



EMOTIONS AND EXIT: THE MODEL

A MODEL OF EMOTIONALLY
INTELLIGENT SERVICE
PROVISION FOR WOMEN
LEAVING PROSTITUTION

A MODEL OF EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT SERVICE PROVISION

STAND AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION



ABOUT SASE

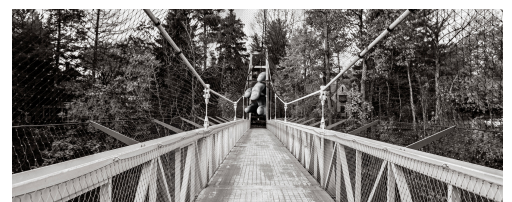
Stand Against Sexual Exploitation (SASE) is a non-profit, non-government, voluntary network of individuals, professionals and services supporting women affected by commercial sex industry. It is our primary aim to provide solutions to help women to leave prostitution and create a different and sustainable path for themselves. Through our research we have found that many women wanted to leave prostitution but were affected by stigma and lack of awareness of how to make this change.

There are currently over 100 UK services dedicated to the support of women in prostitution, but the services they provide are often patchy and lack the resources and ability to provide long-term changes for women. To tackle this issue SASE works to bring charities, service providers, local authorities and interested parties together to create resources and a unified way of thinking when it comes to helping women exit prostitution. The SASE network supports service providers to be effective in supporting exit from prostitution through practice, policy, and law.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This information has been gathered from a range of resources on exiting prostitution, including research and reports on exit and desistance (see bibliography). The emotionally intelligent model was first published in PhD Research, 'The Emotional Trajectories of Women's Desistance: A Repertory Grid Study on Women Exiting Prostitution' (Johnson 2016).

This briefing has been made possible thanks to funding from the Big Lottery Fund. Law, policy, and practice discussed in this document may be subject to change since the date the document was produced.



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POSITION STATEMENT

Prostitution is a particularly gendered activity, with women most often purchased by men. Prostitution is an activity that is increasingly recognised as both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality. While we recognise the involvement of others in prostitution our focus is predominantly on women. The presence of prostitution in a society that values equality is a constant reminder that there is much progress to be made in relation to the gender pay gap; the sexualisation of female bodies; and the disproportionate experience of violence and sexual abuse experienced by many women prior to their involvement in prostitution.

SASE rejects the use of the term 'sex work' to describe women's involvement in prostitution and do not accept prostitution as a form of employment. SASE focusses on the context in which choices are made as opposed to any individual choice.

SASE therefore believe that the most effective and just strategy is one that that focuses legal attention on those who create the demand for prostitution (purchasers); that decriminalises those who are involved in selling sex (predominantly women); that encourages and supports women to leave prostitution through the provision of meaningful exiting support (our main focus); and that rather than normalising prostitution encourages society to understand the power relations and exploitation that commonly occur within this transaction.

ABOUT THE MODEL

UNDERSTANDING THE EMOTIONS OF CHANGE AND HOW TO SUPPORT THIS

WHY EMOTIONS ARE IMPORTANT

Fostering positive emotions and healing undesired emotions will be prerequisites to women making change, going hand in hand with the ability to transition roles and lifestyles. Many women could not imagine being ok and able to exit if they did not achieve certain aspects of their emotional wellbeing. As personal values and emotional states vary, service provision must be able to respond to varying emotional needs.

GENERATING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

This is a two-part model, the first being a set of overarching or basic principles and the second being flexible provision based on emotional categories.

Where the goal of service provision is to generate emotional wellbeing, ethos and overall approach must be matched with a model that is responsive to individual needs. Depending on the emotional needs of each individual, service provision can intervene and play a supporting and transformational role. Service providers can be aware of the kind of emotional dynamics at play and respond with what is most needed in the circumstances, being both flexible and structured in their approach. By assessing each individual on an on-going basis, it will be possible to identify which of the four emotional categories below are most relevant at the time and to have systems in place to respond.

There are no fixed stages to exit, however, over time general themes and trends can be determined. As such, the emotional categories described in the briefing have been ordered in a way that reflects what is likely to come up in the pre, early, middle and later stages of exit. This is intended merely as a guide and should not be viewed as a rigid process – it is recommended that the needs of each woman be determined on an individual basis and as they unfold.

Responding to these emotional categories involves facilitating women to move from the negative emotions that act as a barrier to the positive emotions that act as a driver for change. The suggested model indicates both how to recognise and to respond to a woman in this category.



OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES



- Generating emotional energy through solidarity, support and positive peer relationships

The environment and ethos in which services are provided are extremely important. Staff must maintain appropriate professional boundaries at the same time as creating a culture that facilitates change and nurtures vulnerability. Peer relationships should be promoting positive change and easing isolation.

- Fostering hope and possibility through dialogue and an ideology that does not see involvement in the industry as inevitable and actively promotes exit

It is clear that many women are missing out on the opportunity to discuss exit or are unable to access comprehensive exiting programmes. It is essential that services take an approach that sees exit as achievable and something to be openly discussed.

- Providing opportunity for self-expansion and meaningful activity in order to offer viable roles to transition into (spanning work, relationships, and other aspects of their lifestyles)

Meaningful activity at all stages of exit is a particularly effective way of offering new emotional experiences and helping women transition into new roles and lifestyles.

- A commitment to identifying the emotional needs of each service user and a flexible approach to responding to these individual needs

It is important to work with women to identify their individual emotional needs at any particular time, which will vary by individual. Four emotional categories have been identified to simplify this process and to allow for a blueprint for working with women.

- The ability to provide both urgent and open-ended support

It is important to work with women to identify their individual emotional needs at any particular time, which will vary by individual. Four emotional categories have been identified to simplify this process and to allow for a blueprint for working with women.

- The availability and provision of therapeutic intervention where a woman is emotionally 'stuck'

Therapeutic intervention is not a prerequisite for leaving prostitution and some women will leave without needing this. However, it can be a necessary part of exit when a woman is unable to move beyond certain emotions, leaving her incapable of moving on. This can occur at any stage of exit.



Solidarity



Hope



Opportunity



Responsive



Open-Ended



Therapy

Generates Positive Emotional Energy and is Responsive to Emotional Needs

CATEGORY 1: DISCONNECTION

Most likely to occur: prior to contemplating exit

RECOGNISING THIS CATEGORY

A woman who is experiencing disconnection will display signs of depression and/or will seem to lack emotion. She is out of touch with her feelings. She may display a tolerance or acceptance of negative emotions or experiences. However, she will not have access to positive emotions and so find little enjoyment or engagement with life. She probably isn't considering exit because she does not have hope and believes change is impossible. She may also mask her feelings and operate through a persona. Often, women who are disconnected will be numbing their emotions through drugs and/or alcohol.



CASE STUDY: OLIVIA

Olivia is still currently involved in street prostitution and does not enjoy her day-to-day life. She believes that the sex industry is the only way that she can make money and finds several aspects of the work unpleasant, such as her treatment from the police and members of the public and standing outside in the cold. She is isolated and has lost custody of her children. She struggles to articulate any positive emotions and cannot imagine what an alternative lifestyle would look like. However, when asked about her life she does not feel like her current lifestyle is true to who she really is and what she wants. She is shut off from her emotions and her experiences. She does not acknowledge the feelings of anger and shame that come out in conversation when talking to her.

RESPONDING WITH SERVICE PROVISION

- Alcohol and drug treatment

Numbing out can be as a direct result of drug and alcohol use and many women who access services are known to be in need of drug and alcohol treatment, this can be a crucial element in fostering enough stability to be able to make change:

- Open dialogue about the possibility of exit
- Dedicated exiting programmes
- Outreach

Hope and possibility are crucial drivers to change and exiting services are uniquely positioned to offer the possibility of change when people have lost hope. This involves beginning a dialogue with women about their choices and the possibility of exit. An ethos that does not see prostitution as inevitable helps to generate the emotional energy women need when they feel unable to move forward.. Ultimately, this gives women more choice. Many women have not been invited to talk about exit despite the fact they would welcome it.

- Possible therapeutic intervention to respond to depression, feeling numb, and trauma

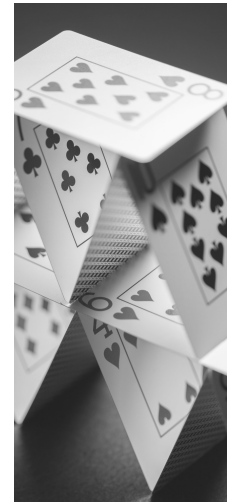
The inability to feel and engage actively in life will derail any possibility of exit - or indeed any possibility of happiness. There may be a need for psychotherapeutic intervention. Unacknowledged, denied, and repressed shame or anger can be disruptive to social bonds and derail any attempts at making change.. Acknowledging these emotions can be reconstructive.

CATEGORY 2: INSTABILITY

Most likely to occur: in those who wish to exit and in early stages

RECOGNISING THIS CATEGORY

This woman will be consumed with concerns about safety and/or isolation and the need for support, and acceptance. She will likely be struggling with the immediate needs that are the traditional realm of harm reduction services and seeking solace from immediate harm or unpleasant experiences. In addition, she will have a sense of isolation, be distrustful of others and be seeking the companionship and support offered at the services. Further, she may be struggling with feelings of shame and degradation and benefit from the non-judgemental environment of support services.



CASE STUDY: LAURA

Laura has just escaped from a controlling boyfriend that morning. Her primary motivation is to escape this relationship and be in a safe space. The service had arranged her accommodation and supported her to leave. She is wary about the possibilities for the future and does not know whether she could realistically survive without involvement in the sex industry. However, she states that she does want to make change. She is experiencing a strong sense of isolation through her involvement in the industry and this feeds into some anxiety around completely separating from her partner. She desires a 'normal' life – a renewed relationship with her children, a nice house, holidays – but is not confident that these things are available to her.

RESPONDING WITH SERVICE PROVISION

• Harm reduction services • Secure premises • Local and accessible services • Emergency accommodation

The priority for women whose primary concern is to feel safe as opposed to afraid will be to meet their needs in respect of day-to-day threats of immediate harm and to reduce unpleasant experiences. Services are frequently a place of sanctuary and safety for women involved in the sex industry and responding to the immediate needs of women's safety is an essential element of service provision.

• Building relationships with key workers • Transforming relationships • Respite and protection

A supportive environment gives women the opportunity to build trust, particularly with key workers. This also means supporting women to transform their social networks by rebuilding relationships (for example friends and family) and move away from toxic relationships (such as with peers, pimps, and boyfriends). In addition, women may need to be supported to overcome the devastating impact of having children in care.

• Possible therapeutic intervention for fear and isolation • Holistic and joined up interventions to respond to need
Support services play a key role in providing relief from the stress and worry of women's daily lives and opening up the possibility of change by increasing emotional energy. The residual effects of involvement in the industry may call for therapeutic support in order to address trauma or feeling stuck.

• Providing a supportive and non-judgemental environment with an open doors policy

The open door of services has a profound impact on the ability of women to make changes in their life by providing on-going support and building a relationship with service users.

CATEGORY 3: TESTING

Most likely to occur: in women who are actively exiting

RECOGNISING THIS CATEGORY

A woman in this category may both have practical concerns and be experiencing changes in her sense of self and identity. She is attempting to adopt a new role, which involves both internal changes about how she thinks and feels and external changes in her behaviour and circumstances. She is likely to display uncertainty around what is possible, to feel vulnerable in relation to her future, and struggle with low self-esteem and a lack of confidence. She is testing and trying to develop or reach out to new possibilities. She may be vulnerable to returning to the industry if no desirable alternatives emerge.



CASE STUDY: PAULINE

Pauline has exited the industry but feels that money is a constant draw to becoming involved again because of debt. She is strongly concerned with developing a sense of independence and being able to manage her own life. The exiting service has helped to give her a sense of direction and routine. She wishes to return to participating in activities that give her a strong sense of self and strength - such as completing her degree and pursuing her career. She feels that she needs more protection and to be cared for. She feels limited by experiences of stigma so that she is unsure of what she will be able to achieve (and whether she will be accepted) and feels vulnerable.

RESPONDING WITH SERVICE PROVISION

- Support with finances, housing, and training or education

An awareness of the tension between being vulnerable and empowered while transitioning out of the industry is essential. Service provision provides a safe space in which women can be vulnerable in ways that lead to change. Responding to this vulnerability involves practical support in developing a more stable lifestyle – such as support with finances, housing, and training or education.

- Meaningful activity and alleviation of boredom

An essential factor to consider is also the issue of boredom – chaotic lifestyles can become habitual and once this stress is lifted a person may not know how to adapt to this change in pace. Finding meaningful activity can combat this. Service provision must therefore develop creative opportunities for meaningful alternatives. While developing opportunities for meaningful activity is important for making these larger changes, so too is simply developing opportunities for enjoyment and distraction.

- Support transitioning into independent living – paying bills, managing a household etc.
- Fostering choice
- Possible therapeutic intervention focussed on choice and empowerment

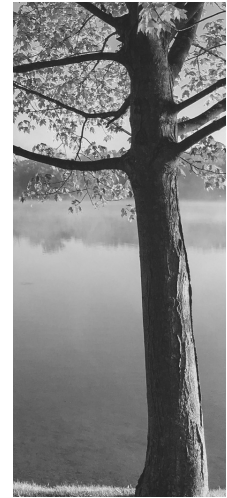
Finding freedom and having more choice is a central concern in relation to this category. This relates not only to the obvious effects of moving away from coercive control within the sex industry but also - at a different level - to finding the balance between a sense of freedom and being able to cope with new responsibilities. For many women freedom necessarily involves financial security and at this stage they may wish transform their relationship to money.

CATEGORY 4: GROUNDING

Most likely to occur: in women who have exited for longer periods

RECOGNISING THIS CATEGORY

A woman in this category may not be grappling with issues of safety, harm, or instability but instead with issues of identity and how to maintain a new lifestyle. She is experiencing emotional relief and wishing to construct a way of life that brings contentment and is sustainable. She may suffer from residual emotional issues of fear, shame and a lack of trust in others. Further, she may feel held back in relation to work and sustainable employment. In essence, she is seeking to ensure that she has strong roots and a sense of purpose, direction and stability. As such, the realities of daily life – its ups and downs, its responsibilities are embraced as necessary but sometimes challenging. Instead of struggling with issues of boredom she is focussed on feeling empowered.



CASE STUDY: GINA

Gina has been exited for 4 years after becoming pregnant with her son, which she saw as an opportunity for change and rejuvenation. She wishes to be in control of her life and not dependent on others and would like to find work in order to increase this sense of stability. She describes developing her self-esteem and confidence as something that she has had to work on and still works on daily. She has developed a new set of friends and engages in the community surrounding her church and religion, which is important to her. She has a strong sense of resilience and purpose, even though she continues to meet challenges. She describes feeling new and being at peace with herself and no longer identifies with her involvement in the industry, having left it all behind.

RESPONDING WITH SERVICE PROVISION

- Working with individuals to develop skills and interests
- Sustainable employment opportunities
- Possible therapeutic intervention focussing on guilt and shame

A key element of creating opportunity that develops self-esteem and pride is to ensure that women have a range of options in relation to the roles they could transition into - avoiding gender stereotypes or very limited fixed roles. This leads to more sustainable change. In particular, there is a need for engaging and accessible employment opportunities. When women have genuine opportunities to understand their skills and interests this widens their possibilities and promotes pride. Residual guilt and shame may need therapeutic intervention.

- Opportunities for inspiration
- Continued support that responds to a range of needs

Women will be seeking a well-rounded and settled lifestyle and may need continued support to ensure that this is achievable. They require a flexible and responsive approach from services who are able to offer both inspiration and support in carving out a lifestyle that works for them.

- Supporting women to become independent and find new communities to engage with

At some point women will be keen to completely move on from the subculture of the sex industry. A woman may be focussed on developing a new sense of identity and moving completely away from their prostitute identity, it is essential that services be aware that a woman may need the opportunity to engage in society away from their peer groups, particularly where there is pressure to re-engage in the sex industry.

SUMMARY OF INTERVENTIONS

DISCONNECTION

- Alcohol and drug treatment
- Open dialogue about the possibility of exit
- Dedicated exiting programmes
- Outreach
- Possible therapeutic intervention to respond to depression, feeling numb, and trauma

INSTABILITY

- Harm reduction services
- Secure premises
- Local and accessible services
- Emergency accommodation
- Building relationships with key workers
- Transforming relationships
- Respite and protection
- Holistic and joined up interventions to respond to need
- Providing a supportive and non-judgemental environment with an open doors policy
- Possible therapeutic intervention for fear and isolation

MOST LIKELY TO OCCUR IN EARLIER STAGES OF EXIT: ISSUES OF SAFETY, ISOLATION, AND VULNERABILITY

TESTING

- Support with finances, housing, and training or education
- Meaningful activity and alleviation of boredom
- Support transitioning into independent living – paying bills, managing a household etc.
- Fostering choice
- Possible therapeutic intervention focussed on choice and empowerment

GROUNDING

- Working with individuals to develop skills and interests
- Sustainable employment opportunities
- Opportunities for inspiration
- Continued support that responds to a range of needs
- Supporting women to become independent and find new communities to engage with
- Possible therapeutic intervention focussing on guilt and shame

MOST LIKELY TO OCCUR IN LATER STAGES OF EXIT: ISSUES OF PURPOSE, CHOICE, AND INDEPENDENCE