



FUNDING EXITING SERVICES

HOW TO EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT
WOMEN WHO ARE LEAVING
PROSTITUTION

EXITING GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE

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, including research and reports on exit and desistance (see bibliography).

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.

FUNDING SNAPSHOT

KEY BENEFITS OF FUNDING EXIT



Savings

Exiting projects can save the public purse £2 for every £1 spent



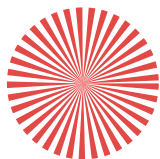
CJS and Health

These projects could save the Criminal Justice System alone in excess of £1 billion a year, and the health services in excess of £1.2 billion



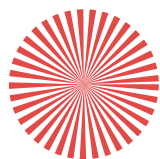
Social Return

Exiting has a huge social return on investment, which is good for both individuals and communities



Sustainable

Exit provides a sustainable solution, eradicating revolving doors and wasted money fighting fires



Better Outcomes

Commissioning the right services, instead of services that just tick boxes, means better costs savings and better outcomes

EXIT AND THE CHALLENGES OF COMMISSIONING

EXIT AND PROSTITUTION AS PRIORITIES

Prostitution as a priority: With many competing issues, some public bodies have been unable to ensure that prostitution is a priority. However, involvement in prostitution can have devastating consequences on the lives of women and children, is often intrinsically connected to other forms of crime (including gang-related and trafficking), and has a negative impact on communities. These issues need urgently addressing. When neglected, there is an increased burden on criminal justice, health, and other public services. In contrast, a comprehensive exiting strategy decreases this burden and offers a permanent solution (for example, see the Ipswich Prostitution Strategy).

Exit as a priority: Commissioners may be under pressure to only deal with urgent and high needs situations. This means that often only harm reduction and street-based interventions are funded, or that interventions are only aimed at crisis or highly complex situations. However, these interventions do not address the root cause of the issue and so women cycle through support services without effectively changing the circumstances that have led to the need for support. It also means that there are lost opportunities to help women before their needs become more complex and demanding. Money is wasted on services that are simply fighting fires without providing stable solutions.

Even in the space of 6 months, exiting programmes have a much stronger impact on women's lives than emergency intervention only. Measurable changes can be perceived early on (reduced involvement, reduced health issues, reduced chaotic behaviour). In order to ensure these changes are lasting, interventions of 2 years can ensure that women are successfully maintaining a new lifestyle and greatly reduce the risk of needing further intervention. There are exceptions to this and some women will maintain relationships with projects for much longer, however, the combination of intensive support over a 2 year period combined with an on-going 'open doors' policy is far more effective than crisis intervention.



REASONS FOR FUNDING EXIT

PART 1

FINANCIAL SENSE

As will be seen below, the cost of addressing only urgent or crisis situations - or using a 'sticking plaster' approach without addressing the real needs of women - leads to wasted money. Many funders are realising that in order to save costs, as well as make lasting and effective change, a more intelligent and comprehensive approach must be adopted.

DISASTER

For some, there will be specific events that highlight the need to address women involved in prostitution. In Ipswich, the murder of a number of women by a trusted and safe punter - a 'friendly face' - shed light on the fact that women involved in prostitution should not be left vulnerable and without choices.

Once the women's lifestyles, needs, and motivations were understood, Ipswich set about to eradicate the risk of harm to these women and create a hostile environment for violent perpetrator. Over time, the sex industry in Ipswich was virtually eliminated and women's lives transformed.

COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Historically, visible prostitution (mainly street based) was the main driver for addressing the issue of prostitution. Unfortunately, this often meant stigmatising and attempting to control the women involved, without addressing their real needs or the fact that it is the demand for prostitution that drives the industry.

Nowadays, the majority of people agree that marginalising the women who sell sex is both unfair and does not resolve the issue. However, prostitution can still be a cause for concern in neighbourhoods, not least because it often leads to street harassment of all women and creates an unpleasant or unsafe environment.

A very successful project in Tower Hamlets, the LIFT project, did a great job of bringing their community together to address prostitution. They raised awareness of the realities of prostitution so that residents were more compassionate to the women involved. Alongside this they supported exiting programmes and invested in long-term solutions. The community was then transformed and the women themselves were helped.

In contrast, areas that criminalise women as opposed to punters, often find that there is a constant supply to meet demand - and that criminalised women may actually become trapped in a perpetual cycle of prostitution and other forms of crime to address economic hardship. Overall, the problem does not get resolved in contrast to exiting services, which actually change the context in which decisions are made and shrink the industry.



Financial Sense



Resolving Disaster



Community Cohesion

REASONS FOR FUNDING EXIT

PART 2

RIGHTS AND BETTER OUTCOMES FOR WOMEN

There is an increasing awareness of the impact of involvement in prostitution and the lack of viable alternatives that lead to this entry into prostitution. Whether on street or off street, trauma, experiences of abuse, and lack of economic power are common characteristics.

People are no longer willing to allow women to be left without alternatives should they wish to leave prostitution and they understand that many women need support to access these alternatives.

PUTTING A STOP TO THE REVOLVING DOOR

Cycles of harm and dependence on service provision combine to ensure that women who access support may nevertheless never truly have their needs met.

Many women may be given temporary help but not given the opportunity and support to make any sort of lasting change. As a result, they start again back at the beginning, creating a 'revolving door' in relation to both public and third sector service provision. Exit puts a stop to this.

BOTTLE NECKING

The problem with piecemeal funding is that women may only have access to certain forms of service – for example homelessness intervention or drug treatment – without anywhere to turn either before or after these issues become relevant.

This means, on the one hand, that women are not being helped before their situation becomes urgent (prevention), or alternatively, have nowhere to go once these urgent needs have been addressed (often meaning a return to the same situation as before and repetition of the cycle).

Services become bottlenecked because they have nowhere to send women and they have no support beneath them to prevent crisis.

Exiting programmes are able to address needs over time and therefore reduce the burden on these emergency services, by both preventing crisis and ensuring that change is maintained.



Protecting Rights



Stopping the Revolving Door



Preventing Bottle Necking

The most important reason for funding exit is to protect rights and have better outcomes for women

WHY EXIT SAVES MONEY

PART 1

Overall, spending on exiting services saves money compared to the costs of other interventions. Savings surpassed spending in Ipswich, for every £1 spent on exit (which included both exiting services and challenging the demand side of prostitution), £2 was saved. One charity, Eaves Housing for Women, spent just £104,000 per year supporting 70-100 women to exit, with resulting savings in all of the areas below, as well as social return.

Resolving Chaos – a charity – has designed ways of proving the financial sense of offering services that more effectively address complex and multiple needs. They have shown that it is significantly less expensive for the public purse in the long-term. This applies to prostitution as these women have precisely the kind of complex and multiple needs that the charity addresses.



CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES ARE EXPENSIVE

Exiting programmes are able to address needs over time and therefore reduce the burden on emergency/crisis services, by both preventing crisis and ensuring that change is maintained. Criminal justice responses are often the main way that women involved in prostitution come into contact with public services. Costs include arrest, police presence and patrol, attending court, and nights in prison.

Many women are fined or hold a criminal record, which actually keeps them in prostitution and leads to more criminal justice involvement, meaning higher costs. In 2004, Walby did a study on domestic violence and found that it costs the criminal justice system £1 billion per year. The costs would now be higher due to inflation. Prostitution is likely to have similar costs because of the range of offences that are associated with prostitution – not simply soliciting but also offences such as theft and assault.

As exit attempts to break the cycle of criminal justice involvement, as well as to overcome the barriers of fines and criminal records, there are enormous costs savings. After implementing a new prostitution strategy that successfully promoted exit, Ipswich found that criminal justice costs reduced by 55%.

HEALTH COSTS (INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH)

Health costs include A&E admissions, visits to the GP, outpatient appointments, counselling, and nights in hospital. Women involved in prostitution present with a range of physical issues, including reproductive and sexual health, fatigue, headaches, stomach problems, pains, cold and flu, skin problems, and physical injuries. Further, common mental health problems include trauma (and detachment), anxiety, hostility, and depression, as well as sleep and concentration problems.

In relation to domestic violence, Walby (2004) estimated that the cost per year for both physical and mental health amounts to around 1.2 billion. Women in prostitution suffer similar injuries due to frequent attacks, however, there are also the added sexual health costs, as well as unwanted pregnancies (many women are under pressure to have sex without a condom for more money). In a Department of Health Report (2012) the costs of violence against women in prostitution were estimated to amount to 2.1 billion (criminal justice, health, social services combined).

WHY EXIT SAVES MONEY

PART 2

CHILDREN IN CARE AND SOCIAL WORK COSTS

Not only do women involved in prostitution have their own social work needs, there are often children involved. Many children are removed from their mothers and put into care. As such, social work has a large workload even when women themselves are disengaged from public services. The Department of Children and Schools and Families (Holmes et al 2009) estimated that it costs 25-30k per year to place a child in foster care. There are also more general administrative demands, which is costly in terms of staff time, when engaging with women in complex circumstances.

Rebuilding families and helping women to maintain a new lifestyle are essential parts of the exiting process. Research has found that even women who accept that their children may not return to live with them nevertheless build stronger bonds after exit. Reuniting children with their mothers remains an on-going challenge of exit and there is a need for stronger policy and practice around this. Outcomes do improve when exiting interventions are involved.

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Being stuck in prostitution means that many women are unable to find other work because of gaps on their CV, lack of confidence, and lack of opportunity. Holding a criminal record greatly exacerbates this problem, leading for some to almost insurmountable isolation from the job market. Really great exiting programmes are able to prepare women to live independently and engage in meaningful activity, including education and training. This increases their chances of finding employment and participating in the economy. However, more importantly, it leads to greater wellbeing and satisfaction.

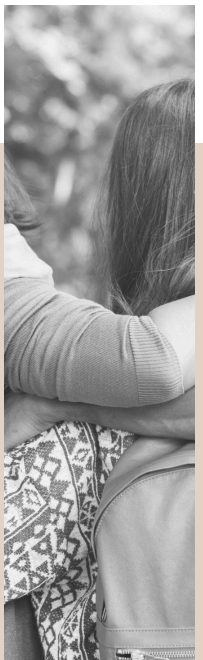
SUBSTANCE USE

The expense (as well as the quality and extent) of drug treatment and alcohol programmes varies. Rehab or detox is more expensive than methadone prescription treatment and many women rely on methadone without further intervention. However, this still incurs costs. It is also far less effective and even leads to people using a mix of both heroin and methadone. Involvement in prostitution tends to exacerbate drug use. Thus, even though women may go through drug treatment programmes, they may still use drugs and alcohol as a way of coping with their involvement and so do not really cease using.

Exiting programmes focus on getting women out of prostitution, a major driver for drug and alcohol use. Women also more effectively change their lifestyles and so are less likely to come into contact with the subculture that keeps them involved in substance use. Thus, women stop cycling through drug treatment programmes and this results in costs savings.

HOUSING

As many women involved in prostitution are homeless, there is an argument to suggest that housing costs increase through exit because exiting programmes have housing as a main priority. However, in terms of policy it would be undesirable to view a reduction in homelessness as a loss. Further, once women are in housing, then exit helps to decrease the costs as programmes are designed to help women to live independently and maintain tenancies (with private or social landlords). They are therefore far less likely to cycle through the more expensive forms of emergency accommodation, which amounts to a significant costs saving.



THE SOCIAL RETURN

MEASURING THE SOCIAL VALUE OF FUNDING EXIT

Social return on investment is a way of measuring the value of an outcome by how much people would pay in other circumstances to receive the same benefit. These comparisons are metaphorical but they must be realistic and justified. For example, a **social benefit** may be increased mobility because previously you weren't able to leave your house, the **value** of this can be measured by the price people pay annually for public transport, which gives freedom of movement. Social return is an attempt to make intangible benefits more tangible and to reflect on their value compared to the money invested in the service or project offered.

For exiting services, there is a range of benefits for both women and communities, many of which reflect a dramatic improvement in lifestyle and outcome (examples below).

Walby (2004) estimates that the 'Human and Emotional Cost' of domestic violence amounts to 17 billion. This is measured by people's willingness to pay to avoid trauma. By analogy, we can imagine that the human and emotional cost of prostitution is just as high, considering the high levels of trauma experienced by women.

- **Increased emotional wellbeing:** Research on emotions and exit has shown that women undergo a transformation in their emotional landscape – feeling more confident, connected, and content. This in turn reduces stress and marginalisation and increases the ability to make decisions and take action. A financial proxy for this could be the costs of attending therapy, life coaching, CBT, or even retreats. Although counselling is one aspect of exit, being part of an exiting programme has a greater value in terms of achieving emotional wellbeing than the therapeutic sessions alone. Therefore, the financial proxy is the cost of attending more therapy than is already accessed in the projects. (Eg. Weekly therapy for one year = £2,600)
- **Increased knowledge and understanding of the options available:** Women have far greater access to information and advice and are therefore better placed to make change, or even to build the hope that change is possible. A financial proxy for this would be the costs of attending training or the costs of a researcher – in other words, the time and energy it would cost to find out this information through research. (Eg. Welfare advice training over two days = £312)
- **Able to access amenities and pursue activities:** Women become more engaged in meaningful activity and have better access to amenities. A proxy for this is the average household spend on recreation – in other words the amount people pay to be actively engaged in life. (Eg. 2016 average annual household spend on recreation and culture = £3,536)
- **Links to communities and networks:** Women often rebuild relationships and feel more supported in general, due to building new communities and networks (including the support services themselves). The desire to be connected to others can be measured financially by the average household spend on communication. (Eg. 2016 average annual household spend on communication = £832)
- **Community cohesion:** It is undeniable that prostitution, when visible, continues to affect communities. This can be particularly worrying for women who may feel vulnerable to pimps and perpetrators in the area, as well as distressing and unpleasant for everybody. As mentioned earlier, the LIFT project engaged the community in Tower Hamlets in supporting women involved in prostitution and eradicating demand in the area. This led to good outcomes for women involved in prostitution, as well as better community cohesion. In particular, it reduced fear and hostility towards the women themselves. The value of community cohesion could be measured by the annual Local Authority spending on community activities – another way of ensuring the wellbeing of communities, or by the annual household council tax contribution per individual. (Eg. Average household council tax in England 2016/17 = £1,530)

FUNDING THE MOST EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMES

PART 1

Many organisations claim that they fund 'exit' without offering anything that resembles an effective exiting service. Often, it is simply tagged onto harm minimisation services with no comprehensive understanding of what 'exit' actually involves.

This results in mistakes such as expecting women to raise the issue of exit when they are feeling as if there is no hope and unaware of the help that could be available to them, or only offering exit to certain women and assuming incorrectly that others wouldn't be interested. It also leads to mistakes such as thinking that all other issues need to be resolved before exit becomes an option – such as health, housing, and drug use.

More generally, many services that claim to offer exit do not actually offer a range of services, nor do they understand how to fully support the process and ensure that exit is maintained.

When commissioning exiting programmes key features to look out for that indicate an effective service are:

PROACTIVE

A proactive approach to promoting exit – believing that exit is achievable for everybody and not putting the burden on women to raise this issue (often they will not as they have lost hope)

A CLEAR EXITING STRATEGY

A clear exiting strategy – including key stages and making room for relapses and reversals, as well as targets and indicators

AN EXITING WORKER

An identifiable person who is responsible for overseeing the exiting programme – preferably a dedicated exiting worker

CASE MANAGEMENT

A holistic programme that addresses a range of needs – at the same time, not expecting all issues to be 'resolved' before exit occurs, recognising that some needs can be addressed after exit

STRENGTHS BASED WITH MEANINGFUL ACTIVITY

An approach that promotes meaningful activity and focuses on capitalising on women's strengths – the aim is to ensure sustainable change, which means making sure that women are able to adopt and maintain a new lifestyle that is meaningful to them



FUNDING THE MOST EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMES

PART 2

Other factors to consider are:

TARGETS AND INDICATORS

Targets and indicators should be realistic to reflect the process of exit, as opposed to imposing unrealistic levels of change

MAKING ROOM FOR SETBACKS AND REVERSALS

Often, setbacks will be a natural part of the process

SUPPORT TO TRANSITION INTO INDEPENDENT

Women benefit from support while transitioning into independent living so that they do not feel isolated and unable to maintain change

FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility is key, some women exit easily, others will need higher levels of support



EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICE

An example of best practice was the Chrysalis Project, which teamed up with the local authority in Lambeth to provide a supported housing exiting project.

In the first stage, women were given emergency accommodation and intensive support.

In the second stage, women lived in hostel style accommodation and liaised with their key worker to build a sustainable lifestyle away from prostitution.

In the final third stage, women went into independent housing but were still supported by a key worker for a period to maintain independence.

Exiting provision will typically address a range of needs, including substance use, rebuilding relationships, housing, education and training, finances, health, and emotional wellbeing.

For further information on exiting best practice, see our guide.



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