



Supporting Women in Sex work

- Dual Diagnosis Presentation 5th October 2012

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Aims of the Session

- To raise awareness of the issues for sex working women
- To learn about the work of the adult team at Genesis

Why was Genesis Started?

- Established in 1989 to respond to unmet need – there was no support for women working in sex work in Leeds.
- At the beginning one worker and her backpack went out to the red light district of Leeds meeting the women to see what support could be offered.
- In 23 years grown as a service – Now also have Isis project supporting girls at risk of or being sexually exploited
- Basis – Training service – offering awareness training around Child Sexual Exploitation and Sex work.

Genesis Values and Vision

- Genesis Vision

- All women involved in sex work have the freedom and opportunities to be safe and make their own choices

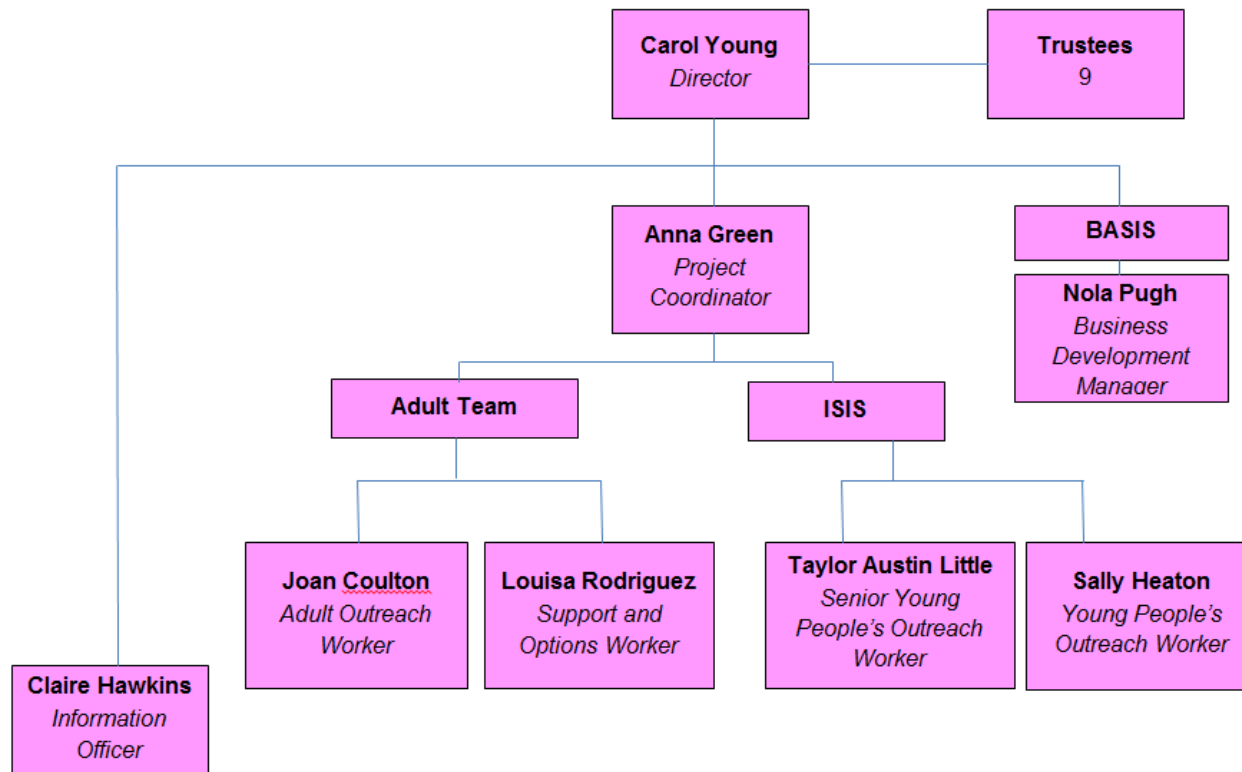
We work to positively reinforce our 5 values of:

- Uniqueness
- Commitment
- Respect
- Trust
- Making a difference

5 Key Aims

- To provide a non-judgemental, accessible service to women that responds to their identified needs.
- To enable women to exit from prostitution by offering long-term support and alternatives to sex work.
- To raise awareness of the risk of sexual exploitation to young people through the provision of education and training.
- To promote an understanding of the issues for those working in prostitution within the wider community and other professionals.
- To ensure a quality service within the local and national framework and extend the level of service provision through a partnership approach and the involvement of volunteers.

The Team



Why do Women become involved in Prostitution?

- Poverty
- Drug/Alcohol use
- Threats / coercion
- Abusive partners
- Emotional and physical abuse
- Financial gain
- “All I know” “there is no other option”
- Lack of education/Training
- Accepted within sex working world
- Exploited as a young person.

Street Workers

- Last year Genesis saw around 250 individual adult women, 40% of whom were street based workers. These women are considered amongst the most marginalized and vulnerable groups within society.
- They face issues such as:
 - Alcohol and drug use
 - Complex mental health issues including anxiety, depression, post traumatic stress disorder as a result of current and/or historic abuse
 - Higher rate of suicide
 - Periods of homelessness
 - Frequent episodes of violence and abuse

Services

Genesis provides a street outreach session every Wednesday evening between 7:00pm and 10:00pm and a weekly drop-in on Wednesday from 2pm to 5pm (creche facilities available).

The outreach team offers:

- Information on a wide-range of health and social care needs
- Long term holistic support
- Free condoms and lubricant
- Sexual health advice and STI screening
- Referrals into drug treatment and other services
- Safety advice and information
- Personal attack alarms
- Refreshments
- Food parcels and clothing
- Harm reduction support in partnership with BARCA

Off-Street Workers

- Last year 60% of the women we saw worked in the off-street market such as saunas, escort agencies, lap dancing clubs, and women working independently from private flats and their own homes.
- We currently have approx 30 indoor establishments that we regularly visit to offer health promotion and safety advice.

Services

- Fast track referrals to the Centre for Sexual Health
- C Swap Programme (Chlamydia & Gonorrhoea testing) on demand.
- Sex Worker specific information in 20 different languages – TAMPEP (European Network for HIV/STI prevention in prostitution).
- Sexual Health and Safer Sex information.
- Information about the law relating to sex-work.
- Information about safe working practices and “Ugly Mugs”.
- Condoms, gloves and lubricant distribution.
- One to one support, signposting to other services

Safety and Sex Work

- “It is unlikely that any occupation or lifestyle exposes a woman to the threat of assault and gratuitous violence as constantly and completely as prostitution” Fairstein 1993
 - VIOLENCE AGAINST SEX WORKERS IS A CRIME NOT
AN OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD

Ugly mug schemes are recognised as important tools in safeguarding those involved in prostitution from violence, abuse and ultimately death

They aim to:

- Improve the level of safety of sex workers by alerting them to dangerous individuals
- Systematically record and monitor violence against sex workers
- Enable 3rd party reporting of crimes against sex workers
- Assist the women to report assaults to the police
- Improve liaison between the women, the police and sex work projects
- Contribute to successful convictions of those who commit crimes against sex workers
- Deliver the message that any violence against sex workers is unacceptable and criminal

Between 2002 and 2009, a total of 207 women have reported incidents of assault via Genesis 'Ugly Mug' Scheme. An average of 26 reports per year. Only 59 (29%) of those were reported to the police. 23% reported a sexual assault and 18% reported rape.

Examples of reasons given for not reporting were:

"They don't do anything" (from a woman who was assaulted so badly by a punter she had 6 teeth knocked out.)

"I didn't think the police would take me seriously".

- *"what's the point of reporting it"*
- worried that they would be charged.

One woman reported a sexual assault to 'an officer on a bike' but didn't know what was going to happen after that.

- Another was kidnapped for 4 hours, assaulted and threatened but didn't go to the police because the man knew her address and she didn't think the police would be able to protect her.

Barriers to Moving on From Sex Work

- ❖ Coercion from 'boyfriend'/abuser/abusers/peers
- ❖ Love
- ❖ Lack of education / job opportunities
- ❖ Drug / alcohol use or dependency
- ❖ Fear of social isolation
- ❖ Sense of belonging within that community
- ❖ Stigma attached & rejection by society
- ❖ Inconsistency of resources and intervention
- ❖ Trafficking / links to organised crime
- ❖ Finances
- ❖ Convictions

New Futures

- The Support and Options worker is a dedicated worker aimed at supporting women who seek to make changes in their life and move on from sex work.
- The support and options worker – support women for up to 2 years depending on need, providing emotional and practical support.

The needs of New Futures Service Users

- In three years from June 2009 to June 2012
- 35 women were admitted to service
- 50% were indoor working women
- 50% street working women
- 90% some form of issue with mental health issue
- 75% of women supported in getting rehoused or to access housing advice
- 45% supported to access training or education
- 22% supported in getting into mainstream employment
- 70% supported to access or referred to drug services
- 20% supported to access or referred to alcohol services
- 88% supported with accessing or referred to benefits services and debt advice.

Do you talk to women about sex work

- How would you approach the subject with a female client?
- What would you do if a woman disclosed she was sex working?
- Do you know where to get specialist support for her around sex work?

Barriers to Disclosure

- Fear of Judgement
- What will happen if I disclose?
- Confidentiality who will they tell?
- Stigma
- They wont understand

Consequences of none disclosure

- Unable to support women with all their issues
- Women's safety
- Substance misuse treated but will not prevent her returning to sex work
- Sex working woman 12x more likely to be murdered than none sex working woman.

Approaching Sex Work

- None judgemental
- Discuss confidentiality
- Make it none specific, eg we ask all female clients (could be part of assessment)
- Enables holistic, multi agency approach to best support vulnerable women.
- Know what you will do next, how will you support them with this, referring to specialist service.

Vicky's Story

Questions

Any further questions or comments?

Thank you for your time!

If you would like any further information please
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