



**CLEVELAND
POLICE**

**NOMINATION FOR
THE TILLEY AWARD**
1999

**MIDDLESBROUGH POLICE
DISTRICT**

**MULTI-AGENCY ACTION AGAINST
PROSTITUTION
PROJECT**

(M.A.A.P. PROJECT)

A partnership initiative aimed at reducing the level of prostitution, kerbcrawling and associated crime and anti-social behaviour in Middlesbrough.

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M.A.A.P. PROJECT

ABSTRACT

Prostitution within Middlesbrough goes back many years and has its roots in the town's heyday as a busy port. Although the town's heavy industry has dwindled prostitutes have continued to work in their traditional ground near to the old dock area of St. Hilda's on the north fringe of the town centre.

Under the current law, prostitution is not in itself illegal, it is the circumstances associated with prostitution that make it so, particularly if the practice is by young people or in public

During the mid 1990's street prostitution in Middlesbrough increased and developed into the residential areas of the town centre. The growth of the problem coincided with an increase in the availability of heroin and 'crack' cocaine. The age of the girls involved in prostitution reduced considerably, many were under sixteen.

The effects of this included: -

- i) An increase in serious crime such as assault, robbery, rape, and abduction.
- ii) An increase in anti social-behaviour and intimidation which effected residents, members of the public who were not seeking the services of a prostitute and those carrying out business in the area.
- iii) Serious health concerns in respect of personal safety, unprotected sexual activity and the misuse of controlled drugs.

In response to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Middlesbrough Police together with their partners in the Local Authority conducted an audit of crime and disorder in the town. They consulted with the local communities, business and other agencies and drew up a crime reduction action plan, which reflected the public's priorities.

The audit of crime and disorder in Middlesbrough published in November 1998 (Appendix 'A') identified the issue of prostitution as being of local concern. A strategy for reducing crime and disorder in Middlesbrough for 1999 – 2002 (Appendix 'B') led to the creation of a Multi-agency **Prostitution Task Group** and the M.A.A.P. Project was developed.

This forum has enabled contributing agencies to understand each other's role and contribution towards dealing with the problem, particularly in respect of young women. It has also led to the increased sharing of information, which has helped us to work, together to tackle this extremely complex problem.

M.A.A.P PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

Street Prostitution has been a problem in Middlesbrough for many years. It is the most visible way in which sex workers meet clients, and in this form it impacts on street safety and quality of life particularly when it takes place in residential areas. Most commonly defined as the exchange of sexual services for some sort of payment, money, drugs or other item of value. Under the current law, prostitution is not in itself illegal, it is the circumstances associated with prostitution that make it so

It is a dangerous occupation, sex workers operating, as street prostitutes remain one of the most vulnerable groups within society. They face arrest and are at risk of violence from customers and others who may target them for assault, robbery or other abuse. Locally two sex workers were subject to serious assaults in December 1998 and a 17-year-old prostitute has been missing since April 1998.

The problem for many years has been tackled by single agencies working in isolation. This report using the SARA model of Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment will detail how agencies in Middlesbrough have come together in a Task Group, formed under the auspices of the Crime and Disorder Steering Group to jointly tackle the issue.

SCANNING

Introduction

During the scanning process we obtained information from;

- ◆ Outreach services
- ◆ Barnados SECOS (Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Streets) project
- ▶ Education Department of Middlesbrough Council
- ◆ Residents Groups
- ▶ Social Services
- ◆ Local Authority
- ▶ minutes from Community Council meetings
- Council housing / Housing Association / Landlords
- ◆ Environmental Health
- Drugs Digest
- ◆ Middlesbrough Crime and Disorder Audit

As well as police based data relating to the number of arrests of prostitutes, kerbcrawlers reported for summons or sent warning / advice letters, numbers of complaints, crimes and incidents involving prostitution. Relevant data bases such as the Cleveland Police command and Control, Crime intelligence and crimes recording systems were searched.

Over the past four years the, activity of prostitutes has developed in residential parts of Middlesbrough. In August 1998 local residents presented a 1000 signature petition demanding action.

The Crime Audit estimated 240 women were involved in prostitution in Middlesbrough whilst outreach workers would identify less than this seeking advice via the Drop-in or Drug Alcohol Services.

During 1998, a research project was conducted in Middlesbrough on behalf of Barnados entitled Sexually Exploited Children On the Streets (S.E.C.O.S) Project. This research confirmed the involvement of young girls in street prostitution. It established that it is rare for young people to enter into prostitution by choice. There is someone older and slightly more experienced who shows them the way. This may be an older sister, family member, friend, boyfriend or abusing adult. Other findings indicate that children involved in prostitution have prior to their involvement: -

- ▶ Suffered either physical or sexual abuse,
- ◆ Regularly been reported missing from home or Local Authority Care,
- ◆ Are involved in drug abuse, or
- ◆ Have been engaged in self-harming behaviour.

In early 1998, as a result of growing concerns over child prostitution (person less than 18 years), the Home Office and Department of Health jointly published guidance to agencies that deal with child prostitutes. This enables all the agencies to work together to: -

- ◆ Recognise the problem;
- ▶ Treat the child primarily as a victim of abuse;
- ◆ Safeguard children and promote their welfare;
- ◆ Work together to provide children with strategies to exit prostitution;
- ◆ Investigate and prosecute those who coerce, exploit and abuse children.

Issues Of Personal Safety

Numerous studies have identified the additional risk of violence to street prostitution and incidents of serious assault have taken place locally over recent months, including a spate of 'taxing activities' presumably by male drug users attempting to steal cash, however the issue of male clients being mugged or robbed is not a rare occurrence.

A number of women spoken to were concerned about their safety, however took calculated risks and operated in a way which helped reduce the potential for agreeing to what may turn out to be a violent confrontation.

- ◆ Not entering a vehicle with more than one occupant
- ◆ Negotiation prior to entering the car
- ◆ Working opposite a friend who could monitor activity

However, concerns were expressed that increased police activity did reduce their ability to check out their potential clients thereby increasing their risk

There is a general reluctance to report incidents of violence, however when something out of the ordinary *did* take place the general view is that street workers would report incidents, either via a friend or support agency. The environment of outstanding fines and warrant enforcement issues ensures the police are seen as the enforcers rather than a caring or supportive organisation when it comes to how street prostitution is managed.

The Child Welfare Officer in St Hilda's reported the fear felt by residents about allowing young children to play or walk freely within the area. Similar concerns abound within the Union Street area; Union Street being near to schools and play areas. The range of nuisance and incivility associated with street prostitution seriously undermines the quality of life for residents and creates a detrimental effect on the status of the neighbourhood and local esteem.

Support Networks

Outreach Services

In January 1996 Tees Health Authority, working with the Genito Urinary Medicine (GUM) Consultant in Middlesbrough decided to set up an outreach service for commercial sex workers. The rationale for setting up this service was to prevent the spread of HIV and the service was funded from the HIV Prevention Budget. The centre provides services for commercial sex workers, both young and old, who work on the streets of Middlesbrough. The centre is open on Friday evenings between 6-9 p.m. The service offers screening, sexual health advice, free condoms and treatment for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's). The drop-in clinic is held at a location in central Middlesbrough adjacent to the area where the prostitutes work. Two outreach workers also go out onto the streets to offer condoms to the prostitutes who do not use the clinic.

Youth Outreach

Contraception and Reproductive Health Service (formerly Family Planning) within the South Tees community & Mental Health Trust manage the Youth Outreach Service. The outreach work began in February 1994. Initially, Youth Outreach linked in with a member of the HIV team in Social Services (Street Health) and began to undertake outreach work with young people who are involved with prostitution and other exploitation practices. It was noticed that there was a gap in service provision for this focus group, as they were not accessing many of the other services. The outreach work consisted of the distribution of condoms, offering advice and information around many issues, making referrals and supporting girls/women accessing other relevant agencies. Later, linking in with Dr

Openay of Ward 48, GUM Clinic, the Women's Drop-in was opened one evening a week to provide working girls with advice, information and support and also to offer sexual health screening and HIV testing. This was and still is set up in the Railway Station area of the town on a Friday evening.

It soon became apparent that a similar service was needed for younger girls who work on the other side of the town. The older women were intimidating younger girls when going to the Drop-in and many were stating that they felt unsafe. When driving around the Bus Station and Union Street areas, an increase in the number of younger girls working was noticeable. It was also made clear to the girls that the car could not be stopped to give out condoms (advice/information) in this residential part of the town, in the hope that the girls would move to a more appropriate place. However, it was decided to open a Drop-in around the Bus Station area as most girls were not willing to go 'over the border' and the number of girls working warranted this decision. This service for the young girls was opened in May 1997 and was on a Tuesday evening.

At this time it was not unusual to make contact with up to 25-30 young girls in this area in one night. These girls were usually under 20, with the average age being 16, although not all girls disclose their age.

Due to lack of funding, this service ceased in May 1998.

Internet

The World Sex Guide makes reference to Middlesbrough including the following: -

"All in all not very welcoming," being the advice for potential kerbcrawlers.

A phrase we need to build upon.

RESPONSE

Multi—Agency Task Group

In December 1998 a Multi-Agency **Prostitution Task Group** was established in response to the Middlesbrough crime and disorder audit. Representation on the Group is made from the Police, Local Authority, Health, Outreach services, S.E.C.O.S., Education, Residents, Probation, Social Services, Durham and Teesside Universities. Additional members were later included from the Chamber of Commerce, a local reporter, MESMAC. (Men having sex with other men). Its terms of reference are

- To create a non-harassment/controlled zone.
- To remove the problem from residential areas.
- To ensure that prostitutes have access to appropriate welfare and health services.
- To reduce the demand side of sex exploitation.

Many members of the group had met previously in various professional capacities but this was the first time that all members had met as one group with a united aim. Prior to the formation of this group there was inadequate information sharing arrangements and there was cultural problems within organisations which created barriers. Problems related to mistrust of another organisation, unsatisfactory communication channels or fear of legislation such as the Data Protection Act's 1984 and 1988.

Concern was expressed that enforcement alone without the involvement of Outreach workers and support networks would drive vulnerable women into a different, albeit less public, method of prostitution without having the support networkers in place, inevitably increasing their potential risks.

Each agency was required to develop an action plan indicating how they will contribute to the overall aims of the M.A.A.P. project.

This section will now, in the main, concentrate on the Police response.

Police Response

The Police were to focus on: -

- Law enforcement, and
- ♦ The identification of young girls under the age of eighteen years who were believed involved are dealt with as victims in accordance with an agreed multi-agency protocol.

They achieved this by a number of tactics:

Kerb-crawlers/Punters

The main focus of Police enforcement tactics was against the kerb-crawler by the District Vice Unit using the following tactics.

Stop — targeting lone male drivers who frequent the prostitute areas. Although no offence may have been committed, targets are warned about the problems of the area

Letters - On occasions where vehicles are not stopped an advice letter is sent to the registered keeper's home address or business premises.

Report for Summons — No cautions are given all kerb-crawler offenders are reported.

Kerb-crawler Court Day - All kerb-crawlers are summoned to Court on the same day. A 'Name and Shame' day.

Research kerb-crawler activity - the District Vice Unit are collating information by use of a pro-forma questionnaire (Appendix 'F') relating to the frequency, traits, personal lifestyle of kerb-crawlers and how they find the publicity relating to prostitution in Middlesbrough.

Video recording equipment - use of video recording equipment has been used to obtain evidence intelligence relating to kerb-crawling activity. The recording takes place either from a static position or by use of an unmarked car.

Dedicated Drug Unit (DDU)

Although not the primary objective of the unit analysis showed a link between drugs and prostitution therefore prostitution areas have been subject to DDU attention. For instance an operation in Union Street which concluded on the 5th / 6th May 1999 resulted in ten people being arrested and charged with conspiracy to supply heroin and 'crack' cocaine.

Prostitutes

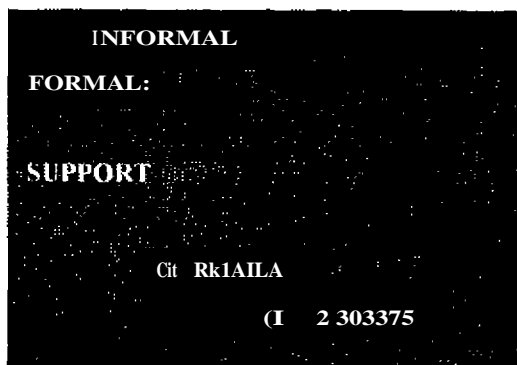
Are dealt with by either warning/moving on, caution or arrest and prosecution. Primarily those who operate within residential areas are targeted. Those operating in non-residential areas are less likely to be dealt with by way of arrest.

Dedicated Police Liaison Officer

The introduction of a dedicated Police Liaison Officer was identified as a vital part of the strategy of managing street prostitution issues (See example of contact card below). Barbara, a domestic violence trained police officer working within the Community Safety Department at Middlesbrough took take up this role on 12^s February 1999. Her primary function is to provide support to those who feel at risk acting as a conduit for information and activity concerning street workers. Out of office hours contact is via a dedicated telephone line and answerphone system.

'Dodgy Punter' scheme

The scheme is co-ordinated via Barbara to raise awareness about violent and abusive punters. A descriptive form is used to allow the prostitutes and agencies to share information about violent clients (Appendix 'C').



Multi- Agency Approach - Juvenile Protocol on Victims of Child Prostitution

The protocol commenced in March 1998 (Appendix'D') its basic principle is to deal with street-workers under 18 as young victims rather than offenders and help them exit from the life of prostitution. The process includes

- ◆ an interview
- ◆ risk assessment
- ◆ intelligence gathering in relation to punters, drug dealers and influences.

A copy of the protocol is attached. In the protocol commences when a young girl who is believed to be involved in prostitution come to police notice. She is not arrested but voluntarily attends the Police Station where a multi-agency caring approach is adopted.

Role Of The Local Authority

A survey of traffic flow by Middlesbrough Council in the relevant areas was carried out. It indicated that the use of traffic regulations would reduce traffic As a result a number of traffic flow measures have been proposed and are being progressed.

Media

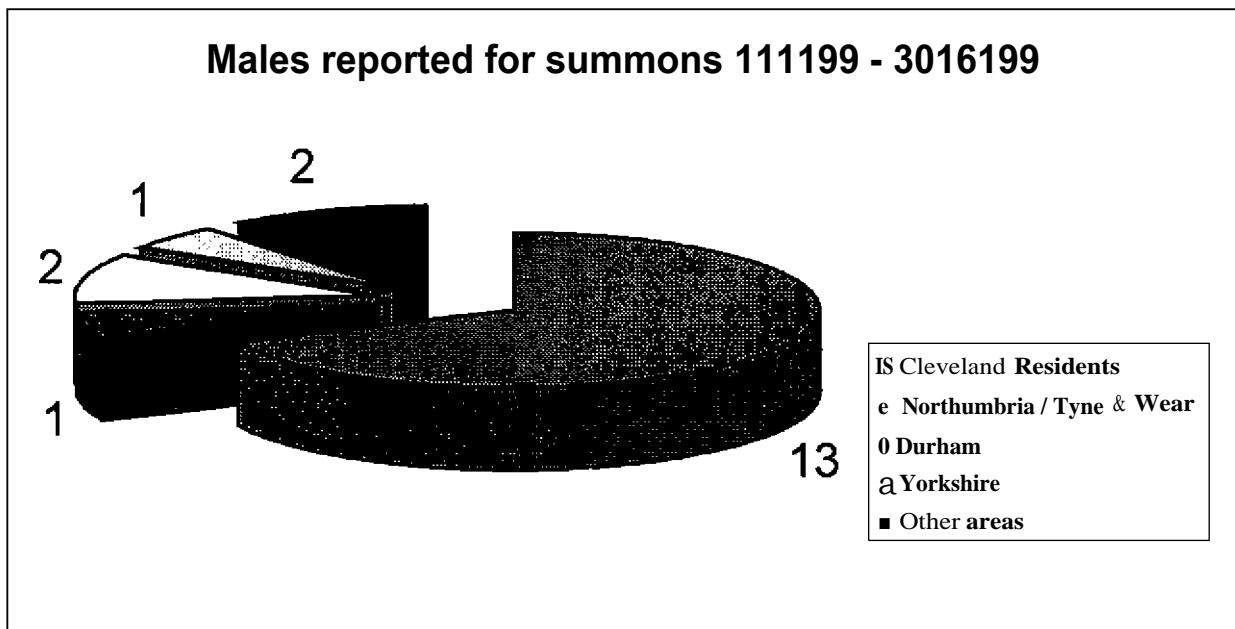
Publicity of prostitution can have an adverse affect on the issue. For instance in 1998 publicity surrounding the proposal to explore the use of a controlled zone initially increased prostitute and punter numbers. However the media have an increasingly important role to play in publicising the broader issues and therefore a local reporter has become part of the Group.

A mixed strategy of media use was adopted using all forms – press, TV and radio. The message was differentiated and aimed at different audiences – for instance residents to re-assure, punters to warn and general public to raise awareness. Multi-agency inputs were given and a number of media events were planned. Examples of media releases for enforcement are: -

- ◆ In October 1998, Police launched `Operation Roxanne' an enforcement operation aimed at the kerbcrawler and prostitutes. Local T.V., radio and media attended a press conference. The message given was a warning to kerb-crawlers and emphasised that there was no controlled zone in Middlesbrough.

This was repeated in May 1999 under `Operation Roxanne II'.

The kerb-crawler court day continues to bring media attention to our enforcement campaign. This highlights police activity and influences potential kerbcrawlers and members of the public. (Media cuttings Appendix `E')



The data shows a slight reduction in the number of letters and summonses issued. However the greatest difference lies in the reduction of punters from the Northumbria area. Perhaps evidence of the effectiveness of the media campaign.

Prostitutes have also been released on bail with a condition not to enter the residential areas where they operate. This has been effective but invariably they are arrested for breaching bail, placed before Court and dealt with. The effect of this is therefore generally short lived.

In the last 12 months there appears to have been a decrease in the number of young girls working in this area of the town. This is not to say the problem is going away. The very visible policing, high profile operations and the media coverage have had a marked effect on the girls working within it. Due to this, many girls have decided not to work in this area and have gone to other areas, are working from home or other houses/flats.

Future Perspective

Public Survey - The success of this M.A.A.P. Project can only be measured by an improvement in the quality of life of those who live, work and visit the relevant areas. Therefore to measure this The Task Group are presently (July 1999) in the process of preparing the first of a series of annual public surveys in the relevant. The information should provide an indication as to whether the project has achieved its aim. However, early indications, such as the press report above, show a favourable outcome.

New Deals for Communities this is a Government led initiative based in west Middlesbrough, which is the area where the prostitution problem has been high. Fifty million-pound has been made available for sustainable projects. Prostitution is one of a number of individual projects bidding for funds from the New Deals scheme The project will include CCTV, environmental improvements and traffic reduction schemes. The possibility of the creation of a controlled zone will also be explored. Some members of the group have seen such a scheme in operation in Edinburgh.

S **Conclusion**

There is still plenty of work to be done, but the main issue of coming together and placing the problem in the public arena has taken place. The joint working of the Task Group is a success. They have taken a number of successful steps towards full multi-agency service delivery in the area of prostitution management. The future for the group is one of hard work and perhaps experimentation with a multi-agency approach to an operating a controlled zone.

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