

Redbridge Community Safety Partnership

Strategy to Reduce On-Street Prostitution in Redbridge

2012 - 2015

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1) Introduction

The aim of this strategy is to develop a focussed and co-ordinated approach to managing and reducing street prostitution in Redbridge with a particular reference to the borough's current hotspot location.

2) Background to the Strategy

Since 2009 a number of initiatives have been undertaken by the Police, Local Authority and other organisations in an attempt to address the growing prevalence of on-street prostitution in Loxford ward, located in the South of the Borough. Loxford Ward is an area which has high rates of deprivation with 8 of its 9 LSOAs¹ falling within the top 30% most deprived areas in England. Despite these combined efforts the problem of on-street prostitution has continued to exist in this location and anecdotal evidence suggests that, due to outside factors, the problem may have actually become worse over this period.

In September 2011, a petition signed by 2,528 residents of Loxford Ward was submitted to the London Borough of Redbridge. The petition highlighted to the Council the residents' concerns around prostitution and the impact this was having on their lives, (see page 2).

In response to the petition a local multi-agency problem solving group (LMAP) was established to co-ordinate the work being carried out to address the problem of 'on-street' prostitution in Loxford Ward. A number of initiatives, including enforcement activities and environmental improvements were carried out as a result of the work of this group. However, despite this, prostitution has continued to be a visible problem in this location, with intelligence indicating that any reduction in prostitution in the area following this work is generally temporary in nature.

In response to the entrenched nature of this on-street prostitution issue in Loxford ward and acknowledging the complexity of the problem, it was felt that a longer term strategy should be written. This will allow the work that has already been undertaken to be further developed, co-ordinated and sustained in order to manage the issue effectively in the longer term. The strategy also focuses on measures to help women wishing to exit from prostitution; good practice methods adopted in this strategy may also provide an outline to address on-street prostitution problems that occur in other areas of the borough outside the primary hotspot location.

¹ LSOA – Lower Super Output Area – are homogenous small areas of relatively even size (around 1,500 people).

3) On-Street Prostitution in Redbridge

Impact on local communities:

Street-based prostitution has a negative impact on local communities, including:

- An increase in associated crime such as drug dealing and anti-social behaviour;
- Noise and traffic throughout the night;
- Drug and sex litter (needles, condoms, tissues etc.);
- Increase in local residents' fear of crime;
- Increase in concern on the impact on and potential involvement of young people in the area; and
- Perceptions of gender, as streets turn into an environment of male dominance where men negotiate the sale of women's bodies and female residents are approached by kerb-crawlers.

Borough Wide Intelligence:

A local scoping exercise that has been carried out indicates that there are isolated incidents of on-street prostitution in a number of wards in Redbridge. However, the small number of women involved in prostitution evident at these locations, and the irregularity of occurrence, minimise the majority of the associated impacts on the local community in these areas.

A study carried out by Eaves in 2009 (A London based charity working to eliminate all aspects of violence against women) into the provision of brothels across London, estimated that there are 39 brothels operating in Redbridge². Although this strategy is not primarily designed to respond to off-street prostitution, certain provisions within it will be of use to women involved in prostitution who work in brothels and other off-street locations.

Loxford Ward:

Over the past two years the number of women visibly involved in prostitution has increased in Loxford ward. This is thought to be partially a result of the inner London Olympic boroughs increasing their enforcement activity towards women involved in prostitution, causing them to migrate outwards. However, it is unlikely that now the Olympic period has passed that there will be a voluntary movement back to previous operating areas for the women involved in prostitution due to the now established trade that exists in the south of the borough.

Although, from the enforcement activity carried out, some information has been gathered both about the women involved in prostitution and the kerb crawlers (see scanning exercise below), it has proved difficult to develop and maintain an accurate picture of the women involved in prostitution in Redbridge. It is believed

² Data from Big Brothel report – Eaves 2009

that there is a degree of organisation involved, since of the 185 cautions issued between October 2011 and March 2012, only 13 arrests have been made. This suggests that women are being moved either to off street locations or to other boroughs after being cautioned and subsequently replaced by different women, in order for arrests to be avoided (which are made following the issue of three cautions). Information regarding where the women are from, what their health and wellbeing needs are, and how many women in total are selling sex, particularly in Loxford ward, is required in order to develop a more accurate understanding of the situation.

Scanning Exercise:

Women involved in prostitution:

Women involved in prostitution often have a number of different aliases and can therefore be difficult to detect through analysis of crime records. All the data sets on women involved in prostitution have significant complexities because of the problem of identifying specific individuals. Local data below has been collected from a number of different data sources including SNT intelligence, custody records and Drug Interventions Programme figures.

▪ Borough wide Intelligence:

It is believed that there are currently over 70 known women involved in prostitution who have at one point worked in Redbridge, almost exclusively in the Ilford Lane area. This data has been gathered from custody data, Merlin data (cautions) and other police intelligence sources.

▪ Loxford SNT Intelligence:

During October 2011, Redbridge Police identified a number of the most problematic women involved in prostitution operating in Loxford.

- A number of these women were known to have sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and Hepatitis C;
- A number of these women were known to have mental health issues, such as self harm, depression, suicidal feelings;
- A number of the women are known to have drug dealers as boyfriends, pimps or associate with known male criminals; and
- A number of these women who are involved in prostitution are also known to have been involved in other crime types. In particular they have been arrested for prolific shoplifting offences but are also known to have committed robberies and burglaries.

▪ Intelligence from Enforcement Operations:

Information obtained on the 36 different women involved in prostitution arrested or cautioned during a recent enforcement operation, September 2012:

- Women were aged between 18 – 36 years old;
- Home Borough of residence obtained on these women included:
 - 9 x Redbridge;
 - 5 x Newham;
 - 4 x Barking and Dagenham;
 - 3 x Waltham Forest;
 - 2 x Enfield;
 - 1 x Havering;
 - 1 x Brent;
 - 9 x no borough of residence provided
- Of these women:
 - 26 gave Romanian as their nationality;
 - 9 gave British as their nationality;
 - 1 gave Polish as their nationality.

▪ Drugs Intervention Programme (DIP) figures:

In Redbridge custody suite, 12 different women involved in prostitution were tested for class "A" drugs on 16 occasions, of which 15 tests came back positive. These results are further broken down as:

- 8 (50%) tested positive for both cocaine and opiates;
 - 4 (25%) tested positive for cocaine;
 - 3 (19%) tested positive for opiates; and
 - 1 (6%) tested negative
- 14 of 16 (88%) of these women involved in prostitution were classified as being white European;
 - 7 of 12 (58%) of these women involved prostitution were aged between 18 and 29;
 - 5 of 12 (42%) of these women involved in prostitution were aged between 30 and 40.

Men involved in prostitution:

To date we have not been made aware of any men involved in on-street prostitution operating in South Ilford, with particular reference to Ilford Lane.

Children involved in prostitution:

To date we have not been made aware of any under age males or females involved in on-street prostitution operating in the hotspot areas.

Kerb Crawlers:

Note: The following figures have been compiled from intelligence gathered during four separate operations or periods of enforcement activity; (Kerb crawlers caught on CCTV who signed Anti Social Behaviour Contracts; Police Undercover Sting Operation targeting Kerb Crawlers; Kerb Crawlers charged during 2011 who were issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice; Kerb Crawlers given an official sanction prior to the commencement of work in October 2011). Each of these operations has been analysed separately, which has provided an upper and lower limit for the percentages in relation to demographic details of kerb crawlers.

Between October 2011 and the end of January 2012, enforcement activity that has focused on kerb crawlers, has provided the following information:

- Location of Offender's Home Address:

Kerb crawlers who have received some form of formal sanction due to their activities in Loxford Ward are known to have come from:

- Redbridge including Loxford Ward;
- Newham ;
- Haringey;
- Tower Hamlets ;
- Havering;
- Barking & Dagenham;
- Bexley;
- Waltham Forrest;
- Essex; and
- Other locations outside Metropolitan Police area.

Intelligence information shows that for the different operations from which this data was gathered, between 42% and 54% of the kerb crawlers came from Redbridge. Between 3% and 36% of these men came from Loxford Ward.

- Ethnicity of Offender:

Kerb crawlers who have received some form of formal sanction due to their activities in Loxford Ward identified their ethnicity as follows:

- White: Between 16% and 36%
(British, Irish, Scottish or any other white background);
- Asian or British Asian: Between 55% and 83%
(Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or any other Asian background); and
- Black or Black British: Between 9% and 27%
(Caribbean, African, Any other black Background).

4) Response

In order to address the problem of on-street prostitution in Redbridge with particular reference to the borough's hotspot location, work will be undertaken through the following four key areas:

- a) **Environment:** Carrying out environmental improvements to reduce the ability for prostitution to take place;
- b) **Enforcement:** Tackling the demand and supply through enforcement activity aimed at both the women involved in prostitution and kerb crawlers;
- c) **Exit:** Developing multi-agency provision for women wishing to exit from prostitution and improve the safety of women involved in prostitution; and
- d) **Engagement:** Responding to the local community's needs and concerns through engagement and communications work.

Each of these four key areas is further expanded upon in greater detail below.

A working group has been established to carry out work in each of these four areas. To co-ordinate their response and ensure that it is carried out in a holistic manner, each key area of work will have an accompanying action plan clearly outlining work required to be undertaken by each of the sub-groups. Each of the chairs of these groups will then attend the 'Reducing On-Street Prostitution Strategy Group'.

Work to date has primarily focussed on enforcement activities targeted towards the women involved in prostitution. This strategy proposes that a more balanced and holistic approach is taken by all partners. Lists of the agencies and organisations which we would look to involve and may be able to assist in carrying out the aims of this strategy are listed in Appendix i.

Street prostitution is widely recognised as a form of violence against women and this is reflected in the Mayor of London's "The Way Forward" strategy 2010 – 13. While the Home Office's 'Review of Effective Practice in Responding to Prostitution' acknowledges that improving the safety of those involved in prostitution and reducing violence against them should be a core focus of any work undertaken in dealing with prostitution.

Local strategies including the Redbridge Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), the Crime and Disorder Partnership Plan and the draft Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, also reflect this approach, with the women involved in prostitution being considered either victims or both victims and perpetrators. As such, as much focus is required on targeting kerb crawlers and those who might be controlling the activity, as on providing support to those women wishing to exit from prostitution. Previous approaches were often less holistic and tended to focus primarily on the women involved in prostitution.

a) Environmental Response

For any activity to take place, it requires a sphere or location in which the participants both have the opportunity and willingness to carry it out. By addressing the location in which both the solicitation and the act are carried out, the amount of prostitution that is currently taking place can be reduced.

i) Redbridge's response to date:

Multiple agencies have worked together to put in place a number of environmental improvements to address both, as well as areas where women involved in prostitution are known to congregate and the locations used by the prostitutes with their customers. These have included the following:

- An in-depth Environmental Visual Audit (EVA);
- The up-grading of street lighting in sixteen side streets off Ilford Lane;
- Erection of fences and installation of gates to control access;
- Installation of a car access barrier on a Local Authority managed housing estate;
- Upgrading of lighting on housing estates; and
- Removal and reduction of vegetation.

ii) Future planned work:

It is recommended that the following work needs to continue to address problem locations:

- A follow up environmental visual audit to assess work already carried out and to make further recommendations;
- The continued maintenance of vegetation in problem areas;
- Increased cleaning of problem areas;
- Gating and fencing of new locations caused through dispersal as a result of previous work carried out;
- Investigation into the implementation of one-way systems on side roads off Ilford Lane.

b) Enforcement Response:

Enforcement activity to reduce street prostitution is the most visible and resource intensive aspect of this response. It can have an immediate impact upon the situation yet also needs to be carried out in a sustained, coordinated and balanced way to have a long term benefit.

'The policing of street prostitution needs to take account of those buying sex as well as those selling sex.'³

The following work is recommended to fulfil this priority:

- A strong multi-agency approach which focuses on tackling kerb crawling;
- Continued enforcement activities towards the women involved in street prostitution; and
- Work to identify and target those involved in the control of prostitution activity.

i) Redbridge's response to date:

A number of different enforcement initiatives and operations have been undertaken targeting both kerb crawlers and the women involved in prostitution. These have included:

- An undercover sting operation focused on arresting kerb crawlers;
- High visibility enforcement using central Metropolitan Police Service resources targeting the 'on-street' prostitutes;
- A multi-agency disruption operation;
- Continued enforcement by the Loxford Safer Neighbourhood Team;
- Introduction of a Dispersal Zone, under section 30 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003; and
- Identification and use of anti-social behaviour legislation make known prostitutes the subject of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders to stop them operating in the borough.

ii) Future planned work:

The following enforcement activity is suggested:

- Continued use of anti-social behaviour legislation including ASBOs and Dispersal Zones;
- Enforcement of the Dispersal Zone;
- Regular enforcement operations targeting both the women involved in prostitution and the kerb crawlers;
- Further target operations focused on the kerb crawlers;
- High visibility multi-agency operations.

³ A Review of Effective Practice in Responding to Prostitution – Home Office

c) Diversion and Exit Response

Women involved in on-street prostitution are an extremely vulnerable and often marginalised group of women. They face multiple and complex needs such as homelessness, substance misuse, experiences of childhood abuse and/or childhoods in care. For the vast majority, prostitution is a choice of 'no choice'. Many entered prostitution at a very young age and have early experiences of abuse and violence; they have often been groomed or forced into prostitution.

In Redbridge we are also encountering a large percentage of women involved in prostitution who have come to the U.K from Eastern Europe. These women may have been the victims of trafficking, or may have come to the country intentionally to work in prostitution. However it is believed that some form of coercion or exploitation has been experienced by these women in the majority of cases.

In addition, women involved in prostitution experience high levels of sexual and physical violence on the streets and in their intimate relationships. Many experience numerous physical and mental health problems and/or are drug or alcohol dependent. The mortality rate for women involved in street prostitution in London equals 12 times the national average (Home Office 2004).

The different elements of support that need to be put in place for a holistic exit response require the involvement of multiple agencies including⁴:

- Specialist prostitution projects and services;
- Health (including sexual, reproductive and mental health services);
- Police;
- Housing Services;
- Drug and alcohol services;
- Social services;
- Children's services; and
- Probation Service.

Additional agencies and organisations will also have to be involved to provide support for women who are not U.K residents, including:

- Voluntary agencies with experience of working with trafficked women;
- The UK Border Agency (or the appropriate agency following the announced changes to this organisation);
- Other specialist trafficking agencies and organisations; and
- Voluntary sector refugee and migrant organisations;

⁴ A Review of Effective Practice in Responding to Prostitution – Home Office

i) Redbridge’s response to date:

- Negotiating with organisations within LBR to recognise women involved in prostitution as victims of violence against women and treat them appropriately;
- Information/Intelligence gathering;
- Setting up a referral pathway into the Repeat and Vulnerable Victims panel;
- Investigation with outreach service providers in relation to drug and alcohol misuse.

ii) Future planned work:

The following work is recommended to fulfil this priority:

- Develop and maintain an accurate picture of the women involved in street prostitution;
- The provision of outreach services and a drop in centre as a way of achieving initial engagement which can lead to more sustained engagement;
- Development of multi-agency support for women involved in prostitution who want to change their lifestyles and exit from prostitution; and
- To improve the safety of women involved in prostitution.

d) Responding to the Local Communities Concerns through Community Engagement and Communications

The initial impetus for the action being carried out to address the problem of prostitution in Loxford ward was the concerns of the local community. It is important that the local community continue to be kept informed about the work that is being carried out but also that they feel empowered as part of the solution.

The local community can provide extremely useful information and act as additional eyes and ears for the agencies carrying out work in the area. Additionally some members of the local community will be involved in the purchase of sex from the women involved in prostitution and as such by discouraging them from doing this a further reduction in prostitution could be achieved.

i) Redbridge's response to date:

To date engagement with the local community has been limited to providing information and updates on the work being carried out to deal with the problem through the following channels:

- Local press and media outlets,
- Use of 'Quick Communication' leaflets produced by the local safer neighbourhood team;
- Publishing information on Redbridgei and in Redbridge Life;
- Providing information at Area Committee 6; and
- Local ward councillors.

There was also a 'walk about' in the local area to view the locations where prostitution is happening, which included participation by local residents to highlight their concerns.

Additionally local residents continue to provide information to the Council on the number of women involved in prostitution seen in the area and locations where they have been observed.

ii) Future planned work:

The following work is recommended to fulfil this priority:

- Engaging with the local community to understand their views;
- Empowering local residents by including them in certain specific responses and work being carried out;
- The promotion of reporting to the police and other agencies;
- Continuing to keep local residents informed;
- Challenging the myths and exposing the reality of street prostitution; and
- Discouraging people from buying sex.

5) Resources and Funding

2012/13:

Work carried out during the first year of the strategy, was funded from both mainstream and one-off additional resources for operations, specific initiatives and environmental improvements.

2013/14:

During the second year of this strategy, a funding bid has been submitted and agreed by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to a sum of £133,000.

This funding will allow work to be conducted in the following areas:

- Outreach provision;
- Research into the women involved in prostitution;
- Provision of a support officer to target kerb crawlers;
- Environmental Improvements;
- Communications;
- Community Engagement

A more comprehensive breakdown of the value of this funding (£133,000) is attached as Appendix ii to this strategy.

Enforcement activities conducted by the Police and multi-agency participation in specific operations will be funded from both mainstream and one-off additional funding.

2014/15:

For the third year of this strategy, a funding bid will be submitted to MOPAC to the same value as for the second year of the strategy.

This funding is not guaranteed and is dependent upon effective performance, meeting the objectives set out in the original funding bid and the outcomes from the work conducted.

Enforcement activities conducted by the Police and multi-agency participation in specific operations will be funded from both mainstream and one-off additional funding.

6) Taking the strategy forward

Whilst acknowledging the significant challenge set to reduce street prostitution, there is a real opportunity to resolve some of the long standing problems that have been associated with prostitution, its causes and its consequences.

The success of this strategy requires the commitment of all partners to support the aim of tackling street prostitution in Redbridge, in acknowledgment that it is a significant social problem in the areas where it takes place. Delivering the four priorities of this strategy through the integrated action plan will enable partners to make a real and sustained impact upon street prostitution, therefore improving the lives of the individuals involved, and upon the communities affected by this violent, crime based, and exploitative activity.

The Redbridge Safer Communities Partnership acknowledges that women involved in prostitution are often victims of violence and measures to address this are included in the action plan. Additionally the partnership is aware that it is the women involved in prostitution who are consistently blamed for the existence and continuation of prostitution. Working to disrupt the demand for prostitution therefore forms an integral part of this strategy and a balanced approach targeting both kerb crawlers and the women involved in prostitution forms the core of the enforcement aspect of this strategy.

This strategy should be progressed with due regard for changes to legislation, such as those being debated around anti-social behaviour and the work currently being carried out by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime on Prostitution across London.

7) Governance and ownership of the strategy

A 'Responding to On-Street Prostitution Strategy Group' has been established consisting of the chairs of each of the 4 sub-groups, which will meet approximately quarterly in order to monitor progress, hold partners accountable for their actions and provide strategic oversight. This strategy group will report to the Community Safety Partnership, Business Support Group and provide updates to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

This strategy and associated action plan is intended to run for a three-year period and will be reviewed during the writing of the Safer Communities Partnership Plan 2015-16. However it is recognised that work to tackle prostitution may require a longer-term approach and that the principles established in this strategy may need to be continued over a longer period.

This strategy should not be taken forward in isolation; it is intrinsically linked to the Violence against Women and Girls Strategy, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Safer Communities Partnership Plan.

References:

Safe Exit 'A Template for a multi-agency approach to tackle street-based prostitution' http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/data/files/realising_rights.pdf

Greater London Authority (2010) 'The Way Forward: Taking action to end violence against women and girls' <http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/The%20Way%20Forward%20Final%20Strategy.pdf>

Scottish Government: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/crimes/Response/streetprostitutionguidecons/LAguidance/LeavingProstitution>

The Crown Prosecution Service:
http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/p_to_r/prostitution_and_exploitation_of_prostitution/

Boff, A (2012) 'Silence on Violence: Improving the safety of women' <http://www.uknswp.org/wp-content/uploads/SILENCEONVIOLENCElondonmajorofficereport19thmarch2012.pdf>

Toynbee Hall Safe Exit: <http://www.toynbeehall.org.uk/page.asp?section=460§ionTitle=Our+Work#Partnerships>

Shelter England:
http://england.shelter.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0016/49030/Off_the_Streets.pdf

Redbridge Joint Strategic Needs Assessment:
http://www2.redbridge.gov.uk/cms/care_and_health/health/joint_strategic_needs.aspx

Appendix i

Key organisations/services likely to contribute to the delivery of the action plan:

- Redbridge Local Authority services, including:
 - Adults Social Services - Safeguarding
 - Safer Communities Partnership Team
 - Children’s Services
 - Street Scene
 - Public Health
 - Anti Social Behaviour Team
 - Housing
- Redbridge Victims’ Panel
- MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference)
- NHS:
 - Havens
 - GP services
 - Sexual health services
 - Drug treatment services
- Voluntary organisations, including:
 - All domestic violence and sexual violence services in the borough e.g. East London Rape Crisis Services, Poppy Project;
 - Refuge and Migrant Forum East London
 - Redbridge Street Pastors
- Greater London Authority
- Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime
- The Metropolitan Police Service –
Including local Police and Sapphire (Rape and Serious Sexual Assault Unit)
- UK Border Agency
- Job Centre Plus
- Adult education and training providers
- Other agencies identified through intelligence gathered

Appendix ii:

Project/Area of Work	Funding
Outreach provision	
2 x part time outreach workers (ISVA)	£40,000
Training for front line staff	£1,500
Referral pathway cards	£1,500
Tracking of women involved in prostitution	
Research	£20,000
Kerb Crawler Enforcement	
Support officer (Commission Police)	£20,000
Environmental Improvements	
Additional cleans	£2,000
Additional vegetation removal	£2,000
Fencing and gating	£25,000
Communications	
Warning signs	£1,000
Enforcement communications campaign	£2,500
Sexual health campaign	£2,500
Reporting campaign	£2,000
Community Engagement	
Community meeting	£1,000
Community action days	£2,000
Coordination	
Coordination	£10,000
Total Funding	£133,000

Appendix iii:

Governance:

Governance of the strategy will be through:

- Redbridge Safer Communities Partnership Board

Structure:



