial relief to residents in the vicinity, was accompanied by rehousing of sex workers living there.

Enforcement activities

Street sex work has increasingly been seen as a problem of public disorder and this has influenced attempts to address it at a local level. While multi-agency responses were evolving across the five sites to address the issues raised in communities by street sex work, areas were often undergoing a complex and sometimes contradictory transition. While community-based responses were evident in a number of locations, for example via wardens, community safety partnerships and environmental initiatives, crackdowns on sex work still featured in most areas. The increase of community policing can be seen as an attempt to increase community capacity:

The police wanted to reduce prostitution but they didn't have resources so they worked with the residents. (Resident, Southside)

But this also raises questions of legitimacy (Sagar 2005), and has the effect of increasing the surveillance of street sex workers. In Westside and Riverside, for example, lay involvement in patrolling and collecting evidence for Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) became a stimulus to reinvigorate previous police enforcement, which became a central feature of the strategy, raising issues of sustainability and the fact that increasing enforcement still cannot meet expectations. This may also result in ownership being returned to the police, a position that contradicts and may conflict with multi-agency work to support women.

There was considerable variation of the use of ASBOs, Criminal Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (CRASBOs) and other civil measures against sex workers in our study. In Central, while there had been a high use of ASBOs generally in the city, their use in relation to sex workers was the lowest in our study, which may relate to the influence of the multi-agency partnership there. Elsewhere their application ranged from what could be termed an initial blanket use in Westside, to their place as part of periodic crackdowns in Southside and to a lesser extent in Eastside, used there as a "last resort", as one agency worker described it. By contrast, judicial reluctance meant that such measures were not used extensively in Riverside.

The main effects of increased enforcement in all the case study areas were to disperse women to other areas, leading to various problems. These included impact on other neighbourhoods, a lack of contact for sex workers with support services and an increase in women's vulnerability. Concerns over their safety were raised and relationships with police could become strained and compromised due to the contradictions between protection and enforcement:

There's certain places that I can't go ... without any of the other girls ... so if anything happens to me and I'm not even allowed to go near the police station, I'm banned from that area as well, so if I get attacked, I mean it's ridiculous. (Sex worker, Riverside)

The girls are working on their own, in ones and twos because they are so

nervous of the ASBOs etc they are getting into cars without checking, so they are far more vulnerable to attack and they are being driven further away as well. The men are also nervous about being caught, so they'll drive them to a more lonesome place to have sex, so the women are much more vulnerable, and so is he as well. (Project worker, Westside)

The need for longer-term solutions was stressed by a large number of agencies and recognised by some residents across all the five areas.

Local people don't feel ASBOs work. They don't understand why they are used. They are also aware that outreach services can't reach and give support to women who are more vulnerable. (Agency representative, Eastside)

The amount of evidence that's been led and will be led in ... it's just incredible and I would question, how many drug rehabilitation programmes could we have got the women into for that amount of money? (Agency representative, Riverside)

Concern was expressed by a number of stakeholders over the clarity of orders, their restrictiveness and their applicability in the absence of specific nuisance behaviour:

It included non-residential streets where they are not necessarily creating fear. I hope we are not going to start proposing that sex workers don't have the right to be in a public area. (Project worker, Riverside)

Sex workers talked about the way in which ASBOs and the threat of ASBOs impacted on their movement, particularly when they were not working. For example, women had been prevented from attending police stations, outreach and drugs services, the homes of friends and family and shops because of the conditions of orders. One woman spoke of the negative impact of combined community surveillance and having an ASBO on her

participation in family events in the locality, particularly her father's funeral:

Because the residents who have seen me working on the street, they ring the police all the time. And my family live in the area. When my dad died he had the funeral in [one of the churches in the area outside a hospital], and before I knew it there was five coppers outside trying to arrest me for working. And I was in a black suit, burying my dad. And that's because the local people, neighbourhood watch, had said "you're working outside the hospital". And the police came and disrupted the whole funeral on my dad's death day. They nearly arrested me because of my ASBO. (Sex worker, Westside)

What was clear from those who had experience of implementing and being subject to these orders is that there is considerable uncertainty as to the permissible freedoms of sex workers in public spaces. One project worker talked of concern of the relative ease in securing orders against the seriousness of consequences for their breach, raising the issue of proportionality:

You don't have to give much proof at all [for CRASBOs]... So we've met girls in prison who say "well I wasn't working, I wasn't soliciting, I was just walking down the road eating a bag of chips and I got arrested" and nobody's challenging it... when you think you've got the power to put someone in prison for five years and the effects on that woman of that, losing her home, losing everything basically. It's a big consequence, isn't it, for a very small act. (Project worker, Westside)

There is a concern that, by being interpreted and indeed defined in these orders as antisocial per se, the very presence of sex workers in public spaces is becoming increasingly criminalised and rights of free association impeded (Fletcher, 2004; Sanders, 2005). One resident talked about ASBOs being an "almost inevitable" step to prison (resident, Central), due to the likelihood of their being breached because of the continued need to

earn money, a concern shared by other residents as well as agency representatives, project staff and sex workers themselves.

... they can get up to five years for breaching an ASBO, so they are getting incredibly long prison sentences for something they would previously have got a small fine for. So it's turning women into a much more criminal group than they ever were. (Project worker, Westside)

This in turn made it even more difficult for women to counter the stigma they experienced and to move into other areas of work:

... a criminal record, you've been in and out of prison all your life or whatever and people look down at you because you're a drug user as well... People just judge you because you're an ex-prostitute, you're an ex-user ... and it's hard to find work with that kind of work you've been doing or because you've used drugs in the past. People just don't want to know, they push you to one side. (Sex worker, Southside)

In some instances, the negative consequences were compounded by media intrusion (and consequent stigma), given the political attention this issue received:

The last time I was in court they put my address and everything all over the paper ... that means anybody that didn't know that I worked that knows me knows now ... I've got all these kids and that all shouting at me in the street now when I'm going to get a bus ... landlord was going to give me a flat but I couldn't take it. I wouldn't even be able to walk to my own house ... it was like you have no privacy or nothing. (Sex worker, Riverside)

While most sex workers and project staff viewed enforcement measures such as ASBOs as being counterproductive, one woman who had received an ASBO as an alternative to a prison sentence did feel that it had helped her more with her drug use than prison would have done, because it had kept her away from her drug suppliers in the area: "Because it's

given me those extra rules that I can't break. It's worked for me, but some girls it doesn't work for". However, the same respondent also commented that a more effective solution might have been referral to a drug rehabilitation programme. In another case where a woman moved on, this was due more to involvement with the sex work project than the ASBO:

... that was a woman who worked with us a lot. She was coming to a stage when she was getting ready to leave and it was the final thing that really pushed her on really ... the other ASBOs have done nothing but displace people so they have moved to the edges of the beat. They have moved them to work in a much more dangerous way. (Project worker, Eastside)

Concern was expressed at the lack of pre-emptive diversionary measures or social care support across the sites. This was acknowledged by some agencies but felt by some to be balanced against the need to respond to residents. While being described by some agencies as a balanced approach to addressing needs of residents and compelling women towards treatment – "we use the stick, ASBOs, CRASBOs and civil injunctions, [the support project] is the carrot" (agency representative, Westside) – others were less convinced:

When an ASBO is served, before it's served girls should be referred to support agencies and one of the weak areas ... is that women are not always referred before they get an ASBO, so the doors for support and exiting are not open to them.... A lot of ASBOs are served before they have the chance to get support. Not all the time, but [it] happens fairly regularly. (Project worker, Westside)

The police have not in the past communicated with the agencies about the women going to court for ASBOs. This means there is no care package in place. Women who are responding to work with outreach are suddenly in the position where they are subject to an order and leave the district and so the

support that was being offered and accepted is ended. (Community representative, Southside)

The negative impacts were reduced in areas where multi-agency working took a more holistic approach to street sex work, for example in Central, Eastside, and previously in Riverside, where complaints were dealt with via mediation with residents, or a compromise was found whereby sex work could take place in a way that was less likely to be considered antisocial. Enforcement was then used only in the few instances when other strategies were found to be ineffective.

In some areas there had been activities targeting kerb crawlers, such as sending letters to the home or business of those believed to be kerb crawling, or putting points on their driving licence. There was some support among residents for ‘coming down heavily’ on kerb crawlers and possibly re-education programmes for offenders, but some were sceptical of such initiatives, seeing them as a short-term deterrent and also potentially resulting in further dispersal of sex work to other neighbourhoods. Some residents noted that further action against kerb crawlers had been limited and that the women were ‘easy targets’ in comparison. It has been noted that further research is needed into the long-term impacts of initiatives such as re-education programmes for kerb crawlers (Hester and Westmarland, 2004).

Managed spaces and areas of tolerance

In our focus groups and interviews, we encouraged discussion on forms of spatial management that might better serve the needs of residents and sex workers. In these discussions, our respondents overwhelmingly made reference to ‘zones of tolerance’ (hence our use of the term here). Currently, there are several British cities where formal or informal tolerance areas have been defined. In effect, these are areas where the police ignore solicitation, but invoke laws relating to exploitation, under-age working, procuring and other criminal activities. Though such zones may expedite the work of the police, the

principal aim is to facilitate the work of support and outreach services in an environment where the presence of sex workers does not generate significant opposition. As such, these areas are best described as areas of selective decriminalisation rather than tolerance per se (Clark et al, 2004). There has been little formal research into the feasibility and effectiveness of tolerance areas for street sex work and evaluations of schemes in Europe are ongoing (see, for example, Kersch, 2004).

Of the study areas, only Riverside had experience of a managed tolerance zone, which had been abandoned by the authorities in the light of changes to the socioeconomic make-up of the area. Interviews with sex workers in this area suggested that they were not consulted on the abolition of the zone and it had forced them to relocate to new beats, provoking complaints from residential groups and creating problems for outreach services. When asked how their working conditions might be improved, the majority of Riverside sex workers argued for the re-establishment of a managed zone:

... because that way ... the police can keep an eye on the girls, watch what’s going on.... At least the [workers] wouldn’t be getting attacked and things like that ... if you’re working from your phone ... nobody knows where you are.... But if you’re in a tolerance zone you are watching out for each other and that. (Sex worker, Riverside)

In Riverside, the possibilities of re-establishing an area of tolerance were discussed with agency representatives, who suggested any such zone would have to be located in an area “acceptable to the street girls and ... acceptable to the customers ... it’s going to be very, very hard to find a geographical location that does both” (agency representative, Riverside). Nonetheless, in the words of another agency representative, Riverside’s experience suggested that “if it’s done properly and in the right place” a zone can “ease the problems” residents face. For many residents in each of the sites, a managed zone had much appeal:

It’s never going to go away. And I think non-residential areas would probably

be the best place for them ... somewhere where children can't see. I think the children are the main issue... You don't want them to see all this. (Resident, Southside)

Many women indicated that they would prefer not to work in a residential area if there were safer options elsewhere, particularly an area that was well lit and with other women around. For example, a sex worker in Eastside suggested: "... maybe do a little tolerance zone, like they do in other places, where they could just put us somewhere, like even on the industrial estate, where guys could come and pick us up from that particular place, and there are people around, so we're safe and the guys are safe, and they know they're not going to get robbed or anything like that". This sentiment was echoed by a worker in Southside: "... you will never stop prostitution because there's loads of people out there doing it... So I think there should be a place like an area well lit up for the girls and more security on the beat". One view that both residents and sex workers shared was that any designated area should be away from residential areas, although the safety elements of such a scenario were less frequently considered by residents. Having regulations about moving out of the agreed area, with sanctions being applied if women strayed beyond the zone, was a possibility mooted by some local representatives and sex workers themselves. Some business and agency representatives were positive about sharing space in view of the fact that there could be different uses at different times.

But it is possible in a commercial area, and in some ways it's been interesting to see how it fits. It's not a problem, no one is bothered. In the day you know it doesn't interfere with anybody and it's almost like the women are seen as part of that community. (Agency representative, Central)

The idea that sex work can be easily accommodated within industrial areas was disputed by some business representatives who alleged certain nuisances caused by sex work. Problems of discarded condoms and other debris around goods entrances of businesses suggest that any managed space

would need to be regularly cleaned to assuage complaints from businesses. Agency workers also stressed that surveillance would be vital to ensure sex workers' safety in industrial zones and also to ensure that illegal activities such as drug dealing and other crime are policed.

Though most discussion revolved around issues of how these zones would be run and managed, there were also some concerns expressed about whether this might 'normalise' – and even encourage – sex work. Overall, there appeared little official support for tolerance zones in Westside, while in Southside there had been little police enthusiasm when tolerance zones had been mooted in the past. In Central, the police were similarly uneasy about identifying a tolerance zone, although the largely industrial area currently used for soliciting in the City Central area was often described as a 'safety' zone.

In this respect, there was considerable support for off-street sex work to be tolerated, with many residents suggesting that off-street work in licensed, regulated or managed 'brothels' would be more acceptable to them than any form of street working, as it was perceived that this would not present the same degree of nuisance. There was also a widespread belief that off-street working would be safer for women and clients. Against this, some perceived there would always be a demand for on-street work and were realistic about the fact that indoor work would not be an option for all street sex workers.

Consultation about local responses to street sex work

For residents, a lack of consultation by service providers was linked strongly to a feeling of lack of control over semi-private as well as public spaces, particularly where there was a lack of fit between different processes of inclusion (for example, where there was significant negotiation and networking at local level, but the links were not made to ensure that decisions at this local level were fed into city-wide policy making). Many stakeholders in all groups felt that local authorities should consult with members of communities before taking action in response to street sex work.

For some, this meant extending consultation beyond a few, more active, residents and ensuring that consultation was linked to action in relation to the safety and rights of both residents and sex workers. This is an important point, as there was evidence from the research that some policies had been shaped partially on the basis of representations from a small, selective group of community activists.

When it came to formulating policies, not only around responses to street sex work, but also in relation to other changes in the local area such as regeneration activities, many stakeholders expressed the view that consultation with sex workers was important. For example, a resident in Southside made the point that: “If they are not consulted, then the changes the authorities make may well fall flat. They are the experts in sex work!”. Consultation with sex workers might take place via support projects to facilitate access. There was a question regarding what that consultation might actually mean and some sex workers expressed scepticism about the extent to which their views would be heard when balanced against the views of residents.

Improving relations between residents and street sex workers

Community mediation has been regarded as effective in reducing some of the tensions between local residents and sex workers (Hester and Westmarland, 2004). While none of the sex worker support projects was formally commissioned to liaise with communities or carry out mediation work, all but the Southside project were engaged in some work of this kind. One project in Eastside viewed a community engagement approach as central to their work and all but one of the other projects stressed that while their primary objective was to support sex workers, they had a wider responsibility to the community.

The range of community related work, which varied across the sites, included:

- relaying information about community complaints to sex workers and encouraging them to adapt working practices;

- attending community or multi-agency meetings in order to listen and respond to concerns and raise awareness about the project’s work and issues of concern to sex workers;
- taking part in community environmental ‘clean-up’ events and other community events;
- carrying out community consultation and liaison via surveys and consultation meetings, for instance consultation about mobile outreach and court diversion services in Eastside and Central; and
- working with communities on an ongoing basis to deal with specific complaints or ‘hot-spot areas’.

Projects in Eastside, Westside, Central and Riverside felt that community engagement had delivered some positive outcomes. These included: a greater understanding among the community of street sex workers’ needs and circumstances; a greater awareness among sex workers of community concerns; improved relationships between projects and residents; the resolution of specific issues of nuisance or complaint; and the establishment of mechanisms for constructive dialogue and partnership working.

The project worker on the street can talk to [the women] as well. Ask them to keep it out of particular areas, eg people’s gardens. With the project worker working closely with community and police, that’s working. (Resident, Eastside)

Comments from various stakeholders in Westside suggested that relationships between the project and residents had improved over a long time period: “we now work with them [the sex work project] and have regular meetings” (residents’ group representative, Westside). A project worker in Central felt that there had been substantial impact from a community consultation and emphasised that the project continued to work with businesses and residents “to let them see that the project is engaging with the women and passing their concerns on” (project worker, Central). In Eastside, the local community sex work forum was also seen as a vehicle for mediation and awareness-raising activities. Project representatives noted that work with

communities could be difficult, with staff sometimes facing high levels of anger and hostility from some people. In such situations it was a challenge for them to remain motivated to engage in dialogue with residents, although it was clear that in some areas, such as Eastside, persistence had paid off.

Staff in other agencies, such as police and wardens, also undertook some informal mediation activities in most of the areas, which mainly took the form of passing on residents' concerns to sex workers and asking them to move on from certain areas. For instance, wardens in Eastside saw themselves as playing an important role in communicating residents' concerns to the women and this role was also mentioned in relation to wardens in Southside. In Central, Eastside and some other areas, certain police officers had built up good relations with the women and acted as intermediaries between the women and local residents: "generally [the women] are nice people and if you ask them to move they will do" (police representative, Eastside).

Most residents and agency representatives interviewed acknowledged that more could be done to improve relationships between residents and women working on the street, particularly further mediation and awareness-raising activities. What appeared to be most effective in influencing some residents to change their views was meeting a sex worker and discovering that she was not the 'outsider', the despicable 'other' who had been portrayed in accounts in the media or by other residents, but an individual woman with her own characteristics, problems and views.

I think ... if some of the women were prepared to be in a meeting like that, all the people who are protesting have got to face them as real women and suddenly all sorts of things burst, you know. You know, this is just a woman. So I think it's absolutely vital that happens. (Business representative, Riverside)

Most recognised that this took a great deal of courage and that such an environment would be too daunting for many women, as they might be laying themselves open to further abuse. Thus the timing and composition of the

meetings or groups would be particularly important and steps would have to be taken by supportive agencies and projects to make such a contribution possible. There are other ways of raising awareness that do not involve face-to-face contact between sex workers and residents, such as use of theatre or arts to represent the women's views, mentioned by stakeholders in Westside and Southside. What is important is that the women need recognition as people before they can effectively be involved in decision making and compromise.

In Riverside and Westside, the climate for mediation had been more problematic because of the polarisation of views and the fact that sex work projects had been seen by some residents as part of the problem. Some residents in these areas, who felt the presence of sex workers was not to be tolerated, were very resistant to the notion of any mediation, although others did see the potential for developing understanding:

The girls haven't stood up at school and said I want to go and be a prostitute. It's not something they've chosen to do you know in most cases. And I think people need to understand that. It's not a lifestyle decision. (Resident, Westside)

Agencies may have a role in facilitating meetings between diverse residents to ensure that the views of more active members of the community do not always dominate. Faith groups can also play a part in awareness raising and consultation. For example, a faith leader in Southside spoke of raising awareness within the mosques and representatives in Westside and Riverside expressed similar sentiments about the role of the church in mediation.

Some residents suggested that members of the community could engage directly in friendly dialogue with the women and ask them quietly to move on, although others expressed concern at making themselves vulnerable in this way. Some sex workers also felt that relationships would be improved if local residents "stopped talking down to us" (sex worker, Westside). While it was the view of some residents and agency representatives that some of the women

had attempted to reduce situations of conflict, not all believed that they would be willing to change their behaviour. Many sex workers interviewed, however, recognised that they could help the situation through taking certain steps to reduce activities that were most likely to distress local residents and felt that there was scope for awareness raising on the issues:

They [sex workers] would need educating on that because some women don't realise that they're doing any harm to anybody, when they're doing what they're doing, because they've been brought up in a kind [of] lifestyle that is totally different to the norm. (Sex worker, Westside)

Some residents suggested that to ensure a rapid response to complaints, a designated individual or agency tasked to respond to concerns of residents and liaise with the relevant bodies could help. If residents knew their concerns were being addressed, this might ultimately extend to concerns for the well-being of the women themselves, rather than simply removal of 'the problem'. As a community representative in Westside suggested, where relationships had improved, in time perhaps there might be a situation where "the person would look out of the window and think 'there is a woman who needs some help, therefore I will phone that person, I will not phone the police to have her arrested, I will report this and say she needs some input from whoever it is' ". Mediation should thus form part of a 'package' of responses.

Partnership and integrated responses

While the degree of strategic cooperation between agencies varied across the sites, the need for multi-agency working in pursuance of longer-term strategies was recognised across the board: as an agency representative commented in one of the focus groups, "in five to 10 years' time, if [street sex work] has moved to another area, we don't want to go through the whole thing again, we want a strategy in place". Integrated services for women on the street that addressed their many needs in a holistic manner, particularly around drug use and accommodation, were seen by community

and residents' representatives and sex workers themselves as a vital aspect of any strategy. There was general support for both harm reduction, particularly health and drugs interventions and 'exit' support, with many residents referring to the need for helping women to leave street sex work and access 'education' opportunities.

Where it worked well, joint working offered increased capacity, opportunities and resources to pursue common interests. It also offered an opportunity for projects to influence wider policy and service delivery and gave an increased role to statutory agencies beyond commissioning services, through joint initiatives at a more strategic level. Examples of effective multi-agency initiatives included the provision of supported hostel and other accommodation in Eastside and Westside and strategic initiatives in Central, such as audits, which fed into an environmental policy that sought to reduce residents' complaints and pre-empt potential conflicts. Such activity had also enabled sex workers to get involved in community work, increasing their skills and capacity and improving community cohesion. The court diversion schemes operating in Central and Eastside give sex workers the opportunity to engage with services as an alternative to penalties such as ASBOs or fines. Engagement here was thought by project staff and agency representatives to be more appropriate than sanctions and more realistic than a strategy based solely on 'exiting', which would require more funding and time.

While multi-agency approaches were far from static, there was a concern that good work and shared understanding could be lost through inertia or a lack of formal recognition. This was the case in Southside where a number of residents and agencies had been involved, via the forum, in research to establish a multi-agency approach. This strategy was not advanced because of what was considered to be a lack of commitment of senior actors and a number of respondents involved in the inter-agency forum felt let down:

... I feel angry, I've worked hard in this area to get a better service for the women, to get a better deal for the residents and we get nowhere because nobody up there has taken any notice.

It's people on the ground who have worked hard. It's small organisations, voluntary organisations that have worked hard ... this needs to be taken on by the council ... by housing ... by the authorities. (Community representative, Southside)

There were also concerns over the sustainability of some multi-agency approaches given the impact of the redevelopment occurring in some areas. In Central, for example, as one agency representative noted, "[the city's] restructuring is causing some problems", which risks interrupting the present "accommodation" of street sex work. Concern was expressed that as these spaces were constricting, so too were the viability of current policy of the forum and its ability to deliver on longer-term goals:

One of the reasons the forum isn't as productive as it has been is because of regeneration of the city ... we do need some sort of safety area but because of regeneration it's very difficult to say in two years time that street sex work will be tolerated.... (Agency representative, Central)

Interviewees from the city's agencies talked of a previous attempt to pre-empt problems and secure a space for this approach by proposing a tolerance zone that had been rejected by the chief constable despite support by other agencies. This revealed the different levels of agency power and responsibility: while Central's approach is linked into Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership structures, its collective approach lacks statutory power.

While there was general support among respondents for a multi-stakeholder forum, the structure and scope might differ according to the nature of the local area of street sex work and its level of containment. In addition to the range of relevant service providers and other statutory and voluntary agencies, many respondents felt that it was important that the views of women sex workers themselves be represented at such a forum. Equally important was representation from communities in the areas of street sex work, although it was felt strongly by some that this should not just

include those who have 'made prostitution their passion'.

Adverse media coverage could clearly undermine local progress and be counterproductive to 'low-key' joint strategies for spatial management and working with local communities. In Riverside, as an agency representative commented, the media had been seen as 'instigating complaints' among residents in relation to the location of the zone. This highlights the need to use publicity to pre-empt problems and help to set opinions through a proactive communication strategy.

Conclusion

The problems relating to finding a space for street sex work have parallels with the difficulties in embedding a multi-agency approach. When partners do cooperate, where communities feel that their concerns are heard and where sex work takes place without conflicting to a great extent with resident and commercial interests, shared interests can develop. When conflicts emerge, interests risk being polarised and this may force political and media attention and highlight competing statutory responsibilities in the absence of an overall strategy and partnership approach. The differences of opinion revealed here suggest that a multi-layered approach that includes spatial management, mediation and shorter-term practical measures is important if areas are to achieve greater coexistence between different groups, but this will also generate new challenges for local authorities, police and support services.

Conclusions and policy implications

Introduction

The previous chapters set out many of the key impacts on neighbourhoods of street sex work, particularly the visibility of sex workers at certain times and associated nuisance. Many sex workers interviewed endeavoured to reduce nuisance to residents when working. It was seen that community views and responses to street sex work varied across the five areas, ranging from sympathy and engagement with working women to action to displace them from local streets. There were many instances of coexistence in local areas and there was seen to be considerable scope for improving relations between residents and street sex workers, particularly through mediation and awareness raising. Coexistence appeared to be greatest where integrated responses to community concerns had been developed, involving a range of partners including sex work projects; where consultation activities took place prior to implementation of initiatives; where there were discrete areas away from people's houses where women were able to work and access services at particular times; and where there were multi-agency alternatives to increased enforcement, such as court diversion schemes.

Intolerance of sex work appears to have been implicated in the declining quality of public space in our study areas, through target-hardening measures combined with enforcement activities and residential action. The essential dilemma in the design and control of public space, as Borden (2005) contends, is how to remove those real and significant risks that impinge on the whole of the community while not pandering to a intolerant minority that simply does not accept

that public spaces should be designed to be open to difference. In this final chapter, we suggest a focus on three key policy areas:

- mediation and awareness raising;
- spatial management; and
- developing strategic partnership approaches to street sex work.

Mediation and awareness raising

Community mediation is an important component of any strategy. How mediation sits in relation to other interventions, such as enforcement operations by the police, is an important factor and consideration needs to be given to the balance of power between the negotiating groups in relation to a more formal mediation role. Support projects may be perceived as more independent and well placed to undertake this function, although projects are generally not resourced to undertake additional activities such as mediation. If projects are to have a community mediation role, this must be within a framework of multi-agency support so that they are recognised as having the authority to intervene.

There may be instances where residents, sex workers and police come forward with irreconcilable differences and opposite points of view and the research found that antipathy to sex workers was more entrenched in some areas than in others. Thus mediation may not always be a panacea and the timing and context of such interventions is an important consideration. Mediation may provide an understanding of sex workers and can highlight their humanity, but the outcome is

often considered to be successful if the nuisance of sex work is removed by the women working elsewhere, so the causes of street sex work are never really tackled but are perhaps ignored. The lack of social capital among sex workers makes the idea of negotiation much more complex and it would be difficult to envisage a place for mediation in a climate of zero tolerance, as sex workers would in effect be negotiating for their disappearance from public space.

Mediation or a similar process might be useful in identifying the more complex needs of residents and sex workers and points of commonality that could be fed into a multi-agency approach. It could also build capacity among sex workers, residents and agencies, offering a more democratic alternative to the notion that the state alone can deliver change, although it should not be seen as a replacement for statutory responsibility. The situation in local areas may also be fragile, with ongoing changes to neighbourhoods and thus a sustained approach is required for interventions to be fruitful.

Public spaces and spatial management

There is considerable debate concerning the feasibility or appropriateness of tolerance zones or managed areas. Though some of our respondents expressed anxiety that establishing zones of tolerance condones sex work, many residents and sex workers in our study supported the concept of tolerance zones. It appeared that few had a clear idea of how they might actually operate, however, and in some cases, the support related more to a hope that tolerance zones would remove the women from the area rather than recognising the need for safe spaces for the women.

Official policies of tolerance and/or spatial management are sometimes implicated in the erosion of public space, as they may reduce rather than increase the range of groups and activities encountered in public space. Removal of any further rights to public space may make moving on and indeed the quality of life in sex work much more difficult and dangerous. Creating a safe space for dialogue might be

seen as a necessary step before considering safe physical space, to encourage greater tolerance and joint exploration of viable practical outcomes. In some areas of modest to proactive tolerance, these may include the potential for coexistence and the revitalising of shared public spaces. In others, the polarisation between some groups of residents and sex workers may be too entrenched to allow initially for constructive discussions concerning the sharing of space. It may be pertinent to consider a framework that allows for the exploration of alternative designated spaces among a range of potential options, to work towards area-specific solutions that best suit shared interests.

Strategic partnership approaches to street sex work

Rather than a multi-agency forum to address the issues of street sex work in local neighbourhoods, we suggest that a multi-stakeholder forum would balance the needs of different groups and encourage discourse and ownership of policy. This would include a wide range of residents, agencies and projects, as well as sex workers where the environment was supportive and where they felt comfortable in attending; and could be linked in to the mediation and consultation processes discussed earlier. Consideration would need to be given to potential power imbalances and some issues would be too sensitive to discuss within a wider forum. There might thus be the need for certain sub-groups with a formal link to the main forum to deal with specific concerns and facilitate discussion among particular groups of stakeholders.

Such a forum could enable different groups to have a regular input to longer-term strategy as well as shorter-term initiatives, including practical measures such as neighbourhood clean-ups. In this respect, the Eastside model might be seen as an example of effective practice, demonstrating an inclusive approach to dialogue, with holistic activities such as mediation and court diversion taking place and a central role for the sex work project in providing a bridge between communities and sex workers. There are concerns as to how sustainable and coherent such a very local

response can be if it is not incorporated within a city-wide strategic framework involving the most senior policy makers and practitioners, as was taking place in some of the areas. A further danger is that if such fora are minimally resourced and do not have an official status within a wider structure, once immediate problems have been seen to be resolved, community interest and input will diminish. As people move on from agencies, they may not be replaced and this may lead to a decline in interest and support from the statutory sector.

While the overall framework discussed here is one of negotiation, it is also recognised that the strategy will need to balance support for sex workers and communities with enforcement activities where appropriate, although a support strategy (including support for women to move on) should be in place prior to enforcement measures. We suggest that punitive measures such as Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) are largely inappropriate in responding to sex workers, as they effectively criminalise vulnerable women and prohibit the potential for support and harm reduction, as well as impacting on women's safety. Targeted use of ASBOs or injunctions may be seen as necessary against sex workers who persistently demonstrate antisocial behaviour (rather than simply soliciting without causing distress to others). Before escalating to these forms of intervention, however, there needs to be sufficient evidence that attempts have been made to offer support and that resources have been put in place to facilitate this.

Conclusion

Greater dialogue framed within a discourse of citizenship and safer space for both sex workers and residents is required in local cities/towns where street sex work takes place. Consultation should extend to all interested groups, including residents, businesses, sex workers, projects and agencies, to explore a range of options. To be incorporated within a framework of citizenship, such an exercise cannot start from a position of 'no tolerance' that excludes one of the main groups involved. The starting point ideally should be an exploration of the potential for coexistence, with a discussion of what this might entail to

make neighbourhoods safer both for residents and sex workers.

Returning to the typology of community views presented in Chapter Three, there may be a continuum of activity required according to the tolerance of local communities to the issues, commencing with short-term practical responses within a multi-agency context in areas where intolerance is greatest and moving towards a multi-stakeholder forum that explores the potential for coexistence in areas with higher levels of tolerance. A 'package' of options is suggested below, which may be drawn on according to the needs of each particular neighbourhood. While some options might be prioritised to take into account the local context, individual responses should be placed within the framework of a multi-layered approach, which would include community mediation, preventive work, support, education and rehabilitation services for sex workers, practical responses and enforcement in those instances where no other mechanisms appear to be effective.

While some of the suggestions raised in this report are recognised practice within a wider evidence base, particularly community mediation and an holistic approach to street sex work, based within a model of needs and support for women workers, some initiatives that were widely supported in this research require further exploration. In particular, the issue of managed areas or designated safety spaces has given rise to considerable debate, yet the arguments on both sides of the debate appear to be based largely on anecdote rather than grounded in research evidence. It is thus suggested that further research and evaluation needs to take place into responses such as spatial management strategies, in order to measure the effectiveness of different interventions over time.

Suggested policy responses to street sex work in local neighbourhoods

Practical responses within a city-wide, multi-agency strategic context, some targeted interventions, for example against drug suppliers, balanced with harm reduction, support and strategy to help sex workers move on

Designated contact for residents to raise immediate concerns

Resourcing of project work and other coordinated responses

Communication strategy at strategic partnership level, including raising awareness among communities

Consultation with a wide range of stakeholders on a range of options for forward direction, including requirements for coexistence, if feasible, and designated safety zones

Longer-term strategies such as mediation

Multi-stakeholder forum at local levels, with formal links to city-wide strategic partnership, with primary focus on negotiation, prevention, harm reduction, support and strategy to help sex workers move on

Piloting and evaluation of specific initiatives

in some areas, leading to the increased vulnerability of a group of women who are already excluded from vital services and, increasingly, from public spaces. National policy also needs to accommodate exploration within each locality of a range of options for managing the issue, including the options outlined here, to enable local negotiation and consideration of shared interests to influence the way forward.

It should also be recognised that any agreed local 'package' of options, whatever its nature, requires adequate resourcing in order to sustain it and deliver maximum effectiveness. This is as true of localised mediation activities as it is of a more formal managed safety zone.

At national level, a shift in focus towards increased support and services rather than penalties for street sex workers would be required to facilitate this model of dialogue. This should be accompanied by clearer guidance on the use of enforcement measures such as ASBOs and Criminal Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, which are currently applied in different ways in relation to street sex work in different areas. Such measures were intended to address specific issues of antisocial behaviour, rather than to tackle the very presence of street sex workers, yet it appears that this is the context in which they are used

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Appendix: Details of the research methods and sample

In each of the case study areas, discussions were undertaken initially with staff in sex work projects and statutory agencies to identify mechanisms for accessing and interviewing sex workers and community representatives. The team carried out observation activities, attended meetings, accompanied project staff on outreach activities and attended drop-in sessions. Individual community members and sex workers were accessed initially through agency and project staff and subsequently through snowballing, where interviewers make successive contacts by inviting each respondent to put them in contact with additional people known to them. Sex workers were accessed initially through outreach, although the potential for interviewing using this mechanism was easier in some areas than others. One of the difficulties we encountered with accessing street sex workers was that there were fewer women on the street and many were very cautious and did not stay long to talk. We were also able to make contact with service users through project staff and were not totally reliant on outreach as a mechanism for access. An information sheet was given to all potential participants, outlining the purpose of the research, dissemination and issues of confidentiality.

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with community representatives and residents living within areas where street sex work took place. Some residents were active in local groups tackling sex work. Interviews also took place with staff in sex work projects and sex workers who were working, or had worked, on the street in the five areas. Some of the women also lived in the local area. The researchers also interviewed representatives from a number of agencies in each city.

Towards the end of the fieldwork, separate focus groups were arranged with agency staff and residents in each of the areas.

Semi-structured interviews or discussions took place with a total of 31 agency representatives; 69 local residents (a mix of male and female residents from different ethnic groups and varied age groups, some being retired and some working); community or business representatives; 36 women sex workers; and 12 staff or volunteers in sex work projects. Focus groups comprised between five and 12 individuals. In some instances, individuals attending had been interviewed, whereas others had not previously participated in the research. Thus in some areas, the numbers of community or agency representatives consulted exceeded the numbers given below.

In some areas, it proved to be more problematic to obtain interviews than in others. While the researchers attempted to access a wide range of views through distributing information leaflets, attending meetings, obtaining recommendations from agencies and snowballing, in some instances contacts followed up through these methods were unwilling to participate. For example, in Westside, representatives from one large local residents' group felt that sex work had been 'cleared out' of the area and thus they no longer wanted to discuss the issue. In Central, residents stated that they were not interested in attending a focus group. In some other instances, community representatives approached did not return calls or respond to emails or letters, despite follow-ups. The final sample for each area is shown in the table below.

Table A.1: Final sample for each area

Sample of interviews/focus groups	Central	Westside	Eastside	Southside	Riverside	Total
Agency representative interviews	6	5	8	5	7	31
Resident, community representative and business interviews	11	9	11	15	23	69
Project staff interviews	2	3	2	2	3	12
Sex worker interviews	6	7	8	9	6	36
Focus groups	1	2	2	2	2	9

Formal interviews and focus groups were taped and transcribed. In addition, field notes were taken of observations activities and some informal discussions with stakeholders. Data were analysed using NUD*IST, a software package specifically designed to support qualitative data analysis. Two coding frames were designed, one for interviews and focus groups with residents, project staff and agency representatives, and one for interviews with sex workers. The data from interviews and focus groups with all stakeholders were analysed together, with individual members of the research team taking on specific themes.

During the course of the research, some members of local communities expressed a concern that their area would be identified, particularly in relation to the issues of stigmatisation discussed earlier. Because the sample of women sex workers was relatively small in some areas, it was also felt that use of descriptive information in some instances might run the risk of revealing the identity of certain individuals. It was thus decided to anonymise the case study areas.