A study of the support needs of sex workers across Norfolk, UK

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Disclaimer

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and context for the study
The aim of the study was to provide a picture of sex work across Norfolk, including sex workers’ expressed needs for services and the services currently on offer. The literature suggests that there is increasing diversity both in the types of sex work undertaken and the environments where the work takes place. Street work, although a visible aspect of sex work, constitutes a small proportion of the number of people engaged in sex work with the majority of individuals being more hidden and harder to access. This has implications for support service providers as needs and access are likely to differ between the groups of sex workers.

The study took place over six months between June and December 2014. A brief literature review was undertaken to establish the wider context and patterns of sex work and key issues. The findings reported are based on:

- Interviews with 14 sex workers (on-street workers and escorts)
- Questionnaires for professionals and agencies across Norfolk
- Four interviews with representatives from police, sex workers support projects and a sexual assault referral centre
- A focus group with professionals from agencies who sometimes come into contact with sex workers
- A detailed search of the website AdultWork to provide a snapshot of the numbers of escorts advertising their services across Norfolk
- The research was posted on an online forum for escorts and comments and suggestions for service needs posted by escorts were used as data

Which services are currently available for escorts in Norfolk?
There are two agencies in Norwich which specifically serve the needs of sex workers. However, they have limited involvement with sex workers who are outside of the city or sex workers who are not working on the streets. There is a strong focus on supporting female sex workers.

Other agencies offer support for women more generally, including support with drug and alcohol problems and violence. Some agencies offer their services in outlying towns and are therefore able to reach a larger population. The more inclusive ethos of some services allow sex workers to remain anonymous rather than labelled as sex workers.
There is much evidence of interagency working both within projects and agencies and between them. A good example is the joint outreach between The Matrix and The Magdalene Group and the collaborative working to avoid duplication of services.

**What were the experiences of women who were sex workers?**
The most common pathway towards sex work for the first time included the desire or need for money. The need for money was sometimes due to the lack of reasonably paid work in other sectors or a need for money to support drug and alcohol habits. Some women had been coerced into sex work or had been sexually exploited.

Street workers told multiple stories about violence, abuse, and rape while working. The escorts interviewed had rarely experienced any violence or threats because of their work although there were accounts of stalking and intimidation.

Experiences with the police ranged from no police involvement at all, to multiple experiences with the police as victims and as offenders, including serving time in prison. Most sex workers felt the local police generally treated them well during their interactions. The participants especially felt that policing towards sex workers had changed in recent years from punitive approaches towards more general understanding of their circumstances and respect for them as people.

**What were the support needs expressed by the sex workers?**

**Housing:** Most of the street workers had experienced homelessness (and some of the escorts) and housing continued to be a major issue for them. Living in hostels brought its own problems, especially for women who were trying to reduce or stop their drug use as they were constantly interacting with peers who were involved with drugs.

**Befriending:** Loneliness was a problem for sex workers who had tried to exit as they had withdrawn from their usual circle of sex worker friends but were often unable to instigate new friendships. Escorts also felt lonely as they were worried about others finding out about their work and therefore had limited social interactions.

**Health:** Health issues were common among this group of sex workers and included physical, mental and sexual health problems. Many problems were due to their lifestyle, drug and alcohol use and unsuitable accommodation. Childhood experiences of abuse and neglect added to their mental health problems.
What were the sex workers’ views of services?
On-street sex workers expressed satisfaction with the support services as they used to be but were less happy with the changes that had occurred recently, particularly at The Matrix. Escorts were of the view that specialist services were aimed at street workers and they found support in universal services and on-line.

All sex workers valued outreach work as long as it was discreet and did not attract attention to them as they worked. The street workers preferred the larger van to the car currently used as they could enter the van and be out of view.

Accessibility of services was important and participants overwhelmingly valued the opportunity to pop into services whenever they felt the need although some were happy to telephone and talk to a support worker. As well as extended opening times, location was important as travel could be costly.

It was clear that there was uncertainty about both services; The Matrix because of the recent changes and The Magdalene Group because the sex workers were unsure of their remit.

What are the views of professionals and agencies who support sex workers?
Despite the changes in the practice of sex work, the small number of on-street workers still need long term, relationship-based support. The changing needs of sex workers was acknowledged by many Norwich agencies and they tried to accommodate sex workers in a more inclusive way without labelling and stigma.

Open services were also seen as more likely to be able to deal with interconnecting issues that most sex workers had (especially the on-street workers) and they would be able to provide ongoing support as some problems came to light and others perhaps were resolved.

The police felt that their approach had changed in that they were offering more support and recognising the vulnerabilities of the women, mainly in Norwich. They said that they had been actively engaging women working on the street in conversations in order to offer support.

Conclusions
There was ample evidence to suggest that it is no longer enough to only support the visible population of street workers and there is a need to re-think services so that they more effectively
support all sex workers who seek support. This may mean more integrated services which are more discreet, whilst still offering relationship based support for as long as needed.

New ways of accessing and engaging sex workers who work alone and secretly will be required and are likely to include more virtual relationships between services and those they seek to support. Likewise, harder to reach male and transgender sex workers need to feel included in service provision and efforts have to be made to engage this group with appropriate services for their needs.

**Recommendations for change:**

1. With the changing landscape of sex work, it is not possible to use a ‘one size fits all’ approach. The local population that a service wishes to support needs to be considered when attempting to meet the needs of vulnerable men and women in a particular area.

2. Services need to provide crisis support for workers on the street but also maintain the provision of long term relationship based support for street and in-door workers to increase a sense of self-worth and reduce the risks of loneliness and isolation.

3. Both the literature and our research indicate the need for provision of emergency accommodation and possibly a transfer scheme for long term housing with continuing support in order that sex workers, particularly those who wish to exit, can move away from potentially risky contacts but not be left lonely and isolated.

4. Although there are specialist police officers who engage with sex workers on a regular basis it is clear, both from the literature and our research, that the complexity of the law often causes a lack of clarity. As sex work becomes more hidden, the safety of workers will become harder to monitor and to police. It is important therefore that all police officers have a working knowledge of the legality of various types of sex work.

5. The sex workers interviewed for this study had mostly positive experiences of their involvement with the police. However, there is still reluctance to involve the police, particularly by street workers. Adapting the Merseyside model where all crimes against sex workers are viewed as hate crimes may encourage sex workers to report violence and abuse against them but also, as suggested in the literature, increase rates of prosecution of those who attack sex workers. The availability of a sexual assault referral centre in Norwich (The Harbour Centre) and increased confidence in reporting would put Norfolk
in a strong position to increase convictions and protect sex workers from abuse and violence.

6. Services must link with those provided for children and young people at risk of or involved in child sexual exploitation in terms of information sharing in order that the wider picture is known and early intervention is made possible.

7. The findings of this study indicate that rather than reducing support services for sex workers it appears to be necessary to expand these services to include different kinds of sex work and sex workers and the increasing numbers of people who engage in sex work.
Because everyone that works out there, yeah you know, ninety five percent of the people don’t want to work out there (On-street sex worker)

CHAPTER 1: AN OVERVIEW

This report provides an overview of the needs of sex workers in Norfolk. It adds to previous research which established a need for countywide services to be available (Gummerson, 2012) and extends our knowledge by including the views of sex workers as well as professionals who support sex workers. The aims of the research were to explore, as far as is possible with such a hidden population, the extent of sex working across Norfolk in order to identify where services should be focused. Additionally to examine, with sex workers, their experiences and their perspectives on the support they have received and the support they would like to receive in order to determine what support services need to be provided across the county.

Although prevalence in the UK is unclear, sex work and sexual exploitation exists in most towns and cities (Home Office, 2004). Historically society’s view that ‘they’ are ‘unlike us’ has determined how sexually exploited children and young people and adult sex workers have been perceived, treated and perceived themselves.

Involvement in sex work is a pathway mainly negotiated through physical and emotional risks and the risk of the stigma of public condemnation. Due to its hidden nature, the numbers of people involved in selling sex in the UK can only be estimated (Home Office, 2006). What is clear is that those involved are a largely ‘stigmatised marginalised and criminalised group’ (Shaw & Butler, 1998, p.190). Legal and moral responses are often based on contradictory perspectives of those involved as ‘sad’ or ‘bad’, ‘victim’ or ‘criminal’, not on an understanding of the structural disadvantages affecting many who become involved in selling sex, nor on childhood experiences of adversity and maltreatment which impact on identity and choice (Dodsworth, 2012; Sanders, 2005).

Sex workers’ narratives indicate a complex picture, in which there is a differing balance of agency and victimhood throughout their life pathways, from the impact of childhood experiences to the experiences, relationships and wider structural factors impacting on them as adults. Taking too polarised a position by, for example, only seeing those involved as victims, risks denying the possibility of self-determination to such a degree that women’s voices are ignored or silenced in the debate about effective ways forward.
However, the issues are complex, some women entering sex work as adults have experienced such unresolved trauma in childhood that, in terms of emotional development, they may remain unable to make informed decisions. Other women develop more effective coping strategies, have a stronger sense of self and feel that their involvement in sex work is a choice for them to make. Different coping strategies are relevant in terms of building resilience (Rutter, 1985). Greater understanding of these factors may lead to interventions which move away from perceptions of those involved as victims or criminals and towards services which promote resilience and more effectively and holistically address their needs (Dodsworth, 2012).

Sex work has become increasingly diverse. The more traditional street work is the most visible aspect of sex work. However, larger numbers of escorts and other off-street activities represent a more hidden world of commercial sex. More hidden still, is indirect sex work which includes services such as lap dancing, stripping and virtual sex services over the telephone or the internet. Services that aim to support sex workers still tend to focus on street sex work due to the visibility of their work and the impact on local communities and reaching off-street sex workers remains difficult despite their larger numbers. Likewise, policy debates also tend to focus on street workers due to the more direct impact on local residential areas and communities. The legality of sex work influences the attention paid to the different groups of sex workers as the police continue to use legislation such as anti-social behaviours orders to address street work but escorts working alone in houses or flats are largely ignored as they are not breaking any laws.

There is a new focus on migrant sex workers, particularly trafficked individuals who are forced to work in the UK sex industry. There is, however, recognition that some migrant sex workers travel to work in the UK voluntarily but often they do not seek services and support due to their nationality status.

The landscape of sex work has thus changed and research has demonstrated the diversity of the types of sex work provided and consumed but also the places where such work takes place (Campbell & O’Neill, 2006). Sex is now sold in many off-street commercial spaces as well as through the use of technology and includes related activities such as lap dancing, telephone and internet sex. Despite this diversity in places and activities which reduces the visible presence of sex work, stigma and prejudice remains. Violence against sex workers remains high and the criminal justice system continues to fail this group of people in many cases. Lone indoor workers are unlikely to contravene prostitution laws but are still vulnerable to attack and violence. Working in groups can reduce the risk of assault and violence but is criminalised and therefore even unrelated crime against such groups, for example a burglary, often goes unreported (Kinnell, 2006b).
1.1: DEFINITIONS AND TRENDS
Throughout this report the term ‘sex work’ will be used to refer to prostitution and the term ‘sex worker’ to refer to those engaging in sexual relations in exchange for payment or some other benefit (May, Haracopos, & Hough, 2000). Although there are many activities described by the term sex work, this report will mainly focus on direct sex work such as indoor and outdoor sex work and escort services.

The number of sex workers in the UK is largely unknown and most literature cite the often contested figure of 80,000 from 1998 (Kinnell, 1999). The difficulties in estimating the number of commercial sex workers relates to the hidden nature of the work and the transient population as sex workers often move in and out of sex work.

A more recent consensus based on UK Network of Sex Work Projects¹ members’ report suggests that the population is between 50,000 and 80,000 female sex workers of whom around 28% (14,000 to 22,400) work on-street while the remaining 72% (36,000 to 57,600) work in indoor establishments and as escorts (UKNSWP, 2008, p.5). A similar figure used by ONS, 60,879, has come from an extrapolation of a mapping of the numbers of female sex workers in London (Dickson, 2004). However both numbers include female sex workers only.

More recently, new numbers have come to light through data mining and extraction from the web where most escorts advertise. Import.io² built an extractor to the website AdultWork³ and found that 42% of the providers advertising on AdultWork were male⁴ and the total number of escorts was over 100,000 when males were included. This number obviously excludes street workers but suggests that the total number of sex workers is much larger than previous figures indicate.

1.2: SEX WORK AND THE LAW
The literature suggests that there is confusion about the laws relating to sex work amongst sex workers themselves, their clients, the police and the wider population (Pitcher & Wijers, 2014). The uncertainty about legality may lead sex workers to feel less confident about being protected by local police officers if they encounter violence and crime against them. The All-Party

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¹ The UK Network of Sex Work Projects (UKNSWP) is a voluntary sector umbrella group for organisations working in the field. Members include groups led by sex workers themselves, children’s charities, organisations managed by health authorities, HIV and sexual health-services, and agencies with a religious ethos.
³ This is the website used by Norfolk Police and many researchers to estimate the numbers working in particular areas of the country www.adultwork.com
⁴ The search was limited to active accounts only
Parliamentary Group on Prostitution and the Global Sex Trade (APPG, 2014) found that the legislation was unclear and that sex work is in itself legal but many associated activities are criminalised. The group recognised that ‘despite significant violence experienced by those who provide sexual services, the fear of prosecution causes reporting rates to remain worryingly low’ (p.6).

The confusion about the law also means that some independent lone workers work in secrecy. The secret nature of their work is further exacerbated by their worry about stigma. Therefore, they rarely acknowledge their working status to others, including officials such as tax offices (Day, 2007). Nonetheless, some independent workers are formally registered as self-employed and pay taxes. However, if the same independent workers worked in a shared house for safety reasons, they would run the risk of being criminalised (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Prostitution and the Global Sex Trade, 2014). A survey on laws and service provision in relation to sex work found that even police officers are sometimes not clear about the law. Understanding that individual indoor sex work is legal may encourage those sex workers to access support and medical services (UKNSWP, 2012).

Once sex workers come into contact with the criminal justice system, punitive measures can serve to further entrench them in sex work. More constructive sentencing such as Rehabilitation orders and Engagement and Support orders have the potential to direct women to services which can support them and, if desired, help them start the process of exiting (Atkins, 2010).

There are differences between the vulnerabilities and experiences of street-based workers and indoor sex workers. It is also important to separate the issues of trafficking from sex work. Drawing on research from the UK and the Netherlands, Pitcher and Wijers (2014, p.5) suggest that decriminalisation is ‘not sufficient to protect sex workers’ interests, nor facilitate more supportive forms of working’. The Netherlands have regulated sex businesses and consensual sex work is decriminalised (except for minors and involuntary sex work) whereas the UK penalises clients of sex workers and women working together, often for safety, in houses. The model of intervention in the UK has been described as ‘enforcement plus support’ by Phoenix (2009, p. 20) with an emphasis on exiting the industry. Despite the differences in legislation in the two countries, both interventions are argued to be designed to manage the inconvenience for the state rather than supporting the needs and rights of the sex workers.

1.3: CHANGES IN SEX WORK - THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY
Online solicitation through advertising and escort websites may have replaced street solicitation to some extent although this appears to be influenced by the age of the sex worker (Cunningham & Kendall, 2011). Sex workers aged 25-40 may have better opportunities for partnering, lower
rates of drug use, fewer psychopathologies and better literacy and technology skills according to research from the US (Cunningham & Kendall, 2011). Younger street workers, who the authors suggest are often runaways and women involved in drugs-for-sex exchanges, as well as older women who may not have the skills for the indoor market, remain on the streets. Both of those groups may be considered particularly vulnerable and in need of on-going support and services.

**The internet-facilitated indoor market**

The internet has made sex work more hidden, lowering the probability of support services engaging face-to-face with workers. The opportunity to advertise sexual services using the internet allows escorts to appeal to certain clients and set out the specific services they offer as well as services which will not be offered. This means that clients are better matched to the escort and also allows for some communication between the sex worker and the client prior to the encounter. Cunningham and Kendall (2001, p.275) suggest that the Internet is useful on three counts:

- Escorts are able to reach large numbers of potential clients
- They can build a reputation for high quality services through client feedback
- They can attempt to screen out undesirable clients

Escorts advertise on established sites or set up their own websites (for example with help from SAAFE5). The cost of setting up a website is minimal compared to the audience reached. Websites allow the opportunity for clients to post reviews and feedback but also to browse and compare characteristics, prices and photographs of sex workers6. For clients, the risk of arrest is reduced as they do not have to kerb crawl to identify sex workers. Escorts are also able to use the internet for screening procedures by entering a client’s name or telephone number into search engines to verify their authenticity.

**1.4: RESPECT RATHER THAN STIGMA AND PREJUDICE**

Sanders and Campbell (2007) have argued that in order to reduce violence against sex workers, attitudes and perceptions of women who sell sex need to change. However, with policies and practice focusing on ‘the problem of sex work’ (Home Office, 2004), public attitudes are unlikely to change. Sanders and Campbell (2007) further contend that there is a difference in the way the media and policies portray in-door and street workers with street workers constructed as ‘desperate, dirty, addictive individuals conforming to the “junkie whore” stereotype’ (p.15). Men who buy sex are also demonised and that is likely to be detrimental to the relationship between

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5 A website and forum with information to help escorts, particularly those new to the industry. Everything is written by sex workers and for sex workers www.saafe.info
6 For example www.adultwork.com and www.punternet.com
sex workers and their clients. Instead it might be better if policies build on existing codes of ethics and etiquette which are apparent on some message boards organised by men who buy sex (Soothill & Sanders, 2005).

Violence from clients is not an unusual experience for sex workers. This is particularly so for street workers who experience various forms of abuse including verbal, sexual and physical abuse (Phoenix, 2000). Church, Henderson, Barnard, and Hart (2001) found, from a questionnaire survey across three UK cities, that 81% (93) of street workers had experienced violence from male clients compared to 48% (60) of sex workers who worked in saunas and flats. Male sex workers, although less likely to experience violence, can sometimes be victims of homophobic violence (MacPhail, Scott, & Minichiello, 2014).

Soothill and Sanders (2005) observed, in their analysis of an online forum, that discourses of work and choice rather than disposability were conducive to respect and potentially acted as a preventative factor against violence (para 3.3). Client behaviour may also be influenced by social attitudes that suggest that women who sell sex are degraded women, not deserving of respect and that men who buy sex should feel shame and self-disgust at their behaviour. Kinnell (2006a) suggests, from an analysis of surveys of male clients of sex workers in Birmingham in the late 80s, that demonising clients could result in feelings of self-disgust and shame being expressed as anger towards the sex worker who has allowed him to give in to his urges. Male escorts have also reported that their clients are sometimes reluctant to accept what they are doing and clients often say that they just want a massage as Dave, cited in Wilcox and Christmann (2006, p.18), expressed: ‘I think in a way they say that because it helps their head, because they’re not going to pay for sex, because it is probably an ego blow for them...’

1.5: DIVERSITY IN SEX WORK AND SEX WORKERS

Escorts

Working alone as an escort can be isolating and stressful (Sanders, 2005). A US study involving 30 semi-structured interviews with escorts found that their narratives ranged from stories of living in isolation from fear of being found out, to coming out and gaining acceptance. Some also talked of being trapped in sex work through their dependency on money for luxury goods or even just to earn a good salary compared to other jobs available to them (Koken, 2012). The job was isolating and they were generally fearful of coming out as the cost was felt to be too high. Advertising on the internet was an added worry and many would blur their faces in photos. Only a very small minority of the sample had come out and told friends and family about their work, others had tried but returned to the closet for fear of judgement. The experience of being an escort was therefore often a lonely one.
Sanders (2005) has provided a detailed account of the off-street sex industry in Britain and also found that the fear of being recognised often led to the existence of a double life. The thought of meeting work associates outside work was potentially problematic and uncomfortable. The risk of being ‘outed’ was for some so great that they would travel many miles to work in a different geographical area to where they lived. Those women, would sometimes stay away for three days a week, say, returning to family life the rest of the week. For some, Sanders (2005) found, the distance between work and home also served as a psychological barrier, separating sex work from home life.

Managing the fear of being found out often led escorts to reduce their social networks. Often they would not be willing to disclose their work and therefore it could be hard to make and maintain friendships (Sanders, 2005). Opportunities to spend time in a confidential environment where disclosure is acceptable and they do not feel judged may therefore be helpful for lone escorts and services may be able to provide not just befriending but peers support for escorts.

**Male sex workers**

Research exploring the experiences of male sex workers is scarce compared to that of female sex workers. Many reports, legal and government publications only mention female sex workers or include male sex workers in the term ‘prostitute’ (Home Office, 2006). As a group less commonly studied, male sex workers remain less visible but this may also be due to their smaller numbers compared to women sex workers and their places of work which tend to be off-street and behind closed doors, for example, in public toilets (Gaffney, 2007; Whowell, 2010). However, it is important to acknowledge that, like their female counterparts, males sell sex for different reasons, at different times in their lives and in various contexts and spaces (Whowell & Gaffney, 2009).

A study by Hudson and Rivers (2002) looked at the needs of seven male sex workers in Bradford. Three were street based and four worked from a house or flat. The men reported similar issues to female sex workers with street workers wanting dedicated support services including outreach, befriending and counselling services. Male escorts, like the female escorts, had greater control and choice over their work practices and were more positive about their experiences of selling sex. Street worker had started selling sex before the age of 18 (as young as 12) and described themselves as working class whereas the escorts had started after the age of 18 and described themselves as middle-class. The authors suggest that resources should be directed to provide services for street workers as the escorts expressed that they did not have any unmet needs or their needs were minimal and more directed towards change in legislation. However, US research on programmes for internet-based male escorts demonstrated a desire for this group of sex workers to have access to support with career enhancement, legal matters, marketing and
financial planning (Grov, Rodríguez-Díaz, Ditmore, Restar, & Parsons, 2014). The authors suggest that such support services extend beyond the usual sexual health or safer sex advice mostly offered to male sex workers.

Male escorts, like female escorts, therefore appear to be more in control of their work practices and less likely to experience violence although their desire for anonymity may also influence the reporting of acts of violence (Wilcox & Christmann, 2006). Wilcox and Christmann (2006) also found that male escorts were unlikely to engage with agencies. There were several reasons for this, first, because they did not feel that they had a need to. Second, because they felt that services were for other types of sex workers such as on-street workers and sex workers with drug and alcohol dependencies or workers who wanted to exit and third, because they were mostly not aware of the existence of support services. The participants in the study therefore suggested that services should be available to support the most vulnerable sex workers and would need to offer counselling, crisis accommodation, condoms and sexual health checks.

**Migrant sex workers**

Increases in the proportion of migrant sex workers have been reported and the UK has the highest diversity of nationalities (56) working in the sex industry. However, the proportion of migrant sex workers, 40%, is relatively small compared to other countries in northern Europe. Most migrant sex workers in the UK are from Russia, Ukraine and Romania although there is also a reported increase in the number of women originating from African countries (TAMPEP, 2007).

Mai (2011) interviewed 100 migrant women, men and transgender people working in all of the main jobs available within the sex industry and from the most relevant areas of origin (e.g. Eastern Europe, EU, South East Asia). He found that although some migrants are subject to coercion and exploitation, the majority are not. For most interviewees, the intention had not been to come to the UK to work in the sex industry but working in the sex industry was a way to avoid unrewarding non-sexual jobs and sometimes exploitative working conditions. The money earned in the sex industry allowed many to obtain dignified living conditions in the UK and enabled them to assist family in their country of origin.

The majority of migrant sex workers work in indoor environments, estimated to be around three quarters of migrant sex workers, and this makes them less visible to services and law enforcement agencies. The work takes place mainly with other sex workers in places like apartments, brothels, bars and clubs and massage parlours and is often organised by third persons (TAMPEP, 2007). Overall, the type and place of work is similar to national sex workers.

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7 TAMPEP (2007) reports the proportion of migrants in Norway (70%), Denmark (50%), Estonia (95%), Finland (60%), and Germany (60%). The proportion in London is much higher than in UK overall at 75%.
A study on the risk of sexually transmitted infection and violence among indoor female sex workers found that migrant sex workers saw more clients than UK-born sex workers, were less likely to use contraceptives and were less likely to be registered with a GP. Some migrant women reported using sexual health services abroad rather than in the UK (Platt, et al., 2011).

Potential barriers to migrant sex workers’ involvement with support services have been identified by sex work projects across Europe and include poor command of the local language and fear of accessing health and social care services due to their immigration status which leaves them vulnerable and often isolated (UKNSWP, 2008). Poor command of English also means that negotiating with clients is sometimes difficult and migrant sex workers expressed that they would like English classes so that they may increase their earnings (X:talk project, 2010). Support services should be mindful of the local migrant population and provide literature and support leaflets in appropriate languages. Offering language classes for migrant sex workers may also be helpful and can potentially lead to better integration and lower levels of exploitation of those workers.

1.6: TYPES OF SEX WORK AND ASSOCIATED SERVICE NEEDS
When writing about in-door sex work in Vancouver, Canada, O’Doherty (2011) proposed that data from research with street workers may not be generalisable across other kinds of sex work such as parlour work or escort work. Similarly, a UK study of in-door and street based workers found differences between the two groups, particularly in terms of violence and drug use with the latter group experiencing the most (Jeal & Salisbury, 2007). Their research, comparing the health needs of the two groups (71 in each group), highlighted considerable differences between the needs and service use of the two groups. Parlour workers generally had more stable lives, entered sex work later, were more educated, less likely to have children (but any children were more likely to be at home with them), less likely to have a drug dependency and more likely to engage in sex work to increase their standard of living.

Their different lives and reasons for sex work translated into very different service needs although there were some commonalities. Both groups would like services near to their place of work, female health professionals, condom provision and counselling. Parlour workers wanted their sexual health services separated from their general health services whereas street workers wanted a service that could address all their needs. Street workers also wanted services to address basic needs such as food and drink, showers, laundry facilities and just someone to have a chat with. Clearly the differences in service use patterns and risk taking suggest that it is not possible to use a ‘one size fits all’ approach when supporting sex workers. The local population

8 An example of a project offering free English classes is the X:talk project in East London
http://www.xtalkproject.net/
that a service wishes to support needs to be considered when attempting to meet the needs of vulnerable women and men.

The key objectives of the Government’s prostitution strategy (Home Office, 2006, p.1) were to:

- challenge the view that street prostitution is inevitable and here to stay
- achieve an overall reduction in street prostitution
- reduce all forms of commercial sexual exploitation
- improve the safety and quality of life of communities affected by prostitution, including those directly involved in street sex markets

In order to improve the safety and quality of life of sex workers, support services need to appropriately address the issues that sex workers face. Pitcher (2006, p.236) drew on a number of research studies to identify issues specific to female sex workers. These included:

- Violence
- Problematic drug and alcohol use
- Homelessness or unstable housing arrangements
- Low self-esteem
- Harassment from police and communities
- Experience of criminal justice system
- Negative experiences of accessing statutory services

The list does not include health issues which was the primary focus for projects in the 1980s, particularly the issue of HIV/AIDS prevention. Later projects shifted their focus to drug and alcohol services and more recently, many projects take a more holistic approach to support sex workers with most of the above issues, either by linking with other agencies or referring to appropriate services. The particular focus of a support project is often reflected in the funding source (Pitcher, 2006). It is also important to stress that all of the above issues should always be considered in the context in which sex work takes place and not all sex workers will experience every issue detailed. Conversely some sex workers may be struggling with all or none of the above issues.

1.7: ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF SEX WORKERS
Drawing on published evaluation reports of support services for sex workers, we will address the various ways that services have sought to support sex workers with some of the issues identified by Pitcher (2006), above, in mind.
Violence and safety issues
As discussed above, reporting of violence is thought to be low amongst sex workers. Sex workers may need support to go through the process of reporting and participating in court proceedings. Home Office (2011, p.5) guidance suggests that

*The police’s responsibility for public protection means that stopping attacks on those involved in prostitution, and catching and convicting those responsible, is a core part of reducing the harm from prostitution*

The guidance further suggest that in order to protect sex workers, police will need to increase the confidence of sex workers to report crime which may involve working closely with sex work support projects. Inter-agency working should therefore be one aspect of supporting sex workers and projects would need to link in with other services and agencies through regular meetings. Such meetings could be case management meetings or updates on service provision and more general issues surrounding the support of sex workers.

A Canadian study outlined some ways in which the harm from violence could be reduced (Rekart, 2005). Suggestions for reducing harm included education, empowerment and integrated care. Outreach programmes were seen as important as were accessible materials about risks of violence. One project in Liverpool, Armistead Street, has been particularly proactive in working with the local police force to encourage reporting and taking crimes against sex workers seriously (Campbell & Stoops, 2010). This has led to a large increase in the number of sex workers reporting crimes and a subsequent increase in the number of convictions. Key to the success has been the practice of treating crimes against sex workers as hate crime.

Recognising that violence against sex workers is shaped by attitudes of prejudice and hostility has led to classifying the violence as hate crime and carries with it an enhanced response as well as increased police resources. In the past, police in Merseyside had ad hoc relationships with agencies and sex workers which made it difficult to maintain contact with vital witnesses. By appointing an independent sexual violence advisor (ISVA) - a trained support worker who provides assistance and advice to victims of sexual violence - within the Armistead Street project, it has been possible to liaise with police, offer training and awareness-raising sessions to other agencies besides supporting sex workers who have been victims of violence.

Support includes advocacy and continued care if cases progress through the criminal justice system. By working closely with the local Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), it has been possible to improve the quality of evidence which in turn is more likely to lead to prosecutions. Since 2006, the start of the new service in Liverpool, and 2011, the conviction rate for crimes
against sex workers was 83% (75% conviction rate in cases involving sexual violence). There was also a 400% increase in the proportion of people reporting crimes willing to give consent to share full details with the police (Stoops & Jones, 2011).

The success of the ‘Liverpool model’ has resulted in other areas employing specialist ISVA services for sex workers, for example, Open Doors in East London (Blair, 2011). It is interesting to note that although the evaluation of Open Doors in East London suggests that the ISVA service is for ‘men and women selling sex’, the report does not include any information about male sex workers or any special considerations which may apply to men selling sex.

The Ugly Mugs scheme
The National Ugly Mugs Scheme started as a pilot scheme in April 2012, funded by the Home Office for one year. The online scheme enables the sharing of details of perpetrators with other sex workers to help improve safety, and details can be passed on to the police if the victim consents. An Ugly Mugs report describes the incident, characteristics of the perpetrator (e.g. hair, clothing, age, and accent), description of the car and the location of the incident. Sex workers and support workers can join the scheme as members, make reports and receive alerts about local incidents. Currently the funding for the scheme comes from voluntary contributions and other sources of funding sought out by UK Network of Sex Work Projects (UKNSWP).

A recent evaluation of the National Ugly Mugs (NUM) scheme found that it had been a success and well-received by sex workers (Laing, Pitcher, & Irving, 2013). The speed and regularity by which alerts were disseminated was particularly valued by sex workers and projects. As of 31st March 2013 there were 937 users of the scheme. Alerts were mostly received by email (71% of individual members) although some members received alerts both by email and text. The largest member group was private/independent workers (60%) and female (78%). Members were based across the UK with the majority in London, the North West and the Midlands. Only 37 members were from East Anglia. Likewise, only a small number of incidents were reported by sex workers in East Anglia (1%).

Problematic drug and alcohol use
There is much literature debating the circularity of drug use and sex work (May, Edmunds, & Hough, 1999; Mosedale, Kouimtsidis, & Reynolds, 2009). Is sex work a way to fund a drug habit or are drugs used to numb the psychological pain of sex work or perhaps both? In May, Edmunds and Hough’s (1999) study they found a complex picture of sex work and drug use in three areas of Greater London. In one area sex workers comprised only a small proportion of drug buyers and only a few sex workers used drugs with their clients. In another area, sex workers constituted a significant majority of drug market customers. They tended to use drugs with clients, to sell
them drugs, or to buy drugs on their behalf. They often accepted drugs as payment for sex. Drugs, therefore, facilitated sex work, and the relative ease with which sex workers raised money meant they were ideal clients for drug markets.

The use of drugs in turn leads to riskier sexual behaviour and leaves the sex worker more vulnerable to violence (Mosedale, et al., 2009). In Mosedale et al’s (2009) study of sex workers in south London, the women talked of the need to take drugs to enable them to work on the streets and cope with the violence, including multiple rapes, they had experienced whilst drunk and on drugs. One woman explained:

There was a lot of violence...when I was sick and needed money for drugs I’d do anything. I’ve been raped 7 times. I got strangled once in a bin shed (Mosedale, et al., 2009, p.359)

Links with drug support services appear to be an essential aspect of providing holistic support services for sex workers. The nature of substance using street workers’ chaotic lifestyles means that services will need to be flexible to increase accessibility, usually providing a drop-in service rather than appointments which are likely to be forgotten, childcare, weekend opening hours, mobile outreach and telephone support. The needs of these women are likely to be complex and entrenched and support will need to be ongoing and extensive (DrugScope, 2013). The range of services available should include needle exchanges, treatment, housing and employment support. Seeking help is often triggered by a crisis event (e.g. rape, assault or overdose) and immediate help should be available. Therefore, quick access to drug treatment is also important so that recovery can start when the individual signals readiness (Hester & Westmarland, 2004).

**Homelessness or unstable housing arrangements**

In considering violence and substance use, it is clear that sex workers often have unstable lives which means that they are not able to maintain a permanent address although there are significant variations, mainly determined by the location of the sex work. Workers who are based in parlours or work independently as escorts are less likely to be exposed to violence or have a drug habit. In turn, they are more likely to maintain an independent home than street workers (Spice, 2007).

Housing has been identified as a particularly important issue for those seeking to stabilise their lives, to exit sex work or to cease drug use (Home Office, 2011). Street workers often have periods of homelessness and some live in squats or drug dens (Spice, 2007). Hostel accommodation dedicated to sex workers and supported housing can be the first step to recovery and more independent living (May & Hunter, 2006). However, if women wish to exit sex work, then such accommodation may not be suitable. They may find that there are too many people they know
who are still working and using drugs and therefore recovery and exit may be too difficult. Such women may want to move to another area but many services are currently only available to residents of a particular area, or those who are able to demonstrate a local connection (Hutchinson, Page, & Sample, 2014).

An example of housing for women exiting sex work is the Chrysalis Project in South London (Easton & Matthews, 2012). According to a recent evaluation, the project offers high quality accommodation and support. Phase One provides initial intensive support with the help of trained psychotherapists. This allows the women to deal with traumatic experiences such as abuse and neglect and having children taken into care. Phase Two is a move towards independence but still supported and linked with local services. There is an emphasis on building social networks in the wider community. Phase Three involves a tenancy but still with support from a floating key worker. The women take on the responsibility of paying rent, getting on with neighbours and looking after a home (Hutchinson, et al., 2014).

The emphasis on building local social support networks is of particular significance for sex workers. Sex workers often have supportive networks with other sex workers, therefore, it can be hard for women who have been involved in a street culture for many years to let go of the routines, relationships and often status that they have within a community of sex workers (McNaughton & Sanders, 2007). Clearly, locating housing away from negative influences is crucial but moving away from familiar networks can also lead to intense isolation and boredom unless substitute networks can be found to avoid the spiral back into chaos and trauma (McNaughton & Sanders, 2007).

Health issues

Mental health

High rates of poor mental health in females sex workers have been reported in a recent Swiss study (Mc Grath-Lone, Marsh, Hughes, & Ward, 2014). There appears to be an association between the working conditions (i.e. the setting) and metal health issues and, not surprisingly, the experience of violence contributes to the decline in mental health of sex workers. Furthermore, a study of 100 inner-city street sex workers (male, female and transgender) in the US found that over 42% of the participants met the established criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of violence and abuse from clients, pimps and partners (Valera, Sawyer, & Schiraldi, 2001). However, McGrath-Lone et al’s (2014) study also found that social support can positively influences the mental health of female sex workers and support projects should perhaps consider ways in which they can encourage social networks to develop.
Sexual health

Sexual health is the most examined aspect of health-related concerns of sex workers and it is often assumed that sex work facilitates the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STI) but research suggests that this is mostly in developing countries and street work (Cameron, 1998; Spice, 2007). The prevalence in STI and HIV is related to the use of condoms (Sanders, O’Neill, & Pitcher, 2009) which adds support to the provision of free condoms for sex workers in places which are easily accessible to them. Of course, drug use, particularly injecting drugs, also carries a risk of blood-borne viruses which requires regular health checks (Sanders, et al., 2009).

Physical health

The use of drugs (injecting and smoking), experiences of beatings and other violence against the body are likely to lead to physical health problems for sex workers. Such problems include weight loss, chest pain and chest infections, unwanted pregnancy and miscarriages, irregular periods and abscesses (May, Haracopos, & Turnbull, 2001). Being homeless or living in poor housing such as squats or drug dens increases the likelihood of contracting respiratory diseases, including tuberculosis (Spice, 2007). These physical ailments need attention by medical professionals and therefore access to health services at times when sex workers are able to attend is of great importance.

1.8: MOVEMENT BETWEEN DIFFERENT TYPES OF SEX WORK AND EXITING

Many women are economically coerced into sex work, that is, their prime reason for starting is economic need. However, there are other reasons such as a rational choice or drifting into the work through being introduced by friends who are already working in the sex industry as well as coercion or grooming by a boyfriend or older man (Sanders, et al., 2009). It has been estimated that 70% of those involved in sex work became involved before they were aged 18 (Home Office, 2004). Connell and Hart (2003) found that the men they interviewed in Scotland were frequently coerced into sex work in their early to mid-teens, by one or more individuals. These were said to be pimps, paedophiles, money lenders, friends, partners, acquaintances and other sex workers.

Some people may have a relatively short career in sex work, for example students who undertake sex work to support their studies (Roberts, Bergström, & La Rooy, 2007), whereas others have limited options of other types of work, perhaps due to lack of education and qualifications, and remain in the profession. For others still, a lack of self-worth or belief in alternatives being possible traps them into continued involvement (Dodsworth, 2012).

Movement between the different types of sex work sometimes occurs but radical upward mobility can be difficult for street workers with problems such as homelessness and drug use although some try if they experience increasing levels of violence on the street (Benson & Matthews, 1995; Sanders, et al., 2009). Male sex workers demonstrate some mobility and will at
times combine on-street work with indoor work which they manage using a mobile phone or the internet (Connell & Hart, 2003). Increase in drug use may also result in escorts or other in-door sex workers moving to on-street work (Sanders, et al., 2009) but moving from in-door work to on-street work may also be a conscious choice for those working in managed establishments. This is because parlours expect women to work long hours, tell them when and how to work and take a significant proportion of the women’s earnings compared to the autonomy of on-street work where they can choose their own hours and keep all of the money, unless they are being pimped (Pitcher, Campbell, Hubbard, O’Neill, & Scoular, 2006).

Exiting
Although not all sex workers wish to find a route out, some would like to leave. An evaluation of 11 multi-agency projects in the UK found that 69% (128 out of 186) of the street workers who used outreach services had tried to exit at least once (Hester & Westmarland, 2004). McNaughton and Sanders (2007) have suggested that UK intervention-based ‘exit’ programmes for street-based sex workers do not always take account of the complexities of the transition. As discussed above, removing women from networks of familiarity can make it hard for them to sustain an exit from sex work and as McNaughton and Sanders (2007, p.896) comment, “precarious ‘new’ lives, that looked ‘ordered’ to welfare officers and agencies involved in regulating behaviour, could easily spiral back into ‘disorder’”. Going forward thus meant leaving everything they were familiar with behind.

The process of change is likely to be lengthy, involving many stages and requiring support throughout and afterwards. Hester and Westmarland (2004) proposed a four stage model of needs and support to aid projects in developing support for exiting. The four stages are: vulnerability, chaos, stabilisation and post-exiting/moving on. In addition, Månsson and Hedin (1999) found that there were four challenges that women who stop sex work face: working through and understanding the experiences of a life involving sex work, dealing with shame, living in a marginal situation and dealing with intimate and close relationships. Thus, exiting occurs in a mix of complex factors including structural, situational, interpersonal and individual and support will be required with all of those factors as well as at every stage.

After the murders of five sex workers in Ipswich, Suffolk, a strategy was implemented which aimed to enable sex workers to move away from sex working and its associated risks (Poland, et al., 2012). This is a distinctive approach compared to many initiatives nationally which emphasise harm reduction while continuing sex working, including projects in Norfolk. The strategy in Suffolk aimed both to reduce demand and supply for sex working through addressing the life factors which make it difficult to stop, rather than seeking a punitive approach. A recent evaluation found that it has had clear and sustained success over five years in terms of eliminating
kerb-crawlers from the streets, removing women who are sex working from the streets and successfully engaging them. The intervention has been extended to off-street sex working and helped women to routes out of sex work through the Make a Change team (Poland, et al., 2012).

**Barriers to exiting**

It is clear that if a sex worker has decided to leave the profession, the transition is likely to be long and complicated and may take several tries. Exiting is unlikely to be one event but rather a series of events which will progressively move the sex worker nearer to exiting (Månsson & Hedin, 1999). The use of drugs can be a significant barrier to finding a route out of sex work but there are many other barriers both on personal and societal levels (Baker, Dalla, & Williamson, 2010). Baker, et al. (2010) found a vast number of barriers including individual factors such as self-destructive behaviours, mental health problems, effects of childhood trauma, low self-esteem, shame and guilt, physical health problems and lack of knowledge of services. Structural factors included limited employment options, poor education, criminal records, discrimination and stigma, poverty and inadequate services. Therefore, successful support for sex workers who wish to exit needs to be holistic and available for a the entire process of exiting, including supporting women who yo-yo in and out of sex work before, perhaps, finally exiting.

Choice in when to exit is also important and sex workers are less likely to exit successfully if the process is compulsory as a result of rehabilitation or criminalisation (Cusick, Brooks-Gordon, Campbell, & Edgar, 2011). Bindel et al (2012, p.14) suggest that ‘exit can only be facilitated, not forced’. Furthermore, there is a right time for individual sex workers to exit, often followed by a crisis, and services need to be available immediately to engage sex workers at that point (Mayhew & Mossman, 2007). This suggests a need for long term support for sex workers as they negotiate the precarious route to exiting as well as a support service for those who feel unable to exit or who actively choose to continue.
CHAPTER 2: THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to provide a picture of sex work across Norfolk, including sex workers’ expressed needs for services and services currently on offer. The research questions focussed on the following:

- What is already known about needs and best practices in delivering services to sex workers?
- What are the needs of different groups of sex workers in various locations across Norfolk?
  - How can those needs best be supported?
- What are the perspectives of specialist and other professionals involved in supporting sex workers about service need and provision?

2.1: METHODOLOGY

The study took place over six months between June and December 2014. A brief literature review was undertaken to establish the wider context and patterns of sex work and key issues. The study methodology included:

**Interviews with sex workers**

Sex workers were accessed through The Matrix project, the police and via an online forum. Initially we tried to access indoor sex workers through escort websites. Twenty-two emails were sent directly to escorts working across Norfolk (Dereham, North Walsham, Cromer, Fakenham, Great Yarmouth, Kings Lynn, Thetford, Downham Market, Wymondham and Watton) and four brothels (Norwich and Great Yarmouth) were contacted, only one replied and unfortunately the respondent was not willing to participate.

Fourteen female sex workers (on and off-street) were interviewed either face to face (four) or via telephone. The face to face interviews took place in a quiet room at The Matrix (one interview took place in the sex worker’s home). Despite efforts to recruit male and transgender sex workers both through The Matrix and an on-line forum, none came forward (see Appendix A for information, consent, interview schedule and debrief).

**Questionnaires for professionals and agencies**

In order to gain a picture of the prevalence of sex work across Norfolk, a short questionnaire based on previous research by Barefoot Research and Evaluation\(^9\) (Hartworth, Hartworth, &

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Convery, 2012) was sent to agencies across Norfolk with a varied response rate (Appendix B). Those agencies included health (GUM clinics and some GP surgeries), drug and alcohol support services, police (beat manager), support services for women, sexual assault referral centre, and voluntary services for vulnerable people.

**Interviews with professionals and agencies**
Interviews were undertaken with representatives from the police, sex worker support projects and a sexual assault referral centre.

**Focus group with professionals**
A focus group was held with professionals from agencies who sometimes come into contact with sex workers (see Appendix C for information, questions, consent and debrief).

**On-line forum**
The research was posted on an online forum for escorts and comments and suggestions for service needs posted by escorts were used as data.

**Detailed search of the website AdultWork**
A search of the online site AdultWork was undertaken to assess numbers of escorts advertising their services across Norfolk and included males and females.

**Data analysis**
All transcribed data from interviews and focus groups were analysed using thematic analysis. This ‘bottom-up’ approach allowed themes to emerge from the data and provided a new and detailed insight into the needs of sex workers as well as agencies who sometime work with sex workers. Analysis was aided by NVivo 10 software.

**Ethical considerations**
The study abided by the guidelines for ethical practice from the British Sociological Association (British Sociological Association, 2002) and ethical approval was obtained from the School of Social Work, University of East Anglia ethics committee. All names of people and places have been changed. Sex workers were offered a £20 store voucher for taking part in the research in recognition of the time required to participate. All research participants were debriefed and appropriate helplines were provided.
Reporting of the findings
Several steps have been taken in order to preserve the anonymity of the participants:

1. Sex workers have been allocated a number randomly (e.g. SX1). Any quotes from the online forum are identified as ‘on-line escort’.
2. Individual professionals have not been identified but the organisation or agency they represent is noted (e.g. police)

The following chapters present the findings of the current study and concludes with our recommendations.
CHAPTER 3: SEX WORKERS, SEX WORK AND SUPPORT SERVICES IN NORFOLK

Norfolk is a largely rural county in the East of England with a population of around 870,000 people. The red light district of Norwich is located around Rosary Road but there are also brothels and independent escorts working across the county of Norfolk. In this chapter, we discuss what is known about sex workers and sex work across Norfolk from our current study as well as previous literature.

3.1: THE SEX WORKERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY
The fourteen women who participated in the study ranged in age from 23 to 48, with an average age of just under 35. Most identified themselves as White British, with one participant identifying herself as mixed race and another as Asian. All but one participant were born in the UK. The women identified themselves mainly as heterosexual but bi-curious or bi-sexual was also a common response. One participant identified as transsexual.

Housing
In terms of housing, the majority of the women were long-term renters, some privately and others through the council. Some women currently lived in hostels or sheltered housing. There were no homeowners in the sample.

Drug and alcohol use
Many of the women had experienced problematic drug or alcohol use at some point in their lives. Identifying as an alcoholic was common, although several of the women mentioned that they were now in recovery or were seeking help for alcohol problems. Drug use was also commonly mentioned by street workers with drug use sometimes being the result of entering street work (through making friends in the scene who used drugs or in order to handle sex work). Others, however, began sex work as a way of earning money quickly in order to support an established drug habit. Out of the women interviewed, only one had an active drug problem, with the rest of the women with problematic drug use on Methadone scripts. Three women, two escorts and one street worker, reported never having had an alcohol or drug problem.

Advertising sex work
Advertising their services as sex workers had been done in a variety of ways during the participants’ years in sex work. Sex workers who had sometimes or exclusively worked as escorts used newspaper advertisements, classifieds, word of mouth, and websites such as AdultWork to advertise their services. They either managed these ads themselves or had an agency manage them for them. Street workers sometimes used no form of advertisement beyond what one woman called, “self-advertising,” but cards and stickers were sometimes also mentioned. A few
of the women who had exclusively engaged in street work were currently contemplating advertising on a website, although a lack of a computer or not wanting to do sex work regularly had prevented them from doing so previously.

3.2: PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON NORWICH SEX WORKERS
Previous research established a profile of sex workers in Norfolk using information from the database of The Matrix Project which provides support services to sex workers in Norwich. The figures relate to 2012, before the changes to the service, including its location (Gummerson, 2012)\textsuperscript{10}, and are based on 550 people who had contact with the service\textsuperscript{11}. The majority of service users were white British women. Although not a homogenous group there were definite trends observed:

- The majority of women were aged 19-35 (75% of the sex workers)
- Half lived in rented accommodation, 25% reported no fixed abode and 14% reported that they were in temporary or hostel accommodation
- A third of those using the service had children under the age of 18
- All of the street workers were reported by The Matrix to be using heroin or crack cocaine
- Just over half of the service users were involved in criminality, mostly theft
- Nearly half of service users reported a history of childhood sexual abuse

3.3: SEX WORK AND SEX WORKERS IN NORFOLK
Current figures from Norwich police suggest that there are around 24 street workers in Norwich red light district which is mainly located around Rosary Road but sex workers also work in Barrack Street, Cavalry Green and Telegraph Lane. The maximum number of women working on the street at any one time is between six and ten. There are many more escorts working across Norfolk both independently and in houses or brothels. Some houses are known to contain foreign nationals.

The majority of escorts advertise their services on-line and estimations can be made using popular adult websites (e.g. AdultWork, PunterNet). Figures supplied by Norwich police, based on escorts advertising on AdultWork, indicated that there are 260 escorts (female) working in Norwich and 25-30 of those are foreign nationals.

\textsuperscript{10} Figures were not available from The Matrix at the time of writing the current report and come from a needs assessment undertaken on behalf of Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Partnership in 2012.
\textsuperscript{11} This figure captured the total number of individuals who had ever made contact with the service and included current sex workers, former sex workers and partners and family of sex workers.
Looking across the whole county and at male and female escorts we found, from searching the website AdultWork\textsuperscript{12}, a total of 231 women advertising their services and 172 men across Norfolk\textsuperscript{13}. This is in line with the proportion of male to female escorts found nationally through the data mining by Import.io of all escorts advertising on AdultWork (see Chapter 1: Definitions and trends). They found that 42% of providers advertising were male, in Norfolk it is around 43%.

It is worth noting that over half of the males had no ratings by clients, perhaps indicating a lack of activity with the highest number of ratings being 92. It is, therefore, necessary to be cautious about the reliability of the number of male escorts actively working rather than hoping to work. Female escorts generally had more ratings (highest number of ratings was 2206) and around two thirds of the females had at least one rating.

There were some escorts who advertised as being based in specific areas of Norfolk, although some indicated that they would work in a wider area. This means that some escorts are counted more than once, however, for the purposes of mapping areas of activity, absolute numbers are less relevant.

**Table 1: Numbers of escorts working across Norfolk – from AdultWork**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertised base</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norfolk</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwich</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings Lynn</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Yarmouth</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thetford</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cromer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dereham</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly, even if viewed with caution, the above figures (Table 1) indicate that there are many more escorts than street workers in Norfolk and that there is some activity across the county, yet services provided for sex workers mostly have a focus on street workers in Norwich.

\textsuperscript{12} AdultWork was chosen as during interviews with escorts it was suggested that 80% of escorts advertise on AdultWork. ‘I would say, you know, of independent Escorts I would say about probably about at a guess 80% use AdultWork’ (SX14).

\textsuperscript{13} The parameters used for the search included all sexual orientations but only individuals who had logged into their account within the last two months. Search took place on 5/12/2014, 10.00 and can only be viewed as a snapshot on that particular day as the numbers varied even at different times on that day.
In order to explore in more depth the countywide picture, we contacted local agencies including police and drug and alcohol services (Norfolk Recovery Partnership (NRP)) which enabled us to paint a partial picture of the activities around the county:

- In Great Yarmouth there was awareness of sex work taking place, in particular the use of sex as a payment for substances. Local police reported that there is no red light district in Great Yarmouth but they were aware of one parlour. There were concerns around an increase in human trafficking as this group was seen as the most likely group to engage in sex work. In Gorleston, the police reported that there were no brothels, parlours or street work that they were aware of.
- The feedback from Thetford and surrounding areas suggested some activity related to drug use. Unfortunately we did not receive any information from the police in Thetford but information from Attleborough indicated no activity at all that the police were aware of.
- There was no information available from the police in West Norfolk including Kings Lynn area. However, information from NRP showed that some women, at least five, were involved in sex work from their own homes. There was also some indication of travel to Kings Lynn for sex work from the London area.
- Information from North Norfolk is extremely limited. There is no information available from the police and NRP were unaware of any sex workers using their service.
- Not surprisingly, the picture in Norwich was very different with all agencies contacted aware of both on and off-street work as well as internet sex work. In addition, there was awareness of male sex work or exchange of sex for prescription medicines within the prison.

There appears to be awareness of the existence of some sex workers across most of the county but the figures outside Norwich are low, probably because sex work is undertaken within the sex workers’ homes rather than on the street.

The agencies we contacted were all concerned about the safety of sex workers and their particular agency’s ability to meet the needs of the sex workers. Those needs were seen as support with drug and alcohol misuse, sexual health issues, including blood-borne virus screening and contraception, safeguarding of children and pregnancy. There was awareness of specialist support services and even outside Norwich, agencies said that they would refer to The Matrix outreach service or the Magdalene Group. The reason for sex work was mostly to fund drug habits although there was some suggestion that sex workers who did not use drugs worked to increase their income. Apart from the information regarding males in Norwich prison, there was no mention of male sex workers in the feedback from agencies.
From the above and the number of escorts advertising on AdultWork it appears that there is some activity outside Norwich, particularly in Kings Lynn and Great Yarmouth areas. However, the information from the agencies contacted suggest, despite anecdotal evidence indicating some activity countywide, that there is little awareness of sex work going on in the outlying areas. This is likely to be due to the hidden nature of indoor sex work and sex workers who live in smaller towns across Norfolk travelling to Norwich to work on the streets.

3.4: SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SEX WORKERS IN NORFOLK
Norwich has two specialist support services for sex workers, The Matrix and The Magdalene Group. Both services clearly advertise their target clientele but at the same time suggest that they offer a ‘discrete’ service. There are other services who often come into contact with sex workers and will support them within a more generic support service.

The Matrix
The Matrix comprises a team of professionals offering a service to male and female sex workers across Norfolk although currently the service is centered primarily on the Norwich population and mainly on street workers. The service is part of City Reach Health Services which provides health services to people who are homeless, gypsies and travellers, asylum seekers, drug and alcohol users and sex workers. The Matrix is housed within the same building as St Martins Housing Trust and a Training and Development Centre.

Services provided by The Matrix include:
- Drop in
- Information and advice
- Emergency Contraception
- Family work
- Free condoms
- Health Assessment
- Liaison with and referral to other services
- Links to specialist mental health services
- Needle exchange
- Personal Alarms
- Sexual health screening,
- Outreach

The outreach work is currently undertaken jointly with The Magdalene Group and only in Norwich.
The Magdalene Group
The Magdalene Group is a service with a Christian ethos which provides support for women only. It offers face-to-face befriending as well as a confidential helpline service so that women can call and speak to trained staff. The helpline is free to call and women are able to remain anonymous. The service is focused on building relationships with the women and supporting them over time. This includes monthly prison visits and support on release from prison, drop-in where women can relax, chat, eat or even sleep as well as outreach with The Matrix. The emphasis is on improving self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. In addition, they are able to advocate, help identify suitable accommodation and support with accessing benefits, training and employment. The Magdalene Group also offers a free, confidential telephone support and live on-line chat (The ROSE Campaign)\textsuperscript{14} and a befriending service for young people at risk of or being sexually exploited. They run educative programmes in schools about the risks of sexual exploitation and work closely with Norfolk Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Other services
There are other services within Norfolk, although mainly in Norwich, which also support sex workers but within a more inclusive environment. The 4women Centre supports all women, including sex workers, recognizing that labelling women may be detrimental to their engagement with services but at the same time providing a female only environment for women who have experienced abuse and violence. By including criminal justice support, counselling services and drug and alcohol support within the Centre, they are able to avoid women being faced with their perpetrators of abuse or, in the case of sex workers, their clients. The inclusive ethos of the service also means that women are able to remain anonymous and are not labelled as sex workers.

There are many other agencies and services which are able to support sex workers and it is not possible to name all here but they include health services, drug and alcohol support services, supported housing and police. The Harbor Centre is a sexual assault referral centre (SARC) which supports all victims of sexual assault, including sex workers. It has a 24-hour helpline and extended opening and will not insist on police involvement. Local genito-urinary medicine (GUM) clinics are also able to support sex workers with their sexual health needs. Community based Trust Alcohol and Drug Service (TADS) operates across Norfolk and provides treatment and support to people with substance misuse problems which at times includes sex workers.

Younger sex workers have additional opportunities for support, for example from Mancroft Advice Project (MAP) which is an information, advice and counselling centre for young people.

\textsuperscript{14} Free phone helpline 0808 800 1037 or live chat at www.rosecampaign.org
3.5: INTERAGENCY WORKING

There is much evidence of interagency working both within projects and agencies and between them. A good example is the joint outreach between The Matrix and The Magdalene Group and the collaborative working to avoid duplication of services. There is also evidence of agencies working alongside each other to support sex workers by signposting to other agencies. For example, the police have regular meetings with The Matrix and courts are able to refer women to the project for support. Housing is an important aspect in supporting women and both services for sex workers and the police collaborate with housing suppliers to support sex workers.

Within services there were also a few examples of agencies working together by organising drop-in sessions for women where professionals from different agencies were available to talk to. This appeared to be valued by participants and is an area which could be expanded upon.
CHAPTER 4: DOING SEX WORK

Sex workers talked to us about their experiences of working on the street and as escorts. This included narratives about their initial involvement in sex work, experiences of violence, police involvement and ways of keeping safe.

4.1: TYPES OF SEX WORK

Although sex workers tended to mostly engage in either escorting or street work, with the escorts interviewed having only ever done escorting (3 women). The interviews with street workers revealed that several had engaged in both types at some point in their careers (4 women both escorting and street work, 1 woman street work and videos, 1 woman street working with plans to become an escort soon, 5 women street working only).

Some of the street workers interviewed had made their start in escorting and then engaged in street work. One woman’s story included a beginning with modelling and table top dancing before moving to escorting and parlour work, with the occasional foray into street work for additional income. The participant explained that she did not exclusively move into street work until she developed a drug problem, saying:

Street work is only when you sort of hit rock bottom sort of thing you know so it was when I got really, really bad on drugs, I couldn’t work in a massage parlour because I was so on drugs at the time, I was just a bit of a mess so that was just like the last resort (SX2)

While another participant also mentioned that street work was something she turned to when she felt unable to get parlour work because of a deterioration in her physical appearance, not every sex worker interviewed saw street work as the ‘last resort.’ One participant, for example, regularly engaged in both street work and adult videos with a financial preference for video work, while another participant suggested that although working in a house felt safer, especially when the work involved a manager who remained nearby or another sex worker, street work usually meant more money at the end of the day:

So £25 for half an hour’s work and it is quite hard you have to massage oil and sex is included and the guy expects his half an hour and so you are definitely working for your money even though you try and talk away a lot of it you know. You could say on the streets I am going to get in a car, okay drive around for ten or fifteen minutes trying to find somewhere to park that is you know safe but really you are so wary that the police are going to be there and you want them to hurry up that you are probably with them you know five or ten minutes and you have earned, well £30, so you know it’s the same equivalent less time you know (SX1)

Turning to street work for the money, despite security risks was a common story, regardless of whether the participants had a drug problem. Street work was, therefore, sometimes framed as
a conscious choice even when working another, more traditional job was an option. As one participant said:

I was better off than when I was spending a forty hour week and it was like I only had to go out there three nights a week and I could bring back more than I could possibly earn up to April and it is a quick tax free. Do you know what I mean that is what keeps you in it, it’s as easy as that, it keeps you going back, going back just for the money (SX9)

Moving from escorting to street work was therefore not an unusual story because of the additional money it offered, drug dependency, or because the women did not feel confident enough to work in a parlour or as an escort. That did not mean, however, that the participants imagined moving from street work to escorting to be impossible. A few had plans to move to online work such as webcams, as soon as they improved their computer skills:

Yeah I am on the street, I am heading towards working on the Internet but I don’t have a computer yet so (SX11)

But others had little choice in where to work due to past experiences of abuse and violence which had left them physically scarred:

You know I would rather do it at you know Escort Agencies and things like that because of my scars though it is hard for me to get a job in a Parlour or something like that you know (SX10)

4.2: ENTRY INTO SEX WORK
The most common pathway towards sex work for the first time included the desire or need for money. For one escort it was the combination of enjoyment of sex and the opportunity to earn a high wage which encouraged her to start:

I always liked sex, always had lots of boyfriends, I was fed up of, and the idea of being paid for sex always sounded very powerful to me. I was fed up of never having more than a very basic income. I had been through a bankruptcy and I was just, I was fed up of never being able to live comfortably (SX13)

Likewise, another escort had found that the ‘ordinary’ work she was doing was paid so poorly that she was getting into debt which led to her engaging in sex work:

I did have four part time jobs at the time but basically you know I am quite good at maths so I worked out how many hours I would need to be doing to be earning enough after tax and National Insurance to keep my head above water and pay off my debts and it was
something stupid like 65 hours a week which realistically you can’t find that amount of work because little part time jobs weren’t available (SX14)

Another escort, however, recently finding herself single and needing to support her children, believed she had little other choice:

For the house, for my family, for my kids and then for my car in [...] you know, that is why I make this choice because it is no choice (S12)

This sense that there were few options out there other than sex work was a common theme in street workers’ accounts as well. One woman began sex work after her children were placed in local authority care so that she could provide for them in some way:

About five years ago [I started] and it was when I lost my kids I wanted to be able to make extra money so that I could take them out on trips and still buy them Christmas presents and birthday presents (SX5)

Street work was sometimes framed as a more legitimate way of earning a living during desperate times. Several of the women, for example, mentioned feeling as if they were forced to choose between shoplifting and sex work; they chose sex work:

Err when I was a lot younger, err I am a shit thief, I tried and I couldn’t rob someone and at the end of the day I got into it and the money was good but I was pushed into it in another way if you see what I mean, you know I wasn’t forced, I knew what I was doing but in the same respect if I saw someone my age now I would try and talk them out of it (SX10)

Basically I found myself going back onto heroin and crack and that [sex work] was kind of a means to fund it, a way to fund it rather than pinching things and going in and out of jail so it was a way to basically to get the money I needed (SX1)

For others, sex work began through coercion. Several women mentioned boyfriends or partners who had introduced them to the scene and encouraged, or demanded, that they work. These relationships often also included domestic violence, meaning that refusing was impossible:

He sort of introduced drugs to me and things, he used to sell drugs and things and once I got on drugs it all sort of came with it, he was really violent and I sort of stopped seeing
my family and my friends and everything so yeah I think if I wouldn’t have met him I don’t think I would have no (SX2)

Yeah I had a habit and stuff and I was living round people’s here there and everywhere who use and stuff and obviously they want drugs or money and stuff and I had a boyfriend who used as well at the time and he just used to sit there and do nothing and would expect me to [sex work] (SX6)

Sex work sometimes began as sexual exploitation among young people. One young woman who grew up in a care home described trading sex for food:

Umm running away from a Children’s Home I used to do it just to get food (SX11)

While another young woman in foster care who was sexually abused by her foster father turned to sex work in order to escape her circumstances:

Well Foster dad started inappropriately touching me, I decided I didn’t want to be at home or couldn’t stay at home anymore at fifteen, so I kind of knew about the Red Light district, I had seen the shows on the television and had an inkling that you know, I was already you know having sexual relationships with older guys so I didn’t really see the difference, so you know it was money and a way out and so I started going down to the Red Light district a couple of nights just to dip my toe in the water really (SX8)

Most of the women felt that their decision to enter sex work was inevitable. Those who were coerced by a partner or older men, drug addiction, or financial instability felt that they had not known anywhere or anyone to turn to:

I didn’t know where to go for help to be honest (SX2)

I was estranged from my mum at the time, I didn’t have, you know all my friends were in the scene so, no (SX3)

They suggested that if they had had somewhere to ask for help, they might have made other choices:

Yeah, just somewhere like this really, like The Matrix, someone you could go to and say ‘look I am in trouble’ really (SX2)
4.3: SEX WORK AND VIOLENCE
The participants’ experiences of violence because of sex working differed greatly between escorts and street workers. The escorts interviewed had rarely experienced any violence or threats because of their work although there were accounts of stalking and intimidation:

> Made me think maybe he gets off on scaring women, maybe that is what does it for him and he was trying to intimidate me because you know like I said I am all up for dirty talk you know, I do it every day in my job you know, but it was not normal the way he was doing it so it rang alarm bells and immediately I saved him in my phone as, you know with certain men so that I knew to avoid him (SX14)

However, their fears mostly revolved around discrimination or blackmail:

> I have no problem with people knowing but I don’t tell everyone and partly because I don’t want to be discriminated, and I know if I go to a Rental Company or a Landlord and tell them exactly what I am doing they probably wouldn’t rent a property to me (SX13)

There were worries about the consequences of family and neighbours finding out about their work:

> I might have had to leave the town, it might have caused me housing problems, it could have caused problems for my mum in her work (SX13)

> I am very conscientious about you know my clients being discrete when they arrive and when they leave, I don’t have loads in a day, you know I will only see about two, three people a day and quite often I will take days off, so there isn’t a flow of men coming in and out, so that touch wood, hopefully you know works to stop any neighbours getting back at me (SX14)

> I worry when I go out and hope and pray that someone today can’t see my face when I go out for the condom machine (SX12)

Escorts’ concerns also had to do with future employment opportunities should the time come when they wanted to do something else. On one hand they felt they should be honest about their work but on the other hand, they felt that this honesty would affect them negatively:
If I tried to go back into mainstream employment I would actually want to tell, to say ‘yes this is what I have been doing for seven or eight years’ but I don’t know if I would get a job! (SX13)

Street workers, on the other hand, told multiple stories about violence, abuse, and rape while working:

I have had quite a lot of bad experiences, I got raped...I thought they were going to kill me, I thought they were, because I thought do they really think they can but they never took the money off me, they just thought they could treat me like that but that boy, like that wasn’t the agreement (SX6)

I have been beat severely by a punter and I have also been gang raped (SX7)

I had a really bad rape and I was beaten quite badly out on the beat (SX8)

I got raped twenty five years ago and that puts you off for a bit (SX9)

4.4: POLICE INVOLVEMENT
Experiences with the police ranged from no police involvement at all, to multiple experiences with the police as victims and as offenders, including serving time in prison. Many of the street workers had had some experience of the police coming up to them as they were soliciting. Most felt that the police acted leniently towards them and preferred to warn them or ask them to leave rather than arrest them:

Generally they would just say you know ‘you have got five minutes to leave the area’. They weren’t like, you know they didn’t nick you or, you know unless you were persistent and then they would arrest you, you know they would take you down to the station (SX3)

Yeah I have been stopped by the police a couple of times, they have never actually like, I have never actually been done for it, they have just sort of asked me what I am doing up there and then let me go but yeah so I am not actually like known to the Police for doing that [sex work] (SX4)

Some of the participants found the rules around solicitation confusing, especially in relation to warnings and arrest:
They give me a ticket, they give you a warning, you get, I don’t even understand the system, you get three warnings within three months and then you get arrested. I don’t understand how it all works it is so confusing (SX11)

In contrast, the police felt that the sex workers were aware of the system and understood it clearly:

We are working on warning systems still and it is quite clear that it is understood by the women that we deal with because then they get two warnings and the third warning they will get arrested and after that it goes on from there but after the second warning it is a three month period that the warnings are valid for and they will disappear so there is obviously some way they have got of funding whatever they need off the street because they can disappear for a couple of months for that first warning to drop off and then they will come back out again and you know ‘I haven’t got one warning now’ so – (Police)

Most sex workers felt the local police generally treated them well during their interactions. The participants especially felt that policing towards sex workers had changed in recent years from punitive approaches towards more general understanding of their circumstances and respect for them as people:

When I was first working there wasn’t, you didn’t get fined for prostitution you went to prison for prostitution (SX9)

They are more, they are more, I think the police do more now for working girls than what they do like when they see you on the street and like ‘just get off the street’ they looked at you like you are scum but now I think they realise and they look at it in a different way (SX7)

Despite this feeling that the police were not out to get them on the streets, few of the women felt they could turn to the police when they were victimised through sex working. The participants told numerous stories about being attacked and raped in the past but not reporting the incidents. For some, reporting such violence meant potentially being ‘outed’ to friends and family who might not know about their activities:

They are afraid that the family will find out and they are afraid that it will be in the paper (SX13)
Others worried that reporting a crime simply meant additional officers policing the neighbourhood, thus preventing sex workers from working:

*If I report it, it is just a higher police presence down that area and it makes my life even harder* (SX11)

For one sex worker there was concern about contact with the police as it could adversely affect her contact with her children and she had resorted to work in a way that was less visible to the police:

*I tend to work off my phone now, it is just not worth it, the police started being around so much that it is just not worth it because I ended up getting sent home a couple of times and if they arrest me and it goes on my record then it could stop me from seeing the kids* (SX5)

The sex worker has become less visible but the work goes on and it may be that the reduced visibility leads to limited contact with support services as transactions are negotiated by telephone rather than on the street. Another participant suggested that she did not report violence to the police because she felt partially responsible for it, given the known dangers of the work:

*You do feel responsible as well, you know that what you are doing is illegal* (SX8)

Other women said they had tried in the past to report violence but had received little help from the police and therefore they had become reluctant to report any recent incidents:

*I saw a foreign guy and I went back to his flat and he ended up beating me up and raping me and taking my money and stuff, so yeah we went to the police but they didn’t do anything about it much, so most of the girls they don’t even bother going to the police because they just think, because they are working on drugs the police aren’t going to take that much notice of things* (SX2)

One woman’s opinion about the police changed after she reached out to them at a point of crisis, only to have the officer blame her for the rape and refuse to help:

*I came down from, it was this slope of the beat and I came down from the trees and as I came down from the trees I must have looked like a horror out of some zombie apocalypse, you know I was covered in blood and it was quite bad and my face was all swollen up and
a patrol car was coming down and I flagged him down and he kind of got out and he was like ‘what!’ you know and I was like ‘I need to report a rape’ and he looked at me and he said ‘well technically it is not a rape is it, what did he not pay you, that’s theft isn’t it?’

(SX8)

Even though experiences such as the woman’s story above occurred in the past and many of the women acknowledged that the police’s response to sex workers had often changed, memories of such interactions remained and cautioned them from trusting the police too much. The police also felt that their approach had changed in that they were offering more support and recognising the vulnerabilities of the women, mainly in Norwich:

\[\text{I think certainly from the Police perspective, there is a lot more we can do in terms of the street side of it, I think we can carry that through in terms of vulnerability and support to the off street workers as well as long as we have those mechanisms in place. I think we are at that sort of very early stage so we are not ready perhaps yet to take it further outside of Norwich (Police)}\]

They said that they had been actively engaging the women working on the street in conversations in order to offer support:

\[\text{[We have] asked them the questions you know ‘are you alright?’ And ‘does anyone make you to come out here to work?’ Or ‘are there any problems, anything we can help with, anyone we can put you in touch with?’ And it is just asking them relevant questions, giving them the chance to have their say and say you know we are not just here with a big hammer to say ‘right you can’t do this’ (Police)}\]

In contrast to the street workers’ experiences, the escorts interviewed had no experiences with the police as offenders and had limited experiences with them as victims. One escort, for example, had had to contact the police when a client returned to her home to burgle her. While she felt she was treated fairly by the police, she was surprised to realise that the officers who first came to her home did not know the laws around sex work:

\[\text{Initially, when the officers arrived on the scene of the crime, they were very, they didn’t know what the law was, they made some very un-useful comments and they admitted that they didn’t know because one of them said ‘why don’t you work with somebody else?’ And I said ‘well that is illegal’ and the police woman shrugged her shoulders and said ‘I don’t know’ (SX13)}\]
The uncertainty of the law could also be an issue for the police when they were dealing with on-street workers ‘historically a lot of the issues that we have had in terms of even the street workers is because officers are unclear themselves when they are going out’ (Police) but it was something that specially trained officers were clearer about:

*Having sat down and looked through the laws in relation to the street working, I feel a lot more confident now about going out and doing my role in that place but in terms of brothels and off street working, again it is something I would have to sit down and I would have to relearn, that is probably an area I need to investigate I think* (Police)

Police sometimes became involved after complaints from local residents which they had to investigate:

*We as the police have to respond to community issues as they are raised and put in front of us and we have to be seen to be doing the right thing* (Police)

Most complaints reportedly related to the mess associated with drug use which raised concerns for local children:

*There is a whole host of it and there are a lot of them saying ‘like I know it happens, I knew it happened when I moved here but you know when they are getting picked up and they are going away that’s fine but I don’t want it in the alley behind my house and I don’t want them in the park where my child is going to play’. And it is just too close for them all really and it has been a long time on Rosary Road now* (Police)

4.5: SAFETY

The issues of violence, policing and safety are clearly interconnected. The women are all vulnerable and at risk of violence, as demonstrated above, which means that they will at times have need for the police. To minimise both the risks of violence and contact with the police, they engaged in various strategies to keep safe. Some participants made it clear that it was not always possible to rely on other women around to look out for you when working on the street:

*One of the girls the other day let me get in the car with a client that she knew was not very nice….he strip searched me when he picked me up the other day but this girl let me get in there knowing what he was like* (SX1)
It is hard when you are out there you are out there on your own basically. You have got the girls robbing the girls, you have got, yeah it is terrible so you just have to watch your back (SX2)

However, some sex workers did look out for each other and had a clear system in place when they were out working, as one participant described:

So I see err [sex worker friend] come and get in the car, she will get in the car, I will see what car it is and the opposite way round and by phone, if you have been like more than twenty minutes, a phone call ‘are you okay?’ or a text, if you get a text back ‘I’m busy’ and certain words, a keyword that if you answer the phone if you were feeling slightly you know ‘hang on this bloke is a bit weird’ a keyword I know that there is something the matter (SX10)

Strategies would sometimes involve others who were not working. They talked about enrolling boyfriends or partners as ‘security buddies’:

My long term boyfriend was a client and he acts as my, what I call ‘my security buddy’ he knows when somebody is coming to see me or he knows my movements if I am going out cold and he listens to a lot of my gripes, so there is a lot of support (SX13)

[My partner] knows what I do, if I am going to someone’s house I will give him the address, if I can I will give him the registration number and I will always make sure I am on phone when I get in the car so he expects a time that you know if I am not here by such and such, then you know and I have the regular posts that you know I like to go to so he will kind of start looking there and you know if I feel uncomfortable as well, so yeah it is a bit of back up (SX8)

The majority of street workers relied on ‘intuition’. They often felt that there was not time to notify anyone as kerb crawlers were anxious to move on quickly for fear of getting spotted by the police:

…like when you are getting into a car, like they [punters] don’t even give you a chance to remember the registration number do they? (SX1)

The only safety measure was therefore to keep their wits about them and base safety judgements on previous experiences and their ability to judge people’s character:
I am a pretty good judge of character, if I don’t like someone I will say ‘oh I feel sick’ and the first thing someone is going to do is bolt, they don’t want you being sick in the car do they, you know? (SX10)

One way to reduce safety risks was to stick to regulars as much as possible but also to limit drug use while working as working without a clear head was seen as dangerous:

If you have got a regular you know, that’s a bit better but when it is just like someone picking you up in a car you don’t know them from Adam and you are high or maybe not high you have got things going through your head (SX7)

Despite taking precautions they were all ultimately aware that keeping safe was not always possible:

You can’t really like it’s a risk you take - there ain’t no way of keeping safe (SX4)

Keeping safe was a different matter for escorts who worked alone from their own premises. They all talked about the measures they had taken to decrease the risks, should they experience a violent client, which varied from installing a spyhole to keeping heavy objects in accessible places around the house:

I have now replaced the spy hole in the door and I always look to see somebody’s face before I let them in (SX13)

I don’t open that door if they look like a junkie or talk not nice on telephone or talk not very respectable to me on the telephone and then I won’t make booking or let them come inside (SX12)

In addition to evaluating the client visually, some escorts had practical safety measures inside the home and one had trained in self-defence:

I have a personal alarm hung near the door and my idea is that I would pull that quickly and took it outside and I don’t know whether people would respond to that but I also took up Jujitsu and have done that for two years now. I train when I can but that is something else I have got to fit in but it is important to me as well (SX13)

Another escort expressed a wish for pepper spray to be legalised as she felt that would be a useful self-defence and safety measure but in the absence of pepper spray, she strategically placed heavy objects around her flat:

Heavy objects and you know I think I would go for the blow as hard as I can at the side of the knee so I would disable them, not you know kill them if say for instance I whacked them round the head you know I have got a risk of killing them, I don’t want to do that
because my concern is that I don’t want to be a victim who then becomes the perpetrator (SX14)

The time of day that they worked was an important part of keeping safe as expressed by one participant:

I think the women if they are worried just make sure like, just work at day time because after when late it is not, not good, just not make booking when it is late night. I work on the day, sometimes at night time but it is just regular ones like my old good customers (SX12)

The above has demonstrated that all of the participants were aware that their work carried with it major risks of violence and all of the street workers had experience of violence and abuse. Previous experiences of violence which had not been taken seriously by the police had influenced the likelihood of later reporting violent incidents. However, overall the women felt that the police were more supportive than they had been in the past and had better awareness of their vulnerabilities which led to more engagement and understanding between the two parties.

4.6: UGLY MUGS
It was surprising that over half of the participants did not subscribe to the Ugly Mugs scheme. Most of those had never heard of the scheme and others were aware of the scheme but did not use it. This may explain the findings from the Ugly Mugs evaluation that only 37 members were from East Anglia (Laing, et al., 2013). One participant was particularly safety conscious and used the scheme in conjunction with other safety measures:

When somebody books me, I put their phone number into SAAFE, I put it into three of the Forums [for escorts] and I put it into Ugly Mugs. I also Google it and I put it in Facebook and Twitter (SX13)

Here there are clear advantages to having internet access and the time to research the clients before meeting with them. However, text messages from Ugly Mugs directly to a sex worker’s phone were useful for both street workers and escorts:

But you know I am signed up to the Ugly Mugs Charity and I do receive text messages and I think the amount of text message warnings I get are predominantly from the city and also street walkers who tend to be victimised (SX14)

Projects that support sex workers are also able to receive the alerts and sex workers appreciated getting the information when they attended The Matrix:
Like they done a thing like if there is some punters, some dodgy punters they had a big thing on the wall, that was at the other place, so as you went in there they would be like ‘right look out for that car or look out for this guy’ yeah that would be well handy because then you know if you saw that car not to get in it, do you know what I mean, so yeah (SX2)

Being aware of potentially dangerous clients is a necessary first step in protecting sex workers. The use of the Ugly Mugs scheme was disappointing and is perhaps something that projects should support women in using more extensively.
CHAPTER 5: SERVICE NEEDS

The women talked about the many issues that impacted on their lives, including housing, loneliness and isolation and health (physical and mental). It was clear that needs varied between individuals and their particular circumstances but there were some needs which were common to most of the sex workers we spoke to.

5.1: HOUSING

Both on-street and off-street sex workers had worries about housing. The escorts spoke about the worry of lease agreements which did not allow for working from their own home, despite the work being legal as they were working on their own. They had not yet experienced any problems but they were nonetheless anxious for the landlords not to find out that they were working from their rented homes:

I know if I go to a Rental Company or a Landlord and tell them exactly what I am doing they probably wouldn’t rent a property to me (SX13)

I am with a Housing Association so if they did find out I don’t know how they would react (SX14)

Most of the street workers had experienced homelessness (and some of the escorts) and housing continued to be a major issue for them. Living in hostels brought its own problems, especially for women who were trying to reduce or stop their drug use:

You know nothing is happening you know, I don’t want to live in a place like [hostel], I don’t want to be round people like that. If I want my own flat I would want, it is because I want to get off drugs. I spent fifteen months clean, doing clean urine testing, doing it and that but then the last few months has just gone, I have just gone off key (SX10)

The above participant felt that she needed a place to herself to ‘sort her head out’, something that was not possible while she was surrounded by people in the same position as her. Other participants concurred with her as they spoke of getting their own place, ‘my own flat, somewhere to call my own because I know that would sort me out’ (SX10). Unstable relationships with partners and spells in prison added to housing insecurity:

Yeah I have had housing problems when I was with him I [ex-partner] was in a Council place and he made me sign it over to him, so now I am with my partner that’s his house, I have been with him four years but if we broke up I would be buggered you know so yeah, I would probably have to get a private place (SX2)
And then when I got released from jail I had nowhere to go so when I came out I had to go and stay with an ex punter for a little while even though I weren’t back in that game it was the only place I had to go (SX7)

For some participants, having their own place did not mean that they could get away from the lifestyle they might be trying to escape:

I got my own place and then people found out where I lived and then it just got took over by you know people from London and like I got bullied into it and I lost the flat because of it (SX1)

The above participant was homeless after her eviction and ended up sleeping in a tent for a while and then staying in a Bed and Breakfast place which meant that she had to work even more: ‘I was working still through all this and in the end I was actually having to work more because I ended up paying for a B & B every night… obviously when I had to fork out for a B & B as well, it means seeing that extra person’.

The police were also aware of the difficulties that housing could cause for the sex workers, in particular the places where sex workers were accommodated influenced their ability to get away from undesirable networks:

We have got people that come round to the houses at the bottom of Gas Hill and they can’t get away because they are then walking Rosary Road to get to the shops or across Bishop Bridge to the shops to get milk or anything like that and someone will drive up and they will stop and they will talk to them, the next thing you know it is money for them and they can’t get away and you have only got to be sofa surfing, one night they have got nowhere to sleep, what are they going to do? And it is not having anywhere to go to get away from the problem (Police)

In addition to the difficulties in finding and keeping housing, several participants, who had reasonably secure rented housing, found that it was poorly maintained:

The landlord is as dodgy as hell. He doesn’t do no repairs, it is dark, it’s mouldy, its filthy, the heating don’t work half the time, so it is cold as well (SX9)

Like McNaughton and Sanders (2007), we found that housing was a dominant issue for sex workers, particularly for those who wanted to exit sex work. The removal from familiar surroundings, which is often necessary in order to avoid contact with influences from the women’s past, meant that isolation and loneliness became more acute problems.
5.2: LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

The women were dealing with many losses, including the loss of their children and loss of contact with family members. Being a sex worker also meant that they rarely felt that they could confide in others apart from fellow sex workers which in cases led to lonely and isolated lives. One woman talked about her family and stressed that ‘they cannot know what I am doing’ (SX12) and many of the other women indicated that they were keeping their work secret from some, if not all, family members and friends. One escort said that she did tell people if she had to, for example, financial advisors and health professionals: ‘I tell people on a need to know basis’ (SX13). Having to keep their occupation secret meant that it was sometimes easier not to socialise with others not involved in sex work and could effectively mean that they had to lead a double life as Sanders (2005) found in her study of the off-street sex industry. One participant who began to do sex work because of her financial situation found that her need to keep her occupation secret had further reduced her socialising:

Yes, my life has ended you know I stopped socialising because of the money but also I found over the past couple of years my friend circle has you know shrunk dramatically (SX14)

Loneliness was also a problem for sex workers who had tried to exit as they had withdrawn from their usual circle of sex worker friends but were unable to instigate new friendships:

I don’t really mix with anyone because I still feel ill that if I mix with people from my past I don’t know whether I am strong enough to actually not go back down that road, so not associating with people is helping me more even though I am a bit lonely and I have only got like a couple of friends. I would rather that... (SX7)

For some women it had been a lifetime of dealing with problems themselves and they did not feel that they needed others in their lives. They had become self-reliant:

When I first started out I have always, I have never had help really, I have never had help, and I have always had to do it myself (SX10)

Being self-reliant, although seen as protective, still meant that they sometimes felt lonely and one participant explained how she had developed a strategy to deal with her isolation and loneliness:

When I can’t get out what I want to say about how I feel, I sit and write a poem. I can’t just, if you now give me a pen and a bit of paper and said write, I couldn’t do that but if I
was sitting there and I am depressed and that then I just write all my feelings down and I will come out and I have got a poem (SX7)

The escorts found that forums were a useful way to feel connected with others in the same boat and valued the opportunity to talk to others on-line:

I go on quite a few Forums, I have an email contact with a couple of established Escorts (SX13)

Forums allowed escorts to support each other in a space where there were no secrets and they could speak openly about their fears and problems:

Yes supporting each other because I think also Escorts find, we end up isolating ourselves (SX14)

As well as the fear of family and friends finding out about their work, the women also feared being discriminated against although the vast majority did not feel that the services they had come across did discriminate. One woman recounted an incident with her GP but rather than discrimination it was more labelling of the woman as a sex worker by the GP which meant that there was always a focus on that part of her identity:

Most service providers don't even blink an eye when I say what I do for work, only ever had one rude doctor that starting giving me a full on lecture on STDs and condoms etc... Pretty sure I went to that appointment to get my iron levels tested! (SX13)

It is clear that sex work is seen as a deviant profession and the sex workers themselves are reluctant to disclose what they do. Some of the street workers had a sense of community with other sex workers both on the street and on-line. The social networks of most sex workers were therefore limited to other sex workers and perhaps a few ‘outsiders’ such as friends and family who were aware of their work.

5.3: HEALTH ISSUES

Many of the participants had experiences of violent relationships, both during childhood and now as adults. Breakdown of relationships had led to loss of family members and several of the women had children who were in local authority care as a consequence of their work and drug use. The children they had lost were a source of grief no matter how many years had passed and many were allowed little if any contact with those ‘lost’ children:
I had my baby, out of hospital into the Rehab it was no, you know you are not getting your kids back, so I don’t know where they live, I don’t get no letters, I don’t get no photos, no nothing (SX7)

But I would like to find out whether [son] and [daughter] can actually meet, I know I might not be able to see him but I don’t see why like brothers and sisters can’t kind of meet at a Contact Centre or something, I think it would be beneficial to both of them because otherwise they will grow up not knowing they have got other siblings and I just think it would better if they kind of sort of grew up knowing each other (SX1)

For these participants, losing their children often meant losing hope. One participant who had lost several children, each at birth, believed her motivation to change had disappeared. Much like the narratives of female offenders who speak of desisting because of motherhood (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002; Kreager, Matsueda, & Erosheva, 2010) she believed that keeping her children might have been the trigger she had needed:

I think if they hadn’t took my first baby off me, the one they took off me at birth and gave me a chance, I think I would probably have just turned my life around but because they took her, like I took care of her for ten days in hospital and then they took her, then they done it to me again with my last son, took him away, they didn’t even give me a chance, they didn’t give me no support (SX7)

The effects of traumatic experiences had taken their toll on the women’s mental health and some were depressed which was treated with medication or counselling. Counselling was difficult for many of the women as they were reluctant to think and talk about past experiences:

I used to get so teary eyed and so wound up before I went, as soon as I would get in I would just burst out crying and then I would try and talk and all these different things come out of my mouth which is going on in my life and they would go ‘right we will talk about one particular subject today’ and I would just break down, I couldn’t do it (SX7)

The above participant felt that the counselling was not helpful: ‘I would just rather have my thoughts now and again about what went on then rather than sit and talk about it because that makes me feel worse’.

The difficulties in talking about the past was echoed by another participant who indicated that the distress it caused her led to increased use of drug and alcohol to numb the pain:
I don’t normally talk to people because you know you are asked these things in counselling and they all start bringing it, just bringing it all back up and then straightaway what do I want to do after, you know, after listening to all of that? (SX10)

Despite finding talking therapies difficult, several of the women valued the support if it was offered. There was much talk of shame and regret, which could be hard to deal with on a daily basis. One participant talked about the shame she had felt when she returned to drug use and sex work after being supported out of it but also the value of medical intervention (methadone scripts) and counselling to enable her to have another go at exiting:

I felt so ashamed that I had come so far and you know done all this and I had gone back into it and so straight on a methadone script, it was really lucky they gave it to me because I wasn’t you know using a lot but it gave me an incentive that I didn’t want to and it gave me something regular, and that is a security blanket in itself and the support and counselling (SX8)

Another woman had not yet embarked on counselling but was waiting for her first appointment with apprehension: ‘well I am not really over-keen on it but I need to’ (SX11)

Several of the women also had physical health problems to manage which included cystitis, sexually transmitted diseases, allergies, respiratory diseases, deep vein thrombosis and metabolic disorders. All participants were registered with a GP. The women all reported that they had regular sexual health check-ups either through specialist sex worker services or hospital clinics.

5.4: DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROBLEMS
The above suggested that many of the women had issues with drugs and alcohol and for some the use of stimulants was a way to cope with the work as well as their past experiences. Drug use was mentioned as more problematic for the women although some also had alcohol addictions which were either being treated or managed in other ways:

I don’t get drunk but I have a dependency where I have to drink every other day or I feel a bit ill but I am under the Recovery Team at the minute to try and sort that out (SX7)

I have a very bad alcohol problem but I quit about a month ago...yeah I am doing good (SX11)
One participant said that she had used alcohol all her life and another, similarly, said that she was often drinking, ‘but it is under control’ (SX9).

The use of alcohol and drugs often went hand in hand:

Yes, I have been or I am an alcoholic, I have used drugs, I currently don’t drink and I don’t take drugs and I don’t intend to but when I first came into sex work that was the other reason for coming to sex work was that I had, I often lost jobs because I wouldn’t go in if I had been drinking or if I was ill so that affected my employability as well and being able to work for myself meant that I could take time off when I wanted, or when I needed and I got into recovery whilst I was doing this [sex] work (SX13)

For some participants, drug use came first which then led to sex work in order to pay for drugs. One women had stopped working after using methadone but found that the script was not enough:

I have got a script but it is not holding me so that is why I have ended up having to go back and start you know old habits die hard. I didn’t work for two years, it has only been in the last few months that I have started doing things again (SX10)

Street work was seen as a quick way of getting enough money when there was no other way:

No that, to be honest street work is only when you sort of hit rock bottom sort of thing you know so it was when I got really, really bad on drugs, I couldn’t work in a massage parlour because I was so on drugs at the time, I was just a bit of a mess so that was just like the last resort, I would just go out there and so I would be out there from about eight at night until about midnight, earn a couple of hundred quid and just go home really so (SX2)

Having issues with drugs could lead to family conflict and homelessness which then in turn left few options for young women:

Well I used to live with my mum and then because of my drug problems my mum wouldn’t let me stay there very much and I did go into a Hostel but I ended up getting into trouble (SX1)

I started using thinking that I had it perfectly under control and I didn’t and it spiralled out of control really quickly, I lost my flat, I ended up sofa surfing, was street homeless for a
short amount of time and yeah street work then was like a necessity, I didn’t have any other choice (SX8)

Participants suggested that once caught up in drugs that was all they thought about:

All you think about is where you are going to get that next bit of money from to make you feel better and get you know the next bit of crack or whatever. I mean you don’t, sometimes I have earned three hundred pounds out there and spent the lot in a night and not even have a cigarette for the morning, do you know what I mean, or when you do that and you work and get a punter and then you spend that money driving around getting drugs, smoke it and then you go back so you are out there longer because you are not standing there constantly to get money so it is just like a really vicious circle to get out of (SX7)

Yes with drugs because it went from making money for getting presents for the kids and stuff which is still always my top priority but then of course everybody else around me was using and I had used before I had the kids and I gave up for like eleven and a half years while I had them and was pregnant and stuff and then of course after the kids I was depressed and pissed off and when I got back into that circle I then started using again (SX5)

Drugs were also used just to manage everyday life and past experiences:

I watched you know someone get murdered when I was five right in front of me, beaten to death, I have been abused, I have been burnt, I have got over two hundred cigarette marks all over my legs, scars on my face, tied up for three days, battered you know but you know people look at me and go ‘oh yeah, no no’ you know and expect me to be fine and I can’t help it, you know drugs keep me sane (SX10)

Many of the women had boyfriends or partners who also used drugs and they depended on the women for money:

Yeah but if I didn’t go home with the money I knew that I would get arguing and things with him so, yeah I had no choice really and then once I was on drugs it was a case of having to go to earn the money to be able to like live the lifestyle we was living and do drugs and stuff so… (SX2)
Overall, drugs appeared to be a major factor in initiating sex work and once the women had started, sex work was one of very few options (another being shoplifting) available to them which guaranteed enough money to sustain their drug habit.

The recurring issues for these women appear to be housing, drug and alcohol problems and the isolation that accompanies unconventional work. The issues are interlinked and cause and effect are not clearly defined. For example, for some women the sex work was a result of needing to fund a drug habit which in turn could lead to a spell in prison, isolation and lack of suitable housing on release which then led to further sex work, partly to raise funds but also to reengage with their social network.
CHAPTER 6: SEX WORKERS’ EXPERIENCES OF SERVICES

There was awareness amongst the sex workers of specialist services in Norwich. The street workers we interviewed either currently accessed The Matrix or had accessed it in the past and were recruited for the study with the assistance of The Matrix. Some had also accessed The Magdalene Group although less frequently and the following emphasis on The Matrix rather than the Magdalene Group by the women is not an indication of the success or accessibility of either service. The interviews invited the participants to discuss any support services that they were aware of or had ever used.

6.1: THE WAY THINGS USED TO BE

It was interesting that the services were seen as services for street workers and not services that supported escorts:

*I’ve always been told most places like The Matrix project is for sex workers on the streets, so never considered looking into them (on-line escort)*

The majority of the women had originally come across The Matrix during their outreach service and many talked about the bus that used to provide services to them when they were out on the street:

*Because when you were down the street they would come down in like a big white van, so anybody who needs like condoms or they would like, you used to be able to go on the van and they would like give you loads of chocolate, a drink, some condoms and things like that, so you knew if you went out on the street you would be like ‘right yeah The Matrix will be out in an hour’s time’ do you know what I mean? So you just used to get everything you needed from there sort of thing (SX2)*

The presence of the van was clearly an evening highlight and a source of support. Some women had been involved with the outreach team for a long time before they ventured into The Matrix offices:

*It took me a while because like I would just see them on the Outreach bus and it took me a few years to start going in the office but they had a food cupboard and you could just go and get food, like if you didn’t have any food and they did food parcels at Christmas, made sandwiches like (SX3)*
There was much reminiscing about the service that The Matrix had offered women and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. There were stories of help and support with housing, jobs, debt and benefits, probation, computer issues, safety and any paperwork that was tricky to complete. In addition, there was a valued space for chatting, friendly company and a sense of belonging:

They are just there for you it is so lovely, it is not just the work they were there for you, they were there for you, just to talk to you, they used to take me to appointments, you know, they will help you as much as they can (SX7)

Before they moved, they had like the food cupboard and the clothes cupboard before they moved, they used to try and run groups before they moved to like build your confidence and relaxation and different things like that and they wanted to further that by trying to do craft groups and maybe get us running a café for each other to support each other (SX5)

Friendships were formed and the women felt that staff was reliable and helpful. The service was seen as different to other services and staff members were seen to go the extra mile for the women:

I just think, they just like get friends with people, [staff member] who used to work here, I used to ring her about anything you know and even on her day off she would like come and pick me up and, I don’t know, go and help me shopping or go and help me with my Housing or something, they just always make that little bit more of an effort to sort of help you really. It doesn’t matter if it is about working, just about anything in general do you know what I mean, so if you feel shit, ‘I need this sort of thing now’ or ‘can I borrow the phone to ring so and so’ they will always like help you (SX2)

They were just brilliant you know like with Housing and you know when I got pregnant they were fantastic. I wasn’t working then but they were fantastic even though I had stopped working, you know they were still involved and I had, I really, it is only the last year I haven’t been seeing anyone, I used to have a worker come round every week just to you know have a coffee and see how I am and things but they, and they would do like a Care Plan but they said you know you are doing so well that you don’t really need us, obviously we are always here if you do need us but we are settled now my husband is working, you know I am a housewife, I am a mum (SX3)
6.2: RECENT CHANGES TO THE MATRIX SERVICE

There was a sense that things had changed and more recently, there was more dissatisfaction with the service provided. As one women explained:

> But now they have had their money cut, most people have left and they can’t even have that really all the time so now there is not hardly any support from them really compared to what there used to be because they have changed it all and they want them to go county wide on the same amount of people as well which is just impossible. If they are going to give you the support and that that they were giving you, you know they can’t be expected to have their money completely cut, move into one tiny room that they can’t even have all the time and cover the whole of Norfolk and do what they wanted to do and what was useful (SX5)

The reduced opening times, the lack of space and the low number of staff available meant that the service was no longer seen as fit for purpose by some women who had previously used it:

> I think it was better at Adelaide Street because it was bigger they had more rooms and it was a lot bigger. Basically there are not as many staff working here now as what there was before which I think was a bit of a shame do you know what I mean? Because the more staff there is the more they can help the girls so I think that is a bit of a shame that they haven’t got as much support as what they had before (SX7)

The manager and staff were aware that there had been some drastic changes to the delivery of the service which were driven by cost:

> The key [changes] were moving premises, they were all driven basically by the cost, so that the, I suppose the overall budget went down significantly and it was either changing to the staffing or changing to venue, so the venue was the one that changed because the rooming was kind of condensed here but there was kind of loosely enough space here and we could still have the staffing (The Matrix)

In addition to the changes in venue and some changes to staff, the remit for the service has also changed and is more focused on recovery and short term work rather than ongoing contact with service users. This is done by being available to support women in a crisis and then linking them in with other services for on-going support, a change from the previous ethos of the service:
We used to work with families and friends and somebody who you used to know once upon a time, somebody who used to sex work or you know – and that isn’t really happening now (The Matrix)

Partnership work with The Magdalene Group was seen as a positive way forward in providing a wraparound service for sex workers:

They [Magdalene Group] are longer term focussed, so they run a kind of befriending, long term service that they run three drop-ins a week where people can go and chat and have a meal and they form groups and they run craft things and you know bible studies and you know things that are long term and they can stay as long as they want and they are the people who are working now or have worked in the past so they could be former sex workers (The Matrix)

The Magdalene Group also acknowledged the partnership work between the two services. The Matrix offers sexual health services which is something that The Magdalene Group is not able to offer (other than free condoms) and the two services undertake outreach together:

In recent months the Matrix have been coming out with us on a Thursday evening because their staffing has been depleted over the last year so they haven’t been able to outreach, so they have been coming out with us which is really positive so they can offer sexual health screening (Magdalene Group)

The change in outreach was something that street workers commented on and they were unsure about the car used for joint outreach as opposed to the van that used to park away from their ‘patch’: 

I know the Magdalene Group but you know they drive around and they make it worse. You know they are driving around when you are trying to earn money, you don’t want it, people standing there and getting out, I am not there to talk to people, I need to get there and get out as soon as possible, I hate what I have to do. I can’t bear what I have to do you know. When The Matrix used to come round that is fair enough, they’d come round and they park off, you know, you get in their bus, you get what you need and you know, you knew where they were (SX10)

It was clear that there was uncertainty about both services; The Matrix because of the recent changes and The Magdalene Group because the sex workers were unsure of their remit:
There used to be the Magdalen Group but they were more, that was for ex workers even though sex workers could go in there, I used to go in there and that used to be like just two ladies or three working girls, sit and have dinner and a cup of tea and a chat and all that but the last time I went in that had all changed, a lot of them there weren’t even sex workers they were like years and years ago sex workers so it didn’t feel right if you know what I mean, going in there and talking about what is going on in your life with sex workers at the time and they were all like, ‘oh we done it years ago and it is easy if you do this’ you might not have been addicted to drugs, I was! So your situation is totally different to my situation, so I don’t know if that still goes (SX7)

Most sex workers were aware of The Magdalene Group’s Christian ethos and would refer to the service as ‘the Christian Group’. One participant felt that The Magdalene group wanted to save her:

It is the fact that I love what I do, ultimately I want to do what I do, I don’t need to be saved, I don’t need to be told that it is wrong. They want you to stop and they want to rescue you from what you are doing and it shouldn’t be about that, I think it is a legitimate, you know I think prostitution should be legalised, it is in other countries (SX8)

Nonetheless, they valued the space and the friendliness of the staff at the Magdalene Group and the support on offer:

It was weird like when I went in there I just like spoke to one woman which was, she was really nice and she give me some clothes and stuff like...I have just been there once but I should go there more really (SX6)

If I am over there I will go in and they are open Monday Wednesday and Friday and they give you a dinner and sometimes I will go out down there and have dinner if I am staying over there (SX9)

Despite offering food, befriending and support, some women did not find that they were able to access as many free condoms as they needed for their work and would therefore have to access The Matrix as well or instead:

Well we have got Mary Magdalen, it is like Church based and they supply you with condoms and that and you can have a chat with them and they will give you a cup of tea and that but it is like going, then when you come out I think they may give you like ten condoms something stupid like that. You go up Matrix van, they know you are a working
women and they know that maybe, like if I lived over there I would probably be out more often. Ten condoms isn’t going to be no use to me for a period of a week (SX9)

The recent changes to The Matrix service has meant that some sex workers are no longer accessing the service as often as they used to as they find it situated in a less accessible place, the premises are small and not conducive for ‘hanging out’ and catching up with peers and the staff levels are too low. However, the changes have led to a more coordinated and collaborative effort between the two Norwich based services as both services find their niche.

6.3: ESCORTS’ VIEWS OF SERVICES
The street workers were very sure of their needs and relied heavily on the services on offer. The escorts told another story. As mentioned above, services for sex workers were assumed by escorts to be for street workers only. Escorts had very different needs and expectations of services. Only one escort had used a specialist service for sex workers but all attended mainstream clinics for their sexual health checks, ordered and paid for their condoms on-line and used internet forums for information and networking with peers. One escort had never heard of The Matrix although she had once been given a card from The Magdalene Group. She had never contacted either for support and was surprised at what they could offer when told about the services. The escorts who did not do any on-street work expressed a desire for some kind of support service but emphasised that it had to be discreet:

If there was a service available and it wasn’t publicly you know splashed all over the place ‘this is a Service for Escorts’ then yes I would [use it] if it was discrete (SX14)

Therefore a service specifically for sex workers did not appeal to them but perhaps a service integrated within other relevant services. They expressed a need for support with legal and rights issues, general advice about escorting work, peer support and website design. The on-line community of escorts was seen as thriving and important for reducing isolation, increasing safety and asking advice:

And I have been to a couple of Forum Socials and met up with some of them [other escorts] in person at Socials, I have met one or two because I have been in the area and I have said ‘do you fancy meeting up for coffee?’ (SX13)

Some escorts found that at times they needed legal advice or guidance and others had wanted help with setting up their website:
I managed to work out how to set the website up and get going with that and then [online forum] helped, when I had a problem with that website some of the people on [online forum] actually provide websites for escorts at very low cost and they make sure you retain ownership and control which is important and they are the people who administer, who host and who are behind my website at the moment (SX14)

Tapping into the on-line community of escorts is something that the Magdalene group is actively doing to try and engage local escorts across the whole of Norfolk who are unlikely to visit their premises:

*We Net reach so that we can let people know about our service so we connect with women who are advertising On Line and sort of try and meet them in the same channel I suppose, so we offer life chat and a help line because they are the ways that they are, that is the way that they are advertising themselves so and in that way we can give county wide support as opposed to just support in the City Centre* (Magdalene Group)

Accepting that escorts operate mainly via the internet and communicate mostly on-line has meant that the strategies used for actively trying to engage with this group of sex workers has changed and may eventually lead to a more diverse client base. Many of the needs expressed by the escorts could be addressed through on-line forums or internet chatrooms and they did not express material needs such as free meals, clothing or condoms. Some escorts said that they had taken advantage of free condoms from their doctor but had found that they could not get enough and had resorted to buying in bulk on-line. They were also choosy about the type they wanted to use both for work and in their private lives.

**6.4: ACCESSIBILITY OF SUPPORT SERVICES**

Participants overwhelmingly valued the opportunity to pop into services whenever they felt the need although some were happy to telephone and talk to a support worker. One participant explained that she did not always have enough money to top up her mobile telephone and therefore she preferred to drop in:

*I prefer to drop in because I haven’t always got credit* (SX4)

For another participant, drop in was useful as it was seen to provide flexibility as opposed to an appointment system:
Personally a drop in, it gives flexibility I have got the kids you know and if I had a job you know it would be working around that and a chaotic lifestyle is what I am thinking on a wider level when I had a chaotic lifestyle you know it is much easier (SX8)

For the street workers, on-line support was not considered useful as they rarely owned or had easy access to a computer and many were not computer literate. However, some escorts used on-line support and preferred it.

The location of the service influenced the accessibility and one participant talked about living close to the original site of The Matrix which allowed her to drop in although she sometimes telephoned and even made contact if she saw any of the staff outside the building:

*Most of the time, a couple of times I have dropped in, a lot of the time I call. I haven’t been in for a while but I do nip in occasionally or if I see, when I was living next door if I saw them go across the car park I would say hello and talk to them (SX7)*

After the re-location of the service, she was no longer able to do that and therefore she was not making contact as often.

A low turnover of staff and a continuation of support over a period of time also made a service more accessible as sex workers built a trusting relationship with staff over time:

*All my workers that know me well, I have had the same, like stuck to the same workers because otherwise if you have different workers you end up repeating yourself all the time and then you get bored with saying it after a while and you just don’t bother in the end do you, you know? Like I have said it a hundred times I can’t be bothered now (SX1)*

Sex workers were therefore more likely to stick with one service as they appreciated the continuity and rarely felt like embarking on establishing new relationships with support workers who did not know them or their past.

Opening times were also important and the women indicated that they would like to see the service available most days although they were aware that resources would not allow for that and one participant suggested that a helpline should be available:

*I mean if you have got a problem in the middle of the night I would like to think that there is some kind of number that you could ring even if it was just to leave an answerphone message, do you know what I mean? (SX9)*
Interestingly, there were issues with accessing a service which could be accessed by others who a sex worker might know from the past. This was a particular issue with group work and raises issues of the value of services dedicated to sex workers as opposed to support for sex workers within other support services:

*I think it’s just me not wanting to go there in case there is people from my past in there who they are going to say well you know ‘they have changed, you are changing, you can be friends with them’ but then you just get back together and everything, so I would just rather not be in that circle like* (SX7)

6.5: SERVICES’ AND PROFESSIONALS’ VIEWS OF CHANGING SEX WORK PRACTICES
The above has alluded to the changing practices of the two Norwich services in order to meet the needs of the next generation of sex workers who work with the aid of technology. Both services have started considering more virtual support services for some sex workers. However, there is still a small minority of on-street sex workers who have chaotic lifestyles, often experience violence and abuse and have few support networks in place. For those sex workers, there is still a need for drop-in, out-of-hours availability and outreach work. The work will involve long-term support and needs to be built on good relationships, as expressed by one support worker:

*But still developing relationships because it is all about relationships with our clients, you have got to, you have got to establish a relationship with them and that sometimes takes a long time because they will come across as very ‘oh yes you know whatever’ but actually to trust someone that takes them a long time so yes we have got a good reputation at The Matrix which we can use to build up a relationship* (The Matrix)

There was also a recognition from both Norwich services that although escorts may not need the same kind of services as street workers, they will still have a need for reliable relationships and an outlet where they can openly talk about their work. That could be an on-line forum with other escorts or, as one service is trying, a befriending help-line where escorts can get things off their chest:

*So we will go onto, for example, Adult Work we have got a sort of email or text script that we have that says ‘Hi there, just to let you know there is a confidential and non-judgemental service for women working in the adult industry’ because we want to cover everybody and we are aware that those women that are working on line have a very different attitude and mind-set to those women working on the street, so a lot of the women are quite happy not to have support because they feel they don’t need it which is absolutely fair enough but we want women, those women that are isolated working from*
home and can’t tell anybody about their day at work to be able to ring and say ‘do you know what I have had a really tough day and I can’t tell anybody about it because nobody knows’ (Magdalene Group)

In that way, the service hopes to build up relationships with women who work as escorts without having face-to-face contact.

We contacted a number of services which sometimes support sex workers and there was consensus that sex work was changing which meant that services also had to change. One service had actively changed their working pattern to accommodate the needs of sex workers:

A few years ago we adapted our service to make it more accessible to sex workers – i.e. extending our helpline to 24 hours and offering self-referral (no police involvement) medicals at the weekends too between 8am and 7pm (SARC)

There was also an awareness that a change in clientele meant that services that ‘labelled’ their users were unlikely to engage with the particular individuals that the service was aiming to support:

Therefore open services that do not carry a stamp e.g. ‘drugs’, ‘offenders’, ‘homeless’ ‘mental health’, ‘rape’ as a gateway for the other services...we professionals can come in and make that first signposting so much easier. I feel that’s key (4women)

The idea of services which were open and welcoming to all was therefore seen as a better way to engage with people without attaching labels to their conditions or occupations. Specialist workers could then come into those services and provide specialist support more discreetly. Open services were also seen as more likely to be able to deal with interconnecting issues that most sex workers had (especially the on-street workers) and they would be able to provide on-going support as some problems came to light and others perhaps were resolved:

Brief interventions are not significant enough to promote successful recovery from drugs or exiting sex work - should this be what the client wants (NRP)

There are additional and more recent complications surrounding sex workers who may have been trafficked and working illegally in Norfolk. Often such workers work in brothels or houses which could be raided by the police:
There have been a couple of brothels that have been looked at and they have been dealt with and we have been left a little bit in limbo because there are people that are not you know from the country, they appear and they are then potentially homeless because where they were everything has been closed down, so that is the issue that we have found recently (Police)

Such situations further emphasised the need for joining up enforcement with support. Another change is the sexual exploitation of women who do not realise that they are sex working and are therefore unlikely to seek support from services specifically for sex workers. However, they may come to more open services which offer support for women:

We have got a number of women who come in who as I said don’t realise they are sex working, who usually have an element of learning disability or an element of denial and they are being not financially paid but they are being, you know, given clothes, food etc. so that is why they don’t see it as sex work (4women)

The work of the Safeguarding Children Board, CSE Subgroup, has done much to raise awareness of the risks of child sexual exploitation and to develop multi-agency strategies to work effectively with this vulnerable group. The MASH team works closely with the Magdalene Group to provide intervention and support. However, there is a need for the provision of more resources for both young people and adults, especially long term relationship based therapeutic services, in order to offer these individuals at risk of involvement in sex work, or already involved, support in seeing alternatives to continued involvement (Dodsworth, 2014; Dodsworth & Larsson, 2014).
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The landscape of sex work is changing with different types of sex work being undertaken by a broader sector of the population. It is no longer enough to only support the visible population of street workers and there is a need to re-think services so that they more effectively support all sex workers who seek support. This may mean more integrated services which are more discreet, whilst still offering relationship based support for as long as needed.

New ways of accessing and engaging sex workers who work alone and secretly will be required and are likely to include more virtual relationships between services and those they seek to support. Likewise, harder to reach male and transgender sex workers need to feel included in service provision and efforts have to be made to engage this group with appropriate services for their needs. Further research has to be undertaken to understand those needs which is likely to involve the use of peer researchers over a longer period of time.

Despite the overwhelming dislike for the work they have to do, the women in this study had few other opportunities to earn enough money to support themselves and their families, even if they did not have a drug habit. Hence, there was little focus on exiting sex work but instead there was talk about moving into better paid and safer sex work, as perceived by the women. In order to move to escorting and working on-line, certain computer skills and resources are required and although the women were keen to develop such skills, few appeared to have the opportunity or resources to do so.

Overall, the sex workers who participated in this study (all female) expressed a need for services to be available to them. There were differences observed between the types of service and individual needs expressed by the women. Length of time sex working, the type of sex work and previous life experiences appeared to be influential in the needs expressed. Escorts who did not have substance misuse problems were keen to have support to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation but also help with computing, web design, information and advocacy. The street workers all enjoyed and valued the services provided by The Matrix and The Magdalene Group but were finding that The Matrix no longer provided the support they had become used to and felt that they needed.

The lives of the street workers were often chaotic and assistance was regularly needed with everyday difficulties including letter writing and attending meetings or appointments. There was also material deprivation and they sometimes relied on services to provide hot meals, drinks and clothing. They were after reliable availability in contrast to many other experiences they had had with services during their lives. Without the support of services, these women would clearly
struggle and their quality of life would be further reduced. However, there is little to suggest, in this report, that the women want specific services for sex workers and it is likely that they would be happy to attend services that support women in general which would in turn reduce the labelling which can lead to low self-worth.

Figure 1: Diagram illustrating recommendations

Recommendations
The study has identified several key issues in terms of service provision from our interviews with both sex workers and the professionals involved in supporting them. The diagram above (Figure
1) illustrates the complexity in supporting sex workers, including the wider policy and legal context. Needs and support requirements vary between individual sex workers and the type and place of work and are further complicated by personal experiences both in childhood and as adult sex workers. We therefore make the following recommendations:

- There are considerable, and growing differences between the different groups of sex workers, for example, street workers and escorts and the markets in which they operate. The support needs of sex workers will therefore also differ depending, in part, on the environment in which the work takes place but also between individual sex workers in terms of the impact of their previous life experiences on their ability to manage their lives both as sex workers and as individuals. Consequently, it is not possible to use a ‘one size fits all’ approach. The local population that a service wishes to support needs to be considered when attempting to meet the needs of vulnerable men and women in a particular area.

- We therefore recommend that services provide crisis support for workers on the street but also maintain the provision of long term relationship based support for street and in-door workers to increase a sense of self-worth and reduce the risks of loneliness and isolation. For some of the most vulnerable individuals there will be an ongoing need for support whatever stage of involvement in sex work they have reached. These services must also link with those provided for children and young people at risk of or involved in child sexual exploitation in terms of information sharing in order that the wider picture is known and early intervention is made possible.

- Street workers express the need for emotional, practical, health related and material support and appear to be less concerned about a service being labelled specifically for sex workers. In order to provide such support, premises need to be conducive to befriending and peer support by allowing an accessible, comfortable space in which that can take place. In addition outreach services are regarded by street workers as valuable but must not result in increasing the identification of individuals and thus the risks they run.

- For other sex workers however, (for example escorts and those working via the internet) there was a reluctance to use specialist services which, it was felt, are potentially stigmatising in that they are advertised specifically for sex workers. Escorts were keen to have support with business skills, web design, legal and rights issues and information but also value befriending and peer support. Such support can take place in a virtual environment as those interviewed expressed a reluctance to attend services. Alternatively, and/or additionally, more holistic services which address other needs alongside those arising from sex work may
be a better alternative in that they would provide anonymity and offer services for the person as a whole.

- Both the literature and our research indicate the need for provision of emergency accommodation and possibly a transfer scheme for long term housing with continuing support in order that sex workers, particularly those who wish to exit, can move away from potentially risky contacts but not be left lonely and isolated. Without such support, street workers are likely to turn to pimps or clients to look for temporary accommodation.

- We still do not know enough about the needs of more hidden sex workers in Norfolk such as migrant workers, males, transgender people and those who offer services that do not require intimate contact (e.g. webcams). These individuals are difficult to access and in order to engage these groups in research it will be necessary to take a longer view but also to encourage a more participatory approach, perhaps engaging the sex workers as peer researchers. As the numbers of street workers decrease and different and often hidden types of sex work increase it is essential to explore sex work in a broader context in order to provide appropriate support.

- Although there are specialist police officers who engage with sex workers on a regular basis it is clear, both from the literature and our research, that the complexity of the law often causes a lack of clarity. As sex work becomes more hidden, the safety of workers will become harder to monitor and police. It is important therefore that all police officers have a working knowledge of the legality of various types of sex work. Although it is beyond the remit of this study, it is suggested that consideration be given to changes in legislation and policy to increase clarity, increase understanding and increase the safety of those involved in sex work.

- The sex workers interviewed for this study had mostly positive experiences of their involvement with the police. However, there is still reluctance to involve the police, particularly by street workers. Adapting the Merseyside model where all crimes against sex workers are viewed as hate crimes may encourage sex workers to report violence and abuse against them but also, as suggested in the literature, increase rates of prosecution of those who attack sex workers. The availability of a sexual assault referral centre in Norwich (The Harbour Centre) and increased confidence in reporting would put Norfolk in a strong position to increase convictions and protect sex workers from abuse and violence.

- Finally, the findings of this study indicate that rather than reducing support services for sex workers it appears to be necessary to expand these services to include different kinds of sex work and sex workers and the increasing numbers of people who engage in sex work. The
findings indicate that that some of those services could be web based but that, given the nature of the vulnerabilities of many of those involved in selling sex, there will also always be a need for long-term relationship-based therapeutic services which address the needs of individuals in a holistic way.

They would always have someone on the bus or they would get someone who worked for the Council or somewhere, to see whether they could help you with the housing and I mean they have got me in Bed and Breakfasts when I didn’t have nowhere to stay so but these associating with other Services together, have helped me with getting properties and all, you know, with loads of things... at the time if I hadn’t had them I probably wouldn’t be here today...I really don’t think I would have been (On-street sex worker)
REFERENCES


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Appendix A

A study of the support needs of sex workers across Norfolk

Information sheet

What is the purpose of the study?
The needs of sex workers change all the time. For example, sex workers operate from many locations including via the internet. This evaluation wants to find out what services sex workers want and need and how they want those services delivered. We want to speak to people who have experience of sex work and your views matter. The University of East Anglia has been asked by The Matrix to carry out this independent study.

Do I have to take part?
No. You can decide if you want to take part. This sheet provides information about the study but if you decide to take part you will be given a consent form to sign. You can change your mind at any time and whether you take part or not will not change the services that you get.

What will happen to me if I take part?
Penny or Jane will get in touch with you and arrange a time and place that suits you to interview you. It will be somewhere private. We will ask you about any services you have had, what you think of the services and what else you feel should be available to support your needs. If you agree, the interview will be recorded so that we don’t have to take notes while we talk together. The interview will take about an hour.

Payment
We would like to give you a £20 store voucher as a ‘thank you’ for your time.

What are the disadvantages and risks of taking part?
You will need to give up about an hour of your time. Talking about your life experiences and support needs may bring up upsetting feelings.

Will my taking part be kept private?
Your information will be kept strictly private and only the study team will hear or see your records from the interview. When we write a report about what we found we will use some examples and quotes from the interviews but not enough for other people to recognise anyone who was interviewed. The only time we would tell someone else what you say is if you tell us something that makes us think you are not safe. If we think we need to tell someone we will discuss this with you first.

If you would like to take part you can call or text Penny on 07920 708970 or email p.sorensen@uea.ac.uk

All messages are confidential and Penny will get back to you.
A study of the support needs of sex workers across Norfolk

Consent form for interview participants

(Please tick each box to show that you consent to that point)

☐ I agree to take part in the interview for this study. The study has been explained to me and I have read the information sheet and had the opportunity to ask about anything I did not understand.

☐ I agree that the interview can be recorded.

☐ I understand that I can stop taking part in the research at any time.

☐ I understand that I will not be identified and in addition, personal details will be changed in order to preserve anonymity in any report produced.

Name__________________________________________________________________

Signed_________________________________________________________________

Date___________________________________________________________________
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Background information
Age
Ethnic group
Country of birth
Preferred language
Sexual/gender identity
Which area do you live in?
Marital status/dependants
Current accommodation

A bit about you
How did you first become involved with sex work? – How long ago and where/area
Could anything have made a difference to you starting at that point?
What type of sex work do you do? – street, brothel, sauna/massage, escort, dance
How do you advertise? – online, magazines, papers, word of mouth
Do you have experience of:
  • Dealing with the police, probation service, courts
  • Problematic drug use
  • Problematic alcohol use
  • Housing problems (eviction, temporary accommodation, hostel, B&B)
  • Have you ever been homeless? For how long?
  • Do you have or have you had any financial issues – debt, pension, tax
  • Do you have any health problems (sexual, physical, psychological, suicidal thoughts, chronic illnesses,
  • Are you registered with a GP?
  • Have you experienced violence (clients, partners) and/or abuse, bullying (sexual, emotional, physical) or harassment? Did you report it? If not, why not?

Thinking about services
Who do you talk to if you need support (emotional and/or practical)?
Who do you rely on in a personal crisis?
Are there any current issues that you would like help or support with?
Have your needs for services changed over time?
Can you name services for sex workers that you are aware of in Norfolk?
Have you heard of The Matrix?
Do you use specialist sex worker services in Norwich because they are not available where you live?
Would you like similar services to be available where you live?
Do you think outreach services are important?
Which services do you use regularly or are you currently in contact with? E.g. psychological/counselling, health, emergency contraception, advocacy, legal services.
What are your experiences of services and staff? Think about access, flexibility, stigma, confidentiality, trust, location.
Have you ever experienced discrimination from anyone providing services?
What is your preferred way of accessing services: phone, drop-in, attached to other services (e.g. health), outreach, text, online chat, blogs, forums?
Are services always available at a time when you need them or when you are able to access them? I.e. sometimes needed at unsociable hours/urgently.

Safety
How do you keep safe? Techniques, strategies.
Buddies for safe calls, working in pairs.
Ugly Mugs reports – do you access? App?
Do you have experience of peer support groups or online forums?
Where do you access safety information? Or any other information?
Have you ever attended any courses in assertiveness and negotiating with clients?

Finishing
Have you ever been asked which services you would like and how you would like to access them?
Would you like to be involved in developing the right kind of services for sex workers?
How would you like service providers to consult with you?

Do you have any other comments or questions that you would like to ask me?
Thank you for taking part in the study about the support needs of sex workers in Norfolk. We hope that you have found the interview useful as a way of thinking about the services that you find helpful and services which are still needed.

If you feel at all worried about anything discussed during the interview there are helplines which may be able to guide and support you.

- **The ROSE campaign** is a non-judgmental service which offers help and support on issues such as sex work, personal safety, housing, benefits, drug and alcohol services and other health related issues. Call them on **0808 800 1037** for free confidential information.

- **The Matrix** provides a confidential, flexible and responsive service to those working in the sex industry in Norfolk. It operates an outreach service around Norwich. The Matrix also works with individuals who work from home, in brothels and escort agencies. You can call them on **01603 883423** (weekdays 9-5).

- **The Harbour Centre** is dedicated to providing a comprehensive service to women and men who have been raped or sexually assaulted, offering the opportunity for medical examinations without police involvement. You can call them between 8am and 5pm Monday to Friday on **01603 276381** or contact the 24 hour helpline on **0845 456 4810**.

Any questions you may have about the research study can be directed to the researchers:

Penny Sorensen (Email: p.sorensen@uea.ac.uk; Tel: 01603 591084)
Jane Dodsworth (Email: jane.dodsworth@uea.ac.uk; Tel: 01603 593572)

If you have any comments or complaints about the way the research has been conducted please contact:

Professor Gillian Schofield
Head of the School of Social Work
University of East Anglia
Norwich NR4 7TJ Phone 01603 592069; Email: g.schofield@uea.ac.uk
A STUDY OF THE SUPPORT NEEDS OF SEX WORKERS ACROSS NORFOLK

The research
We have been commissioned by The Matrix, Norwich, to undertake an assessment of the support needs of sex workers across Norfolk. This will involve an attempt to map the areas and extent of adult sex work including street workers and the more hidden escorts, parlour workers etc. In order to map this population we would like to draw on the knowledge of agencies and professionals who are sometimes involved with providing services to sex workers. The findings from this research will be used to raise awareness of sex work in Norfolk and the kind of services the workers need and want.

Who are we?
Dr Jane Dodsworth is the principal investigator. She is a lecturer in social work and has extensive experience in research with sex workers and young people who have been sexually exploited. Dr Penny Sorensen is a senior research associate who has worked on several sensitive projects involving evaluations of support for families and young people. We are both based in The School of Social Work, University of East Anglia, Norfolk.

What you can help us with
We would be grateful if you, or someone from your agency, could complete the following questions about the numbers and location of any sex workers that your service comes into contact with. Once you have completed the ten questions, please return the form electronically to Penny (p.sorensen@uea.ac.uk). Penny can also be contacted on 01603 591084 if you have any questions or require further information about the research. All information is confidential and will be anonymised.

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<td>1. Do you have any knowledge of the type of sex work that goes on in your area?</td>
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<td>2. In the last year, do you know of any of your clients or service users that</td>
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1. Have you exchanged sex for resources (money, drugs, alcohol, accommodation etc.)? How many? Ages, gender, location

2. How do you know this (have they told you) or do you suspect (and why do you suspect)?

3. Do you know how or why they became involved in sex work?

4. Are you aware of any travelling from other countries or other areas in the UK for sex work/sexual exchanges?

5. Do you provide any services to sex workers? Is this any different to your routine services?

6. Do you know of anyone else who provides services to sex workers?

7. Do you know the needs of sex workers in your area?

8. Do you have any concerns in relation to sex work in the area?

9. Who else do you think we should talk to who may know something?
A STUDY OF THE SUPPORT NEEDS OF SEX WORKERS ACROSS NORFOLK

The research
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Who are we?
Dr Jane Dodsworth is the principal investigator. She is a lecturer in social work and has extensive experience in research with sex workers and young people who have been sexually exploited. Dr Penny Sorensen is a senior research associate who has worked on several sensitive projects involving evaluations of support for families and young people. Birgit Larsson is a senior research associate with research experience in projects involving sexual exploitation, young female offenders, and looked after children. We are all based in The School of Social Work, University of East Anglia, Norfolk.

If you have any questions about the research or would like further information please contact Penny on p.sorensen@uea.ac.uk or 01603 591084
An assessment of the support needs of sex workers across Norfolk in order to determine what support services need to be provided across the county.

Focus Group for Professionals - to explore their views on service provision, issues faced, ways forward, best practice  (UEA Monday 10th November 2014)

Aim: To explore the extent of sex working across Norfolk in order to identify where services should be focused.

Research questions relevant to the focus group

- Is it possible to determine the extent and distribution of sex workers/sex working across the county?
- What is the changing nature of sex work in Norfolk? What is the changing nature of the needs of sex workers in Norfolk?
- What are the perspectives of specialist and other professionals involved in working with sex workers about service provision and how does this inform best practice?
- What lessons can be learnt from examples of best practice in this area which can inform future policy and practice across Norfolk?

Questions for the focus group:

1. What is known about sex work in other areas of the county outside Norwich?
2. What sort of sex work is it - street/escort/other?
3. What are professionals’ understandings/experience of the changing nature of sex work in Norfolk?
4. If the nature of sex work in Norfolk is changing are sex workers needs changing?
5. If so what are the changing needs
6. Are these needs provided for?
7. If so by whom?
8. What are seen by professionals as the key gaps in provision?
9. What do professionals’ know about The Matrix and what they do?
10. What would professionals like The Matrix to provide?
11. Are there examples of good practice in Norfolk or elsewhere which could be expanded/copied to improve services in Norfolk?
12. What do professionals think sex workers want/need in terms of service provision?
13. Any other sex worker related points anyone would like to make?
CONSENT FORM – FOCUS GROUP

☐ I confirm that I have read and understood the information about the UEA study of the support needs of sex workers across Norfolk.

☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.

☐ I agree to discussions being audio-recorded.

☐ I agree that my comments can be used in any report or publication in relation to this research, in accordance with the reassurances given.

☐ I understand that I will not be identified and in addition, personal details will be changed in order to preserve anonymity.

☐ I understand that the research team may wish to approach me for further information or to check preliminary results and agree that they may keep my contact details in order to do this while reserving the right not to participate in activities at a later date if I so choose.

☐ I agree to keep discussions in the focus group confidential.

Name___________________________________________________________________

Signature________________________________________________________________

Date_______________________________________________

Contact details (email or phone/mob) _________________________________________
Thank you for taking part in the study about the support needs of sex workers across Norfolk. We hope that you have found the focus group useful as a way of thinking about current services, joint working and any improvements that might be made to enhance support for all sex workers.

Any questions you may have about the research study can be directed to the researchers:

Jane Dodsworth (Email: jane.dodsworth@uea.ac.uk; Tel: 01603 593572)
Penny Sorensen (Email: p.sorensen@uea.ac.uk; Tel: 01603 591084)
Birgit Larsson (Email: b.larsson@uea.ac.uk)

If you have any comments or complaints about the way the research has been conducted please contact:

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