



Paying the Price: a consultation paper on prostitution

Consultation response from The National Youth Campaign on Sexual Exploitation

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Step In My Shoe: A Poem By Ellen

The wisdom inside on the journey I've been.
Noting compares to the life that I've seen
Feeling the thump of my heartbeat
As I walk this cold dim derelict street
Don't judge me cos it hurts.

Just like a flower that once bloomed
Now aged and decrepit delicately ruined
Willing in the darkness, just another child doomed.
The pain before the snapping inside
Behind my eyes where it hides.
My body now an empty shell
A number in the system, a nameless
Soul not mine to sell.
Don't judge me cos it hurts

Now there's not much left of me to erode
When will they reap what it was they sowed.
The finger of blame never lies with the accuser
Yet he who caused the shame, the reason I was used
And abused.

Don't judge me I still hurt.

Paying the Price

A consultation response from The National Youth Campaign on Sexual Exploitation

1. About The National Youth Campaign on Sexual Exploitation

- 1.1 The National Youth Campaign on Sexual Exploitation is a joint initiative between The Children's Society and ECPAT UK. It seeks to involve young people with experience of prostitution in decisions that affect their lives¹; to provide opportunities for their voices to be heard and to enable them to campaign about the injustices that they face.
- 1.2 The Campaign works in partnership with projects that support young people with experience of prostitution; Barnardos, NCH, NSPCC, and local community based projects nationwide. It works with young men and young women under the age of 25, to enable them to set their own campaign goals and activities².
- 1.3 In response to the consultation, the Campaign gathered opinions from young people with experience of prostitution all over the country, in a variety of ways;³
- Carried out a postcard petition which was funded by the Home Office. The Campaign received 71 signed postcards from young people.
 - Distributed and collated questionnaires designed by a young person. 16 Young people completed questionnaires.
 - Carried out focus groups and work with individuals in projects. 28 young people took part in individual or group work in projects, over the period January 2004 to September 2004 inclusive.
 - Young people visited other projects to research the opinions of their peers: 4 young people were interviewed by the Youth Campaigner who designed the questionnaire.
 - 5 young people from the campaign group met in London to discuss their ideas on *Paying the Price* and delivered their key messages to Caroline Flint MP in a meeting at the Home Office.
 - Geographical locations of young people involved in the Youth Campaign Response to *Paying The Price* were: Doncaster,

¹ The terms, 'Young people with experience of prostitution', 'Young people involved in prostitution' and 'Young people with experience of sexual exploitation' are used interchangeably throughout this response to reflect the different ways young people describe their experiences, and to avoid repetition.

² The term, 'Young people' refers to young people under 25 with experience of prostitution who work with the Campaign. Some of the young people have exited prostitution, some have not.

³ The total number of young people who took part cannot be established, as information was gathered anonymously in some cases and young people may have contributed in more than one way to the response.

Huddersfield, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Luton, Norwich, Middlesbrough and Manchester.

The Campaign attempted to undertake a variety of campaign activities on the review, in order to take account the different ways that young people feel willing and able to get involved and to include as many young people as possible.

- 1.4 Initials and geographical locations are used to identify young people. Ages are included where ages were known to the Campaign. Where the young person is male, this is specified.
- 1.5 The Campaign focussed on the questions in the report that explicitly relate to young people; routes into prostitution, protection and support for young people involved in prostitution and the role of the criminal law. However, young people felt that some of the issues for adults had implications for young people, so these ideas are included too.
- 1.6 The Campaign's response is young people led, and young people friendly. Direct quotes from young people are used to convey young people's ideas. All the ideas in the response are young people's ideas, young people helped to edit this response, and it is a response that can be read by young people.
- 1.7 The response reflects the range of experiences the young people reflected on. It outlines the things the young people agree on, but also seeks to recognise differences of opinion between the young people. The response draws upon all the different ways that young people contributed in an effort to include as many people as possible.

2. Paying the Price: Overarching response to Paying the Price

- 2.1 The Youth Campaign welcomes the consultation. The young people are pleased to see this issue getting the attention it deserves, because they feel this issue is neglected. We commend the Home Office Prostitution Review Team for being so keen to involve us in the consultation, and thank them for their support throughout this process.
- 2.2 The Campaign welcomes the focus on prevention and the fact that the paper recognises that the majority of adults who work in prostitution got involved in it before they were 18.
- 2.3 The Campaign also welcomes the recognition in the paper that most young people get involved in prostitution because they have limited choices, and that it explores the best ways to support sexually exploited young people.
- 2.4 The Campaign welcomes the invitation to look at the criminal law in relation to young people involved in prostitution.
- 2.5 The Youth Campaigner's most wanted to see change in the following areas, referred to in *Paying the Price*: Accommodation, Child Protection, The Looked After System, Media portrayals, Support for sixteen and seventeen year olds, Early intervention, responses to young people involved in prostitution from key agencies, and they also call for decriminalisation of prostitution for under 18s.

3. Youth Campaign responses to questions in Paying The Price

3.1. Chapter 1: Challenging myths and misconceptions

3.1.1 Public perceptions of prostitution are very important to all the young people who work with the campaign. Young people agree that there is a need to raise awareness about the realities of prostitution. (1.10) They feel this is one of the most important ways of helping young people involved in prostitution- society judges them for being involved in prostitution, and this affects their self esteem.

- *It's the public's opinions that make us feel like shit. (TA, 18, Leeds)*
- *People only have one opinion about young people who work on the street... the lady of the night and all that. If people could understand why they do that it might make life easier... There's always a reason for someone doing something. (W, 19, London)*
- *People think you're just nothing. Do you know what I mean- You get labelled as a smack 'ed. When I cut through on that path the other day there were some lads there, about 12 yr old, calling me a dirty smack ed and a bag ed and that. I was just dressed like this [tracksuit and trainers] I didn't look like I was working or anything. And they were 12 years old! (C, 24, Leeds)*
- *People think you do drugs, that you rob off people, hurt them, and think you are dirty because you work on the street. (N, 20, Leeds)*
- *People look down their noses, call you names like walking disease, junkie, easy lay and some people think it's ok to rape us. (L, Doncaster)*

3.2 How can awareness be improved and the common myths and misconceptions about prostitution be dispelled?

3.2.1 Role of the Media

Young people feel that the media plays a crucial role in terms of how prostitution is perceived. They say the media needs to be more responsible and should present some of the key reasons why young people get involved in prostitution, instead of portraying all prostitutes as nuisances.

- *It's all about media portrayal, why people are so quick to judge. (L, 20, Manchester)*

- *They should put across both sides of the story- what about they people that are doing it because they have got no choice? They should try to research better and put across that everyone has got their own story- their own individual reason. (EL, 23, Leeds)*
- *We don't want sympathy- just we don't want to be judged. (TA, 18, Leeds)*

3.2.2 The Youth Campaigners feel that negative and stereotyped portrayals of prostitution in the media reinforce taboos and think this discourages young people speaking out if they become involved in prostitution.

- *It makes young people keep it to themselves- feeds hysteria- It makes them feel more ashamed. (TA, 18, Leeds)*

3.2.3 Challenging professional's judgements

Some of the young people feel that public perceptions are particularly problematic because this leads to some of the professionals who are meant to help people involved in prostitution having negative perceptions of prostitutes. They think professionals working in areas where they come in to contact with young people involved in prostitution should have training on why people get into prostitution and what it is really like. This would help to dispel myths about prostitution and challenge the assumptions of some professionals.

- *You need an educational programme for all civil servants, saying that yes, it's your own fault but it's not that easy. Yes, there are an element that steal and are violent, but there are some that don't. I would rather sell my body than do that and no body does that by choice. They lump us all together. Generalise. They think we are all stupid. They talk to you like you are a baby and are quite surprised when you show intelligence. You need to educate people. There should be a course that they would be sent on. (R, 23, Huddersfield)*

3.3 What is the role for schools in raising awareness of this issue?

3.3.1 Education programmes

Youth campaigners feel the best way to challenge judgements is through education programmes in schools. Education in schools would make people understand the reasons why people get involved in prostitution, and eventually this may stop the public being so judgemental.

- *We need to educate people to try to change the way people think about us- more telling and understanding in schools and*

parents. We should tell people about how we are humans. (J, Doncaster)

- *We should give people more information about why some people take drugs (T, Doncaster)*

This relates strongly to part 3.11, the role for schools in preventing young people from getting involved in prostitution.

3.4 What can be done to ensure that those who go to prostitutes are fully aware of the implications of their activities?

How do we ensure that it is clearly understood that those using young people under 18 for sex are guilty of child abuse?

3.4.1 Media Campaign

Young people want the media to report more widely that it is wrong to pay for sex with a child. They feel there should be a high profile campaign that:

- Warns of the effect of prostitution on young people.
- Warns about the possible consequences of buying sex with a young person.

They think there is the need for a television campaign, and also media specifically targeted in areas where men look to buy sex with children: red light areas, contact magazines, newspapers, saunas and massage parlours, and the internet. When the group met in October they all strongly agreed on this point.

- *There should be big billboard adverts in the beat area about the cost of paying for sex with kids meaning life- It could cost the kid their life and the cost of buying the kid could mean life in prison. (E, 22, Leeds)*
- *Pictures of kids and showing what prostitution is really like for them. (EL, 23, Leeds)*
- *People should know that under the new Sex Offences Act you can get life for paying for sex with a kid. (L, 20, Manchester)*
- *They should have TV adverts like the NSPCC's. (Full Stop Campaign) that show you how it is, that are realistic, have the shock factor. (TA, 18, Leeds)*
- *Those ones about gun crime are good. They send out a strong message, in areas where people might use guns. There should be the same about prostitution. (E, 22, Leeds)*

3.5 Chapter 2: The Key Issues

Young People involved in the Campaign speak frankly about how they got involved in prostitution. They feel if the government listens to these stories it is likely to better understand how young people get involved in prostitution, and therefore it will be better able to respond with action that will stop this happening in the future.

3.6 Does this paper present an accurate picture of models of prostitution in England and Wales in the 21st Century?

Whilst the young people who read the document felt that an understanding of models of prostitution were important, they also felt that it was important to recognise that everyone is an individual. They were all agreed on the importance of giving the government this message.

- *Everyone's got their own story. What happened to me could be totally different from what happened to her and what happened to her was probably different to what happened to the next person. (EL, 23, Leeds)*

3.7 Is there further information on the numbers, ages, ethnicity and circumstances of children abused through prostitution?

3.7.1 What is prostitution?

Youth Campaigners feel that the document mainly reflected the reality of the circumstances of young people involved in prostitution. They agree with the definition in Paying The Price, that prostitution is the exchange of sexual services for some form of payment. (2.1)

- *It's not just purely sex for money- it's sex for any favours. (R, 23, Huddersfield)*

3.7.2 Why people get involved in prostitution

They agreed that the 'common characteristics' of people involved in prostitution were accurate. (1.1) However, they felt that not enough recognition is given to the fact that people who get involved in prostitution sometimes do so just to earn money and that abuse, difficult lives, homelessness and problematic drug use did not apply to some people.

- *Some people we know do it just to get by. (TA, 18, Leeds)*
- *Sometimes you chose it because it's the best thing at the time. (A, 19, Manchester)*

3.7.3 Pimps

Youth Campaigners felt that *Paying the Price* focussed too heavily on the fact that all young people have pimps. They felt it was important to see that this is not always the case.

- *I didn't have a pimp and I get fed up of everyone thinking that I have definitely got one. It was my boyfriend's sister who introduced me and I have never had a pimp. My boyfriend just thought I was at a catering agency for 2 days a week- he still doesn't know now. (TA, 18, Leeds)*
- *People do it because they have got no family, no support, debt... to keep body and soul together. (EL, 23, Leeds)*

3.7.3 However, they said sometimes young people are have boyfriends that could be described as pimps.

- *It's mainly their boyfriend...their boyfriend's on drugs- then they want you out working. That's what happened to me- it was my boyfriend and a lot of the other people, it was the same with them. (EL, 23, Leeds)*
- *I got into it through kids homes, through taking registration numbers of for other working girls. I never had a pimp. I used to know about with this guy who used to beat me up. I was doing it. I suppose you could call him that. But that wasn't until much later on. (L, 20, Manchester)*

3.7.4 Victims of abuse

The Young people agree with the action the Government took in May 2000, which stresses the need to treat children involved in prostitution primarily as victims of abuse.⁴

- *They need to see a 13 year old smack 'ed who sleeps around as a child- not an adult. It's out of the child's hands- they shouldn't judge or use labels. (L, 20, Manchester)*
- *People should change their perspective- they need to see past the teenager with the big mouth. (L, 20 Manchester)*

3.7.5 However, when they talk about this they stress that young people may well not act like victims. They say that it is helpful for professionals to given guidance that young people involved in prostitution are victims, but only if professionals do not expect young people involved in prostitution to behave like they are victims.

⁴ *Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution*, Department of Health (2000)

- *But some kids get left out of being seen as victims. They don't seem vulnerable, but just because they don't seem vulnerable doesn't mean they aren't. Often the worst behaved are the most vulnerable.* (L, 20, Manchester)

3.8 Chapter 3: Routes Into Prostitution

What can be done to prevent the abuse of children through prostitution?

All the young people that have taken part in the Youth Campaign feel preventing young people getting into prostitution is vital, because they would not want any young person to go through what they have been through.

- *The thing is that kids will be thinking, 'it's not for me'. But then they see the money- and a quick way of making it. They offered me the money the first time and I thought it was so much, 'I'm going out and doing it tomorrow'. You have to get them before it happens.* (S, 24, London, Male)

Youth Campaigners used their own stories and thought about what would have helped them in order to establish what can be done to stop young people getting into prostitution.

3.9 How can we effectively identify those at risk?

3.9.1 Focus on Looked After Young People

The group of young people who visited the Home Office agreed that The Looked After System is where young people are most at risk, although people who are not looked after are also at risk too.

- *We've got the whole story really. Being in care and all that. One version of a story, anyway. I think in one way we're just a typical bad luck cases. Foster care... Social workers...* (R, 23, Huddersfield)

They feel that the residential care homes does not meet the needs of vulnerable young people, which can lead to them becoming involved in prostitution.

- *They have grown up with abuse, and if they are getting abused in the home they don't know there's anything wrong with it. So they grow up to be drug addicts and prostitutes, because they let people abuse them.* (N, 18, Liverpool)

3.9.2 Youth Campaigners identified certain things in some people's childhoods that make them vulnerable to prostitution. The young people who read *Paying The Price* felt it accurately reflects these.

- *Home life, abuse, bullying, family, friends* (B, Huddersfield)
- *If they are abused, mentally or sexually, when they are children.* (T, Huddersfield)
- *Things they witness either arguing or violence between parents or brothers or sisters or bullying at school* (S, Huddersfield)
- *Families, friends, some feel depressed or don't have a choice.* (TA, 18, Leeds)
- *Being abused, things they see as they're growing up- violence, going in and out of care homes.* (N, 20, Leeds)

3.10 What are the most effective measures to prevent the abuse of children through prostitution?

Youth Campaigners' views on this question are included in their responses to Chapter 4 of *Paying the Price*. (Section 3.12 to 3.16)

3.11 What role should schools play in a preventative strategy?

Most young people felt that schools should educate children about how people get into prostitution and that this might stop young people from getting involved.

- *You need to get schools to get kids to realise that it's no pretty woman.* (A, 23, Doncaster)

Youth Campaigners agree that because they did not know about drugs- particularly Heroin and Crack, and their link to prostitution- they got involved in drugs and prostitution without really realising that it would be difficult to go back.

- *I didn't know anything about drugs, prostitution, and what you end up doing to take drugs. Kids need telling.* (A, 23 Doncaster)
- *If I'd have known what it [Heroin] did I'd never have dreamed of it. I didn't know what it did. All I knew is that people were taking it. I took it- spewed up- but I liked it- I didn't know I'd rattle. They never talked about crack cocaine and heroin. I never knew that you needed £150 a day for crack and £60 on Heroin- that you'd be out [working in prostitution] all day and night.* (K, 21, Doncaster)

- *You just think, 'what have I got to lose. It won't do me any harm'. Nobody explained to me about how it went. [Heroin and prostitution] They didn't say what it could do to you. I didn't know what it was even though my cousins had been doing it for a while. (E, 19, Middlesbrough)*
- *I think they could do more to help the situation, give more information about prostitution, what leads to it, drugs, alcohol. Some of the girls when they are 13, 14 have boyfriends on drugs and their boyfriends might need them to pay for the drugs and girls should be made aware of the circumstances that surround child prostitution like these. (L, 20, Manchester)*

3.11.1 Young people had differing opinions about what age it was appropriate to tell children about prostitution and drugs, but a consensus was reached in the group that met that it should be 13 upwards.

- *14-16. Maybe a bit younger. If you are older you don't listen that well. (A, 23, Doncaster)*
- *13 for definite. It's hard to say though. I was grown up by the time I was 16 and I wouldn't have listened. (K, 21, Doncaster)*

3.11.2 Young people feel the best way for schools to tackle this issue is to focus on getting across the reality of prostitution to young people. Young people recommended talks in schools by ex-working women or ex-drug users, taking children to visit places where drug users live, showing a video made by people with experience of prostitution about what it is like, and workshops exploring the advantages and disadvantages of prostitution and the different ways people become involved.

- *The teachers don't know how bad lives have been. Maybe you could have, once a week someone different going into classes, so that the kids listen more. They would listen because it's not the sort of story you hear. (K, 21, Doncaster)*
- *They need someone who's been there, on drugs, someone who's been introduced by their boyfriend, someone who's been depressed, people who've been through it, hit rock bottom, using crack. You need different people so kids don't think it's the same for everyone- Show the different routes. At least then they've been warned. We knew about weed and speed and coke, but what about heroin and crack cocaine? (A, 23, Doncaster)*

- *I'd like to give talks, but if I went to speak to people in schools it would have to be in other cities. Any other than mine- I wouldn't be bothered. (A, 23, Doncaster)*
- *There should be counsellors in schools and people who've been in that situation or lived around that to come into schools and talk to you about it. Instead of police officers telling you drugs make you like this and that. People don't listen to police officers. Young people would listen more to people who'd been through it. I think it would help me and help a lot of people. (P, 20, Huddersfield)*
- *Workshops in schools might work; Tell them they don't want to sleep with old, grey, sweaty men. Show them pictures of them, and of people crying because they don't want to do it. (M, 19, London, Male)*

3.11.3 Youth Campaigners feel that to focus solely on schools to deliver this education to young people would miss out some of those most vulnerable to getting involved in prostitution. These education programmes also need to be targeted at the most vulnerable groups of young people.

- *This might not have helped me though, because I didn't really go to school. If you are already in the lifestyle... it would help to go to girls' groups or children's homes- tell them about exploitation and relationships. (E, 21, Middlesbrough)*
- *I was 13 when I left school. Anything they taught me after that went in one door and out the other. It would help if in children's homes they had an education officer to teach them. If they didn't want to take GCSE's, if they were being picked on for certain things in their lives then they could learn in another way. They should have teachers in children's homes. There were no teachers in mine, just the truancy officer. (L, 20 Manchester)*

3.11.4 Some young people felt that educating kids would not stop young people getting into prostitution. They acknowledged that sometimes when young people are told not to do things, it makes little difference.

- *But they're not going to see the link. The problem is that once you've had a pipe [crack] you always want a pipe. It would work with some though. (S, 24, London, Male)*

3.11.5 They decided that it was still very important to educate young people about prostitution, but that it was important to tell them about the good things as well as the bad things.

- *Tell them the good and the bad, but the disadvantages too. How you are going to get it [Heroin]. How you will feel. My*

boyfriend done this- not school. He made me feel like it would be ok, but nobody who loved you would hurt you so much. You need to say the positive and the negative, 'cos young people will experiment no matter what. (E, 20, Middlesbrough)

3.11.6 Young people feel the role of schools in educating children about prostitution is two fold: to prevent young people getting into prostitution and also to change society's opinions of people involved in prostitution. (See 3.3)

- *At the moment, people see a working girl and they know she's a smack 'ed, but they can start thinking and stop judging. (K, 21, Doncaster)*

3.12 Chapter 4: Protection and support for children abused through prostitution

How do we help victims of abuse through prostitution, and their families?

3.12.1 Youth Campaigners used their own stories to address this question. They described the protection and support they receive or received, what is or was useful about it, and also described gaps in provision and how these could be addressed.

Some of the young people were under 18 before *Safeguarding* in 2000, and some of them were under 18 and involved in prostitution after the guidance had been published. The group found little difference in their experiences and opinions as a result of the impact of the guidance.

Some of the key things young people think would help young people in involved in prostitution are; mentoring, consistent support, professionals being better skilled on this issue, tailored services aimed at this group, more projects, more resources invested in this group of young people, and more suitable accommodation.

3.12.2 A general theme when discussing this question has been Youth Campaigners agree they feel that because their behaviour was challenging, and as a result they were not always a priority for services- often they did not get the help and support they needed.

- *Just because I had a big mouth didn't mean I didn't need support. (L, 20, Manchester)*

This relates to point 3.5.6.

- *Some kids get left out of being seen as victims. They don't seem vulnerable, but just because they don't seem vulnerable doesn't mean they aren't. Often the worst behaved are the most vulnerable. (L, 20, Manchester)*

Young people's experiences are a comment on *Safeguarding 6.2 Voluntary and persistent return to prostitution*.⁵ Young people felt there came a time in the looked after system when their difficult behaviour, linked to prostitution, meant that they stopped getting the support they needed, even the young people most likely to get into prostitution are those with who behaviour is difficult to work with.

- *It just got to the stage where everyone gave up on me.* (L, 20 Manchester)

3.12.3 More support

One of the other key themes for Youth Campaigners when addressing this question was that they felt on their own. They feel there should be more support available to young people involved in prostitution; more consistent support, more frequently.

- *They [Social Services] used to visit every other fortnight, but really we needed support every other day. I got more help from Barnardo's⁶ in a week then I 'd ever had from that.* (P, 17, Liverpool)
- *They [Social Services] see you and go, 'How're things going?' and they think that's enough. It's when they [Young People] don't get the support that they go off their heads.* (N, 18, Liverpool)
- *If you're not in education they [Social Services] don't want to know. There's just no consistent support. When something goes wrong- anytime day or night- who do you speak to? At the end of the day you're on your own.* (TA, 18, Leeds)

3.12.4 Mentoring

One of the ways they feel more support could be provided is through mentoring schemes. They call for young people involved in prostitution to be given mentors with similar experiences that are available to talk to during the night as well as during the day, that can offer intensive support. They feel this is particularly need in times of transition; leaving prison or secure, upon turning 16, and in times of difficulty.

- *They need advice. Someone everyday- like a friend, 26 or older, who know about the problem, until their life changes.* (M, 25, London, transgender)
- *You need to tell them it's not normal but without making them feel bad. Maybe if they spoke to someone that had been through it*

⁵ *Safeguarding*, Department of Health (2002)

⁶ Barnardos Merseyside Scheme

they could tell them the reality of it. You need a person that's been through it to tell you. Try to explain. Not tell them to stop but put the word over that you are lowering yourself. (E, 19, Middlesbrough)

This point relates to what Youth Campaigners say about the need for Early Intervention. (3.16.11)

3.13 How do we reach children in need of protection from abuse through prostitution?

3.13.1 More Projects

Young people felt there was a need for specialist services for this group, and they called for access to a specialist project for all young people involved in prostitution. They have concerns that some young people do not have access to a project because they do not have one in the area they live in.⁷

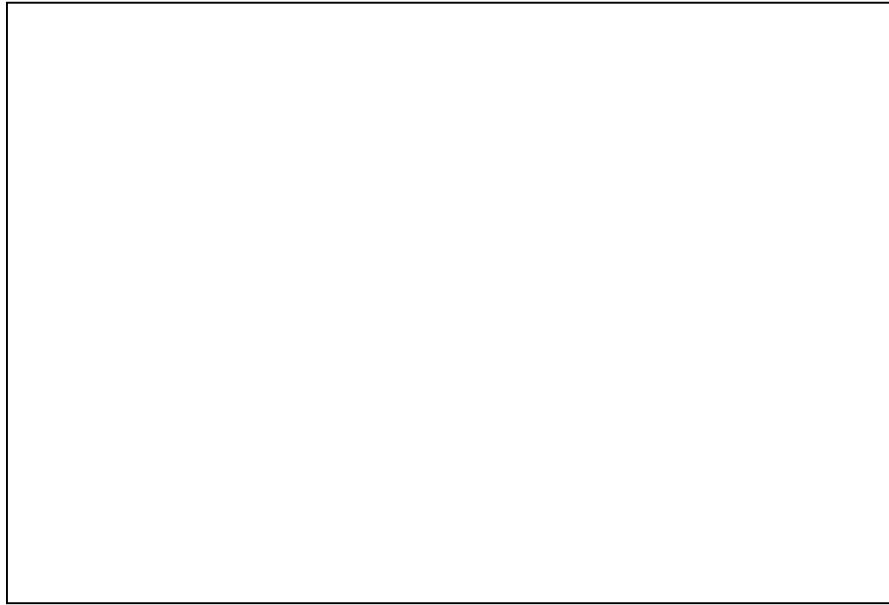
- *Some towns aren't as lucky as others, and that's not fair on the people who've got nothing. (E, 19, Middlesbrough)*

3.13.2 Phone Line

Young people may well be afraid to tell people face to face what is happening in their life. Youth Campaigners are calling for a well-advertised phone line for this group of young people. They feel this would help them because it is anonymous and young people could be sure that the person on the other end of the phone cannot identify them. It would be easier for some young people to talk on the phone, and young people involved in prostitution often need someone to talk to at night, when all services are not available. A special service is needed to ensure that people taking the calls know how to deal with the things that the callers may say.

The Campaign received 41 signed copies of a postcard calling for this service. The postcard was designed by a Youth Campaigner and sent out to specialist projects all over the country:

⁷ All young people taking part in the campaign either currently work with a specialist prostitution or sexual exploitation project, or have done in the past. Young people get involved with the Youth Campaign via these projects.



3.14 Are there further examples of good models that have had proven success in helping young people abused through prostitution to move on?

3.14.1 What helped

The majority of young people spoke highly of the specialist projects they were working with, or had worked with in the past. They have different ideas about what helps or has helped them through their experiences, but some of the most common areas they have identified include:

- Intensive one to one support
- Doing 'normal' things like painting and drawing
- Outreach- essential to make contact
- Basic needs provision- especially food
- Having a non-judgemental service
- Fast track sexual health services

3.14.2 More projects for young men

One of the other key themes was a call for more services for boys and young men. This was from young men who had received a service from a specialist project and feared for young men who did not have access to a project. This was also a call from young women who received a service from a specialist project, as they recognised that these were mainly on offer to girls and this needs to be extended.

- *There should be more services for young men... you need people there you share your experiences. Young people need places like these. Free yoghurts and advice on housing, job applications. There should be more places like this.*⁸ (M, 19, London, Male)
- *There should be more for boys- it's bad enough for the girls, but the shame and guilt is ten fold for the boys.* (E, 22, Middlesbrough)

3.15 How are services best tailored to meet the specific needs of children and adolescents involved in prostitution?

3.15.1 The main areas young people feel services could better meet the needs of young people involved in prostitution are; Social Services, Police and Accommodation.

⁸ Michael is referring to SW5, a service in London for young men and male, transsexual and transgender sex workers.

3.15.2 More generally, young people discussed at length the problem of professionals that lacked the skills and knowledge to help them appropriately. They feel that if there were designated professionals within services who were willing and able to work with young people involved in prostitution, this would improve outcomes for young people.

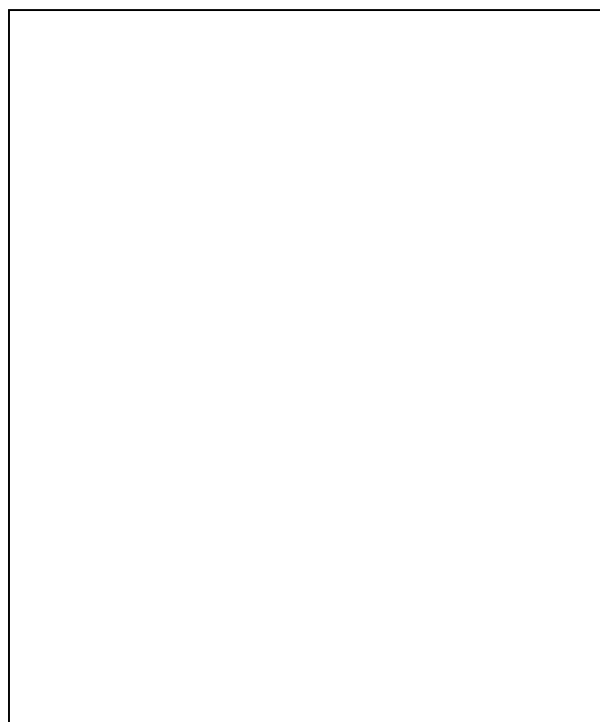
- *Staff don't have the skills...Next they wanted me to get a flat on my own. Right in the middle of the beat!* (E, 23, Middlesbrough)
- *The bloke who ran my care home had a fixation with prostitution. He was convinced I was a prostitute, even though I wasn't- it was his problem, not mine- but after a while I thought, 'well, if everyone thinks it, I may as well'* (R, 23, Huddersfield)

3.15.3 Specialist police officers

Youth Campaigners are calling for this to be addressed, particularly the police force, as they felt that how the police deal with prostitution is inconsistent both within their local area and nationally.

- *They need some sort of training to deal with girls. When I got raped they were really good... dead helpful. They put me in a hotel and everything. But when someone tried to strangle me they were tossers. I'd only been working 2 days and they weren't interested.* (C, 24, Leeds)
- *I wish they would just talk to you like a normal person.* (E, 10, Middlesbrough)

This was one of the issues young people focussed on in their postcard petition.





In areas where young people have access to specialist officers within the police, they feel this is an excellent way for the police to work with young people involved in prostitution. Youth Campaigners would like to see this in all areas.

The Campaign received 30 signed copies of this postcard.

3.15.4 Social Services/Child Protection

Young people felt that social services, in particular, need to work harder at listening to young people, being flexible, giving them choices, and should be more realistic in their expectations when working with young people involved in prostitution.

- *This is one of the most important areas, if you are 14 it is no good to be told you are doing wrong, by a social worker. The thing is about Social workers, if someone says no you can't, then you go and do it anyway. If someone said you can only do it at your pace, you can come out of it gradually...that would be better. (L, 20, Manchester)*
- *Once they knew I had a problem they did try and send me to a psychiatrist. I had no influence in that and I had no interest in it. They were forcing me to go. (R, 23, Huddersfield)*
- *They never listened to me. I always wanted to come back here but they wouldn't let me so I kept running away all the time. They've all been taught this is the way to do it, but there's no way you can say that...everyone's an individual. (R, 23, Huddersfield)*

- *Even if it's just, 'This kids home or that one?' they should still give young people a choice about what is going to happen to them. (E, 23, Middlesbrough)*

3.15.5 One of the ways that Youth Campaigners feel this could be achieved is if professionals were open and honest about the child protection procedure. Young people acknowledge that they were at a great deal of risk when professionals discussed their cases privately, but they felt that this only put them at even greater risk, as it only increased their hostility to services.

- *I didn't mind being referred to Social Services. But I hated them doing it behind my back. That's the wrong way to go about it. It gets your back up. They should have been open and honest. I would have preferred it if they had said to me, 'I'm going to make a referral to Social Services. There may be things they can do to help you.' It's just good manners. This is why we don't trust them because they do things behind your back. The way they operate is designed to make you feel distrustful of them. (Y, 25, Manchester)*
- *They had meetings without me. All about my life and I wasn't even there. (E, 19, Middlesbrough)*
- *Another thing was the meetings behind my back. It is your life they are discussing and the more they do things like that the more you think 'fuck you, I am not doing what you want me to do'. (L, 20, Manchester)*

3.15.6 Secure units

Secure units being used as part of child protection procedure were another area in which Youth Campaigners are calling for change. Young people object to young people in prostitution losing their liberty because of their involvement, although at the same time acknowledge the level of danger they were in when they were placed in secure. Young people report that if someone needs to be taken out of the danger they are in, it should be to somewhere that does specialist work, to avoid the young person feeling criminalised.

- *In a way it opened my eyes. They just put you in somewhere with a load of people committing burglaries or thieves. If they had a place which was separate, then they could do more specialised work. What did we do? Nothing. The house above us had child rapists in. We were allowed to mix with them outside and in school. That's no good. You need to do more specialised work. Secure just made me worse. (L, 20, Manchester)*
- *They put me in a secure unit with people who had been nicking off people and molesting people. They locked me up for my own safety. They locked me up because they couldn't control me. 9*

months I spent in that bloody secure unit. It was silly to put me in there when I didn't even have a criminal record. (R, 23, Huddersfield)

He should have been locked up- not me! (G, 16, Manchester)

They talked about secure units containing them for the short term, but achieving nothing in the long term. See section (accommodation)

3.15.7 Foster Carers

Youth Campaigners call for special Foster Carers for young people involved in prostitution. This would help to provide more consistency in young people's lives, as young people would be more likely to stay with one family. They feel that these foster carers should:

- Want to look after young people with challenging behaviour
- Be trained so they have knowledge about drugs and prostitution
- Have a family situation that allows for young people with challenging behaviour
 - *My first set were specialists in disabilities- they had a young disabled boy and older kids. They just weren't set up to deal with me. (R, 23, Huddersfield)*
 - *There should be more information for foster carers; they should be briefed to understand the reasons why they are doing it (working in prostitution). (B, 15, Huddersfield)*
 - *If you place someone like me where there are younger children, it is not fair on anyone. It is not fair on the adults, because they can't give the kids the attention they need, because they are distracted by the older ones and it is hard for the older ones when there is a baby who needs so much attention. (L, 20, Manchester)*
 - *I had to take home leaflets about drugs for my foster carers- they didn't know anything about them! (TA, 18, Leeds)*
 - *Some things could have been changed. There could have been more 1-2-1 with me, and more continuity. I went from one set of foster parents to another set, to another set, to another set, to another set, then to kids homes. (R, 24, Huddersfield)*
 - *I was sent to 30 foster homes, if I got settled, it was only a short-term placement. The long-term ones were horrible and I always ran away. (L, 20, Manchester)*

Youth Campaigners who came through the looked after system report having anything from 15 to 50 foster placements.

3.15.8 Sixteen and Seventeen

Youth Campaigners also drew attention to a particular lack of support after turning 16, and directly linked this with their continued involvement in prostitution, or describe it as one of the factors that contributed to how they became involved in prostitution.

- *At 16 and 17 your social worker is no help. They say there is nothing we can do. They are supposed to look after you until 18 and then help you until you are 21, but once you are sixteen you are on your own two feet. At 16 I was in a B&B in the middle of the beat with smack heads and prostitutes and it was scary. (L, 20, Manchester)*
- *When I was 16 they tried to move me into a hostel with my baby. My partner came after me, so they had to move me to a different hostel. Even though I wasn't adult enough to look after my son they said I was capable and moved me out. We moved three times- the babyfather kept coming after us. Then I lived in supported housing for a year. (E, 23, Middlesbrough)*

3.15.9 Accommodation

Youth Campaigners feel that accommodation is one of the most important services that needs attention in relation to young people who are involved in prostitution. They feel passionately that the accommodation they were placed in was inappropriate and further entrenched them in prostitution, and call for:

- Specialist therapeutic centres for young people involved in prostitution
- More rehab centres for young people who use drugs
- Young people in separate accommodation from drug users entrenched in prostitution
- Transition accommodation teaching young people who are very vulnerable to live independently
- Accommodation without curfews for vulnerable and chaotic young people
- Emergency accommodation for young people who run away from home or get thrown out

The also feel this would help prevent some young people from getting involved in prostitution and drugs.

- *A different place for younger girls who are on drugs and different things for older girls. 14-17 in one, 18-25 in the other. There should be somewhere safe- Safe houses. (E, 22, Middlesbrough)*

- *You shouldn't mix someone that is in that situation with someone that isn't- it just makes it worse. (E, 24, Leeds)*
- *At sixteen they put me in a B&B, right in the middle of the beat. 'Cos I had a fight with another girl in a children's home. We had had enough of her. The gave me the keys to a grotty B&B, mattresses without springs, flea-ridden carpets, full of smack heads and prostitutes. (L, 20, Manchester)*
- *I wanted supported housing down here but they wouldn't do it. Maybe I was a bit young. But saying that there was another girl. Instead of secure she had a flat and always had a member of staff with her. I was really jealous of her. I would have felt like they would have been treating me more like an adult and not a kid- after what I'd been through I could never be classed as a kid. (R, 23, Huddersfield)*
- *I did sleep there, 'cos a lot of the time there was nowhere for us to stop out. But why did I have to be in by 9.00 pm we were 15! I'd come in at 3 or 4.00 am in the morning. The rules, regulations and boundaries are the problem. They say they want to make it like a home, but they are not. You wouldn't have health and safety if you were at home. (L, 20, Manchester)*
- *We want places of safety to register these children- specialised residential care homes that are able to create a better life for these children. (Taken from Newsletter written by Lyndsay)*
- *There should be rehab places for young people who use drugs, and the waiting lists should be shorter. You need to do things when kids want to do them- not 9 months after. (TA, 18, Leeds)*

3.15.10 Young people also said that housing services and Social Services need to listen more to what young people in prostitution want, and try to provide them with choices.

- *Even if it's just, 'This kids home or that one?' they should still give young people a choice about what is going to happen to them. (E, 23, Middlesbrough)*
- *They think a young person should always be with their family. Sometimes they may be right, sometimes they may be wrong, but they should ask the young person what's best for them. Did they ever ask? No way. I refused to go home. My mum would say yes, she'd have me, then the next day I'd be out again. (W, 19, London)*

3.15.11 Early Intervention

Some young people call for early intervention in young people's lives. They feel that there was little intervention in their life before their involvement in prostitution, and then they had to cope with a lot of intervention after their involvement, which leads to young people feeling resentful. Services should get involved and share information as early as possible.

- *I was being abused at home, but they didn't do anything then. They didn't want to know until I started earning myself money in prostitution. (L, 20, Manchester)*
- *We need more information shared between agencies early on, but not more information than is necessary. (E, 22, Middlesbrough)*

3.15.12 More Resources

Young people also call for more money to be spent on increasing opportunities for young people vulnerable to prostitution, or involved in prostitution. They feel that resources limited their chances.

- *Sometimes, when services try to help you there's always some reason why they can't. Something comes out like there is not enough funding. . There was always an issue with money and I just thought, 'I could earn that myself in a week!' (E, 22, Middlesbrough)*

3.16 Chapter 7: Protecting Communities

Views on the role the criminal law should play in relation to children abused through prostitution

3.16.1 There were strong messages from Youth Campaigners that young people under 18 should not be prosecuted for their involvement in prostitution under any circumstances.

3.16.2 They challenge the clause in *Safeguarding* relating to persistent and voluntary return to prostitution, referred to in *Paying the Price* (7.24), which states that as a last resort to deal with young people who persistently go back to the streets they can be arrested for loitering or soliciting.

- *You're surviving- it's wrong that some kids could get charged. (TA, 18, Leeds)*
- *It should be decriminalised for Under 18s. They never chose to get into it and they should always be treated as victims of abuse. And charging them never helps anyone anyway. (L, 20, Manchester)*
- *I was the first person to be sent to prison for prostitution. They did it in 2 weeks- that's what they did in those days. They give*

you fines, but they trick you by asking you how much you are making. You shouldn't send someone down for working if they're under 18. (M, 18, London, Male)

3.16.2 Age distinctions

Youth Campaigners agree with the age distinction being drawn at 18 years old, as outlined in *Paying The Price*.

- *You're still a kid when you are 16. When you're 18 you can make your own decisions, but you could say that at any age really- it depends on your situation. (R, 23, Huddesfield)*
- *At 17 you're just a kid. If I was more grown up I might not have done it. In a way I think I'm still a kids now because I missed out on so much growing up. (EL, 23, Leeds)*
- *Under 18 you're not old enough to make up your own mind. (L, 20, Manchester)*

4. Summary of Youth Campaign Response to Paying the Price

Youth Campaigners welcome *Paying The Price* and are pleased to see this issue getting the attention it deserves.

Based on their own experiences of involvement in prostitution, young people make these key recommendations:

- ❑ Young people involved in prostitution should never be criminalised for their involvement in prostitution. No prostitution offenses should apply for under 18s.
- ❑ More accommodation options are desperately needed; safe emergency accommodation, semi-independent accommodation, better foster care, more drug rehabs for young people. Young people must have more choice and more flexibility in their accommodation services. Vulnerable young people should not be accommodated with women entrenched in prostitution and young people should not be put in secure units due to a lack of needs-led care.
- ❑ Extra support is needed for young people involved in prostitution, *not less*, around transition ages- especially 16 and 17. This support should also be extended to young people at risk of involvement, as young people are particularly vulnerable at these times.
- ❑ Professionals should be trained to deal more effectively with young people involved in prostitution, and they should listen to what young people say and always try to offer young people choices. Agencies having a designated worker for this issue would help.
- ❑ Agencies need to make sure they consistently help and support *all* young people involved in prostitution- even if young people do not *behave* like a victims, they are still desperately in need of support.
- ❑ Young people involved in prostitution should be informed of, listened to and involved in child protection procedures affecting them.
- ❑ Preventative programmes in schools are needed, and they should include a realistic portrayal of what it is like to be involved in prostitution.
- ❑ Early intervention is essential in preventing young people from becoming involved in prostitution. Young people in the looked after system are particularly at risk of getting involved.
- ❑ The media should play a more active role in challenging stereotypes about prostitution. This would help society to eventually become less judgemental.

Throughout the work on this response young people with experience of prostitution demonstrated that they are resilient, resourceful and well able to be involved in decision-making. The Youth Campaign calls for agencies to recognise this resourcefulness and work with young people with experience of prostitution to ensure that the situation is better for young people in the future than it was for young people who have taken part in the campaign so far.

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