

# **Women's Open Space Project Evaluation: Final Report**

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## 1.0 Key Findings

### *Headlines*

This report presents findings from an evaluation of the WOS project, carried out between July 2011 and March 2012. The evaluation sought to analyze the impact and efficacy of services offered to street-based sex workers by WOS and to look at the NHYC model of engagement with young women at risk of sexual exploitation. This report will provide an analysis of service delivery and user-engagement with WOS and NHYC, and will highlight areas of best practice in engaging with street-based sex workers and with young women at risk of sexual exploitation.

The Women's Open Space (WOS) project works with street-based sex workers in North London, effectively combines outreach and drop-in services to meet the specific needs of their client base. Women at the drop-in felt the most vital services they received related to housing, health (physical, sexual, and mental), and emotional support.

WOS has helped women make positive changes to their lives and encourages them to engage with services that are appropriate for them. Many of the women at the drop-in had reduced or stabilized their drug use; some of them were practicing safer sex because of information and advice received at the service; others were in stable accommodation as a direct result of the WOS project's intercession.

The organizational philosophy of WOS means that the services provided for sex workers are user-led and take a holistic approach to helping women. This gives women a sense of ownership about their interactions with the project, and all of the women we spoke to felt the WOS project had made a significant difference to their physical and emotional well being.

WOS work effectively with other third sector and statutory bodies to ensure that sex workers have access to a range of services that will help provide support and stability. Their positive working relationships are evidence of good practice in the field.

Young women who are at risk of sexual exploitation are effectively engaged with youth services through the New Horizon Youth Centre (NHYC). WOS and NHYC work together to ensure that young women who are at risk of sexual exploitation or who are facing sexually exploitative

situations are encouraged to access targeted youth interventions, which diverts young women from becoming fully entrenched in sex working. This cooperative model is something that could and should be employed in other areas.

Both WOS and NHYC take a holistic approach to working with their clients, and have built up trust with women that are particularly 'hard-to-reach'. These relationships are having a positive impact on the lives of those who attend the drop-in services, which is partly due to the model of working, but also connects to the particular knowledge and expertise of the WOS/NHYC staff.

## *Introduction*

The aims of the evaluation were two-fold. The first aim was to evaluate the impact and efficacy of services offered by WOS, specifically focusing on service delivery from an organizational perspective and establishing areas of best practice in engaging with street-based sex workers. The second aim of the evaluation was to look at the New Horizon Youth Centre model of engagement with young women at risk of sexual exploitation to establish an area of best practice.

WOS provides street-based sex workers with a range of services that help them to stabilize their lives. Many of the women who engage with WOS have high-level needs and would be reluctant or unable to engage with more traditional services providers. WOS have a long history of working in and around the King's Cross area, and have built up years of trust with a client group who are particularly wary of mainstream services providers.

WOS are organizationally linked with the New Horizon Youth Centre (NHYC) and there is overlap between the staff and some of the services provided. Both WOS and NHYC offer holistic services to their client group, with the aim of encouraging young people and sex workers to take positive steps towards improving their quality of life.

## *Methodology*

The study took an ethnographic and participatory approach to data collection, using participatory observations at drop-ins; participatory mapping with WOS staff; mobile interviews with outreach

workers; and in-depth interviews with the WOS team, sex working women, young women at New Horizons, and other public/third sector agencies.

The evaluation followed ethical guidelines set out by the SRA, and the Middlesex University Ethics Committee approved the research.

## *Engaging with Sex Workers*

Some sex workers suggested that they were experiencing increasing levels of violence on the streets, and many spoke about police harassment. For many women the threat of ASBOs was a major concern for them, and had a negative impact on their working practices and on their safety. WOS was seen as a positive force in that the outreach made the streets safer for women, and also that WOS staff acted as advocates for women, interceding on their behalves in situations where they felt powerless.

Sex workers that we spoke with experienced relatively high levels of social exclusion and isolation. The WOS drop-in provided a safe space where women could socialize and receive emotional support without fear of being judged. As stigma may be a significant barrier for accessing services, having a drop-in where women feel comfortable and 'normal' is an important factor in the success of engaging sex workers.

WOS provided practical help, as well as emotional support for their clients. Women accessing the drop-in felt help with housing, health (sexual, mental, and physical), and help with drug-related issues were the most important aspects of the practical services on offer, but also felt the emotional support they received was a key factor in the success of the project.

Housing is a particular problem for street-based sex workers, and WOS were able to help women with a variety of housing needs. Working to house drug-using sex workers can be complicated as they have high level needs, but WOS provides a specialist service that sex workers felt worked well.

WOS provide a range of health interventions for sex workers, including support for mental health problems, advice and support on sexual health, and services that promoted general wellbeing.

Because they provide a specialist service, WOS are able to help women where other organizations sometimes fail.

Most of the women accessing WOS services were current drug users, or former drug users. Outreach and drop-in services were critical for helping women stabilize their drug use and access appropriate services, and many of the women had reduced or levelled out their drug-use as a result of their engagement with WOS

The physical space of the drop-in creates a safe space for participants, and women felt welcomed and encouraged to visit WOS through their positive interactions with staff.

WOS offer a unique service for sex workers that takes into account the specific needs of their client group. They demonstrate best practice in the field, and service-users felt positive about and empowered by their interactions with the organization.

Adopting a holistic approach to engaging sex workers is particularly effective when working with women on the streets. WOS operate a harm reduction approach that is essential to helping drug-using sex workers stabilize their lives in the short-term, and encourages them to make positive changes in the long-term.

### *Engaging with Young Women through NHYC*

The young women who access NHYC services can be understood to be at risk of sexual exploitation. They experience many of the factors that are likely to facilitate entry into marginalized lifestyles such as street-based sex work, and can be considered a vulnerable client group.

NHYC offered a safe space where young women felt supported and listened to. They felt staff were helpful and supportive, and encouraged them to make positive choices for their lives.

The drop-in provided young women with a space to socialize and form supportive networks. This is particularly important for young people who may experience 'detachment' from structures of support. NHYC help reduce the isolation many young women experience, and encourage women to access appropriate services.



Young women were not always aware of issues around sexual exploitation, nor were they sure what to do if they encountered a sexually exploitative situation. This is something that NHYC and WOS can work together on, ensuring young women (and young men) are aware of these issues and have the tools available to help them should they experience exploitation of this sort.

NHYC offer both practical and emotional support to young women, and participants felt that this was vital for supporting anyone who may be experiencing sexual exploitation. Help with housing and benefits were highlighted as practical measures that could help, while the confidentiality and non-judgemental approach of staff meant that young people felt confident talking to staff about sensitive issues

### *Organizational Perspectives*

WOS engage with a wide range of organizations, including local authorities, drugs/alcohol agencies, hostels, sex health organizations, GPs and NHS services, prison services, probation services, police, sapphire, street safety teams, Drug Intervention Programme (DIPS) teams, Crime Reduction Initiative (CRI) teams, and many other organizations that work with vulnerable groups. They engage in strategic partnership working with other agencies to deliver a wide range of appropriate services for their clients.

Collaborative working is essential for meeting the needs of street-based sex workers, who have multiple, high-level needs and often need a number of services at once, particularly in times of crisis. The organizational ethos of WOS and the positive relationships they have built with relevant agencies ensures that women receive the highest standard of care available.

The one-stop-shop approach used at the drop-in is particularly effective for engaging sex workers, many of whom would be reluctant or fearful of approaching mainstream service providers.

The drop-in and outreach conducted by WOS are seen to offer value for money, particularly because WOS are adaptable and able to work with a wide range of clients.

Outreach conducted by the WOS team reflects best practice in the field, and is seen as a strength by other organizations they work with. Prison outreach was noted as being particularly effective as sex workers become disengaged from services while they are imprisoned, and reengaging them after they are released can be challenging. By maintaining access to sex workers while they are incarcerated, they help keep sex workers in contact with relevant organizations who can then help them readjust to life outside of prison when they are released.

The combination of drop-in/outreach services and a flexible approach to working with women, alongside practical and emotional support was seen as effective by other organizations that WOS engage with. WOS have extensive knowledge of both the local area and their client group (both sex working women and the wider street population), and this knowledge was highly valued by other agencies that also engage with sex workers.

Exiting is a contentious issue both within academia and amongst third and public sector organizations. WOS operate a harm reduction approach to working with their client group, and put the needs of their clients above any ideological drive to move them out of the sex industry. This pragmatic and effective model was valued by the women we spoke to, and was also seen as an appropriate and holistic means of working by other organizations that WOS come into contact with.

The WOS team have a great deal of practical experience working with vulnerable populations, and have built a strong team who share a similar ethos. Engaging with sex workers can be challenging at times, and could be understood in the context of emotional labour. Strong communication skills and a shared team identity help WOS through difficult periods of client engagement, and ensures that team members are supported by each other, and by the organization more generally.

## *Recommendations*

Offering both outreach and drop-in services was the best way of engaging sex workers, and the services would be far less effective without this coordinated approach. Outreach is an important way of meeting sex working women. Sex workers reported that they felt safer when the outreach team was around, in stark contrast to the police who they felt made their lives more difficult and made sex working more dangerous. Outreach was also important as it meant sex workers were 'clued-up' about the services that were offered at the drop-in, and if they decided to engage with services, the WOS

drop-in was often the first place women turned to for help and support in making life changes. It is important to continue to provide outreach and drop-in services for sex working women, and it may be useful to extend these services if funding allows.

A few sex workers suggested that they were changing the ways they were working, moving from street-based sex work to more telephone-oriented client engagement. It might be worthwhile extending services beyond street-based sex workers, and looking at women working in brothels and saunas. This would require a new methodology for delivering outreach, but with the extensive knowledge the WOS team have of the area, they are well placed to engage sex workers beyond the street. However, it is important to keep in mind that drug-using sex workers have particular problems and continuing to deliver a specialist service for this client group is critical for their sustained well being.

WOS outreach was highlighted as a particular strength by the women that we spoke to and by the other organizations that came into contact with WOS. The outreach they conduct in prisons was particularly effective, and reflects innovation and best practice in this area. This model could be usefully expanded, and WOS may want to consider publishing best practice guidance in this area, or furthering their existing training programme. Indeed, as WOS already provide some training to prison staff around sex working, this could usefully be extended to other organizations and other settings, particularly as WOS have specialist knowledge of the wide-range of issues that street-based sex workers in this area face. Not only would this help women who attend WOS in getting better help from other statutory and third sector organizations, but it is also help develop best practice across the sector.

Measuring outcomes for a chaotic client group can be difficult, and particularly so for WOS as women often access services either at times of intense vulnerability, or times of extraordinary stability. The current Users' Questionnaire is designed primarily for young people accessing NHYC services. Designing a tailored questionnaire for WOS users would give better insights into client satisfaction, and may help improve services. Using a framework that would incorporate elements that measure well-being and chart clients engagements with relevant services would give a better indication of how clients are being helped, and would give WOS the ability to measure outcomes more effectively.

Working with drug-using sex workers is substantively different to working with vulnerable young people. WOS staff make important steps to working with sex workers, but stabilizing their often chaotic lives is not simple or straightforward. Gains that are made are often lost, and helping these women involves years of engagement, often with small (but positive) steps forward. It might be useful for NHYC staff to have a better understanding of the difficulties of working with this group in comparison to working with young people, and to increase communication between WOS staff and NHYC staff to facilitate a more cohesive working practice.

While NHYC staff members are very good at communicating with young people and build trusting relationships, more could be done to ensure that young people are aware of sexual exploitation and what they can do if they or someone they know is experiencing a sexually exploitative relationship. Delivering training on this area to young people may be conducive to ensuring that young people are aware of these issues, and know what do in a situation where sexual exploitation is pertinent. However, this needs to be embedded in practices of engagement with young people in order to have a long-term impact. WOS staff clearly had knowledge of sexual exploitation, but more focused training on how to work with young people around sexual exploitation, and how to incorporate these principles in working practice may be worth considering.

This report focused mainly on the WOS project and their engagement with sex workers. Some of the research we did with young people revealed interesting opinions about concerns related to sexual exploitation. Further research in this area and an evaluation of NHYC services for young people (men and women) who may be at risk of sexual exploitation would be useful.

## 2.0 Introduction

The study of the Women's Open Space Project (WOS) was commissioned by New Horizon Youth Centre (NHYC) and co-funded by the Department of Social Sciences and the Department of Sociology and Criminology at Middlesex University. Based in London, NHYC aims to enable young people (aged 16-21) to gain skills and knowledge to improve their life chances and help them move from adolescence into adulthood. The Women's Open Space Project (WOS) is organizationally linked with New Horizon, but works separately with older women (typically over the age of 21) who are engaged with street-based sex work. WOS conduct outreach work with sex working women in two north London boroughs, and run drop-in sessions at their centre near King's Cross, which enable women involved in sex work to manage their lives by getting help with substance misuse issues, housing, health, and assistance with other basic needs.

The objectives of the WOS Team are:

- To promote positive change in street sex workers who are vulnerable through risk-taking behaviours
- To work with the most disadvantaged and vulnerable client group. It builds on effective partnerships with prison services, the police, the borough street safety teams; drug and alcohol centres, sexual health clinics and PCTs to deliver a responsive service to clients and one that is effective in making changes in their lives
- To reduce the numbers of WOS clients rough sleeping on the street or being involved in other street-based activities
- To reduce the number of WOS clients using hard drugs such as crack cocaine and heroine
- To sustain hostel tenancies and move WOS clients appropriately into more permanent accommodation
- To achieve the improvement of physical health of WOS clients and achieve improvement in their mental stability
- To give the WOS clients a greater knowledge of the following to assist them in exiting prostitution if they wish to leave: the law, rights, housing, health, drug and alcohol support.
- Provide a minimum of 6 outreach shifts a week in Camden and Islington, working with women of all ages in the sex trade in Camden and Islington
- To provide advice and information to WOS clients on accommodation, health and drugs and alcohol services

- To refer clients appropriately into services and support them to maintain usage in collaboration with service providers
- To attend prison weekly and work with resettlement drugs teams
- To provide training annually to prison staff and carry out resettlement work with clients at HMP Holloway Prison
- To manage and deliver a separate drop-in at NHYC's daycentre for women involved in street-based sex work on Mondays and Thursdays from 16.30-18.30.

### *Why is there a need for the Women's Open Space Project?*

The WOS project provides a wide variety of services to women who are involved with street-based sex work<sup>1</sup>. WOS seek to address many of the structural issues that may explain women's involvement in street-based sex work. Many of their clients could be understood as 'drug-using sex workers' (Melrose, 2007), and as such WOS provide services relevant for this client group. However, they also provide help with problems associated with poor health, poverty, social exclusion, and homelessness. Providing services that focus holistically on the issues sex workers face, rather than simply focusing on drug-taking, or exiting prostitution, means that women are more likely to receive appropriate support and are able to take up the necessary intervention required at that given moment. While WOS is not an exiting project, they work with sex workers to help them make positive lifestyle changes, and this holistic strategy puts them in a better position to leave the sex industry at some point in the future should they wish to do so.

Street-based sex workers face high levels of violence in their personal lives and from the communities they work in. Within the UK sex workers have reported multiple incidents of violence (McKeganey and Barnard 1996; Campbell and Kinnell 2001; Church *et al.* 2001; Day and Ward 2001; Phoenix 2001; 2009), leaving street sex workers twelve times more likely to die from violence at work than women their own age (Ward, Day, and Weber 1999). Sanders and Campbell argue that street based sex workers face higher levels of violence than women working in other sectors of the sex industry 'as women who experience the most vulnerable social and economic status are least

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to acknowledge that it is not only women who engage in sex work. However, the WOS team work specifically with sex-working women, and as such the conclusions of this evaluation are limited to this specific population.

likely to have recall to physical safety strategies and are therefore more exposed to violence' (2007:12).

The Policing and Crime Act 2009, which came into force in 2010 has brought more punitive measures with regards to street-based prostitution (Sagar, 2007; Sanders *et al.*, 2009). One of the explicitly stated aims of the Act is to reduce street-based sex work. The resultant impact for street-based sex workers is that they face ever-increasing levels of danger as sex work gets pushed into marginalized and liminal zones. Many sex workers in London face Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) as a result of their street-based activities. A 2005 report on prostitution drafted by the Safer London Committee (London Assembly, 2005) raised concerns about the use of ASBOs for prostitution. We argue that the use of ASBOs with street-based sex workers is problematic, and the interviews with sex workers suggests that they are facing increasing levels of violence, while at the same time experiencing harassment and intimidation at the hands of policing officials. There is a concern that issuing ASBOs to sex workers may further marginalize them and discourage them from accessing services (Harcourt and Donovan, 2005; Pitcher *et al.*, 2006; Broadway, 2008; Sanders *et al.*, 2009). Support services are meant to be part of parcel of ASBOs, but these support services rarely materialize. Breaching ASBOs can leave sex workers facing high fines or jail time, and should women go to prison, this reduces their chances of taking positive steps out of drug-use or sex work after they are released. Sanders *et al.* note:

...the increase in civil measures, with the inevitability that they will be breached by many, has led in the UK to an increasing criminalization of female sex workers in particular. The consequence of serving a short-term prison sentence, with little support, is that women emerge facing debt, may often have lost their accommodation and are forced back on the streets to earn money. The resultant stigma also makes it even more difficult for women to move into other areas of work (Sanders *et al.*, 2009:136).

WOS work with women who have been issued or threatened with ASBOs, as well as women who have been imprisoned as a result of their sex working practices. They work closely with their client group to support them during this process, and give them strategies to help them work in safer ways. WOS engage with borough-level safer streets teams and local police to provide officials with a more complete picture of sex workers' lives so that punitive approaches can be avoided whenever possible.

Observations at the drop-in and interviews with WOS staff suggested that during the data collection period there seemed to be a decrease in the numbers of women accessing WOS services. However, statistics recorded in January 2012 to June of 2012 have revealed a spike in the number of sex workers accessing WOS drop-in services, with nearly double the number of women attending drop-in in March 2012 (n=59) compared to April of 2011 (n=31). This likely due to a number of different variables: recent reductions in benefits, changes to housing benefit; more punitive approaches taken by police in the run up to the Olympics (BBC, 2012; Doward, 2012), amongst others. It is important to remember that even slight changes in circumstance can quickly alter seemingly settled arrangements for sex workers. Continuing services even in periods of slight downturn is important, and as the evaluation has shown, the continuing presence of WOS over the past years has meant that sex workers are assured of a place to turn to and of adequate provision should the services with which they are engaged with fail them in some way, or when they face increased levels of danger or violence.



## 3.0 Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design and methods

The aims of the evaluation were two-fold. The first aim was to evaluate the impact and efficacy of services offered by WOS, specifically focusing on:

- Service delivery from an organizational perspective
- Establishing areas of best practice in engaging with street-based sex workers

The second aim of the evaluation was to look at the NHYC model of engagement with young women at risk of sexual exploitation to establish an area of best practice. We were interested in looking at their work with young women, as there is evidence that the third sector contributes significantly in the delivery of effective exploitation prevention strategies for children and young people (Jago, *et al.*, 2011).

As we wanted to understand the various ways in which WOS effectively engage with sex workers and how they function as an institution, we felt an ethnographic approach to data collection was the most appropriate way of understanding the organizational context in which WOS work, and the ways in which they approach service delivery with a vulnerable client group. We drew on ethnographic research methods, and incorporated institutional ethnographic practices to carry out the research, as this epistemologically driven methodology offers a useful way of exploring institutional ideologies and examining social relations and work-connections (Smith, 2001; Smith, 2005; De Vault, 2006). Our ethnography employed traditional participant observations, undertaken over 30 hours at the WOS drop-in. The drop-in sessions gave us a chance to observe the ways WOS staff engage with sex workers, and how sex workers respond both to staff and to the other women at the drop-in sessions.

We also conducted mobile interviews on outreach walks with the WOS team. We drew on emerging methodological approaches to mobile interviews and spatial methods to carry out these interviews on the move (Buscher and Urry, 2009; Emmel and Clark, 2009) with the outreach teams. The interviews enabled us to see the ways in which the WOS team engage with sex workers on the street, and indeed, how they work with the wider street population that they come into contact with. We tracked these

walks with a GPS device, and were able to map the routes of outreach, pinpointing key areas of contact with clients, and the liminal zones where sex workers work.

We employed in-depth semi-structured interviews with the WOS team and the director of NYHC, asking them about their working experiences, and how they felt about various aspects of their roles within the organization. We also conducted semi-structured interviews with young women at NYHC and sex workers at the WOS drop-in (see appendices for interview questions).

We felt it was important to interview other organizations that work with WOS, to see how other groups working with the same client group understand WOS. We decided to undertake a participatory mapping exercise with the WOS team, to identify which groups they work with, how they work together as a team and how they interact with other agencies (for more on participatory mapping see Emmel and Clark, 2009). The mapping exercise revealed nearly 50 organizations that the WOS team work with on a regular basis. As a result of the mapping exercise, we identified four key agencies that WOS work with and interviewed them about their experiences of working with WOS. These semi-structured interviews were conducted over the telephone with key agency workers between August 2011 - October 2011.

During the mapping exercise, the team also produced a map charting their interactions with an anonymous sex worker over a period of 10 years, to give a case study approach to the level of involvement needed to effectively engage with a street-based sex worker. This map revealed the complex nature of the assistance sex workers may need depending on their situation at any given moment, and gave a better insight into the ways in which WOS work together as a team, and how they work with other organizations to assist clients.

Finally, we carried out an analysis of existing organizational documents used by the WOS team, including their Outreach Policy and Planning document, and their outcomes measures used with sex workers, in addition to reading relevant literature around sex work and sexual exploitation.

### **3.2 Analysis**

All interviews were transcribed verbatim, and Grounded Theory Method (GTM) was used to analyze our data. GTM 'comprises a systematic, inductive, and comparative approach for conducting inquiry

for the purpose of constructing theory' (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007:1). GTM enabled us to meaningfully interact with our data, while allowing room for a focused approach to exploring emerging theoretical questions. We were fortunate to have rich data that demonstrated a variety of perspectives, and moving from the data to theory and back again enabled us to progressively focus and systematically explore data in relation to emergent theoretical issues.

### **3.3 Ethics**

The Middlesex University Ethical Committee gave ethical approval for the research and guidelines set out by the British Sociological Association were used to inform the research process.

We are aware that sex workers (and particularly street-based sex workers) are a vulnerable group who are often over-researched. However, our aim was to interview sex working women about their experiences of the services provided by WOS, to establish how they could better be helped and what changes they may want to see at the drop-in and during outreach. We focused our questions on their experiences of engaging with WOS and allowed women the opportunity to address any issues or problems they felt might be relevant to their experience. We hope that these interviews gave women a sense that their opinions about the services were important, as we asked them their views with the aim of improving or perhaps changing the services they access. After discussing the issue carefully with WOS, we decided that women would receive with a £5 Sainsbury's voucher for participating in the research.

Our interviews with young women likewise focused on their experiences of using NHYC services, but we also wanted to ask them about their experiences of sexual exploitation. Not surprisingly, we faced real difficulty in getting young women at NHYC to speak to us about sexual exploitation. In order to recruit participants, we attended a number of NHYC women's group sessions to talk about the research and try to explain what we were trying to achieve. After speaking with one of the managers at NHYC, we also decided to adjust our interview questions. Rather than asking women directly about their experiences of sexual exploitation, we provided them with two vignettes around sexual exploitation, so they could comment hypothetically rather than having to reveal anything personal about their own experiences. This approach seemed to have a positive impact, and we were able to recruit 11 women to participate in interviews. Young women were provided with a £5 Sainsbury's voucher for participating.

All the participants gave informed consent. Information about the research was read aloud to all of the women from WOS and NHYC who participated, and contact details of organizations (sexual health, mental health, counselling etc.) were given to the women in case they required further support for any of the issues raised during the interview process. Confidentiality was assured to all women and the professionals interviewed, and some data has been left out of the final report to ensure that the anonymity of the participants is protected. All the names of participants given in this report have been changed to protect their anonymity.

## 4.0 Engaging sex workers

This section will highlight findings related to WOS and their work with sex workers.

### 4.1 Vulnerability of sex workers on the street

As previously mentioned, sex workers are at risk of violence when working on the streets. Many of the sex workers who engage with WOS are drug-using sex workers, and drug use can exacerbate violence (Pitcher, 2006).

Many of the women told us that they felt working on the street was becoming increasingly dangerous.

*Helen: I think it is getting more violent out there 'cause the amount of things I've heard, stabbings and god knows what's been out there, it's really getting bad, even my way you're not safe to walk up -- Road, if you're out late at night you've got to have eyes in the back of your head, if you're out there, you gotta have your wits all about you, you know, you've got to be really aware.*

Many women felt the potential for violence was exacerbated by heightened police presence, and that was leading them to engage in sex work in different ways. Women noted that were being forced to work in unfamiliar areas to avoid police or street safety teams. One participant told us that she had stopped speaking to other sex workers on the beat, because she received more hassle from the police when she did so. The UKNSWP's guidance to Sex Worker Safety (2008) advises street-based sex workers to work in well-lit, crowded places that they are familiar with, and to work in twos or threes when possible. Police activity has meant that women are now working in ways that contravene these guidelines, and put them in more dangerous situations. Many participants said they felt more vulnerable as a result of this, and did not feel like the police were there to help or protect them.

Women also mentioned ASBOs and the threat they posed to their working conditions. Previous studies of street-based sex workers indicate that ASBOs can have a range of negative impacts on sex working women. ASBOs can force women into working in more dangerous conditions as they are pushed into secluded areas (Hubbard and Sanders, 2003; Sagar, 2007); can impact women's movements, restricting their use of support services (Pitcher *et al.*, 2006); are often ineffective

(Hester and Westmarland, 2004); and can exacerbate marginalization (Sagar, 2007). In Brixton, the use of ASBOs has discouraged women from using services (Broadway, 2008). ASBOs have been used particularly heavily in Camden near the King's Cross redevelopment site (Summers, 2002), and as recently as March 2012 Camden Council has publicized its own efforts of issuing ASBOs to sex workers (Camden Council, 2012). Women felt that police reactions to sex work were not working in parallel with other social welfare initiatives on offer, and sex workers felt they were being targeted to the point where their working lives are becoming increasingly dangerous.

However, there was a sense from sex workers that WOS is able to provide help deal with police harassment and intercede on their behalves:

*Brenda: I mean, for example, the police were trying to ASBO me from Kings Cross, not from Kings Cross, just the red light district part, and I don't know if it was because of these people or what, and it's like, I was supposed to have a court date in April, and I still haven't had that I don't know it's because of these people or the fact that I haven't been out there or what but something must be good.*

*I: The people here obviously have a relationship with the police and talk to the police, do you think that helps you?*

*Brenda: Yeah, I think it does. Yeah.*

Research suggests that sex workers are often reluctant to report violent incidents to police, and Campbell and Storr (2001) have suggested that developing sensitive police approaches to engaging sex workers is paramount to ensuring their safety. For the women in our study, it was evident that the police were not seen as a help, or a source they could turn to if they were in trouble. Rather, they were seen as exacerbating problems sex workers already faced, and they talked about police in negative terms. Helen talked about one particular incident she had had with police in her area, and how WOS empowered her to do something about this problem.

*I: Have New Horizon helped make things with the police any easier?*

*Helen: They can, because...I was out in the street, I been stopped and searched, I said put down New Horizon and let 'em know I been searched. 'Cause I said I wanted 'em to know that I had been searched and stopped, you know, 'cause then it goes into the report*

*competency, competency report, 'cause I was getting a lot of hassle at first and then it died off, once I started complaining about them, it died off, it died off.*

Helen felt that mentioning WOS helped with the harassment situation, as she was not simply issuing a complaint on her own. Having an agency with credibility to rely on gave Helen a feeling of power in a situation where she would otherwise feel powerless. When the police are seen as a threat or unreliable, it is even more important that sex workers have a legitimate source they can turn to if they do experience violence or need to report an incident.

Women also felt that the outreach teams made their working lives safer. The presence of the WOS outreach team on the street meant women had someone to turn to if something went wrong, or they felt threatened. The WOS outreach team was seen as a positive force, and made women feel safer on a variety of levels.

## **4.2 Socializing and Emotional Support**

Sanders *et al.* (2009) suggest that problematic drug use is often associated with depression and anxiety, while others have highlighted a broad range of mental health problems that sex workers have reported, including depression and manic depression, panic attacks, stress, insomnia, and eating disorders (May and Hunter, 2006; Day, 2007; Sanders *et al.*, 2009). Connell and Hart (2003) point out that sex workers also experience a range of emotional problems beyond this, including feelings of low self-esteem, social isolation, and emotional detachment.

Women that we spoke to at the drop-in reported experiencing many of these issues. The participants cited social isolation most widely as a common problem, and many of the women we spoke with felt that one of the best things about coming to WOS was the social aspect of the drop-in. They enjoyed seeing friends and speaking with the WOS members, and felt having a social setting to relax and engage with other people was important. The WOS drop-on offers a respite from the isolation women feel:

*I: So it's nice coming here and having that social aspect?*

*Helen: Yeah, it helps the isolation, and we talk, you get to meet a couple of new faces and things like that and then they get to know you. It's always frightening the first time you walk*

*in, for them, but once they get used to the people and then we talk to one another, we all get to know one another.*

Sex workers are a deeply stigmatized group, and stigma may be a significant barrier to accessing services (Broadway, 2008). Having a safe space to socialize offers a way for sex workers interact with people without fear of being judged, and increases the likelihood that they will engage with a range of appropriate services that may help stabilize them. WOS provides a non-judgemental drop-in that helps ensure all women feel comfortable and are able to communicate with one another and with staff. For most of the women that we spoke to, the drop-in offered an important space to feel safe and get emotional support. Brenda described the WOS team as a second family, while Carrie talked about feeling safe when she accessed the drop-in:

*Carrie: It really does help a lot, it does. 'Cause I'm sure there's many more people out there who have nowhere to go and they don't even think about a place like this, where you can come and you can feel a little safer, you know and you can feel a little comfort to speak to somebody and somebody to understand your problems, but um... It's comfortable. It's cozy. It's, it feels safe, it feels like a safe place to come. You have a good meal, and you feel good, I feel good when I leave, yeah, I really do, I like, I can't wait 'til Thursday or Monday to come back... (Carrie)*

Goffman (1990) suggests that socially marginalized individuals may benefit from having in-group alignments, and interacting with others who are in the same situation. This was something that many of the women we spoke to commented on with regards to the drop-in – the feeling of normalcy they got from attending the drop-in sessions. Having a non-judgemental approach when working with sex workers is vital for the success of any project (Pitcher, 2006). The women who attend the drop-in are regularly reminded throughout their daily lives that they are marginalized or excluded from society, from their interactions with the police, with the local authority, with customers, and with other people on the street. The WOS drop-in offers a space where women are treated not as sex workers, but as 'normal' people. Brenda comments on the importance of being treated like a 'normal' person:

*I: And what do you think is the best about coming her?*

*Brenda: The fact that they don't treat you like a working girl or somebody that takes drugs, or that. They treat you like a normal person. That's the best part about it I think.*



Many women felt that the drop-in encouraged a non-judgmental attitude, and that this was unique to WOS in contrast to other services or organizations they might engage with.

While many projects that work with sex workers tend to employ female-only staff members, WOS have both male and female staff at the drop-in sessions. Outreach is conducted with mixed male and female outreach teams (during WOS-only outreach and during collaborative outreach as well). There is often an implicit assumption amongst sex work organizations that work with female sex workers<sup>2</sup> that providing women-only spaces provides a safe haven for women (Sanders, 2004) but we would argue that the presence of trusted male staff members/outreach workers has positive benefits for women who often encounter men as drug dealers/pimps or clients. Our observations during drop-in and outreach sessions suggest that women have positive social interactions with the male workers they come across, and many women mentioned the male workers in a very positive way when talking about the familial nature of the services offered. This is an area of innovation at WOS, and should be explored further in other projects.

### **4.3 Practical help**

Engaging street-based sex workers in London can be difficult, as they have high level and complex needs. Recent research carried out in Lambeth (Broadway, 2008) suggests that sex workers benefit most from specialist services, but rely on a wide range of different services, particularly drug and alcohol, mental health, and housing. However, helping street-based sex workers access appropriate services can be difficult, as many sex workers are reluctant to approach service providers as they fear they may be judged (Becker and Duffy, 2002; Pitcher and Aris, 2003; Sanders *et al.*, 2009). WOS provide a one-stop-shop for sex workers, providing a wide range of services that are beneficial for women working on the streets. Providing this kind of practical help is important for women in terms of stabilizing them (physically and mentally): 'Addressing needs around housing, drug services and health is essential. Meaningful activities and access to opportunities for leisure, education, employment and training are also crucial in helping women first believe in, and then establish, a life away from drugs and sex work (Broadway, 2008:5).

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<sup>2</sup> The same cannot be said for most sex work organizations that work with male clients – where it is seen as right and normal for male sex workers to receive assistance from both male and female outreach and drop-in workers. This discrepancy suggests a gender-essentialist reading of sex work and the impact it may have on those working in the industry.

The women we interviewed spoke about the practical help they received from the WOS team, which included advice and support on housing, help and advice about drugs and alcohol, help with mental and physical health issues, advice about safety and safe working practices, advice on drugs and alcohol, and sexual health advice. Women felt supported by WOS in accessing a variety of services, and many felt they would not have been able to approach a service provider without this mediation. Women pointed to a number of specific ways they had been helped, outlined below.

## *Housing*

Homelessness is a particular problem for street-based sex workers (Galatowicz *et al.*, 2005). McNaughton and Sanders (2008) highlight the importance of accommodating women who have reduced or stopped their drug use and/or sex working in stable housing away from negative networks that might draw them back into sex work or drug/alcohol use. They also highlight the problems that sex-working women have with repeated homelessness, particularly when they are housed in a setting that is not conducive to their recovery process. In some cases, women who were housed in flats felt overwhelmed by the responsibility, others couldn't afford the accommodation and turned back to sex work, and some let old networks back in, sometimes voluntarily, sometimes by force. Talking about findings from research they conducted with sex working women, McNaughton and Sanders note:

Obtaining and maintaining housing was identified as a key factor for the women to gain the material security they needed to develop the emotional and psychological processes of change necessary to make transitions out of homelessness or sex work. However, this housing could then become a locus for ongoing problems (such as drug dealing or abusive relationships) or for intense isolation, that in turn motivated ongoing substance use. As a consequence, housing could 'stall' their transitions by embedding them in marginality and vulnerability (McNaughton and Sanders, 2007:898)

Helping women find appropriate accommodation and providing continuing emotional support through the housing process is an important factor in helping women move into more stable lifestyles. In their report on sex workers in Lambeth, Broadway note that 'Periods of homelessness result in huge steps backwards for women, increased sex work and drug use...For women to be able to engage at increasing levels, they must have stable, safe housing' (2008:38).

Women who attended WOS often accessed these services in order to obtain help with housing.

*Brenda: Yeah, they helped me when I came out of prison, they helped me get my flat, they helped me when something happened to me with my last flat and I was walked straight down and put in a hostel. Basically, anything that's gone wrong with me, if I can't get down to mum's in --, it's always here.*

Accessing safe housing was a problem for street-based sex workers we spoke with, and presents a problem for many women in this group across London (see Broadway, 2008 and Shelter, 2004). The WOS team (and NHYC) have a great deal of experience of navigating the complex and labyrinthine housing processes, and support women through this. They have worked with a wide range of hostels and knew a great deal about the various types of accommodation that were available, and which places would provide the best accommodation for a particular client at that particular time. Being able to work with clients to ensure they are safely and appropriately housed is critical for providing stability and security for sex workers.

During the mapping session, the case study demonstrates the various points at which WOS stepped in to help with an anonymized sex worker's housing situation. This woman had a number of problems with housing over the past ten years, and getting her into stable accommodation was critical to ensuring her overall wellbeing. This included getting her housed when she came out of prison, getting her re-housed after her flat was set on fire, and again after she had been in a hostage situation. This particular sex worker had been in a number of hostel and flats over the past ten years, and all of her housing needs had been mediated by WOS.

WOS workers have established contacts with hostel and housing staff, and were able to advocate for women should a problem arise. McNaughton and Sanders (2007) suggest that it is often difficult for women who have led chaotic lives to suddenly adjust to stringent rules and regulations. Having WOS there to act as an intermediary should a problem arise (over drug-taking, curfews, etc) meant that women had a much better chance of staying in accommodation and getting the support they needed. The combination of emotional and practical support is important here, and WOS are able to deliver a service that works to meet the specific needs of street-based sex workers.

*Health*

The WOS team provided a range of services that helped sex workers with health issues, including physical health and wellbeing, mental health, and sexual health. At drop-in sessions, healthy meals are provided for all women who attend. For many of the women we spoke to this was a highlight of their experience, and for some was the only full-balanced meal they had all week. Women are given the opportunity to attend gym sessions, and workshops on general health have been featured at drop-in sessions as well. There is a resident nurse that works with WOS clients, providing support and advice on any health issue they feel is relevant, and she will work with WOS clients to get them sustained access to a local GP service. Accessing a GP can be difficult for women as many of them experience periods of homelessness<sup>3</sup>, or face stigma and discrimination from reception staff or GPs themselves. Having an advocate to help women register with a GP can be hugely important for their physical and mental wellbeing. Additionally, WOS staff members will attend health appointments with clients if this is necessary. One client pointed out that she would not have had her contraception changed if the WOS team had not accompanied her to her appointment:

*Brenda: It was like my implant, I had it done on Thursday, and they know me. 'Cause I'm scared of needles. **But they know me.** For me to go and get my implant changed one of them has to come with me. It would stay in my arm or what. So they are good in that way.*

WOS were also able to help women with their sexual health. Women who attended the drop-in were aware that STI testing was available, and felt confident to ask staff if they wanted to see a nurse or GP about their sexual health. This is particularly important as sex workers may not feel comfortable accessing mainstream sexual health services (Pitcher, 2006).

Sanders *et al.* (2009) point out that the prevalence of HIV amongst sex workers is related to the degree to which condoms are used in sexual exchanges with clients. HIV transmissions are relatively low in Europe compared to Asian and African countries, and this is linked to sex workers being able to insist on safe sex with clients. However, sex workers who have substance abuse issues (particularly drug-addiction) are more likely to take greater risks and exercise less caution when engaging in commercial sexual exchanges (Europap, 2003; Sanders *et al.*, 2009). WOS provide

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<sup>3</sup> Having a fixed address is often a pre-condition of being able to register with a GP service, although technically patients still have the right to register with a GP without a fixed address.

condoms to sex workers who need them – for some women the cost of condoms was prohibitively expensive, and having access to a regular supply of condoms meant that sex workers were more likely to engage in safe sex practices. Many of the sex workers who accessed WOS were also able to reduce or stabilize their drug-use, making it more likely that they will engage in safer sex practices.

Sanders *et al.* (2009) suggest that sex workers rarely have adequate support for mental health problems, and May *et al.* (2001) argue that drug treatment services are not tailored to the needs of sex workers. For sex workers who have drug problems, their addiction issues can compound mental health issues. It can be difficult for agencies to work with clients who have such profound and competing needs, making it challenging for sex workers to access appropriate services or to get the help they need. WOS offer support for these women, who are often need help to deal with multiple issues at the same time, and can step in when other services are not able to work with these clients. For some women, this was evidenced by the fact that WOS helped when other services had failed them. In one case, WOS were there to support a woman who had been removed from a drugs rehab facility because of mental health issues:

*I: So do you feel supported coming here?*

*Ellen: I do, because when I was in rehab, I was in rehab for 3 days and they asked me to leave because I was seeing dead people after hearing in the group that somebody was nearly killed, they put somebody in intensive care and that person nearly died and since then I've started to see the dead people again and have flashbacks, so they asked me to leave because it weren't helping the group, they didn't have the right facilities and they tried to find me another place, but they were no help at all.*

*I: So have they [WOS] helped you get into other programmes?*

*Ellen: They're looking into it and sorting it out now.*

*I: So you feel confident that they'll be able to help you here?*

*Ellen: Yeah, I've got more trust here than they people who were doing my rehab so it just goes to show you...*

Working with women who have such high-level and competing needs demands a particular competency that many agencies are ill equipped to deal with. The experience WOS has of working with street-based sex workers means they have the skills to work with women when other organizations or agencies fail. There is a strong argument that specialist services (in particular drugs,

mental health, and domestic violence) need to be introduced to meet the specific needs of sex workers.

## *Drugs*

There is evidence to suggest links between street-based sex work and class A drug use, and the use of heroin and crack-cocaine may increase sex workers' vulnerability (May *et al.*, 1999; Becker and Duffy, 2002; Sanders *et al.*, 2009). Many of the women we spoke to at WOS were currently using crack and/or heroine, some of them had stabilized their drug use and others were on methadone scripts. For many of the drug-using women we spoke to, the WOS team had been introduced to them during outreach. Outreach was an important way for sex workers to get to know the team and to get to know the services that were available before attending the drop-in.

Outreach work was particularly useful for engaging women with drug habits, and one sex worker we spoke with had known the outreach team for many years but had only recently started attending drop-in sessions. This was because her drug use had dropped significantly and she felt able to attend as she was looking for people to socialize with, and ways to spend her days without drugs.

*Anna: I like the staff, they're very outgoing and tolerant. 'Cause they've invited me so many times so long ago and I was into a lot of drugs at the time, so I didn't end up coming and I was always either going to get something or on the way back to go but now I haven't been taking [drugs], like once a fortnight or something, so I have a lot of time on my hands, you know, I dropped out with the friends that I used to be hanging out, and yeah I seem to just be getting along.*

For Anna, knowing the outreach team already meant that she was familiar with the drop-in and services offered there, and when she made a positive step towards reducing her drug use, she had a safe and welcoming space to come where she was already known to staff.

Another woman suggested that if she had had access to services offered by WOS at an earlier date, she would have stopped her drug use much sooner than she had.

*Fiona: If I'd had this place when I was still using, my drug use would have been given up years ago, years ago. Definitely. Even my support worker told me that, and my outreach worker, they both said to me, 'cause after they seen me coming to these sort of places, they said to me, you know if we'd got you linked into these places years ago you'd have stopped all that life.*

For many of the women we spoke with, engaging in sex work was a way to fund their drug habit. For those that had significantly reduced their drug use, they had largely reduced the amount of time they were working on the streets. WOS offered access to a number of services for women wanting to reduce their drug use, and women at different stages of the recovery path all felt that WOS offered support that was critical for their path towards a more positive future.

Boredom has been highlighted in drug and alcohol research as a factor in relapsing behaviour (Rawson, Obert, McCann & Marinelli-Casey, 1993; Wallace, 1989). Broadway's (2008) research with sex workers in Lambeth reveals that boredom was identified by sex working women as one of the reasons they relapsed back into drug taking after a period of sobriety. The WOS drop-in offers a reprieve from boredom for women. One sex worker shared her experiences:

*Helen: It's more a relief when you go home, when you've had a chat and talked, and that's more relief for us, 'cause you do get bored at the end of the day, you know you got nothing to do, you get bored and you just go wandering out on the street and there's more trouble out on the street than what's inside.*

For another sex worker in a similar situation, she met the WOS team on outreach, and when she decided to reduce her drug use she felt the drop-in was a good place to start to rebuild her life.

*I: So you met her [the WOS worker] when she was doing outreach?*

*Gina: Yeah, on the street, yeah*

*I: How long ago was that?*

*Gina: Um, that was a few months, I met her all the time, every time I was on the streets I'd meet here at -- station, I met her a few times. The last time I seen her I think was a few months ago...*



*I: So what made you decide to come down?*

*Gina: Um, 'cause I wanna, I've been on drugs, I'm on the methadone, and uh, my partner's doing group and everything and he's started college today. And, um, I'm sitting in the house and I'm doing nothing, and sometimes being bored makes you use again, and I don't, I would want to get my meth cut down and if I'm using on top of my meth I can't get my meth cut down, I'd probably have to put it up, you know like, seeing him doing well, I wanna do well as well, you know what I mean, I wanna do something.*

*I: So this is a good place for you to come?*

*Gina: Yeah I thought this might be the start, this could help me get into somewhere, starting doing voluntary work or something like that.*

For Fiona, the drop-in was a way to structure her days now that her drug use had significantly reduced.

*Fiona: It's just a shame it's only open on a Monday and Thursday. 'Cause I wouldn't even mind, I know 50 p is not a lot, but even if they charged 50 p for the meal so they could have it every day, I would do that, just so I could come here and talk to the staff – 'cause where I am in Wood Green, I'm in a hostel, I'm in a room, and all I've got is my telly, I just lie on my bed all day watching telly, and my outreach worker and my support worker are getting worried now because the boredom is starting to set in, and that's what might make me start using again. And I don't want to go down that path again, I've been clean for a year, touch wood, and I don't want to go back down there, but I'm just thankful for the places like this, I can just get up and come here, spend just a couple of hours, it's like an hour to get here, and then a couple of hours here, and an hour back, so that's like 4-5 hours out of my day, and because I've got a bad back and legs, by the time I do get home I'm really tired and I get a good night's sleep 'cause my belly is full of food here, I really enjoy it, you know what I mean, but it's just a shame it's only open twice a week.*

*I: So you think it's helpful in helping you stay off drugs?*

*Fiona: Yeah, yeah, definitely. Definitely. 100%.*

For Fiona, the drop-in offers her structure to her day and helps her deal with the boredom that has accompanied her reduction in drug use. She explicitly acknowledges the importance of this for trying to stay clean.



McNaughton and Sanders (2008) talk about the importance of social networks to marginalized women, and argue that these social networks can be both supportive and negative. Women in their studies talked about relapsing (into drug use, sex work or homelessness) and related this to both the feeling of boredom, but also to lack of social networks beyond their immediate network of drug-taking or sex-working friends. Many women who attend WOS have been sex working for years, some for decades. Their network of friends is often built around their drug-taking and/or sex-working, and stopping either of these activities necessitates ceasing contact with these associates. McNaughton and Sanders (2008) suggest that women who remove themselves from the streets often face intense feelings of loneliness and isolation. The drop-in at WOS offers a space where women are able to socialize with a variety of other people, including WOS workers, WOS volunteers, other voluntary and public sector workers, as well as other women in similar situations. There is a danger that some of the women who attend the drop-in who are still engaging in sex working activities and/or drug taking will have a negative effect on women who are trying to transition out of these lifestyles. One sex worker notes:

*I: Have you been able to talk to any of the other girls who come in?*

*Carrie: Some of the other girls who are in another place, I don't really socialize too much with. I just talk to [a voluntary worker] and [another sex worker], I told [the other sex worker] about it, so she just came in today.*

Another participant highlights her experience:

*I: So she described all these different services [yeah, yeah] and they all sounded like something you'd be interested in? And are you expecting to make friends with any of the other girls here?*

*Gina: I already know some of them, some of them, I don't want to give names or that, but I know she's still using, so that kind of person I don't want to be friends with, that kind of person is going to drag me back down. If it's the kind of person who's thinking she might do something like work or college or something, than like, yeah, but I don't want to be friendly with anyone that's still using.*

*I: So was that a concern for you, coming down here?*

*Gina: No, not at all, because I'm old enough to see and decide who I want to talk to or not.*

By and large, the women who were transitioning off of drugs or who were no longer taking drugs were able to dissociate themselves from those who were still using. There was a general feeling that the drop-in was able to offer women who were transitioning off of drugs and/or out of sex work a space to socialize with other people outside their former networks, and helped with the feeling of isolation that accompanied their changing lifestyles. Women who were transitioning felt they were able to make new networks that would help support them in their new lives.

Providing a specialist service for sex workers means accommodating women who are at different stages in terms of their drug-use, and there is no simple solution for providing a space for sex workers who are using, those who are transitioning, and those who have stopped using/never used. This is further complicated by the fact that women who are trying to reduce their drug-taking often relapse or yo-yo several times before they stabilize or stop. Having a space where all women can turn up, and any point in this process is important for providing them with consistent support. However, this is something that may need to be taken into consideration when planning activities or thinking about service delivery.

#### **4.4 Workshops and learning**

WOS offer workshops for women who attend the drop-in sessions, and these were talked about in a positive way by many of the women we interviewed. Many projects that work with sex workers offer a range of information and advice services (Pitcher, 2006) and in some ways the workshops that WOS offer are similar in nature. They have given workshops on a wide variety of topics, including but not limited to: health and nutrition, self-defence and first-aid. The workshops set out practical skills that sex workers may be able to use in their day-to-day lives, and offering women targeted classes on key issues can offer useful techniques for surviving on the streets, and for keeping themselves safe. However, the workshops are beneficial in ways beyond simply providing information.

During an interview with Helen, she spent nearly 10 minutes providing an overview of some key first aid techniques that she had learned in her first aid workshop, including details on the recovery position and how to tie a tourniquet. Helen was highly animated while telling us about her first aid knowledge, and her enthusiasm clearly demonstrates the importance of offering semi-structured or

structured workshops for women who attend the drop-in. Other participants mentioned the workshops and the benefit they got from attending these sessions, and spoke with passion about ideas that they had for future workshops. Anna talked about introducing a hair and make-up session, which was eventually brought in by WOS staff. Women felt empowered by these learning sessions, and particularly for sex workers who were unlikely to engage in other structured activities, these mini-sessions offered them a chance to learn, engage with one another around a particular topic or issue, and they felt they had some control over future workshop sessions which inspired them to think about what their own interests were. This is an area that WOS are considering expanding, and seems to be a developing area of best practice in the field.

## 4.5 Creating a safe space

Pitcher (2006) argues that having a safe space for sex workers to visit is an important element of working effectively with this client group. We began attending WOS drop-in sessions and using participant observation to study the ways WOS staff engage with sex workers, and how sex workers respond both to staff and to the other women at the drop-in sessions. The drop-in setting is a relaxed space where women are able to eat, drink tea and coffee, watch television, take a shower, do their laundry, sit and chat, or just unwind. Several of the women suggested that the physical space of the sessions lends itself to the relaxed atmosphere, and is one of the reasons they find the drop-in so welcoming. The services offered at the drop-in were well utilized, and participants commented on the various ways in which the drop-in helped them:

*Anna: And they help you like, give you clothes, and if you're down and out you can have a shower here, get your clothes washed, watch the Simpsons. (laughs)*

*I: What do you think the best thing about coming here is?*

*Fiona: I just like the way it's laid out, the big table so everyone can sit around it. You got the kitchen so you can see all the staff there. You've got [a drop-in worker] who sits there at the door and always welcomes you when you come in. It's just like, everyone's there in the centre, talking to everybody, it's really nice, it's like a home sort of thing, you know what I mean, it's really nice.*

The physical space of the drop-in, combined with the relaxed approach meant that sex workers felt comfortable and safe accessing the service. This is something that was also highlighted by other third sector organizations that WOS work with.

#### **4.6 Awareness of services being offered**

Most of the women at the drop-in were aware of the various services being offered. This was particularly true for women who had met the outreach team first, and attending the drop-in after. During the mobile interviews we witnessed several occasions where sex workers were told about the drop-in and were welcomed to come down. During one such occasion, the outreach team came across a woman who was well known to them who was with another woman they did not know. The outreach team explained the drop-in to the potential client, and the known sex worker broke in to describe the services that they offered. The outreach team does a good job of promoting the services to women on the streets, and these women have a clear understanding of what the organization does and the various ways that they can help.

However, for women who heard about the WOS drop-in from other organizations, there was less understanding about what services were available, or the ways in which the WOS team might be able to help them. This was only true for women who were relatively new to the drop-in (had attending less than 5 drop-in sessions), as all the women who were regular users knew about the services regardless of how they heard about the drop-in. This is most likely due to a lack of clear explanation given by the other referral services, but it may be something to consider when dealing with new clients who have been referred, as there was a short-term gap in knowledge while these women were acclimating to the WOS drop-ins.

#### **4.7 A unique service for sex workers**

Providing a specialist service that specifically meets the needs of sex workers is important for helping these women, as they have very particular high level needs. Sanders et al note that 'Many sex workers have encountered barriers to accessing health, drugs and social care services, for example because of judgmental attitudes of some staff, inconvenient opening times or location of services (Sanders *et al.*, 2009:142). Offering user-focused and flexible services are components of good practice when working with sex workers (O'Neill and Campbell, 2001; Pitcher, 2006). WOS

work both their drop-in services and their outreach around sex workers, and try to engage with women at a time that is convenient for them. Some of the women have suggested they would like longer opening hours, or feel they would benefit from the drop-in being open more days of the week. There was an acknowledgement from staff that this would be beneficial for some of the women, but the amount of funding the organization has available to provide these services dictates the amount of time that can be dedicated to providing face-to-face contact. There is a strong case that increasing funding for services that deliver value for money should be extended, particularly with the increasing number of women who have started to access services in recent months.

It was clear that for many women who had accessed other services, WOS offered something unique that could not be easily replicated. For some women, having a space that was specifically for sex workers was an important part of their motivation for accessing the project:

*I: And how is it different to [another local third sector agency]?*

*Brenda: Do you know what I think it is, here most of us are working girls, or people who are taking drugs or we still take drugs once in a while. Whereas [there] it's all different things like alcoholics, women with mental issues and that so at least here they all understand that we've all got similar, the same things really.*

WOS provides a service that understands the specific needs of sex workers. Many of their programmes are user-led, and they work with sex workers and listen to their needs when adapting current service provision. Sex workers felt confident in sharing opinions and offering suggestions for change, and these ideas were well-received by staff.

## **4.9 Conclusions**

Organizations like WOS that adapt a holistic approach to working with women can encourage women to make positive changes. The dual focus of practical help with emotional support is a winning combination here, and providing both a drop-in and an outreach ensures that women with different needs can all be accommodated. The women that we interviewed were all happy with the services offered, and felt their ideas and opinions (about workshop and days-out for example) were listened to and taken on board. We would argue that women who attend the services at WOS feel empowered in a variety of ways, which suggests the project is effective in responding to and

positively engaging with this vulnerable client group. The only negative thing the participants commented on was that the service could be open longer and/or on more days. This problem hinges on issues related to funding. With third sector organizations facing increased funding cuts from the public sector and central government, it is important for policy makers to note that some organizations are delivering critical services that the public sector are unable or unwilling to deliver themselves. WOS offer evidence of best practice in their dealings with sex workers, and we would urge local authorities to work closely with them, and ensure they are adequately funded to meet the needs of their client group.

WOS are providing important support for women at a time when they feel violence is increasing, and police are putting them under pressure. Some women that we spoke to suggested they were changing their sex working practices as a result of police harassment. Some were dissociating from other sex workers on the street to avoid hassle from the police, while others were working in areas that were less familiar to them. Sex workers have been dispersed from many areas within Camden, and in particular moved away from the Kings Cross area and the main streets in Camden Town. However, dispersal of sex workers is problematic as sex support projects may lose touch with women who have had to move on. WOS have been working this area of London for over 20 years, and have seen sex workers dispersed from several areas during this time period. The trust they have built up with clients seems to ensure that they continue to come back to the drop-in, but it places a great deal of pressure on the organization and in some cases dispersal policies may place sex workers in greater danger as they change their working practices. It behoves statutory agencies to think carefully about how their policies may affect sex workers, and we would argue that a more integrated and holistic approach must be applied to working with street-based populations if any positive change is to be achieved.

## 5.0 Engaging young women at risk of sexual exploitation

The New Horizon Youth Centre work closely with vulnerable young people, many of whom would be vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCFS) define sexual exploitation as:

The sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability (DCFS, 2009)

Risk factors underlying the vulnerability of young people to sexual exploitation have been widely explored in the research literature, and practitioners working with such populations are generally aware of these factors, and understand the need to mitigate them (e.g. van Meeuwen *et al.*, 1998; Pearce, 2006; Scott and Skidmore, 2006; Pearce, 2007). Jago *et al.* (2011) suggest that young people who are sexually exploited often experience a number of other associated problems. This may include substance misuse, disability, disengagement from school, experiences of domestic violence, or mental health problems. Additionally, young people at risk or experiencing sexual exploitation were associated with offending behaviours. Being in unsafe accommodation increases the risk that a young person may experience sexual exploitation (Harper and Scott, 2005). The young women accessing NHYC faced many of these issues. Almost all of them had precarious housing situations, and problems with securing safe housing were one of the main reasons young women had contacted NHYC in the first instance. Many of the young women talked about various problems they or their

friends were experiencing, and it was clear that many of the risk factors associated with vulnerability to sexual exploitation were present amongst the participants.

There is recognition that young people who have experienced marginalization are targets for entering into street-based sex work:

Entry into marginalised lifestyles such as street-based sex work is influenced by many factors common to other forms of marginalisation including homelessness, violence, unemployment, familial abuse and breakdown, childhood abuse, care system, debt, low levels of academic qualification, mental and physical health issues, substance misuse and poor social networks (UKNSWP, 2008a).

Working with young people who have experienced many of these issues (and often multiple issues at once) helps reduce the chances of young women being sexually exploited, and further, from entering into street-based sex work.

The DCFS suggest that voluntary agencies are able to draw on a range of different strengths that help to engage young people. Other recent research highlights changing and emerging forms of sexual exploitation involving young people, noting that interventions need to be adaptable and able to maintain a multi-agency approach (Pearce, 2006; Firmin, 2011). NHYC are able to offer a flexible approach to working with young people, offer a physical space that appeals to them, have the time and resources to work with vulnerable young people, and importantly have the expertise to address the complex needs of young people who face sexual exploitation. Critically, young women see NHYC staff as trustworthy and responsive, which the DCFS notes that this is an advantage when working with young people who may be at risk of sexual exploitation.

As many of the young women who attend New Horizons will fit into risk indicators set out by the DCFS (children/young people who go missing, children/young people who have drug/alcohol problems, children/young people regularly absent from education, children/young people with mental health issues, children/young people with disabilities or special needs, children/young people affected by gang activity, looked after children/young people, as well as homeless young people or those living in unsafe situations) staff are aware that the groups they deal with already fall into these risky categories, and as such identifying young people at risk is made simpler. Establishing trust with



young people is the first important step in ensuring that young people will be open to discussing problems they are experiencing.

## 5.1 Feeling safe/getting emotional support

All young women interviewed highlighted the importance of feeling safe, listened to and supported by the New Horizon staff.

*Ellen: They [staff] are friendly, they give you advice and they listen too. That's the main thing, they listen to you. You can share with them private things and...everything is confidential.*

Confidentiality was mentioned by a number of participants, and was highlighted as being very important, particularly when talking about emotional issues or past difficulties.

*Katherine: They've got a nurse here so any problems whatever you've got, you can go there and talk to her and everything is confidential, so. And they've got people you can talk to like... [counsellors]... They come around sometimes and if you feel like you're down and you want to talk to someone they are there to listen to you.*

The young women interviewed spoke of how other youth centres and facilities for young people tended to focus exclusively on practical issues (such as securing housing) or on providing recreational activities (sports, educational classes etc.). NHYC was seen as different because staff developed relationships with young people and encouraged them to explore issues they were struggling with and look at ways of resolving them.

*Ferne: I feel like... [the staff here] are on the same level with helping and talking to us... I had a really bad past [and in other youth centres] they know that but we're not talking about it. Here, they want to talk about it and try to sort things out... And it's not like they judge you because something happened to you or something like that.*

Relatedly, most participants commented on how helpful and supportive staff were, particularly compared to central and local government organisations. This often referred to practical help, but also to the manner with which staff engaged with young people, and dealt with problems holistically.

*Sarah: You are the one to help yourself here [in London], no one else [will help you]... But [at NYHC] they help you with anything.*

The young women interviewed were aware that such an atmosphere of trust and security was important, noting that if people do not feel safe they are unlikely to share difficult issues they are encountering, particularly around issues such as drug use and sexual exploitation, and therefore receive help.

*Theresa: If you make the atmosphere comfortable for the [young people] to get things out then they will talk about it.*

Crucially, the space at New Horizon was seen as somewhere safe, clean and secure; the staff and other young people were seen as providing a 'family' for each other.

*Theresa: It's a really nice environment to be in. I've been looking forward to the Christmas dinner for people who haven't got families and stuff, so it's just amazing; it's like a little family.*

## 5.2 Socializing

A core risk factor for the involvement of young people in sexual exploitation is what has been termed in the literature as 'detachment'. Broadly speaking, this refers to relative or total disengagement from structures of support. Smeaton (2009) defines 'detached' young people as those living outside key societal institutions, such as family, education or other government services. These young people often have no formal sources of support, such as parents, siblings or friendship groups, and are likely to be self-reliant. Detachment from such support networks, which often results in low educational attainment, is cited as a common factor among sexually exploited children (Scott and Skidmore, 2006). The young people interviewed often talked about how their time at NYHC

had helped to end feelings of isolation, loneliness, and friendlessness; how they viewed the people they encountered at the youth sessions as 'family'; and how NHYC had facilitated their return to education or to work. Much like the sex workers interviewed, they were aware that loneliness and isolation were often precursors to risk-taking behaviours.

*Theresa: You spend time with other people. you hang around them, it's, like, a good feeling. Then you go back to your room and you're like: oh my god, I'm by myself. Then you start thinking about a whole lot of other things though. I just... even if you don't really need anything, even if you haven't got anything going on just try to come here [and] socialise.*

Again, much like the sex workers interviewed, the young women valued having a space where they could socialise with others in similar situations to them, free from judgement. They valued the opportunity to form friendship networks with other young women who had encountered difficulties similar to their own.

*Ferne: The best [thing] about coming here is the people. Because they all have the same thing. Either they were homeless or they are homeless. So we're all in the same position and nobody's like... See, at the other youth centre some people are all like: Oh, look at her... she has broken jeans... Or: look at her face, she can't put her makeup on properly. Here nobody says anything because they don't care about stuff like that.*

NHYC helps with feelings of isolation and works with young people to build up confidence and present them with opportunities. Young people come to NHYC and engage in services, working with staff on a variety of different levels – sometimes this is simply about securing housing or getting help with welfare provision, while other clients have taken up volunteer opportunities and gone on to university. Pearce *et al.* (2002) note that isolation from support services is a key element of the experiences of young women with drug/alcohol problems, or who have formed abusive relationships with adults. NHYC's approach to engaging young people suggests that this holistic approach is more likely to effectively address routes into prostitution, than more targeted sex-work specific interventions might.

However, there was an acknowledgment among some participants of the need to be careful when forming close friendships with other people at the centre, as some clients were seen as being problematic, and taking part in risky activities such as drinking and drug use.

### 5.3 Practical help

Homelessness and lack of stable housing was a problem for all of the 11 young women we spoke with. All of them had initially contacted NHYC for help attaining housing, although many of them continued to access services after being placed in accommodation. Housing is a critical issue for vulnerable young people, and Lee and O'Brien (1995) suggest that young people often turn to sex work due to their unstable housing situation. Selling sex becomes a survival strategy, particularly for those who have run away from home or become missing from care (Melrose *et al.*, 1999; Pearce *et al.* 2002). Offering housing advice and helping young people gain access to stable and safe accommodation is a critical way of helping them avoid sexually exploitative situations.

*Keeva: I literally knew a girl that came here with the similar stuff [was engaged in sex work], and like she's got her hostel today and she's like she doesn't want to go back, she's happy now and she doesn't want to go back. And staff here have been really, really helpful to her.*

Providing practical help with housing, education, and welfare issues is a key way of helping young people at risk of sexual exploitation. All young women interviewed spoke of the support given by NHYC staff in achieving practical goals, such as housing and education. In addition, they felt the help offered went beyond the practical benefits of finding a place in a hostel or enrolling on a college course, and extended into general improvement of their quality of life.

*Theresa: They give us opportunities... work, life, school, everything... Which is, like, amazing. They try their possible best to help us and give us a better life.*

They valued the specialist knowledge that staff members had in different fields, and the fact that receiving support around practical issues, such as accommodation, education and finances made them feel more optimistic about their futures.

*Nina: You can talk and have advice about everything. Like, if you don't know what you want to do, or you've lost your place, the future, everything, there's always someone in the special field to help you get to where you want to... Anything's possible.*

The fact that many of the young women had developed strong bonds with staff members meant they often felt more inclined to actively participate in a variety of activities provided by New Horizon, increasing their skills and improving their employability.

*Fiona: I don't feel like I **have** to [attend literacy and numeracy classes etc.]... I can just leave it if I want it, but I'm...doing it because they give me something, so I give them something back... It's give and take.*

In addition, some of the young women noted that the very fact that training and classes were available on site was in itself a factor, which mitigated against risky behaviours. They noted that NHYC offers valuable, practical help on issues affecting vulnerable young people and this meant that they were more likely to spend time at the centre more generally, simply "hanging out" and socialising.

*Ellen: Young people need activities to do, if they think someone is going to help them they're more likely to come to that place, like, they're not going to be outside - because that's the things that get them in trouble. Because when you've got a hub, you're not going to be outside.*

## 5.4 Sexual exploitation

In order to ascertain how young women felt about NHYC's approach towards sex work and sexual exploitation more general, they were given vignettes (see Barter and Reynold 1999 for more on the use of vignettes in qualitative research). Two scenarios were described to them (see Appendix II), where someone they knew from NHYC had become involved in street-based sex work, and/or drug use (see ethics page 19). The young women were asked what they would do in such a situation. Participants offered quite different perspectives on how they felt staff engaged/would engage with these types of vulnerabilities. Several of the young women who had been attending the centre for some time felt that NHYC was in a good position to help offer young women practical support and

advice that would make their involvement in risky behaviours such as selling sex on the streets and drug use less likely. They felt that both the emotional **and** practical support provided by staff members meant that young women who attended the centre were less likely to become and/or stay involved in sex work.

*Nina: First [the staff] would talk to them and listen to what they have to say, and the reason why they are doing that stuff [street-based sex work]. And afterwards give them advice, and some counselling, or, I don't know, even if they need medication, that kind of stuff.*

*Ferne: They would try and get her a house and benefits so she don't need to go and make money like that [sex work]. They would help with [her] CV, trying to get a job. So they would put everything on it to get her out of there.*

Some interviewees noted that the confidential nature of the organization meant that they would feel comfortable talking to staff about friends who might be in difficult situations, and the non-judgemental approach to working with young people helps create a positive atmosphere where clients can talk to staff without fear of reprisal.

*Keeva: Like sometimes you might get people that might immediately judge you but something like that doesn't happen at NH, they never judge you. And everything you say is confidential, like no one will hear about it. So you're like really comfortable in telling them anything*

However, other interviewees felt that, while NHYC would be able to offer support around these issues, staff would not be focussed on encouraging young women to exit sex work *per se*.

*Olivia: They [staff] would probably be concerned, but they'd most probably say that it's none of their business, she's a big girl.*

Instead, they acknowledged that the support given by the centre meant that young people were less likely to become involved in street-based sex work in the first place.

In addition, some interviewees stated that, even though they trusted staff, they would be reluctant to inform them if someone else who frequented NHYC was involved in drug abuse, pointing out that

there was a no drugs on site policy at the centre, and expressing the concern that someone using drugs and participating in street sex work might be banned from the building. In addition, some expressed concern about 'telling' on a friend and displayed some confusion around confidentiality, feeling that it was important to keep each other's 'secrets' in the same way as NHYC kept things told to staff private from other clients.

Some of the interviewees who had been attending the centre for less time seemed unaware of other aspects of NHYC's work, such as outreach work and WOS, and so stated they would not tell staff if they knew someone was involved in sex work as staff would not be able to help.

*Selina: They [New Horizon] don't really work with people on the streets like...[sex workers], so I don't think they'd get much help.*

There is an argument here that young people are not fully aware of the issues surrounding sexual exploitation, and providing more information and advice about what to do if they or a friend encounter a sexually exploitative situation would go a long way to empowering young people to make informed decisions about how they could react to such a situation.

## 5.5 Conclusions

The young people who access the NHYC services range in age from 16-21. Whilst not all of them would count as children under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, many of them are still developing as adults. Indeed it would be naïve to understand categorizations of 'children' and 'adults' as monolithic categories. As O'Connell Davidson (2005) notes, limiting concern around exploitation to children under the age of 18 is short sighted. In the situation of young people accessing NHYC services, it is more useful to focus on how sexual exploitation may be part of a trajectory that may lead to adult sex work. Emphasizing the structural factors that may lead to young people working in the sex industry is an important yet often ignored component in helping young people. NHYC work on the very issues that would place vulnerable young people in these undesirable situations: substance misuse, homelessness, depression, running away from home or care, economic need, family breakdown, and sexual abuse (Sanders *et al.*, 2009); and the positive engagements they foster with young people are key elements in building trusting relationships that facilitate communication.

NHYP effectively engage with vulnerable young people at risk of sexual exploitation, and offer them a safe place where they can talk about a variety of issues that might be of concern. The young people who spoke with us, who were all positive about the services offered and the role that staff played in facilitating positive changes, commended the NHYP model of youth engagement. Other organizations would do well to look to this model when working with young people at risk of sexual exploitation.



## 6.0 Organizational Insights and Service Delivery

There were a number of key organizational insights that came out of the evaluation. These emerged from the interviews we conducted with WOS staff members, as well as interviews with organizations that WOS have regular contact with<sup>4</sup>. The mapping sessions, the participant observation at drop-ins, and the mobile interviews with the outreach team supplemented the interviews, and gave a clearer picture of the effectiveness of service delivery from an organizational perspective.

### 6.1 Partnership Working

Working in partnership with other agencies is important for services that wish to provide holistic responses to the needs to street-based sex workers. Building links with other services is key for awareness-raising (Aris and Pitcher, 2004), as well as intelligence and information gathering (Hester and Westmarland, 2004). Pitcher notes that 'projects are not able to cater for all the necessities and thus are likely to need to refer sex workers on to other agencies for support. Building close links with these organizations and sometimes undertaking an advocacy role, particularly in the initial stages of contact for the individual, are also important components of support' (2006:251). In order to better understand the links that WOS have with other agencies, we conducted a participatory mapping session with four members of the WOS team. The aim of the mapping session was to provide a space for the WOS team to engage with one another and think about the various people and groups that they encounter as they try to help women who are accessing services. The WOS team work closely together; while there were organizations that were only known to individual team members (from within their particular area of expertise), many of their networks overlapped. We wanted to identify key organizations that WOS work with both as a team and as individuals, and examine the structure of these interactions. We were aware that WOS engage with a wide range of public and third sector organizations, and we thus identified key agencies to interview for the evaluation from information gathered during this mapping session.

We conducted the first mapping session in June 2011. During this session we were able to identify 49 organizations that New Horizons work with on a regular and ad hoc basis. During the second session in July 2011 we were able to clarify the ways in which WOS engaged with various networks, and we asked the team to give us a snapshot of what their engagement with an anonymized

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<sup>4</sup> The names of these organizations have been kept confidential to ensure their anonymity.

individual sex worker might look like over time. This enabled us to understand their interactions with high-needs clients over a period of years, and to see how their work with clients changes as the client's needs shift and change.

The mobile interviews with outreach workers also revealed how the teamwork with other agencies, as much outreach is shared with other third sector organizations, partly funded by the local authority. There was an instance during a mobile interview where a WOS team member faced difficulty in getting a hostel space for a young person who was sleeping rough on the street. The hostel in question was initially uncooperative, and the WOS member called on another third sector organization to get this problem resolved, suggesting that there are strong links between organizations working with this population. The interviews also revealed evidence of good working relationships across these third sector groups, and mutual support. Rather than being territorial, groups are able to work together effectively, ensuring that a wider range of vulnerable clients can be helped more efficiently. An interview with Organization 1 demonstrates this commitment to partnership working:

*Organization 1: Our project, it is quite informal but it's a little bit different – we have the women's group as well on Fridays, so we try to get some of the women coming here to come to us on a Friday, so it's not like letting New Horizon hold onto their clients, or [other agency] to theirs or we to ours – the more places they go, the better...*

WOS not only do joint outreach with other third sector groups, they also allow certain agencies to come to the drop-in to provide women with multiple services all in one place. This one-stop-shop approach to service provision was popular with women, who felt that WOS effectively advocated on their behalf, and also linked them in with other organizations that would work with them in a non-judgmental way. In this sense, it was important to WOS that other organizations shared their ethos. This was particularly relevant when they were working with women who may have experienced problems with local authorities or police, who had a different agenda for engaging with sex workers

*I: So, it's just that [WOS's] particular ethos allows them to engage with a variety of different people on different levels to effectively protect women?*

*Organization 4: ...for example, say they are working with men, say there's issues around sex working and they're picking up street population work around street drinkers – through that*

*work they may find... issues around sexual exploitation – they found issues around exploitation through doing that work with a cohort of men. So in a way, what we wanted to do was – if there was an issue with an open sex working market, we have we got a team that's generic enough to swap its skills to look underneath other issues to where there possibly might be issues, that would follow safeguarding procedures, you know in terms of feeding appropriate information to the police, but at the same time guaranteeing and reassuring the local street community that they can work with them effectively. So if you think that ultimately our aim of this unit is to reduce ASB – I mean, that is the ultimately aim, is to reduce ASB, so they're effectively being able to deliver that as well as provide effective harm reduction.*

Balancing work with other organizations with different approaches can be difficult, and one organization pointed out that while WOS may speak about a client in conversation, they felt there was reluctance from WOS to formally refer clients into a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). For WOS the safety and security of the women they work with is the main priority, and ensuring that they maintain the trust of the clients they work with is paramount to their continued success. Making decisions about how to proceed when working with other agencies is something WOS do as a team, and the ethos of the organization underpins any decisions they make about how to ensure women's safety and wellbeing is ensured.

The hard work that goes into establishing trusting relationships with women was something that came out of the interviews with the WOS team. One team member described this process to us:

*I: What do you find the most rewarding aspect of working with them?*

*W1: The trust. When the women actually trust you. When they actually disclose something to you – so it might be something very silly as 'I've got huge rent arrears; I'm going to be evicted' as opposed to not even telling you where they are staying, et cetera. Err, yeah, the trust.*

*I: And do you think that after you have been here so long makes those kinds of trusting relationships easier?*

*W1: I think it makes a difference with the long-term women however every time you've got someone new you just start again. I don't think because some who really trust you and tells the new woman 'oh, she has been here forever', that the person is going to trust you. I think you've just got to build it from scratch really.*

*I: How do you work on building trust? Do you have any strategies?*

*W1: No. I talk. You just go; you take an interest in the person's life, if anything arises you offer advice, you offer to accommodate for their needs, etc. and you just build up from there really*

*I: So, it's a gradual process*

*W1: Yes*

The WOS team had, on average, ten years experience working with this group in this part of London. The knowledge they have about both the geographic area, and the street population was extensive. Building trust with vulnerable groups is challenging even for the most experienced of staff, and an awareness of this is one of the reasons that WOS seem to have such a great success in sustaining contact with their clients. The WOS team are aware that working with this client group requires a great deal of patience and determination, but having a good grasp of the realities of working with young people and sex workers means that WOS staff have been able to persevere and engage clients effectively.

*W2: But the problem I had, or the challenges I had, was winning their confidence - winning their trust in the first place. They were a bit cagey even to talk to me and I kind of drew myself an 'I'm here' advert and, kind of, from the advert, I then became friendly with them. It took me nearly a year and six months before they kind of relaxed and be able to say to me "I want to see you privately", which, to me, is a privilege.*

Indeed, the trust that WOS have built up with clients is seen as an example of best-practice within the sector, and often encourages other organisations to work with them.

*Organization 2: So, along the way I've done a little bit of outreach with them [WOS], gone to the prison to see what they do and kind of met – I'll never catch up though, because like two, three years down the line I still don't know half of them – today I've met two or three people I've never met before. It's just like that though, so they're so familiar with people, they might not see them for years and they turn up and it's just like nothing. It's somewhere that you want to be because you know... for some reason the women feel quite safe coming here and there's no those kind of rigid policies and procedures and ways of working which fits when you're trying to engage the kind of people that I want to try to see.*

WOS take a relaxed approach to engaging with their clients, something they (and other organizations they work with) think is particularly effective when working with this group. A WOS worker comments on their ability to be flexible and personal with clients, as opposed to social workers:

*W1: I think you can do so much more in this capacity, as you can do as a social worker. You might have more power because it's statutory as a social worker, however you are so much more flexible in the position we are, as opposed to a social worker.*

The personal approach that WOS take to engaging with clients was something that the women responded well to, and something external organizations could see was effective.

*Organization 1: Having a project like New Horizons... I think, about this project, it's so informal, it's just like they can come in, have food and the girls here, they are really good at starting just talking about, I don't know, the TV show they're watching, food, to go into more all the problems they might have. I think it's good for the women to just come to a project where they can just relax...*

The responsiveness and adaptability of WOS also means that they are seen as 'value for money' by some of the organizations they work with.

*Organization 4: So that's why New Horizons was commissioned initially, to target sex workers but because they had the skills to also deal with drugs, rough sleeping, street drinking, etc...I think New Horizons does offer value for money because they're adaptable; they can cover community meetings and stuff like that. And you can ask them to do a bit of training for a group and they'll do that bit of training. They're just very adaptable; they're a very good organisation to work with.*

Overall, WOS work well with a large number of organizations and work to build effective partnerships that will ultimately benefit the women who access the project. They take a personal approach to engaging sex workers and young women at risk, and they work to maintain their existing organizational ethos and identity, which is critical for ensuring the continued success of the project.

## 6.2 Effective outreach

The role of outreach in effectively engaging sex workers has been highlighted by various academics and sex work organizations (Faugier and Cranfield, 1994; EUROPAP, 1998; UKNSWP, 2008c; Hunter and May, 2004; Hester and Westmarland, 2004; Pitcher, 2006). WOS engage in three different forms of outreach, detached, satellite, and domiciliary. Their model of working reflects many of the key aims set out by the UKNSWP for conducting outreach work with sex workers (c.f. UKNSWP, 2008c).

NHYC have an 'Outreach Work and Policy Guidelines' document that provides joint information for NHYC and WOS outreach teams. There is also some overlap between staff members who work with both young women at risk and sex working women. At times it is unclear how WOS and NHYC fit together, and while there is a good deal of benefit to having these boundaries blurred at times, it can also be problematic if there are different outcomes for client groups. Working with drug-using sex workers can be a long and difficult process, where the positive outcomes for the client are not immediately obvious. In contrast, positive results from working with young people can sometimes be seen more quickly. WOS has a steady group of women who they see on a regular basis, as they need ongoing support, while young people tend to move on more quickly. Ensuring that NHYC staff understand the complexity of working with sex workers may be organizationally beneficial, as both WOS and NHYC staff would have a better understanding of the needs of the WOS client group. Additionally, the outreach policy and guidelines mention a number of documents that are relevant to children and young people, but makes few references to sex working women. While this is unlikely to be a problem at the moment, as WOS workers are very well acquainted with protocols for outreach work with sex working women, it may be useful to consider creating policies as new incidents arise (this is highlighted as best practice by UKNSWP 2008c:27), or when new staff are recruited to WOS who are new to outreach or new to working with street-based sex workers.

Whowell (2010) argues that in order to conduct outreach effectively, outreach workers must have good knowledge of the spaces and places they are conducting outreach in; they must be actively engaged with social networks that are active in those spaces; and they must be able to negotiate dangerous situations that arise on the street and manage these risks: "outreach workers rely on their senses, and their knowledge of the city to provide a service on the beat; knowledge required to operate skilfully" (Whowell, 2010:79). The WOS outreach team had an extensive knowledge of the

areas in which they conduct outreach, and knew many of the places vulnerable clients would sleep rough, sell sex, or buy drugs. Our walks with the team revealed the relatively large areas that staff members are expected to cover – these areas had become increasingly larger as funding was reduced along with the number of staff conducting outreach. Williams *et al.* (1992) argue that gaining access to vulnerable populations, particularly drug-taking populations can be difficult. During the course of conducting interviews with the outreach team we came across women who used drugs and/or sold sex, along with other people who inhabited the streets. It was clear that WOS staff sometimes work with those outside of their direct client group (i.e. women selling sex). Many of the people we came across were not sex workers, but rather those inhabiting street spaces. This was critically important for the team, as there is a great deal of cross over between drugs, alcohol, and sex work. The social networks amongst those living and inhabiting the streets are strong, and it is essential for WOS workers to engage with a wide cross-section of this population – to focus exclusively on sex working women would be counter productive and in fact may be detrimental to the project as those living on the street communicate with one another and any slight or perceived injury to a particular person visited by a WOS team member may have a negative effect on the image of the team across the population, and with sex working women by extension. Working across social networks can be a positive way of building trust with hard-to-reach population and this model of working may be useful for other organizations engaging with similar client groups.

WOS prison outreach was seen as important, as it helped to fill gaps in knowledge for other organizations working with this group. Women might be regularly accessing services, and front-line staff are trying to work with them and get them help. If they go to prison this process breaks down, and staff are often left with no idea about what's happening with these women. WOS are able to fill these knowledge gaps, so that organizations are kept in the loop and as such are better able to help women once they are released and get them back into services as quickly as possible. WOS have a pivotal role here, as they know a great deal about clients, and are able to access them when other services cannot.

*Organization 2: I think this service [WOS] plays quite a big role for me – it's a good resource for lots of reasons because like I could ring them up and say 'do you know such-and-such?' or if someone goes to prison, because they're in the prison they get to see them and everything kind of links up really well.*



All of the organizations that we interviewed were positive about the services offered by WOS, and many felt that the outreach was particularly good, and noted the positive messages that had been reflected back about WOS from clients:

*Organization 3: I think they do a lot of good work with their outreach. I know that the female clients that I've worked with that access NH always speak very highly of the support they get from them, either attending the drop-in or if they, sort of, see them when they're doing the outreach work.*

The fact that WOS have a long-standing relationship with women was seen as a positive by other organizations as well, and this stability contributes to the positive relationships WOS have with sex workers.

*Organization 2: They've built up that trust, haven't they, with women and consistency – because like we've been saying, touching on people, on posts being cut and things changing they're so used to that happening all the time and it does seem that of all the things, this is the one place that has always been there – so, for people that don't have any stability or structure at all it means a lot, doesn't it, when you see the same face that you've seen for the last ten years...twenty years for some people.*

While there are a number of other organizations in the area that offer similar services to women, it was the combination of outreach and drop-in, combined with a relaxed approach to working with women that seemed to set WOS apart from other groups. The multi-agency approach they take to working with women is certainly evidence of best practice in the area.

### **6.3 Effective drop-in**

Pitcher notes that 'Having a safe and supportive space to visit regularly is important to many sex workers' (2006:250). Interviews with women at the drop-in confirm the importance of having a safe space, and the WOS drop-in was highly regarded by other agencies that worked in cooperation with them. Many organizations are of the opinion that WOS workers have a good knowledge of street spaces in the local area and also have good relationships with both sex workers and street people.



Two organizations that mostly work with drug takers use the drop-in services offered by WOS to access clients. There are a lot of cross-referrals between agencies, and recognition that WOS have the capability of working with sex workers as well as engaging with other vulnerable groups when necessary.

There were occasional gaps in knowledge, as some organizations knew a bit of what WOS could offer in terms of service provision and advocacy, but might not know the whole picture. Although this knowledge takes time to build up, it might be useful to have a more concrete knowledge exchange so that other organizations that work with WOS know about all the services available and can pass this knowledge on to their clients if they feel WOS may be able to step in and help. It would also be useful if all organizations that work with either WOS and/or NHYC know about services offered through both WOS and NHYC, to ensure that any potential client that might fit the remit for either service could be appropriately referred.

The clients WOS engage with often have very high-level needs, and require different interventions depending on where they are at, at that moment. The case study exercise revealed that a sex worker may access up to 20 services at any one time, depending on her situation. This means that WOS need to have an extensive knowledge of other local services that the client may need, have these contacts readily available, and know the client well enough to gain her trust to pass on her details. WOS are able to work with clients in a positive way, and this appeals to other organizations, as they know how difficult it can be to get women to engage with service providers. Having a separate identity to statutory and police bodies was also seen as a positive factor.

*Organization 3: The Safer Streets team - and there's other organizations that in theory would be able to reach out to that group - but I don't think they would have the trust and reputation that New Horizon have, because the Safer Streets team also get involved in terms of like doing ASBOs and things like that, whereas New Horizon, like, they're not gonna... They're kind of separate from that really, so I think that would be where there would be a massive gap if they weren't around. I think in terms of the actual project based stuff, like, [an other organization] provide that all, so, but, in terms of the actual outreach I think New Horizon are definitely quite unique.*

WOS offers a flexible way of working that enables staff to engage with clients more effectively, and in fact it allows other organizations to take advantage of the relaxed atmosphere

*Organization 2: It's more of a relaxed space, isn't it, and you're working at the same time. So you're talking to a woman and they're having their dinner, it's that kind of environment, or you can chat to them outside while they're having a fag or something – where as in a service you have that kind of confidential space where you sit down and everything's forms and you do things that way. [Here], I can do things a lot more reflectively – I do have to record things but after a while, you know what you need to record so you don't have to sit down with a paper and pen.*

Again, the flexible and personal approach to working with sex workers was seen as a positive by other organizations, and they felt it made the drop-in particularly effective.

## 6.4 Holistic approaches

The services that WOS provide effectively meet the needs of the women who access the service, and are seen positively by their clients. Other organizations that they interacted with also felt this holistic approach was useful for working with street-based sex workers. There was recognition from one organization that a holistic way of working was about building trust and rapport with clients, and providing a service that specifically meets the needs of women.

*Organization 3: They seem to be quite holistic in the way that they approach work. So they'll try and find different ways to engage with people, which is really good. And they're very good at trying to accompany clients to hospital appointments, and trying to do some of that 'hands on' stuff that sometimes other services just wouldn't be able to do, which I think makes a lot of difference. I think they're very approachable. They're kind of creative with how they work. And they build up a good rapport with clients, clients really trust them, which I think is really good.*

Many organizations focus on exiting women from sex work. This can be a productive strategy for engaging women who are ready and willing to leave the sex industry, and is often more productive when working with women who are based in an indoor market (UKNSWP, 2008b). However, within

feminist analyses of sex work, there is an acknowledgement amongst liberal feminist commentators that focusing exclusively on exiting, or indeed seeing all sex work as violent, limits the ways in which sex-working women can be helped (Sloan and Wahab, 2000; Sanders *et al.*, 2009). WOS offers a holistic service, focused exclusively on women who are street-based sex workers, and operates a harm reduction approach to stabilizing them and encouraging them to engage with services. Their organizational goal is to create positive futures and they aim to enable vulnerable people to achieve independence and make constructive life choices. Rather than focusing on divisive arguments that exist within academia and the third sector about exiting, it might be more useful to try to reconceptualise what exiting is really about. Indeed, in their best practice guidance to working with sex workers, the UK Network of Sex Work Projects suggests that:

The term 'exiting' is often presented as a structured, rigid and coercive approach isolated from harm minimisation services. However, these good practice guidelines redefine it as an option within a range of non-judgemental, holistic, harm reduction services offered to sex workers. Sex workers must first be in touch with flexible, crisis-led, harm reduction services if they are ever to be engaged with a process of more substantial change (UKNSWP, 2008a).

While WOS do not focus exclusively on exiting work as part of their daily practice, there is a recognition that sex work, particularly when combined with other factors (drug taking, drinking, etc.) can be harmful for women. WOS recognize that engaging women in services and trying to employ harm reduction practices is the best way of helping sex working women with high-level support needs. As such, WOS work as much as possible to help stabilize women, using non-judgemental and holistic approaches, and if and when women indicate they are ready to leave the sex industry, the WOS team are able to support them through this process (Pitcher, 2006; Sanders *et al.*, 2009).

Increasingly in the UK and some other countries, provision is lined to 'exiting' as the main focus, with support being directed towards this aim. While some sex workers may wish to change their lifestyle, however, there may also be many who do not want or are not ready to move on, although they may often be in need of other crucial support to address immediate needs. If projects limit their services only to those who wish to leave the sex industry, the social and health needs of those who do not want to move on are neglected (Sanders, *et al.*, 2009: 142).

One organization we spoke with highlighted the tensions that exist in the competing ideologies around engaging with sex workers, and suggested that

*Organization 4: In terms of working with WOS, this has been a really useful aspect for us to have because a lot of these women are long-term street women; they've probably exhausted the route through centre-based services – barred or just bloody exasperated with them or just totally unworkable, and WOS allows that respite, where they can eat something, they can rest, they can do some fun activities where they're not seen as a sex worker, they are just seen as a person so they can do a beauty workshop, they can get a shower, etc, and that helps build up the confidence, self-esteem, which ultimately allows women then to make choices about their lifestyle. So, for example, a far more effective exit strategy isn't to stop a woman from sex working immediately, but therefore to support her to access benefits, support her to access housing, maybe to deal with a complex sexual relationship she's got with a pimp/partner/dealer/etc and all those things ultimately can contribute to a lot more successful exiting.*

Part of the reason WOS are able to successfully engage and sustain contact with a hard-to-reach client group is that their services are user-led. Rather than focusing on exiting as the ultimate aim, they focus on their clients and their clients' needs, and work holistically to address the multiple issues these women deal with on a regular basis. One WOS worker spoke about her approach to engaging clients:

*W1:...I think we are quite realistic. We will work on every single issue, we are putting the client and the woman first, so before anything else, she is a woman; then she's a user, then she's a mother, then she's ... whatever else comes after. We don't focus on exiting at all. We take the women as they are and go with on what they want, with a little push every so often but not with an emphasis on 'you've got to stop'. You know, if they want to talk about drugs, we will talk about drugs; if they've had enough of talking about drugs, that's fine, let's talk about something else.*

This approach appeals to the women who access their services, and clearly resonates with many of the organizations they work with on a regular basis.

## 6.5 Strong team working

The WOS team is comprised of 5 core members who regularly engage with street-based sex workers. All of the WOS members felt that strong relationships within the team were essential for helping clients effectively, and it was clear that WOS had worked together to build links with one another, as well as links with the clients they worked with. During the data collection period, there were a number of emotive issues that surfaced for the team, and in August of 2011 a client they had formally worked with and whom they were still in contact with died from a long-term illness. This was emotionally difficult for the other sex workers who knew this woman, but it was also challenging for the WOS team. The intense work that they do with clients, and the amount of time they spend with women over weeks, months, or years means that there are often personal feelings involved.

The debriefing process was highlighted by the WOS team as a key mechanism for dealing with difficult or emotional situations, and offered a safe space for the team to talk through difficult issues.

*I: So the team is like a support network as well?*

*W2: Yeah, I mean we talk about stuff like, that's why the debriefs are really important for us, because it gets a lot of emotion out.*

The debrief sessions are a regular part of WOS' working practice and helps ensure that the team discuss problems and emotional issues that arise.

It could easily be argued that WOS workers engage in what Hochschild (2003) might call 'emotional labour'. Hochschild talks about 'healthy estrangement', a precaution against burnout for those engaged in emotional labour. Healthy estrangement allows workers to have boundaries around their engagement with clients, and is essential for those who work closely with vulnerable populations. The WOS workers clearly cared about their clients and invested a great deal of time and energy to working with them, but were able to separate themselves from their roles – this is important psychologically and suggests that WOS work within a strong, supportive team that share a common ethos. This approach to client engagement enabled them to continue working with their client group for long periods of time without experiencing burnout.

*I: Do you find it quite emotional, the job that you do?*

*W1: Not any more. I think when anyone works with any vulnerable clients, it's harsh, it's reality full blast in your face in a way, but after x amount of time working you just learn to separate yourself from it*

*I: How did you do that?*

*W1: I guess with time. I think psychologically it just becomes too painful to be carrying that all the time. And don't get me wrong, sometimes I take stuff home and I think, 'oh, I wonder how they're doing', et cetera, but sometimes you just switch off because emotionally I think you can't just carry baggage like that constantly.*

WOS staff were able to manage boundaries effectively while at the same time providing essential care and support for their clients. During the data collection period a number of incidents occurred that caused us to ask WOS staff specifically about counselling services. WOS staff told us that they had been offered formalized counselling services, particularly after times of crisis, but none of them had taken up these offers. They preferred instead to rely on one another, and in particular used the debrief sessions as a way to discuss problems and emotional issues.

*I: How do you manage those emotional boundaries?*

*W3: Practice really - after you've been working for a long time, at first I had dreams about it, you go on training – you have a good manager and a good team, you talk about it; you do debriefing after every drop-in, outreach you don't tend to do briefing, but if something major has happened, we'll definitely sit down and talk about it and see how everyone's feeling – you definitely check how your partner's doing, because it might be late at night and see how the other person's feeling.*

The Organization works to ensure that the WOS team are offered appropriate emotional support, and the strong team unit ensures that difficult issues are discussed and staff members are allowed and encouraged to offload any negative feelings within a safe space.

All of the WOS team had a great deal of expertise working with vulnerable clients, had worked at WOS for at least two years, and worked closely with the other team members. In general they felt they could rely on one another to provide appropriate and measured support, and their close relationships had a positive impact on their work with clients and with other organizations.

## 6.6 Conclusions

From interviews with staff, other agencies and clients, as well as the mapping exercise, it is clear that the position that both WOS and NHYC occupy as long-established and well-known organisations places them in a strong position to help difficult-to-reach clients with multiple and complex needs. The networks that the team(s) have built up with other third sector and government organisations are valued by service-users, staff and other agencies alike; and the holistic nature of the service they provide is seen as a valuable asset and an example of best-practice within the field. However, while the use of a combination of both outreach and drop-in facilities was seen as incredibly useful, it should be noted that there was a certain disconnect between aspects of work carried out by WOS as opposed to NHYC more generally - something which was mirrored in the interviews with vulnerable young women, some of whom were unaware that the organisation as a whole was involved in outreach, or worked with sex workers and drug users. Ensuring that NHYC staff understand the complexity of working with sex workers may be organizationally beneficial, as both WOS and NHYC staff would have a better understanding of the needs of the WOS client group. Similarly, the creation of clear policies to be shared between all staff may facilitate shared understanding. This could help both teams to capitalise on their similar strengths: trust from within their client group(s), flexibility, consistent message, and strong staff retention leading to highly valued institutional knowledge.

## 7.0 Recommendations

Overall the evaluation has revealed elements of best practice within the organization. WOS and NHYC offer holistic services and well-placed interventions to their client group, work well to engage those who are most vulnerable and at risk, and work in partnership with other organizations to deliver services that offer tangible support as well as value for money. We will now outline a number of recommendations, based on the findings of the evaluation.

- Offering both outreach and drop-in services was the best way of engaging sex workers, and the services would be far less effective without this coordinated approach. Outreach is an important way of meeting sex working women. Sex workers reported that they felt safer when the outreach team was around, in stark contrast to the police who they felt made their lives more difficult and made sex working more dangerous. Outreach was also important as it meant sex workers were clued up about the services that were offered at the drop-in, and if they decided to engage with services, the WOS drop-in was often the first place women turned to for help and support in making life changes. It is important to continue to provide outreach and drop-in services for sex working women, and it may be useful to extend these services if funding allows.
- A few sex workers suggested that they were changing the ways they were working, moving from street-based sex work to more telephone-oriented client engagement. It might be worthwhile extending services beyond street-based sex workers, and looking at women working in flats, brothels, and saunas. This would require a new methodology for delivering outreach, but with the extensive knowledge the WOS team have of the area, they are well placed to engage sex workers beyond the street. However, it is important to keep in mind that drug-using sex workers have particular problems and continuing to deliver a specialist service for this client group is critical for their sustained well being.
- WOS outreach was highlighted as a particular strength by the women that we spoke to and by the other organizations that came into contact with WOS. The outreach they conduct in prisons was particularly effective, and reflects innovation and best practice in this area. This model could be usefully expanded, and WOS may want to consider publishing best practice guidance in this area.



- WOS use both male and female support workers during outreach and drop-in sessions. This seemed to have a positive impact on women, who were generally positive about having men present during drop-in sessions or on outreach. Many services tend to provide women-only spaces, assuming this creates a safe space for sex working women. We would argue that providing male role models in this setting has positive benefits for clients, and other organizations may want to consider exploring this when working with female sex workers.
- Measuring outcomes for a chaotic client group can be difficult, and particularly so for WOS as women often access services either at times of intense vulnerability, or times of extraordinary stability. The current Users' Questionnaire is designed primarily for young people accessing NHYC services. Designing a tailored questionnaire for WOS users would give better insights into client satisfaction, and may help improve services. Using a framework that would incorporate elements that measure well-being and chart clients' engagements with relevant services would give a better indication of how clients are being helped, and would give WOS the ability to measure outcomes more effectively.
- Working with drug-using sex workers is substantively different to working with vulnerable young people. WOS staff make important steps to working with sex workers, but stabilizing their often chaotic lives is not simple or straightforward. Gains that are made are often lost, and helping these women involves years of engagement, often with small (but positive) steps forward. It might be useful for NHYC staff to have a better understanding of the difficulties of working with this group in comparison to working with young people, and to increase communication between WOS staff and NHYC staff to facilitate a more cohesive working practice.
- WOS already provide some training to prison staff around sex working. This training could usefully be extended to other organizations and other settings, particularly as WOS have specialist knowledge of the particular issues that street-based sex workers in this area face. Not only would this help women who attend WOS in getting better help from other statutory and third sector organizations, but it is also help develop best practice across the sector.

- This report focused mainly on the WOS project and their engagement with sex workers. Some of the research we did with young people revealed interesting opinions about concerns related to sexual exploitation. Further research in this area and an evaluation of NHYC services for young people (men and women) who may be at risk of sexual exploitation would be useful.
- While NHYC staff are very good at communicating with young people and build trusting relationships, more could be done to ensure that young people are aware of sexual exploitation and what they can do if they or someone they know is experiencing a sexually exploitative relationship. Delivering training on this area to young people may be conducive to ensuring that young people are aware of these issues, and know what do in a situation where sexual exploitation is pertinent. However, this needs to be embedded in practices of engagement with young people in order to have a long-term impact. WOS staff clearly had knowledge of sexual exploitation, but more focused training on how to work with young people around sexual exploitation, and how to incorporate these principles in working practice may be worth considering.
- While both WOS and NH are well established within their respective fields of expertise, it is not always obvious how their work fits together - what is similar, and what is distinct. Whilst this blurring of boundaries can be beneficial at times, it can also be problematic if there are different outcomes for client groups. Ensuring that NHYC staff understand the complexity of working with sex workers may be organizationally beneficial, as both WOS and NHYC staff would have a better understanding of the needs of their respective client groups.

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## **Appendix I Interview Guide for Sex Workers**

1. How did you first become involved with the WOS project?
2. What other groups/programmes do you visit? How do these compare to the WOS?
3. In what ways has the WOS project helped you?
4. What do you think about WOS outreach?
5. What are the best aspects of attending the WOS drop-in sessions?
6. What are the worst aspects of attending the WOS drop-in sessions?
7. What services offered by the WOS project do you think are the most important?
8. Have any of the workshop sessions been helpful for you?
9. What do you think the aim of the WOS project is?
10. Would you tell friends or people you know to come to WOS?



## **Appendix II Interview Guide for Young Women at Risk**

### Part 1: General Questions about Services

1. How did you first become involved with NHYC?
2. What other groups/programmes do you visit? How do these compare to the services offered by NHYC?
3. In what ways has NHYC helped you?
4. What are the best and worst aspects of going to NHYC?
5. What services offered by NHYC do you think are the most important?
6. Would you tell friends or other young people to come to NHYC?

### Part 2: Hypothetical Scenarios

1. You see a young woman who has just started coming to NHYC with an older man on the street near Kings Cross. You think he may be asking her to work on the streets. What do you think about this? Would you tell staff at New Horizons? What do you think they would do about this situation?
2. A good friend of yours has started working on the streets as she has a problem with drugs. How would you feel about this? What would you say to her? Do you think staff at New Horizons could help her?