

Signpost Series



1a. Prostitution

A life cut short....

Prostitution is a major problem in the UK. With many people getting involved at an early age, the violence, drug dependence and associated chaotic lifestyle makes it difficult to exit without support. **The National Christian Alliance on Prostitution (NCAP)** exists to unite, equip and empower groups working with people involved in the sex industry to offer freedom and change. The NCAP network is an operating activity of Beyond the Streets.



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This "Signpost Series" was designed by NCAP as a response to the report "Towards the Inclusive Church; Supporting the Marginalised"¹ to help equip the Church in the process of tackling these pastoral issues.

NCAP agrees that

*"prostitution is survival, not sexual behaviour. The majority of women involved in prostitution do so in order to survive and as a result of previously experienced child sexual abuse, physical and sexual violence, poverty, homelessness, drug dependency and mental health problems."*²

What is a "Prostitute"?

"A woman³ like you and me, but who hasn't had the same opportunities. Coerced, forced or with simply no other choice but to make a living by selling the only commodity that is really hers- herself. A 'commodity' because in many societies, even in today's world, that is all that a woman is seen to be"⁴

Definition of prostitution:

the provision of sexual favours in exchange for some form of payment, such as money, drink, drugs or even a bed for the night"⁵

Government figures suggest that approximately **80,000** individuals in the UK are believed to be involved in the sex industry.⁶ It manifests itself in a variety of on-street and off-street activities.⁷ All aspects of the industry are linked with high



levels of violence and severe health problems.⁸ As many as 95% of those involved in street-based prostitution are believed to use heroin and/or crack⁹. The inherent risks, both physical and psychological, have immediate implications and long-term consequences¹⁰. A study of 475 people from five countries indicated common features of the work.

- 73% reported that they had been physically assaulted
- 62% had been raped
- 92% stated that they wished to escape prostitution immediately.¹¹

¹ See www.ncapuk.org/content/resources

² *Routes Out* Annual Report (2002-2003)

³ NCAP Affiliates also work with men and young boys who are involved in prostitution. For this reason we seek to be inclusive in our language regarding gender. However, many publications are gender specific and quotes from them may appear to reinforce the idea that those exploited by prostitution are all women.

⁴ Green, P. Rahab Ministries, Thailand

⁵ Green, J. *It's No Game: Responding to the needs of young women at risk or involved in prostitution*. (1992)

⁶ Kinnell, H. (1999) *Survey of Sex Work Characteristics and Policies in the UK*

⁷ Dickson, S. *Sex in the City: Mapping Commercial Sex across London* (The Poppy Project: 2003)

⁸ Rekart, M, Lancet, *Sex-work harm reduction: The Lancet* Vol. 366:2123-34,

⁹ *Paying the Price: a consultation paper on prostitution* Home Office (2004)

¹⁰ The Sydney Morning Herald states that "Sex workers" on Sydney's streets are more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder than soldiers returning from combat or police officers." See: www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/print/0,1478,3738194a12,00.html

¹¹ Farley, M, Baral, I, Kiremire, M, and Sezgin, U. *Prostitution in Five Countries: Violence and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*, *Feminism & Psychology* 8:4 (1998)

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1b. Prostitution

A Government consultation paper *Paying the Price* has found a similar situation in the UK.¹² The complex causal factors that contribute to an individual becoming involved in the sex industry often contribute to the view that they have no options but to continue despite the desire to exit.

Studies suggest that more young women become involved in sex work than young men, at a ratio of 4:1¹³. Far less has been documented about sex work among young men but evidence suggests that boys tend to enter and exit sex work at a younger age¹⁴.

Why do people get involved in prostitution?

In the UK it is estimated that around 75% of people got involved in prostitution before their 18th birthday.¹⁵ There are no simple answers for this yet research shows that there are some common causal factors. These include severe adversity in the home environment and childhood sexual abuse, which results in running away from their home or statutory care settings.¹⁶

However, this is not the whole picture. It is unknown how many children are groomed¹⁷ by older men, often posing as a boyfriend or more accurately the abusing adult who seeks to isolate the young person from all their support structures. The “boyfriend” then introduces the idea that the young person can “get him out of a tight corner” by performing sexual services for his debtor. The child is then effectively coerced into prostitution in return for money or other favours; prostitution chose them.

Real Life - One 14 year old describing the trauma of prostitution and its consequences stated:

“You feel like a piece of hamburger meat - all chopped up and barely holding together”¹⁸

Viewing prostitution as an isolated problem tends to shift the focus inappropriately to those who work in and are exploited by the industry, rather than their exploiters who keep the industry alive.¹⁹

“Prostitution is not “sex work;” it is violence against women. It exists because significant numbers of men are given social, moral and legal permission to buy women on demand. It exists because pimps and traffickers prey on women’s poverty and inequality. It exists because it is a last ditch survival strategy, not a choice, for millions of the world’s women”²⁰.



8 Myths about those who are exploited by prostitution²¹

1. There is no chance that your daughter, sister, mother, brother, father or cousin is ever or ever will be involved in prostitution.
2. “Prostitutes” will do anything for money and are all big money makers.
3. All “prostitutes” want and need to be rescued.
4. “Prostitutes” are all “drug addicts” and “alcoholics”
5. “Prostitutes” all come from broken and dysfunctional families.
6. All “prostitutes” make lousy parents and abuse their kids
7. You can’t rape a “prostitute” - she chose it by putting herself in that position.
8. You can’t be a “real man” unless you have been with a prostitute.

¹² *Paying the Price: a consultation paper on prostitution* Home Office (2004)

¹³ Barrett, D. *Young People and Prostitution: Perpetrators in our midst.* (1998)

¹⁴ Palmer, T. *No Son of Mine* (2001) Barnardo's

¹⁵ Benson, C. and Matthews, R. *Street Prostitution: Ten facts in search of a policy* (1995)

¹⁶ *Routes Out* Prevention Pilot and literature review 05

¹⁷ Grooming refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending a child, in order to lower a child's sexual inhibitions or establish an intimate friendship in preparation to the eventual introduction of sexual activities with the child. See:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_grooming or www.crop1.org.uk

¹⁸ Kelly Weisburg, D. *Children of the Night*, (1985)

¹⁹ Nakashima Brock, R and Brooks Thistlethwait, S. *Casting Stones. Prostitution and Liberation in Asia and the United States* (1996)

²⁰ Raymond, J. G. *Coalition Against Trafficking in Women*

<http://action.web.ca/home/catw/readingroom.shtml?x=74355>

²¹ Adapted from PEERS, Rabinovitch & Lewis (2001)

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1c. Prostitution

Almost 1 in 10 British men say they have paid for sex.²¹

Terminology and labels

Various terms are used to describe the sex industry and those that are part of it. Each term carries particular connotations beyond its immediate meaning. When hearing the stories of those involved in prostitution, it is clear that many struggled with a sense of identity. They assumed other names, called themselves “sex worker” or “prostitute”: they turned themselves into what had been done to them, and described themselves by their actions. It suggests that they had been forced to forget that they are indeed **A PERSON**, a woman, a man, once a child. Our language needs to call people back to who they are: a human, a unique creation of God. Many terms that are used are labels to dehumanise people: prostitute, alcoholic, drug addict, Down Syndrome child. The terms “people exploited by prostitution”, or “person involved in the sex trade” help us to remember that these people are **someone’s daughter or son**, sister, niece or grandchild and that they are very precious to God. Our challenge as the church is to align ourselves with Christ’s model and not focus on external behaviour.



C.S Lewis stated:

“People exploited by prostitution²² are in no danger of finding their present life so satisfactory that they cannot turn to God: the proud, the avaricious, the self-righteous are in that danger”.

A woman enters a church scantily clad, with black stockings and a mini skirt. The pastor immediately goes up to her and asks if she thought it appropriate to wear such things in God’s house. The woman looks down a little mystified and finally leaves. The next week she comes again dressed similarly but with red stockings instead of last week’s black. The pastor again confronts her and finally tells her to ask God what He would have her do. The woman finally leaves. The next week she comes back wearing purple stockings and a mini skirt. The pastor is furious and shouts loudly at her “Did you not ask God what you should wear in His house?” The woman bows her head and quietly says “I did ask Him, however He said He didn’t know as He had never been to this church”.

Jesus was described as a friend of “prostitutes and sinners.” How much does this describe the Church today? It is vital for us to follow the example of Jesus, vital for the Church to speak up for the oppressed²³ and become, like Him friends of “prostitutes and sinners”. The apostle Paul gives some helpful pointers for our journey:

“Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” 2 Peter 1; 5-8

²¹ The British Medical Journal: <http://www.newswise.com/articles/view/516413/>

²² Emphasis added.

²³ The NCAP network has over 50 affiliated projects in the UK that are motivated by Christian principles to see freedom for those caught in prostitution. The church is speaking out.

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1d. Prostitution

Praxis: translating an idea into action;

This section is aimed at helping you create an environment where people with a background of prostitution, (whether they are currently engaged in church or not) can feel safe.....

- Those involved in prostitution risk their lives on their ability to judge a character therefore genuinely engage in relating to them.
- Trust needs to be earned in both directions; confidentiality is an essential part of building this trust and will probably be tested.
- Try to communicate their worth; often their sense of self is fragmented.
- Expect levels of manipulation as this is often a learned survival strategy. Set boundaries and stick to them. Will you give money, a lift or groceries?
- Reserve some of your non judgemental listening for those who constantly have judgements made about them.
- Those involved in prostitution may only want to “stop” working without looking at the root issues. Whilst we know the dangers of this, it is still nonetheless the person’s choice only to go as far as they want.
- We must respect the person’s choices. Any coercion on our part goes against the gospel.
- Expect the long-haul. Evidence suggests that it takes around seven years for people to fully exit prostitution.
- Refer to specialist help if you, or others sense the situation is too complex.

Be realistic about the help you are able to provide, be faithful to the part you can offer on their journey

Further resources;

- Contact the Beyond the Streets office or visit www.ncapuk.org for further training or information.
- See other resources in the “Signpost Series”.
- The NCAP Network: Good Practice Guide. To order this go to <http://www.ncapuk.org/content/news>
- “Paying the Price” Home Office consultation paper (2004)
- “No Son of Mine” Children abused through prostitution. Palmer T (2001) Barnardo’s.
- “Fiona’s Story” Irene Ivison (1997) A mother’s story.
- Coalition for the Removal of Pimping (CROP) find support for families. www.crop1.org.uk

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