

RESTRICTED

A PROBLEM PROFILE:
VIOLENCE AND GUN CRIME:
LINKS WITH SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION,
PROSTITUTION AND DRUG
MARKETS IN
SOUTH YORKSHIRE

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Executive Summary

- Barnsley has no visible sexual exploitation or on-street prostitution scene. However there are some premises that are reportedly being used for off-street prostitution. The use of violence in relation to such premises is not known. However it is not thought that the women are coerced into working in these premises. There does not appear to be any connection with guns in relation to these premises, nor does Barnsley have a gun crime problem.
- Doncaster has an established on-street prostitution scene. Pimps are not known to have been operating in Doncaster for a number of years, although boyfriend pimps are regularly seen. Women working in the area are regularly subjected to attacks, although there appear to be less than usual at present. One young woman involved in prostitution was murdered in the town last year. Over the last 12 months there has been concern in relation to the sexual exploitation of young women by some adult asylum seekers, who are in relationships with under age girls. However, this does not appear to be organised or involve regular violence. Guns are not a feature of prostitution nor exploitation in Doncaster.
- Rotherham has an established sexual exploitation scene, which is described as very organised, and involving systematic physical and sexual violence against the young women involved. It also involves young women being trafficked to other towns and cities predominantly in the north of England and the Midlands, for the purposes of having sex with other men. Guns are reported to be carried by men in the town who are involved in the exploitation and other related crimes, such as drug dealing and violence. However, shootings in the town are rare.
- There is both an established sexual exploitation scene and on-street prostitution in Sheffield. There appears to be little concern in relation to gun crime connected to the on-street prostitution scene. But over the last 6 months, there has been an increase in the number of incidents related to guns witnessed by young women who are being sexually exploited. Guns are not used to threaten women; they are carried for self defence or to threaten other men, usually drug dealers.

Recommendations

- More emphasis should be placed on tackling the abusers, rather than the abused. Currently the focus is on the behaviour of those who are sexually abused and to a large extent the perpetrators of the abuse are able to carry on with impunity. This is a recommendation for individual police districts, working with partner agencies

- Awareness raising for police officers and front line staff regarding the issues for those who are sexually exploited, or involved in prostitution. Increased awareness and an empathic attitude would improve reporting rates and confidence by abused women and children in frontline agencies. Examples of such successful work can already be found in Sheffield in relation to training of front line police officers and council workers undertaken by SWWOP, the Sheffield Working Women's Opportunities Project. It should be ensured that further similar work is being undertaken throughout the county. This is a recommendation for Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to ensure that such training is delivered at a local level
- The proposed Sexual Assault Referral Centre is a much needed resource, and would encourage more victims to come forward to report sexual crimes and provide information. It is vital for that this facility progresses as planned
- Continued monitoring of this situation is required. This will occur through the work of the Strategic Drugs Analyst, particularly through regular intelligence gathering reports.

Introduction

Violence has always played a key role in controlling and intimidating women and girls involved in prostitution and sexual exploitation. Whether it is from pimps, punters, boyfriends or other working women, violence is inextricably linked to both selling sex and sexual exploitation. Previous studies have looked at the links with violence in South Yorkshire. Roach and Pearce examined the links between prostitution, drugs and violence in Sheffield in 1998 and Heal reported countywide issues in 2003.

But the recent rise in both reported and anecdotal incidents of gun crime has sparked some increased concern in relation to the levels of violence experienced by women and young women involved in prostitution and sexual exploitation. Initially instigated by Sheffield DAT via the Prostitution Forum, after county wide consultation a review of the current situation was requested that covered all of South Yorkshire. It was felt that a more strategic perspective was required in order to assess the current situation.

This study, therefore, reports on the situation existing in Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, and Sheffield. Whilst there are substantial differences in each area, it is important to report on them all because, as has been seen with Class A drug markets, patterns of behaviour can spread from one area to another. Detailed information in relation to drugs and sex markets and patterns of activity in relation to grooming for sexual exploitation will not be given in this report. The emphasis here is solely on violence related to the sex/drugs market. More detailed information can be found within Pearce and Roach, Heal, and May et al.

At a time when Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships are reviewing their interventions available in their area in light of the new 'Co-ordinated Prostitution Strategy', this Problem Profile of drugs, violence and prostitution/exploitation may be useful to inform planning decisions.

It should also be noted that whilst this report refers solely to women and girls involved in prostitution and sexual exploitation, some of the issues are relevant to young men. The situation remains similar to that reported by Heal in 2003, that although it is known to be taking place there is little evidence in relation to the exploitation/prostitution of boys. Few, to date, have accessed specialist services that have been developed. However, Streetreach in Doncaster have noticed an increase locally of young boys being groomed over the internet to meet men at train stations etc, as well as a national trend of some young men selling sex on the streets for money for designer clothes, rather than drugs.

Methodology

Most of the data presented in this report has been gleaned from a number of different sources across the county. These primarily include young women involved in prostitution, project staff working with women involved in

prostitution and young women involved in sexual exploitation, accommodation providers for young people, drug treatment services, and officers from South Yorkshire Police (SYP). A list of interviewees is provided in Appendix A. Data has also been taken from SYP reports, the SYP Operational Intelligence System (OIS), and open source data.

Context

The increased level of local concern in relation to violence and gun crime has coincided with the wider national debate on prostitution instigated by the 'Paying the Price' consultation paper. This culminated in January 2006 with the publication of the Home Office document 'A Coordinated Prostitution Strategy'. The strategy has five key strands:

- Prevention
- Tackling demand
- Developing routes out
- Ensuring justice
- And tackling off street prostitution

In relation to violence as described within the context of this report, it is the objective of Ensuring Justice is the most relevant, although the issue cuts across all five themes. Many of the women and girls involved in prostitution and exploitation suffer violence of a sexual or physical nature, or usually both. There are a number of reasons why they do not report such attacks. These include threats of further violence, lack of confidence in the police and Crown Prosecution Service, or they do not want to get involved with lengthy ordeals that reporting such a crime can involve. One interviewee stated that those who are being sexual exploited do not always understand the notion of rape. Although they do not want to have sex with the men involved, they just see this as not wanting to have sex. They do not comprehend, nor report it, as rape.

According to a recent report by Kalinski (SYP, March 2006) 'Sexual Offences Against Victims 17 Years and Under in South Yorkshire 2005' key themes arose in such reported offences. The first was 'Child on Child Offending', where one third of offenders were themselves aged 17 or under. The second was 'Stranger Flasher' that accounted for 20% of the overall reported crimes. Thirdly, was 'Familial Offending and Domestic Violence', where a number of addresses were identified as have incidents of both domestic violence and sexual offences against those aged 17 or under. Finally, the 'Stranger Rapist' with whom their first contact with the victim was through rape, or who befriended them and raped them (later that same day). In some instances the victim was raped by more than one offender.

The four scenarios above are based on sexual offences reported to South Yorkshire Police in 2005. The information below will show that unreported crimes will account for another category – rape by those known to victims,

most of who have been groomed for the purpose of sexual exploitation or prostitution. This categorisation is particularly pertinent in relation to Rotherham and Sheffield.

There were 1,266 reported sexual offences in the calendar year 2005 (Kalinski). 612 of these were committed against those aged 17 or under, and 353 of which were recorded as sexual assaults and rapes. However, it is estimated by the British Crime Survey that recorded crime is only 15% of overall sexual violence. As Kalinski states in relation to those aged 17 and under:

“...it is possible that a further 2,353 violent sexual crimes took place against juveniles across the Force but were not reported.” (p 8)

In the UK under 6% of all reported rapes end in conviction. This is the lowest rate in Europe (BBC News 29.03.06). According to the Fawcett Commission report 2006, victims of violence receive varying levels of service depending on where they live. Rape conviction levels varied from 0.86% in Gloucestershire to 13.8% in Northamptonshire. In South Yorkshire the rate was 10.8%. The county has been the location for a number of recent trials in relation to violence against women involved in prostitution or exploitation. In January 2006, a Doncaster man, Ronald Beardmore, received life imprisonment for the murder of Rebecca Stephenson, a 19 year old young woman who was involved in street prostitution in the town. He was a married man with two children, who had no previous convictions. Although he pleaded guilty at his trial, he has not given any indication as to why he murdered Rebecca. Rebecca was the most recent woman involved in the street sex scene to be killed, following the fatal stabbing of Michaela Hague in 2001 in Sheffield. Her killer has never been caught.

At the trial of Nasser Khokar in November 2005, 5 women street sex workers from Sheffield gave evidence against him in a case of kidnap, and rape. It was an unprecedented case in South Yorkshire, of close multi-agency working in an attempt to support the women to give evidence against the man

However, the courage of the women in giving evidence and the commitment of the staff involved paid off when Khokar was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment.

There have also been 3 high profile cases in relation to the trafficking of women from Eastern Europe to the UK and South Yorkshire. These cases have been brought to justice as a result of the work of Operation Reflex, whose remit is immigration crime. Since 2004, a total of 8 Albanian men have been successfully prosecuted for trafficking 5 young women from Lithuania for the purposes of prostitution. They have received sentences ranging from 5 to 21 years.

These are three high profile cases that have come to court in the last year. But there are a large number of cases of physical and sexual violence that do not even get to court, let alone result in successful prosecutions. They may not be prosecuted due to a lack of evidence or, more commonly, they do not get reported in the first place. It should be stated that this report is an attempt to understand the overall situation that exists in the county, rather than an effort to quantify the extent of the problem.

During this research period, a unique insight was gained into the life of those involved in prostitution, violence and drugs. One interviewee described how she lived below a 'crack house' for nine months. When her and her young daughter first moved into the flat, there were no problems. There was a woman living upstairs who had mental health problems, and was known to be involved in prostitution. However, she lived a quiet life at home and had few visitors. But within a few months the situation had changed considerably when two men took over her flat to deal drugs and smoke crack.

The interviewee described how during the day it would be very quiet, but the noise would start late at night or early in the morning, when people came in at night. She noticed that there was generally a recognisable pattern to the noise. Often it would start after a period of quiet when people had entered the flat, presumably when they were smoking crack cocaine. Then the arguing would start with a man shouting and a woman protesting. Usually the arguments were about money. The arguing would continue, sometimes for 2 to 3 hours. The more crack was smoked the more confused the arguing became. There was often the sound of women screaming and crying. Sometimes, the sound of women being hit and beaten could be heard, and furniture may be thrown about.

At this particular crack house, it was believed that there were two men who mostly frequented this address. However, there were also another 2 or 3 younger men who visited and between 5 or 6 women, most of whom were believed to be involved in prostitution. The woman who had the tenancy eventually left as her home had been taken over. She was then homeless.

There was a constant stream of visitors every night, when between 5 to 20 people would call presumably to buy drugs. The interviewee said she did not feel comfortable going near the windows or doors at this time of the night. The situation became intolerable for the interviewee and her young daughter. Although they had not actually tried to involve her or threaten her in anyway, the noise and the violence were escalating. She found it very stressful to live in these circumstances, and was concerned about the effect it was having on her and her daughter. The woman had contacted the police on a number of occasions, but it was not until the day after she left the flat that an operation was carried out to shut the flat and board it up.

This succinctly demonstrates the inextricable links between sex work, and drugs and violence. The women in such situations are much more vulnerable to sexual and physical violence due to the men's use of crack cocaine.

Barnsley

A few years ago there were anecdotal reports from agency workers that there were some young women working the streets near Barnsley town centre. They were believed to be targeting construction workers on nearby building sites. Further research on Barnsley drugs markets (Sheffield Hallam University 2004) probed this point further, particularly when interviewing drug users. But it was not generally substantiated through this research and continuing monitoring of the situation has not disclosed any further issues. It is possible that they were there purely for business with visiting construction workers and left once the buildings were been completed.

According to SYP intelligence systems there have been 6 reports submitted since January 2006 in relation to premises involved in off street prostitution in Barnsley. Whilst some of these premises have elicited complaints from neighbours, due to continual visitors or soliciting of local women or girls, it is not thought that violence is generally a feature of the Barnsley off-street prostitution scene. The women appear to be involved through their own volition and are not being forced into prostitution. Whilst some of the women working in the off-street premises were foreign, they were not trafficked into the county.

At times, there have been reports from the young people's accommodation providers of men targeting homes for the purposes of grooming young women for sexual exploitation (Heal, June 2004). However, at present there are no reports of such activity. The only recent incident that has come to the attention of young people's services is in relation to a 17 year old girl. She has been befriended by a man [REDACTED] in Barnsley. She says she gives him sex in return for cocaine or money. She also has sex with his friends. All the men are in their 30s. Sometimes she is taken to places in Wakefield and Huddersfield. However, she says she is not being coerced into any activity with any of the men, and she is able to say no without repercussions. She has been a victim of abuse in the past, and her current boyfriend is violent to her, therefore she sees this man as someone who cares about her, due to a complete lack of violence. There have been no other reports of prostitution or sexual exploitation in Barnsley during the research period. There are rarely reports of guns in the town and there have not been any shootings in relation to drugs or other crime.

Doncaster

Streetreach, the agency working with those involved in prostitution and sexual exploitation, reports that there are now fewer women working on the streets of Doncaster than there were a year ago. Previously, the average

number of women on the streets each night would be between 15-20. Now it is about 10. Staff believe that there are a number of reasons for this. There are more women in treatment for drug dependency now, there are a number of women who have gone to live with regular punters who are giving them money to buy drugs, and also some of them have started drug dealing as an alternative to prostitution. It was initially reported that the murder of Rebecca Stephenson had not affected the behaviour of women working the streets and that despite being very upset about her death they were still taking considerable risks. However, it may be that over a longer period of time some women have taken opportunities to exit prostitution, via a number of different routes.

Streetreach now employ a personal safety officer, whose role is to co-ordinate the Ugly Mug scheme, liaise with South Yorkshire Police and offer support to women who are giving evidence in court cases against attackers. At present she says the number of physical and sexual attacks against women working the streets are quite low. It is possible that the recent conviction of Ronald Beardmore for Rebecca's murder may have had an effect on men in the red light area. The speed at which he was arrested and convicted may have been influential and the vital role that CCTV cameras played in his arrest may be an additional deterrent. Another man was jailed for 2½ years last summer for stabbing a client of Streetreach. Some women are very reluctant to take Kosovan men as punters as they are reported to be quite violent. They are have a tendency to either not pay or take their money back after sex.

There are a number of girls who are have come to the attention of the multi-agency forum in Doncaster, in relation to sexual exploitation because of their involvement with adult men. Most of them are aged 13-15, and they have become involved with Iraqi Kurdish men living in the town. For the most part the girls are involved in relationships with single men, and whilst this is undoubtedly sexual exploitation as they are under age, there is no evidence to suggest that there are any issues of organised networks, coercion or prostitution, or involvement with any other crimes. Some of the girls have been known to travel to Manchester, Birmingham or Walsall to be with their boyfriends or their families, and one went abroad to Europe for a week. All of these have been registered as missing from home until they re-appeared back in Doncaster. The difference between the Doncaster sexual exploitation scene and what is happening in other areas of the county, is that the girls in the town are involved with the men entirely through their own volition, and there is no systematic physical or sexual violence involved. There have been rare incidents of physical abuse, for example one girl reported that her boyfriend had hit her. This was recorded and treated as domestic violence. The specific multi-agency operation that was launched to investigate this situation will be closed down in the foreseeable future as it is much less of an issue now than it was a year ago. However, the multi-agency forum will continue as before.

There are no under age girls working the streets in Doncaster at present, nor have there been for some years. Neither is there any pimps known to be operating in the area, although boyfriend pimps are regularly present.

Although there is some information to suggest that some criminals in Doncaster are carrying guns, they are seldom recovered and rarely seen. The last shooting in the town was in the summer of 2004.

Rotherham

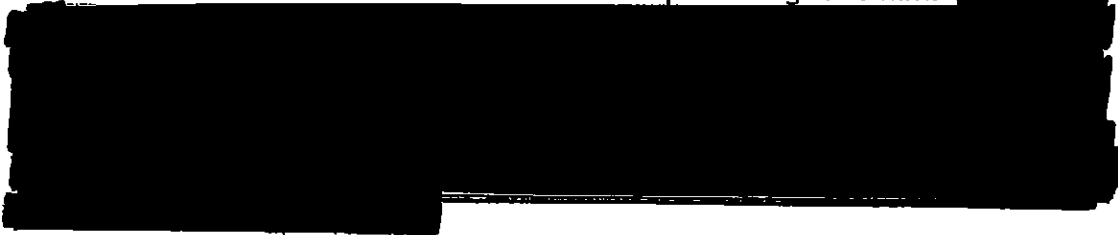
The situation in Rotherham continues as it has done for a number of years, and as described by Heal 2003 and others. Whilst there is no regular on-street prostitution scene, the issue of sexual exploitation in the town remains significant. Multi-agency staff, working with young women who are at risk of or who are being sexually exploited, state that although some of the main players have changed since 2003, the situation remains very serious for some young women caught up in such activities. In relation to violence, verbal intimidation and threats are regularly used, as are physical beatings and rape. None of the perpetrators are believed to use substances that would contribute to such levels of violence. Young women are regularly trafficked between different towns and cities, and some are told that they cannot return home unless they have sex with a number of different men first.

These attacks are often not reported to the police, usually due to fears of further violence and intimidation. District police state that they receive few reports of violence related to sexual exploitation. Therefore unreported attacks do not fall into any of the 4 categories of sexual offences as defined earlier in this report by Kalinski. These offences come within a separate category of rapes and sexual assaults committed by those who are known to the victim, the perpetrators of sexual exploitation.

Workers believe, from information given to them by the young women and their families, that sexual exploitation in Rotherham is well organised, with one or two networks of men thought to be behind the physical and sexual abuse of young women in the town. These men are also said to be involved in guns, drug dealing and other crimes. A couple of agencies reported the grooming of young women starting at school, with brothers or cousins of the older perpetrators being encouraged to identify, target and start the grooming process before introducing them to the men. They are financially rewarded, or similar, for their work. One young man was described as having returned to school after a long period of truancy, purely with the intention of grooming girls for the purposes of exploitation for which he was well rewarded. He is reported to be driving a good quality car, despite the fact he is still at school. Some young men in the town are reported to see this lifestyle as a more viable career option than legitimate work, as they can easily attain cars, money, girls, power, and 'respect'. Even an article in the Rotherham Star (11.12.04) referred to 'Girls in the Grip of Pimps', that up to 40 girls may be involved handled by a 'highly organised' network of pimps. This information was gleaned from the Audit of Crime, Disorder and Drug Problems, Rotherham Borough 2004. The Risky Business Project is currently working within between 40 to 50 young women at risk or involved in sexual exploitation.

In relation to guns, workers state that girls have been reporting the presence of firearms in the town over the last two years. Usually they are stored in boots of cars or occasionally under front seats. Even some young people in Rotherham that are not involved in crime, know who the main criminals are and that they carry guns. As well as being used for sexual purposes, girls and young women are used to transport drugs between towns and cities, as well as to different addresses in Rotherham. One young woman from Sheffield was shot dead in December 2005 in the district. However, it is not thought that this is connected to any local activity, such as described above.

In March 2006, a 22 year old man, Mohammed Ashan, was sentenced to 19 years imprisonment for the murder of a 19 year old young woman in a Rotherham night club. He stabbed her through the neck, during an argument that started because she said he had indecently assaulted her. Partner agencies say he was well known in Rotherham, as an alleged perpetrator of sexual and violent offences against young women in the town. However, most of them were too scared to make formal complaints against him.



It is believed by a number of workers in the town that one of the difficulties that prevent this issue being dealt effectively is the ethnicity of the main perpetrators. Whilst perpetrators and paedophiles come from a number of different ethnic groups in the town, the main 'gangs' associated with organised sexual exploitation are Asian. This is not a new problem. One worker who had been working in Rotherham for nearly 30 years said that Asian men, particularly taxi drivers, have been involved in the exploitation of young women throughout that period. However, in the 1970s it was a few men who were involved for their own gratification. It was not the level of organised crime that many believe it to be now, which offers career and financial opportunities to young Asian men who get involved. Iraqi Kurds and Kosovan men are also involved in the sexual exploitation of young girls in the town. However, they are not believed to be involved in organised activities against young women. It is more for their own personal gratification.

Sheffield

Sheffield has both an established on street prostitution scene and a very entrenched sexual exploitation problem. As commented in previous reports, the red light area is well known in the city, although recent years has seen a shift in the geographical area in which most women work.

Most young women who sell sex on the streets of Sheffield who begin by smoking crack cocaine and heroin. Use of Class A drugs usually occurs prior to their involvement in prostitution. Those who are currently being pimped, or who have been in the past, have all been offered crack or heroin by older males who then 'put them to work on the streets'. One youth worker currently has 3 young women who are aged 18 or under, and have been involved in street sex work or in saunas. All of them have been, or currently are, involved in crack or heroin use. There are very few under 16s whom are working the streets. One young woman interviewed for this research said she had been selling sex on the streets since she was 13. Very occasionally there are a few 12 year old girls, although the average age is 14. All those who are actively selling sex are using Class A drugs.

All of the young women, who have been involved in selling sex, have been subject to violence. Some are attacks from boyfriends, some from punters. A number of the young women report violence and rapes. One woman had been physically assaulted and raped several times, although this was not directly related to her involvement in prostitution. As alcohol use impairs her judgement, she can unwittingly get involved in some dangerous situations. A number of young women report being given crack cocaine and heroin, before being raped. Some young women reach a stage when they stop being given alcohol or drugs to aide their participation in sex. They are simply told what they will do, and if they do not comply they are punched, or beaten until they do. One 15 year old girl was kept in a house for three days. When she said she wanted to go home she was beaten up first, and then they let her go.

One youth worker stated that such levels of violence are fairly typical. They are no worse or better than usual. However, what has changed, particularly over the last 6 months or so, is the number of reports by young women in relation to seeing guns. Evidence of such reports has been passed to South Yorkshire Police include mobile phones given to 13 year old girls by older males, with pictures of guns stored on the memory and photographs of 16 and 17 year old young women posing in their underwear holding firearms. One older male showed his young girlfriend the gun that he had hidden. Whilst young women do not usually see the firearms themselves, they hear stories such as people who were shot in the leg, or being maimed for non-payment of drug debts. Although not a recent event, one 13 year old reported having nightmares in relation to guns. She has been in a house in [REDACTED] that have been raided by men who threatened to come back and shoot them.

There have been very few incidents come to light in relation to older women involved in prostitution and firearms incidents. One woman, who was working

the streets and was due to give evidence at a rape trial last year, said she was intimidated by a friend of the accused. He put a gun to her head and threatened her if she did not withdraw her statement. Another woman was hiding a gun under her bed for other people. The gun had been recently fired. She received a term of imprisonment for this offence.

The youth worker states there has been a definite increase in the number of reports of guns seen. However, no young person has been threatened directly by someone with a gun or by a knife. But as she said, young women do not need to be threatened by guns or knives, an offence that could carry a long prison sentence. They can be forced to comply through rapes, beatings, and intimidation. Guns are used by men to intimidate other men or dealers, or as protection. They do not need to be used on those considerably physically weaker than themselves.

There have been reports of sexual and physical violence perpetrated against teenage schoolgirls and adult women in Sheffield. This has been reported to have been carried out by Asian men in an area known as the [REDACTED]. One young woman who had been missing from home for 1 week, later reported that they had been taken to hotels in cars. She said a 25 year old woman had been anally gang raped by the men, an incident that they also filmed. One woman reported to her worker in relation to an incident that had happened the previous day in the same area. She said she had been at a flat in Sheffield, when she had been drugged and gang raped by five Asian men that she knew. She has been gang raped on a number of occasions by the same, and other men. These assaults again, fall outside of the categories as defined by Kalinski, and into a separate category for un-reported rapes by men known to the victim through exploitation/prostitution.

An officer based in the Child Abuse Investigation Unit in Sheffield, stated that the level of violence associated with sexual exploitation occurred at varying levels from slaps and punches to the extreme levels of violence as metered out by the likes of Nasser Khokar. False imprisonment and beatings also occur on a regular basis. She noted a current reluctance for young people to come forward to SYP, who will not give information for intelligence purposes let alone statements.

One worker, who works with women street sex workers, noted a rise in the number of women saying that more punters were requesting anal sex, with one woman saying that she got an extra £10 for agreeing to anal sex. She also noted that women were more likely to be vaginally and orally raped when men were smoking crack cocaine. This was a key feature of the Nasser Khokar trial. A number of women have stated that men can be very charming and attractive, until they start smoking a lot of crack which is when the physical and sexual violence begins.

Officers from South Yorkshire Police Firearms Support Group say they have do not get calls to attend incidents in relation to prostitution or related issues within the red light areas operating in South Yorkshire. They state that this is

probably due to the fact that the women tend to avoid contact with the police. Whilst this is undoubtedly true, it could also be that guns are rarely seen or used to threaten in this context as they rarely need to be used against women or girls.

County wide issues

CROP works with the families of young women who are involved in sexual exploitation and prostitution. They have worked with 150 families over last 3 years and over half of those have been from South and West Yorkshire. They believe that the situation has worsened over the last few years and that in reality agencies are only seeing the tip of the iceberg. They report on the predominately Asian link with young women being trafficked to towns and cities throughout the north of England and the Midlands. Some are also being taken abroad, probably to Europe. They state that girls from 11 years old upwards are being targeted but that the average age is 12 or 13 years old. They are all blonde, white and attractive. Some young Asian women are also being exploited, but this issue is even more hidden as they are not part of the same scene as the white British girls. They are kept very separate. As well as the Asian organised networks, CROP also stated that Eastern European men, particularly Albanians and Russians, were involved. The perpetrators know that the police are not always good at sharing information between districts and forces, and exploit this gap.

The physical and sexual violence that the young women experience can be excessive by anyone's standards. But because the young women are seen to go 'willingly' with the perpetrators, they are often seen by some as bringing the situation upon themselves. However, the definition of 'willing' needs careful consideration. The male perpetrators of this systematic abuse are very skilled in the technique of sexual exploitation and intersperse brute force and violence with charm and flattery to keep the girls close to them. If the girl refuses to co-operate at any time, the violence, threats and intimidation can be a lot worse. The girls are more frightened of what will happen if they **don't** accompany the men, rather than if they do. Threats to involve younger sisters and friends, and intimidation of family are also regularly made if girls don't comply with the men's requirements.

Attitude

The dedication of some officers to supporting women involved in prostitution is well known and they truly know the importance of partnership working, as well as what valuable information the women can offer when treated with respect and dignity. The commitment of SYP Operation Reflex officers to the issue of women and young girls trafficked from Eastern Europe has also improved the reputation of police officers in relation to this issue, particularly with partner agencies. However, some other officers do not have the same attitude. An officer was contacted last year, in the course of making an

enquiry about a drug seizure. He stated that the suspects had been stopped in a certain red light area whilst 'picking up a bag'. Apparently this was a reference to a woman who was working the streets at the time. If that officer had to attend an incident where a woman involved in prostitution had been raped or violently attacked, a sympathetic attitude towards her, which would help elicit vital information and evidence towards a prosecution, cannot be guaranteed. One partner agency worker stated that police action seemed dependent on the personalities and motivations of individual officers. Ultimately, this suggests that the outcome of an incident or case could rely on who has been assigned to it.

A number of women who have been involved in prostitution commented on the unhelpful attitude of some front line workers towards them, particularly those from social services and the police. Fiona Broadfoot, a former street sex worker and now current project worker and campaigner, described how she was groomed and exploited for the purposes of prostitution from the age of 15. She stated how she was regularly missing from home at that age. She also talked about the physical and sexual violence that her pimp, and other men, metered out to her on the merest whim. She said that front line professionals who come into contact with young women involved in prostitution should stop to consider what is happening to that young person, and not just take the situation at face value. As was stated at a recent conference in the county, they are brave young women using coping strategies to survive in the best way that they can ([REDACTED])

The OIS record of a 16 year old young woman interviewed for this research illustrates such an example. Found working the streets of Sheffield aged 13, selling sex and in possession of condoms, the officer recorded that she was:

'Foul mouthed and has bad attitude' (OIS)

Too many young people have an antagonistic attitude towards the police and other agency staff, many of who will be purely acting out of bravado in front of their friends. However, it should be considered that working the streets at any age, let alone 13 years old, is not normal behaviour and that there are fundamental problems in that girl's life for her to be in that situation. She said that people who were employed to protect her neglected their duties. She said that one officer, who found her working the beat when she was missing from home again at that age, said that as he hadn't got any back up he'd leave her there. Whilst she said agreed, as she didn't want to be seeing to comply with police requests, she was inwardly very disappointed he didn't take her off the streets. She was cold, hungry and very frightened. Whilst Fiona Broadfoot's experiences were over 20 years ago, this was just 3 years ago.

One police officer commented that generally the awareness of the issue of sexual exploitation amongst frontline officers had not really improved. She gave examples of police officers called to incidents that were clearly child

protection in nature, where they were unable to think laterally about the situation and therefore children in need were left in unsuitable circumstances. The establishment of the District Public Protection Units is noted, which have dedicated missing from home officers. This should provide a better level of support and onward referral to those young people who regularly go missing from home, often an early sign of being groomed for sexual exploitation.

Ethnicity

The issue of ethnicity in relation to sexual exploitation and prostitution has been a key thread running throughout this report, and is also highlighted in Kalinski's report. Whilst there are white perpetrators of abuse as well, men from particular black and minority ethnic communities disproportionately feature in this profile. White men involved in South Yorkshire tend to either operate alone or with a few other people, or are punters themselves. There are a few Afro-Caribbean men in Sheffield who are well known to local agencies for pimping and exploiting young women. However, even though they are associates, they would not be described as an organised gang although they are reported to be involved in other crimes as well. Some of these men have been operating in this manner for many years. In more recent years Kosovan and Iraqi Kurdish asylum seekers have settled in all four areas of the county, and apart from Barnsley have been reported to be involved in sexual exploitation. Kosovan men have a particularly violent reputation, and women involved in prostitution often try to avoid them if they can. But the men involved constitute low numbers and again would not be described as an organised crime group. Less is known about Eastern European men operating in the county. Whilst there have been some high profile court cases in relation to the trafficking of Eastern European women into the county, they are not featuring regularly in reports concerning on-street prostitution or sexual exploitation at present. Undoubtedly, the most significant ethnic group, to be associated with sexual exploitation rather than prostitution, is Asian men. They could be described as operating organised crime groups and are involved in other crimes as well. It is not believed that South Yorkshire Police has investigated any such crime group for level 2 activities.

Whilst the issue of ethnicity and sexual exploitation is one of great sensitivity, reports of such involvement should be thoroughly investigated by all agencies. Criminals in any environment can effectively dominate and intimidate people within their own community if they are left to act with seeming impunity. To commit such acts of sexual and physical violence will be an acute embarrassment to their family and friends, but who probably feel unable to speak out about such issues. When incidents come to light, it is the likes of the British National Party that seize the media headlines and do more damage than if the issue was tackled proactively. Some young white people in Rotherham say they see young Asian men driving round in expensive cars aged 15. They believe that if that was them the police would stop them

immediately, but they dare not act against Asian youth for fear of allegations of racism.

Treatment of Rape Victims

There are current proposals for a countywide Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) for adult male and female rape victims, which will operate on a multi-agency one-stop shop basis. Premises have been identified at Rotherham. However, the success of this proposal depends on the costs for conversion of the premises to the planned facility. The Fawcett Commission report noted that there were only 14 areas of the country that had SARCs. Whilst it would be a multi-agency resource, police officers would not be permanently based there. In view of the number of unreported crimes that this report has alluded to, a first point of contact for rape victims that does not include the police may be better placed to encourage reporting of rapes and assaults as well as providing information for intelligence purposes.

One interviewee gave such an example. She had been contacted by a woman who said she had been gang raped by 5 men. The interviewee contacted the police who arranged for her to be interviewed and examined. But before they arrived, a police officer telephoned the worker to say that only a male police surgeon was available. Due to the experience of the previous day, the woman did not want to be examined by a male doctor. She refused to go to the interview or examination, and returned home where she had a bath. She has not talked to the police since, losing vital physical evidence and statements. Therefore no one has been questioned in relation to this alleged attack, nor are they likely to be. The proposed one-stop-shop Sexual Assault Referral Centre for South Yorkshire should be able to better prevent a repeat of such a situation.

Conclusion

As this problem profile has demonstrated, the level of violence perpetrated against women and girls involved in sexual exploitation and prostitution remains significant. However, the most significant recent development has been the rise in reports of guns seen rather than used by men involved in the sexual exploitation of young women in Rotherham and Sheffield. It does not appear to be an issue in the on-street prostitution scenes in South Yorkshire.

Whilst some good work is taking place, examples of which have been given within this report, a more pro-active response by police and partner agencies would be effective in securing convictions against suspects and ensuring the safety of vulnerable women and young people.

It is noted that currently there is a high profile publicity campaign in relation to the trafficking of women from Eastern Europe for the purposes of prostitution. Posters in relation to this issue can currently be seen in

Doncaster/Sheffield airport. However, the abuse, exploitation and trafficking of local girls and young women for the same purpose appears to be largely ignored.

Recommendations

- More emphasis should be placed on tackling the abusers, rather than the abused. Currently the focus is on the behaviour of those who are sexually abused and to a large extent the perpetrators of the abuse are able to carry on with impunity. This is a recommendation for individual police districts, working with partner agencies
- Awareness raising for police officers and front line staff regarding the issues for those who are sexually exploited, or involved in prostitution. Increased awareness and an empathic attitude would improve reporting rates and confidence by abused women and children in frontline agencies. Examples of such successful work can already be found in Sheffield in relation to training of front line police officers and council workers undertaken by SWWOP, the Sheffield Working Women's Opportunities Project. Further similar work should be undertaken throughout the county. This is a recommendation for Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to ensure that such training is delivered at a local level
- The proposed Sexual Assault Referral Centre is a much needed resource, and would encourage more victims to come forward to report sexual crimes and provide information. It is vital for that this progresses as planned
- Continued monitoring of this situation is required. This will occur through the work of the Strategic Drugs Analyst, particularly through the regular intelligence gathering reports

Appendix A

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Appendix B

Interviewees

Page containing personal information redacted