

Exiting Prostitution: Models of Best Practice

Prepared for the Ministry of Justice by

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Summary

We have reviewed literature on overseas best practice in relation to helping sex workers exit the sex industry. The literature is moderately extensive, with the most recent and comprehensive coming from the UK. There was little in the literature that singled out best practice principles with regard to helping under age sex workers to exit. Most attention was on preventing them from engaging in prostitution in the first place.

The report strays into literature beyond that simply on best principles for exiting. We felt it necessary to do so to provide a more sophisticated assessment.

Categories of sex workers (Section 1)

Exiting interventions have been promoted mainly in terms of the 'bottom end' of street workers. Generally, little consideration is given to the heterogeneity of sex workers and how – or whether – exiting interventions apply to different groups. We drew attention to two groups for whom exiting incentives might have little appeal.

- i. The first is those for whom sex work is a **preferred career** which gives them satisfaction. They are not well-recognised, even where sex work is decriminalised. They may be a small group, although we do not know for sure.
- ii. The second – and probably a big group – is those for whom sex work is **the best occupational option**. It offers flexibility and a source of good income.

Ideological underpinnings of models of intervention (Section 1)

The approaches taken in different jurisdictions to aiding (or forcing) exit from prostitution reflect their dominant ideological stances about sex work. The legal status of sex work will shape and be shaped by these dominant stances. The stances will influence the thrust and direction of exiting policies. We categorised four stances, depending on whether prostitution is seen as:

- i. An illegal activity – when exiting interventions will largely rely on coercion and penal sanctions, though not to the exclusion of social welfare methods.
- ii. An immoral activity – when exiting interventions are encouraged because sex work is seen as morally 'contagious'.
- iii. A form of violence against women – when exiting interventions seek to 'repair the victimisation' of sex workers on the premise that they are the 'wronged'. Sex workers who pursue prostitution as their preferred career, or for whom it is the best occupational option, will be resistant to interventions which suggest they need help to escape 'victimisation' status.

- iv. A social problem – when exiting interventions, even in a decriminalised regime, are supported because sex work is seen as symptomatic of social malaise and inadequate state support systems that fail to give sex workers alternative choices. Evidence that many sex workers have damaged or inadequate social backgrounds adds force to this ‘social problem’ perspective.

Entering sex work (Section 2)

Reasons for entering sex work are more directly relevant to prevention than to exiting interventions, but they can persist as reasons for remaining in the sex industry.

The literature shows a combination of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors in entering sex work. Push factors – particularly for young street workers – can include abuse, breakdown in caregiving, school exclusion, homelessness, and lack of money. Pull factors can include excitement, encouragement from other sex workers, and freedom to work one’s own hours to accommodate other responsibilities. Most important, though, seems to be that sex work can offer more money than ‘square jobs’.

Remaining (Section 2)

Many factors that draw sex workers into the industry persist as factors for remaining in it.

The thrust of evidence is that the money on offer is a compelling incentive to remain working. This may largely explain why job satisfaction is higher than popular stereotypes countenance. One important longitudinal study in London showed that many sex workers remained in the job even when other choices presented themselves – *via* vocational training or higher education. Sex work was also combined with – and facilitated – other work, education and training. There is evidence, too, that sex workers feel they provide a useful social service – offering emotional support, a service for the socially or physically disabled, and help for those with marital difficulties.

The case for exiting (Section 2)

When sex work has been decriminalised, the case for encouraging those involved to leave rests on the fact that sex workers operate in a risky world. This is so both in terms of sexual health and violence, irrespective of whatever controls are put in place to reduce risks.

While there is a strong case on health and safety grounds for exiting interventions, the literature suggests a weaker case on economic grounds – since sex work is occupationally advantageous for many of those involved, offering high rewards and flexibility. The emphasis on street prostitution in research, public thinking, and policy has tended to obscure this. In any event, the focus on street prostitution has permeated thinking about exit interventions. A perspective that sees sex work as *work* shifts the ground somewhat.

Exiting (Section 2)

Why people want to exit the sex industry and how they go about it has been very much less well researched than why people enter and remain in the industry. There are three principal features from the literature here:

Many – but by no means all – sex workers want in principle to exit

Social stigma may play a part here. Street workers more often want to exit.

It is difficult to exit

There are many barriers to exiting sex work. Economic factors are the biggest of all. Drug addiction and inadequate housing also seem prominent. Partners may want (or insist) on continuing involvement. Sex work can have become an entrenched lifestyle. There can be a loss of social support networks to ease transition into ‘normal’ society – and indeed some sex workers gain social support *within* sex work. Exiting can be difficult, too, because sex workers may not want to approach services they feel will judge them. And some – particularly those on the streets – lead chaotic lives and find it difficult to engage with services.

Exiting is far from a one-off process

Exiting is not a one-off process, but typified by stops and starts. The incentives to remain in sex work will compete with the practical difficulties of exiting, and the uncertain benefits of doing so without guarantees of formal and informal support.

Many studies document the frequency of trying to leave. In New Zealand, UK and Canadian studies, around two-thirds had tried to stop. One study of ‘exiters’ showed they had attempted to leave five to six times before making the break.

Pathways to exiting (Section 2)

The literature on pathways to exiting describes it as a process not an event. But it provides some pointers as to how changes in circumstances can act as a springboard for exiting. While sex workers often ‘take breaks’ and frequently come back because of money, there can be ‘turning points’. These can be fortuitous events that alter the balance of play (a new relationship for instance), or ‘crisis’ situations (such as violence or losing children into care).

After exiting (Section 2)

We came across little research which considered what happened after exiting in terms of the long-term impact of time spent in sex work, or strategies which helped exited workers to develop their lives. The few studies we located were not overly positive. One theme in them was that stigma and social exclusion can impact on the transition to a ‘normal’ lifestyle. Another theme was that ill-health and mental instability persist as problems.

Principles of best practice in exiting interventions (Section 3)

The literature reviewed

We reviewed a moderately extensive literature on best practice principles in relation to both support and exiting. The literature fell into three main types:

- i. **Academic papers** which investigate how programmes operate.
- ii. **Policy documents** from official agencies which lay out approaches to service support. The most important is that from the British Home Office. This drew on wide consultation with sex industry representatives, and the careful evaluations of eleven multi-agency projects which examined ‘what works’ in tackling prostitution. The projects were funded under the Crime Reduction Programme (CRP) introduced by the Labour Government in 1997.
- iii. **Evaluations of programmes in terms of outcomes.** These are thin on the ground. The most useful are five of the eleven CRP projects which aimed to provide routes out for women involved in street prostitution (Hester and Westmarland, 2004).

There is more literature from jurisdictions where sex work is still illegal than from those where it has been decriminalised. This is probably because exiting prostitution is seen as more imperative when criminal activity is involved. Much of the literature focuses on the tension between law enforcement approaches to exiting and social welfare approaches. Short-term reactive measures can work counter to longer-term problem-solving ones.

Support services versus exiting interventions (Section 3)

It was difficult to differentiate best practice principles for exiting interventions from the spectrum of general support services for sex workers. The literature largely addresses them together. This may be because support services for current sex workers are seen as integral to successful exiting interventions – in showing that help is available throughout the forward / backward process of exiting.

Services vary considerably – ranging from basic harm reduction; on-site counselling and advice; health screening; safety plans; help with housing and childcare; and peer support. Exit strategies form part of the package.

The main best practice principles (Section 3)

Box A summarises the main best practice principles we identified with regards to exiting strategies.

Box A Summary of best practice principles for exiting interventions

Holistic interventions	The main principle is that a number of different service providers need to be engaged to address the multiplicity of issues that sex workers often face when they want to exit the sex industry. The agencies include those who deliver: mental health and healthcare services; welfare benefits advice; housing support and advice; antenatal care; childcare and parenting support; education and training; and employment services.
Dealing with changes of mind	Interventions need to accept that sex workers trying to exit will go forwards and backwards. It's a patience game.
Facilitating free choice	Sex workers need choices, but have to make their own decisions. This may be especially important for young sex workers.
Dedicated services and brokerage	Dedicated services are needed, with an agent who will take responsibility for brokering the provision of services. One-to-one support from a 'key worker' seems to work best, especially for young sex workers.
Building trusting relationships	Relationships of trust can provide the basis for exploring routes out. Outreach ¹ is a crucial mechanism. Trusting relationships with brothel owners are also important to gain access to brothel workers. Trusting relationships are especially important for dealing with younger sex workers who are unlikely to accept advice other than from 'credible' supporters. Ex-sex workers are a good resource.
Adequate resourcing	Resourcing can be difficult, but needs to be there for good service provision. Continuity of resourcing is also important for staff retention.
Public education	This is important to counter the idea that those in sex work do not deserve support, and to raise awareness of the issues associated with prostitution. Projects should make it clear that they aim to develop routes out. They should have good communication 'tools'.
Outreach	Outreach maximises the chances of engaging with those who might be considering exit and who need extra reinforcement.
Location of services	Services should be close, but perhaps not too close to areas of prostitution. Opening hours and appointment systems should be geared to the needs of sex workers.

Best practice as opposed to 'what works' (Section 3)

Few exiting interventions have tried to assess 'what works' in exiting interventions, as opposed to what is 'best practice'. There are substantial difficulties in doing so. These include: lack of baseline measures; lack of control groups; the difficulty of following up sex workers; and knowing whether exit was achieved rather than a period of 'time out'.

Three types of exiting provision (Section 4)

Three areas of provision have featured most in the literature on best practice principles. These are (i) drug treatment; (ii) housing; and (iii) training, education and employment.

¹ Outreach work with sex workers is that which, simply put, *takes* support to sex workers, rather than expecting them to *access* it themselves. It can involve youth workers, ex-sex workers, church groups and others.

Drug addiction

Dealing with drug addiction is seen as crucial as a first step towards exiting, especially as it often forces sex workers back onto the street. The literature suggests a number of best principles:

- **Fast tracking** to addiction services is important. Protocols with drug treatment providers need to be set up to ensure that services can be engaged immediately.
- **Points of crisis** can provide a good opportunity to engage sex workers in drug treatment.
- **Treatment entered voluntarily** is much more likely to be successful.
- **Dedicated support** is a key.
- **All client needs** should be dealt with, not just the misuse of the drugs.
- **Pimps / partners** may need counselling and treatment in some cases.

Housing

Adequate provision of settled accommodation is seen as critical to finding routes out, especially for young sex workers. This can be difficult because of limited provision and the often unstable nature of sex workers. Nonetheless, the literature suggests best principles are:

- **Being able to respond to crises** – through specialist high-level accommodation. Hostels may not always be able to deal adequately with the difficulties involved in exiting sex workers.
- **Being able to help a stabilisation process** – through transitional housing for those needing safe and affordable accommodation on a short-term rental.
- **Providing aftercare** – through support to sex workers to sustain their tenancies, develop skills to budget and pay bills, and to claim benefits.
- **Advocates of sex workers** need to make sure that others understand the particular difficulties involved in exiting sex work. It will not help, for instance, if criminal convictions or drug use are held against them.
- **A dedicated housing officer** may be in a good position to help most.
- **Domestic violence** – citing this as a problem for sex workers may encourage housing agencies into offering solutions.

Education, training and employment

Education and training is important in relation to exiting, not only to improve employment opportunities but also in helping to build self-esteem. Employment itself is also seen as important. Some of the best practice principles as regards housing were:

- **Fast-tracking** to training and employment services.
- **Specialist support and assessment** to help sex workers access and sustain work.
- **Matching skills and interests** to access to employment opportunities.
- **Dealing first with other issues** that might be a barrier to employment – e.g. housing, health, and childcare.

The five UK Crime Reduction Programme projects (Section 5)

The best practice principles from the five 'routes out' projects evaluated as part of the Home Office's Crime Reduction Programme (CRP) were incorporated above. However, we described in Section 5 the aims and elements of the five projects, particularly in terms of *Outputs* and *Outcomes*. The evaluation period ran for about 21 months. This is a limitation given the forward / backward nature of exiting. Projects also differed with regard to their measures of exiting.

A range of interventions and types of support were implemented in the five projects relating to sexual health, drug use, domestic violence, housing and other needs. Support included outreach, one-to-one discussion, drop-in facilities, information gathering and sharing, and referrals to other agencies.

The evaluations of the CRP projects were resource intensive in research terms. They serve to underline how difficult it is to say 'what works'. It was not possible, for instance, to compare the five projects in terms of the number of women who had 'exited', which was defined differently across the projects. It is also not known whether some of the exited women returned to sex work, or whether others exited after the end of the evaluation.

A model of support (Section 5)

The main lessons from the CRP evaluations as regards best practice principles are that:

- **Times of crisis** are when sex workers are most likely to want to change their lives. They need help at this stage to move to a more stable situation. Interventions might include fast track referral to a drugs programme, or rehousing.
- **Once basic needs have been met**, it is important to assess what sex workers *want to do* if they exit (the principle of *allowing choice*).
- **At the exiting / moving on stage** there should be continued offers of support so that 'crisis factors' do not reoccur. Exiting sex workers may also need professional counselling to deal with past experiences.

Some other projects (Appendix 1)

We gave some details of other projects set up with a focus on helping sex workers to exit. These are ones of local interest, and / or which have attracted attention as being innovative, well delivered, and having pointers for best practice. Most of them focused on housing provision.

1 Introduction

This report responds to a request by the Ministry of Justice for a literature review on overseas best practice in relation to exiting the sex industry, with particular reference to under age sex workers. The information will inform the review of the Prostitution Reform Act 2003 being undertaken by the Prostitution Law Review Committee. The literature we examined is moderately extensive, with the most recent and comprehensive coming from the UK. There was little in the literature that singled out best practice principles with regard to helping underage sex workers to exit. There was rather more which focussed on preventing them from engaging in prostitution in the first place – but this is essentially out of the scope of this review.

1.1 Introduction

The report strays into literature beyond that on best principles for exiting. We felt it necessary to do so to provide a more sophisticated assessment. Thus, in this section there is some discussion of:

- **Categories of sex workers** – since appropriate exiting models vary for different groups.
 - **The ideological underpinnings of models of intervention** – since these often structure approaches to intervention.
- **Reasons for entering and remaining in the sex industry** – since these are critical to understanding how incentives to leave can be balanced against them.

The remainder of the report is as follows:

- **Section 2** addresses the process of exiting. Three key points here are that:
 - (i) many sex workers in principle at least want to exit;
 - (ii) it seems difficult to do so; and
 - (iii) exiting rarely appears a cut and dried process.
- **Section 3** looks at what the literature shows as regards overarching principles of best practice.
- **Section 4** looks at three areas of provision which are seen as particularly important:
 - (i) drug treatment;
 - (ii) housing; and
 - (iii) training and employment.

It highlights what is known about the most successful ways of assisting exit through these areas of provision.

- **Section 5** presents results from five exiting interventions which have been evaluated with regards to *impact*. There are no other such evaluations.
- **Appendix 1** briefly describes some programs which have attracted attention as innovative, well delivered, and having pointers for best practice.

1.2 Categories of sex workers

Discussion about exiting interventions often fails to take account of differences between categories of sex workers – with much of it focussed on the ‘bottom end’ of very marginalised and damaged street workers. However, sex workers are far from a homogeneous group, and exiting initiatives need to be appropriately targeted. An obvious example is that alcohol and drug (A&D) strategies are of little relevance to sex workers without A&D problems. It is also questionable whether resources should be deployed on those who like their work and wish to remain in it. For this group few exiting incentives will have appeal.

For the purpose of considering exiting interventions, we see sex workers as falling into four main groups. They are those for whom sex work is:

- (i) A preferred career. These are sex workers who very much enjoy what they do. These workers are not well-recognised, even in New Zealand where sex work is legal. They are likely to be a small group, although we do not know for sure.
- (ii) The best occupational option. For this group, sex work offers flexibility and a source of good income. While it may not be their preferred career choice, it is likely on balance to be so. Other sources of work would be an option for some sex workers here, and in terms of exiting interventions many could be helped by mainstream services. The size of this group is not known, but is significant.
- (iii) The result of limited choice. The line between this group and the previous one is difficult to draw finely, but the sex workers here are more likely to be locked into the industry because of the need to finance a drug habit or homelessness. This group may predominantly comprise street workers, especially young or under age ones for whom prostitution constitutes ‘sex for survival’ or ‘sex for favours’ – for example, exchanging sex for accommodation, alcohol, cigarettes or drugs. Intervention strategies will require going beyond mainstream services, at least in the first instance.
- (iv) The result of no choice. For this group, sex work will have resulted from trafficking, or exploitation by pimps. The proportion of sex workers in this group is difficult to estimate, although there is no evidence to suggest that trafficking is a significant problem in New Zealand.

The typology above cuts across other conventional distinctions – for instance between ‘street’ and ‘indoor’ workers. It is difficult to map them closely, but much of the literature (e.g. Sanders, 2007) indicates that street workers are more economically driven – thus falling predominantly into groups (ii) and (iii) above. Indoor workers may more often fall into group (i), but will not be restricted to this.

The typology also glosses over the fact that there is fluidity of movement across sex worker groups. Thus, the few longitudinal studies show mobility between street and indoor work,

especially for those who started on the streets (e.g. Ward and Day, 2006). Research in Canada, too, shows movement between groups, and different ‘career’ influences applying at different times (Benoit and Millar, 2001). Exiting interventions need to recognise this.

1.3 Ideological underpinnings of models of intervention

The approach taken to aiding (or forcing) exit from prostitution in different jurisdictions in large part reflects dominant ideologies (or stances) about sex work. Its legal status can be seen as shaping and being shaped by these dominant stances. We categorise four of them below. Broadly speaking, one or other of them will be characteristic of a particular jurisdiction – although there is likely to be some difference of opinion *within* jurisdictions. The four positions we identify, which will influence the thrust and direction of exiting policies, are that prostitution is:

- **An illegal activity.** Here, exiting initiatives rely in broad brush on coercion – for instance, mandatory treatment for A&D problems (e.g. arrest referral schemes), or penal sanctions. Initiatives of this type are typical in the UK and France for instance, although not to the exclusion of social welfare methods.
- **An immoral activity.** Here, initiatives will be underpinned by a ‘fallen woman’ characterisation. In India, for instance, prostitutes are ‘married off’ to give them the social respectability of marital status. There is a pervasive notion in many countries that sex work is morally ‘contagious’.
- **A form of violence against women.** Here, exiting programmes seek to ‘repair the victimisation’ of sex workers on the premise that they are the wronged not the wrongdoer. Rehabilitation programmes in Sweden (where buyers rather than sellers of sex are criminalised) are characteristic here.² Sex workers who opt willingly to pursue prostitution as a preferred career, or who see it as their best occupational option, will be most resistant to interventions based on a notion that they need help to escape ‘victimisation’ status.
- **A social problem.** Where sex work is decriminalised (as in New Zealand, the Netherlands and most Australian states for instance), it can nonetheless be seen as symptomatic of social malaise and inadequate state support systems that fail to give sex workers alternative choices. The fact that there is extensive research evidence to show that many sex workers have damaged or inadequate social backgrounds can add force to this ‘social problem’ perspective.

1.4 Reasons for entering and remaining in the sex industry

Sex work is still generally regarded as a ‘deviant’ occupation and there has been much research on why some people choose to enter and remain in it. There is a particularly large amount of literature on reasons for entering. This is more directly relevant to prevention than to exiting interventions, except insofar as the reasons for entering persist as reasons for remaining.

2 In Sweden, government policy is that sex workers are given assistance such as counselling, access to shelters, education and job training. Funding is from central government, with service delivery the responsibility of municipalities.

Entering

Briefly, most writers accept a combination of *'push' and 'pull'* factors in entering sex work. Push factors – particularly for young street workers – can include abuse and neglect, a breakdown in caregiving, school exclusion, homelessness, and lack of money. Pull factors can include excitement, encouragement from others involved in sex work, and a way of seeking affection. Freedom to work one's own hours to accommodate childcare or study responsibilities is another pull, particularly for off-street workers (Plumridge, 2001).

Of most importance, though, seems to be that sex work can offer more money than from 'square jobs' (for New Zealand studies, see Robinson, 1987; Jordan, 1991; Turvey, 1999; and Saphira and Herbert, 2004). For young sex workers in particular, money allows immediate gratification (see it, do it, buy it). For others, too, the economic motive is strong. In a study of sex workers in Australia, most had entered the sex industry to support families, pursue higher education, pay off debts and buy cars, houses and/or other large expensive items (Perkins, 1991).

Remaining

Many of the factors that draw sex workers into the industry persist as factors for remaining in it, and indeed explain why it can be difficult to exit. The 'rewards' of course pose the impediments to exiting.

The thrust of the evidence is that the money on offer is a compelling incentive to remain working (and the biggest draw for those who exit for some reason, but then return). Certainly, sex work can be remunerative: a study of 216 sex workers in Queensland aged 18 or older showed an average weekly income of \$A1,500 a week (Woodward et al., 2004). This may largely explain why job satisfaction is higher than popular stereotypes countenance. In the Queensland study, two-thirds of brothel and sole workers said they would choose sex work again and felt the future held good prospects for them. Only a third of street workers held these views.

The economic advantages of sex work also emerged from a unique longitudinal study of 130 female sex workers in London. They were followed up for 15 years to look at career and health patterns both among those still in sex work and those who had exited at some stage (Ward and Day, 2006). Many women had remained in the sex industry for long periods even when other choices presented themselves, such as those associated with completing vocational training or higher education. Women also combined jobs within the sex industry with other work, education and training, indeed, with sex work creating opportunities for these. The conclusion drawn is that sex work can be seen as a positive choice for some sex workers, preferable to other alternatives and offering a conduit to social mobility, such as home ownership.

The issue of how sex workers 'rationalise' what they do is not central to this review except insofar as it touches on why they feel comfortable about their work, and are not necessarily inclined to leave. There is evidence that sex workers feel that their occupation is useful and socially functional (e.g. Sanders, 2006; Perkins, 1991). They see themselves as providing

emotional support, a service for the socially or physically disabled, and help for those with marital difficulties (preventing adulterous affairs).³

The current Christchurch School of Medicine Health Research Council study of sex workers will in due course give invaluable new information for New Zealand as to reasons for entering the sex industry and remaining in it.

1.5 The case for exiting

As sex work has been decriminalised in New Zealand, a reasonable question is why those involved in the industry should be encouraged to leave. The answer to this is that sex workers operate in a risky world both in terms of sexual health and violence – whatever controls are put in place to reduce risks (Farley, 2004). The PRA seeks to allow exiting as a normal practice.

While there is a very strong case for exiting interventions on health and safety grounds, the literature suggests a weaker case on economic grounds – since sex work is occupationally advantageous for many of those involved, offering high rewards and flexibility. The literature draws attention to the fact that there is a wide range of people involved, and many ways in which sexual services are bought and sold. The emphasis on street prostitution in research, public thinking, and policy has tended to obscure this. And it has permeated thinking about exit interventions. A perspective that sees sex work as *work* (albeit pursued for a variety of reasons and, like any other work, having the potential for exploitation) shifts the ground somewhat as regards exiting.

3 Sanders's (2006) study involved interviews with 55 women involved in indoor sex work in Birmingham (UK). They also felt that their relationships with clients were ideally suited for them to enable them to pass on sensitive information about safe sex matters, disease prevention and sexual dysfunction. Thus, Sanders makes the interesting point that the common assumption that sex workers generate a health risk (because of multiple partners) should be tempered by the possibility that they are also effective 'health educators'.

2 Exiting

The issue of why people want to exit the sex industry, and how they go about it, has been very much less well researched than why people enter and remain in the industry. This may be because, as Jordan (2005) says, understanding the search for 'ordinariness' holds less allure. Ex-sex workers also do not readily offer themselves for investigation.

This section briefly covers some literature on issues pertinent to exiting. There are three main conclusions from it:

- i. Many sex workers want to exit in principle at least.
- ii. It is difficult to exit.
- iii. Exiting is far from a one-off process, but rather typified by stops and starts. The difficulty of exiting and vacillation will interrelate. The incentives to remain in sex work will compete with the practical difficulties to be faced on exiting, and the uncertain benefits of doing so without guarantees of formal and informal support.

2.1 Wanting to exit

We made the point in Section 1 that the desire to leave the sex industry will vary for different types of sex worker. There is little evidence in New Zealand as to how many sex workers would like to leave, although Saphira and Herbert's (2004) study of 47 sex workers showed that just under two-thirds had tried to stop, and a quarter had done so.

There are two sources of information from Australia.

- One is from a survey of 64 sex workers (few of them street workers) by the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) in its review of the Queensland Prostitution Act 1999 (CMC, 2004). Although many respondents were not sure of their future plans (40%), 15% indicated that they only planned to work in the industry a 'short while' and 9% said they would like to leave the industry now. Just over half indicated that they would like an opportunity to retrain for another career. On the other hand, just over a third said that they intended to stay in the industry. Sex work was their career choice and they were happy with it. Most noted that they had other skills, formal training and options to work in other arenas, but chose not to do so.
- Another Queensland study was of a larger number of sex workers who were asked whether they would like to leave the industry (Woodward et al., 2004). Half of the street workers said they would, but a smaller percentage of brothel or sole workers wanted to (40%) – a difference of some importance for exiting interventions. Given the other result from this Queensland survey – that overall job satisfaction was relatively high – there is clearly some cognitive ambiguity at work.

2.2 The difficulty of exiting

There is general consensus that it is difficult to exit. Many things that lead people into sex work also act as barriers to exiting. Social circumstances such as inadequate housing and drug addiction can be prominent barriers. People may also be deterred from exiting if service provision does not meet their needs at the time they seek help. Women's partners may live off their earnings and may encourage (or insist on) continuing involvement in prostitution. The economic advantages we identified earlier will play a very large part.

There are other considerations too. While those involved in prostitution are far from homogeneous, many have complex needs and have long-term disengagement from services. Sex work can have become an entrenched lifestyle, as many sex workers begin young – nearly two-thirds began before they were 18 in Plumbridge and Abel's (2001) study in Christchurch). Low self-esteem and feelings of social exclusion are not uncommon (Hester and Westmarland, 2004). Many, too, have lost the social support networks that would ease transition into more 'normal' society. Indeed, some *gain* social support *within* sex work. Interviews with sex workers and others conducted by the Crime and Justice Research Centre to inform the review of the Prostitution Reform Act 2003 found that collegiality is something some sex workers might strongly miss. Jordan (1991) also showed the high level of camaraderie sex workers in New Zealand have.

Exiting can be difficult, too, because sex workers may be reluctant to approach services which they feel will judge and stigmatise them if they disclose their involvement in sex work. And some – particularly those on the streets – lead chaotic lives and simply find it difficult to keep appointments with those who offer to help them.

Many studies point to the difficulties of exiting by documenting the frequency of trying to leave. For instance, the evaluation of eleven multi-agency projects across the UK for street sex workers found that just over two-thirds had attempted to leave on one or more occasion (Hester and Westmarland, 2004). A study in Victoria (Canada) of 201 sex workers showed that seven in ten had exited the sex trade at least once, and more than half exited three or more times. Those who had not done sex work for at least two years had attempted to leave on average five to six times before making the break (Benoit and Millar, 2001). By far the most significant reason for returning to sex work was a financial incentive (cf. Saphira and Herbert's 2004 study in New Zealand; Williamson and Folaron, 2003; Manopaiboon et al., 2003).⁴

In summary, then, the research literature and recorded practitioner experience strongly suggests that a wide range of issues usually needs to be addressed to achieve any reasonable chance of success in exiting.

4 Manopaiboon et al. looked at 42 women in Thailand working in off-street sex work; 25 of them had exited but returned; 16 had not returned.

2.3 Pathways to exiting

The literature on pathways to exiting provides some pointers as to how changes in circumstances can provide a springboard for exiting interventions.⁵ All the research paints much the same picture. It highlights sex workers frequently taking breaks because they are 'sick of the clients', have 'had enough' or their partner wanted them to give up. (These were the most frequent reasons in the larger Queensland study). Sex workers come back because of money, or because something changes. They pass through different stages in the exiting process, moving backwards as well as forwards. As Månsson and Hedlin (1999: 69) say, exiting is a process rather than an event.

Fuchs Ebaugh (1988) describes 'role exit' as the key process by which transition and change occurs. It consists of four phases. Briefly, these are:

- (i) first doubts;
- (ii) seeking alternatives;
- (iii) turning points; and
- (iv) creating the ex-role.

'Turning points' have been identified by others. In New Zealand, Saphira and Herbert (2004) found that exiting from sex work activity was not systematically planned but related to a variety of fortuitous events. Williamson and Folaron's (2003) study of 21 women who had exited from street work at some stage found it to be the result of '*daily hassles, acute traumas, and chronic conditions*' (p.283). Institutional pressure from law enforcement and child protection agencies also played a part. Dalla's (2006) study in Nebraska paints much the same picture.

Månsson and Hedlin (1999) group turning points into:

- (i) eye-opening event;
- (ii) traumatic events such as violent experiences, or losing children into care; and
- (iii) positive life events such as falling in love, having a child, or finding a job.

They conclude that there is "*...a pattern in the process of breaking with prostitution, in which both the restructuring of everyday life and the occurrence of critical incidents are necessary ingredients*" (p72).⁶

The restructuring of everyday life will be the key concern for those who want to help sex workers exit. Hester and Westmarland (2004) see structural factors (such as access to work, housing and education) as interplaying with both relational factors (such as social support networks) and individual factors (such as skills and resilience). They make the point that agencies need to take all three into account to '*plug the gaps and build on existing strengths and possibilities*' (p129).

5 The main studies have been by Sanders (2007); Dalla (2006); Williamson and Folaron (2003); Månsson and Hedlin, (1999); Vanwesenbeeck, (1994); and Fuchs Ebaugh (1988). In New Zealand, Saphira and Herbert's (2004) work is the most relevant, though the study is small. In Australia, Woodward et al.'s (2004) Queensland study is most relevant.

6 Månsson and Hedlin's study is often cited. It was based on interviews with 23 women who had left prostitution (mainly street-based) in Sweden between 1981 and 1995. They built on Vanwesenbeeck's work which drew on the experiences of nearly 200 women involved in or having exited from prostitution, as well as that of Fuchs Ebaugh who interviewed women involved in prostitution and others involved in changing their lifestyles or professions.

Sanders (2007) offers a slightly different typology of pathways to exit, distinguishing some differences as regards street workers and indoor workers. This is shown in Box 1. Sanders interviewed 15 street workers and 15 indoor workers.

Box 1 Pathways to exiting (Sanders, 2007)

	Street workers	Indoor workers
Reactionary	A result of violence, ill health, or significant life events, such as having a child or imprisonment. Reactionary exits can often not be well thought out, without plans of action set in place.	A result of a new relationship, violence, or being 'outed'.
Gradual planning	The intention to enter a drug treatment programme perhaps, or find new housing. They were often supported by specialist services.	Planning for a timed transition with alternative career and financial planning, a 'retirement' plan, and working less.
Natural progression	The desire for a new lifestyle – for instance, drug free and less chaotic.	Becoming older; feeling the career has gone on too long; or disillusionment.
“Yo-yoing”	Failed drug treatment and support packages led to re-entry. Having been fined, meant having to earn the money to pay.	Unplanned exit – perhaps wanting a career break, or less strain. Coming back because 'ordinary' jobs did not pay enough.

2.3 After exiting

We came across little research which considered what happened after exiting in terms of the long-term impact of time spent in sex work, or strategies which helped exited workers to develop their lives. But four studies said something about this.

Månsson and Hedlin (1998) looked at what happened after exiting from the point of view of social reintegration. They found that some women faced 'stagnation' while others experienced 'development'. Thus for some women exiting was not viewed as a positive experience, and had merely led to a 'social dead end'; other women had experienced and been able to sustain positive development in their lives (p.75).

In Nebraska, Dalla (2006) looked at 18 women involved in street work who were re-contacted three years after an initial interview (25 could not be contacted). Those who were able to be re-contacted were older and more often single. Five of the 18 had maintained their exit efforts (though all had exited before); the others had not. The five who exited spoke about strong, new relationships. Relationships breaking down was much more characteristic of those who re-entered.

Benoit and Millar's (2001) study in Canada showed that exited women faced four main difficulties after their break from the sex trade:

- (i) leaving behind the role and lifestyle associated with sex work;
- (ii) confronting and working through their experiences as a sex worker;
- (iii) dealing with new relationships and intimates; and
- (iv) adapting to a new way of living.

The longitudinal study of sex workers in London (Ward and Day, 2006) addressed health outcomes among women still working and those who had left the industry. It was clear that sex work was associated with much higher than normal risks of mental health problems, substance misuse, and ill-health (including sequelae of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as infertility). However, there were no significant differences in health outcomes between women who were still in the sex industry and those who had stopped. In Canada, too, those who had not worked for at least two years continued to struggle with mental health and related problems that do not end after exit (Benoit and Millar, 2001).⁷

This limited literature on those who have exited, then, is not entirely positive. One theme in it was that stigma and social exclusion can impact on the transition to an alternative lifestyle. Another was that ill-health and mental instability persist as problems.

2.4 Male and transgender sex workers

We came across only one study of exiting which included male (n=36) and transgendered sex workers (n=5). This was Benoit and Millar's (2001) study in British Columbia. While it did not report any specific issues to do with exiting for male or transgendered sex workers, it nonetheless provides some pointers which may be pertinent. These are:

- Male sex workers earned less than female workers, which is said to be consistent with Weinberg et al. (2000). At the same time, males seemed more dependent on sex work in that fewer had jobs outside sex work.
- Fewer of the males than females were taking care of dependent children, whether they were still active or had exited. The economic 'pull' of having to care for dependent children, then, might be less strong for male workers.
- Experiences of 'bad dates' was as common among male sex workers as it was for females. Males also reported more mental illness and suicide attempts, which may suggest the need for service provision on the mental health front.
- Male sex workers were more likely than females to feel they did not have support.
- Males were far more likely than female counterparts to identify themselves as homosexual or bisexual. Benoit and Millar argue that since certain conditions of sex work support same-sex and bisexual relationships this might explain why sex workers who had exited were more likely to identify themselves as heterosexual than those who remained in the sex industry. They also suggest that homosexuality, bisexuality and transgender status could be 'pulls' into sex work, with the stigma associated with these orientations operating as a 'push' (cf. Elias, et al., 1998).

7 Benoit and Millar's (2001) study trained ex-sex workers as research assistants. It was based on a non-random sample of currently active and exited adult female (n=160), male (n=36) and transgendered (n=5) sex workers in British Columbia. Exited sex workers were those who had been out of the sex industry for a minimum of two years at the time of interview.

3 Principles of best practice

This section draws together the results of overseas models of best practice in relation to exiting the sex industry. We use the term ‘principles’ of best practice rather than ‘models’. We do not see much difference between the two terms, but ‘principles’ captures the content of the literature better.

This section is organised as follows:

- Firstly, we cover what literature was reviewed.
- Second, we address differences between jurisdictions where sex work is legalised as against those where it is not. For convenience we used the term ‘legalised’ to cover both legalised and decriminalised regimes.⁸
- Third, we look briefly at how general support services interplay with exiting interventions.
- Fourth, we cover the best practice principles we identified.
- Fifth, we draw attention to the distinction between ‘best practice’ as opposed to ‘what works’.

3.1 The literature reviewed

We reviewed the moderately extensive literature on best practice principles in relation to both support and exiting.⁹ The most recent and comprehensive material comes from the UK. The literature falls into three main types:

- (i) **Academic papers** which investigate individual programmes, or synthesise the results from a number of programmes. One example, for instance, is Julie Bindel’s (2006) report for the Eaves Poppy project which was based on a survey of provision in more than 200 projects providing services to sex workers in London. This group of papers is more discursive than evaluative.
- (ii) **Policy documents** from government or official agencies which lay out approaches to service support and – sometimes – the best way forward for exiting interventions. These policy documents often draw on the academic literature. Sometimes, they reflect consultations with those involved in the sex industry in varying capacities. One important recent policy document is that from the British Home Office – ‘A *Coordinated*

8 A literature review prepared for the Ministry of Justice by the Crime and Justice Research Centre highlights the differences between legalisation and decriminalisation, and shows the legal status of prostitution in different jurisdictions.

9 We did not identify anything in the literature that addressed best practice principles as regards transgender sex workers. Benoit and Millar’s (2001) study in Canada included five transgender sex workers, but there was no focus on their particular problems.

- (iii) *Prostitution Strategy* (Home Office, 2006).¹⁰ It draws heavily on the results of the Home Office Hester and Westmarland (2004) report on eleven multi-agency projects which examined 'what works' in assisting prostitutes to exit.
- (iv) **Evaluations of programmes in terms of outcomes.** These are much thinner on the ground. The most useful are five of the eleven projects reported on by Hester and Westmarland (2004) which aimed to provide routes out for women involved in street prostitution. Results from these are reported in Section 5. Much of the literature focuses on the particular circumstances of 'street workers', who in Section 1.2 we located in the category of those with limited choice. We draw attention again to the point we made as regards the diversity of sex workers and the fact that not all of them will want access to support services which aim to help them exit the industry.

3.2 Best practice in legalised and criminalised jurisdictions

An important point to begin with is that principles of best practice differ in jurisdictions where sex work has been legalised compared to those where it is still against the law. There is more literature from overseas jurisdictions where sex work is still illegal than from those where it has been legalised (e.g. most of the Australian states, the Netherlands, and Germany). The heavier weight of literature from non-legalised regimes may reflect the fact that help in exiting prostitution is seen as more imperative given that criminal activity is involved.

Much of the literature from non-legalised regimes focuses on difficulties that arise from law enforcement approaches being in tension with social welfare approaches to encouraging an exit from the sex industry. This tension has been evident in the UK, for instance, not least among the Police themselves. Punitive policing initiatives (for instance 'crackdowns' on street sex work in a 'zero tolerance' approach to social disorder) sit uncomfortably with official policy that the Police should engage with frontline agencies to *help* sex workers (Brian et al. 2004; Hunter et al. 2004). Short-term reactive measures, then, can work counter to longer-term problem-solving ones. This is especially so when pursuing a conviction policy increases the difficulty of sex workers finding employment because of having to reveal convictions for prostitution (cf. Bland and Reid, 2000). This is an important point and was a strong argument for decriminalising prostitution in New Zealand.

3.3 Support services versus exiting interventions

A second point to make concerns the distinction between support services in general as opposed to those which specifically promote an exit from sex work. In principle, it would be helpful to be able to differentiate best practice principles for exiting interventions from those for support services for helping sex workers maintain safety and good health while they are in the sex industry. In practice, though, the literature largely addresses them together. We attempt as far as possible to highlight best practice principles for exiting, but it strains interpretation of the literature somewhat to do so.

¹⁰ This report summarises responses received to a public consultation paper on *Paying the Price* (Home Office, 2004). It sets out the government proposals for a coordinated prostitution strategy. The strategy draws on the consultation exercise, together with the scoping exercise for *Paying the Price*, and the evaluation of 11 projects funded by the Crime Reduction Programme.

In any event, the merging of best practice principles for support and exiting in the literature is largely because support services for current sex workers are seen as integral to successful exiting interventions. For one, support services serve to consolidate the impression that help is available. This seems especially important given the evidence that the motivation to exit the sex industry wavers over time and that for many it is a forward / backward process.

Services targeting sex workers vary considerably – ranging from basic harm reduction; on-site counselling and advice; health screening; safety plans; help with housing and childcare; and peer support. Exit strategies form part of the package.

3.4 The main best practice principles

Box 2 summarises the main best practice principles we identified with regards to exiting strategies. The best practice principles cover basic principles of delivery (such as accepting that there will be stops and starts, and that outreach should be adopted), as well as the nature and content of what is delivered (e.g. holistic interventions). However, the two elements of best practice overlap on many fronts so we have not forced a distinction between them.

Box 2 Summary of best practice principles for exiting interventions

Holistic interventions	A number of different service providers need to be engaged.
Dealing with changes of mind	Interventions need to be patient and accept that sex workers trying to exit will go forwards and backwards.
Facilitating free choice	Sex workers need choices, but have to make their own decisions.
Dedicated services and brokerage	Dedicated services are needed to broker the provision of mainstream services. One-to-one support from a 'key worker' seems to work best.
Building trusting relationships	Relationships of trust can provide the basis for exploring routes out. Trusting relationships with brothel owners is also important to gain access.
Adequate resourcing	To ensure good service provision. Continuity of resourcing is also important.
Public education	To raise awareness about the issues associated with prostitution, and that support services aim to develop routes out.
Outreach	Outreach maximises the chances of engaging with those who might be considering exit and who need extra reinforcement.
Location of services	Services should be close, but not too close, to areas of prostitution.

Holistic approach

Probably the main basic principle is that a holistic approach is needed to address the multiplicity of issues that sex workers often face when they want to exit the sex industry. No single agency

will be able to respond effectively. The agencies that may need to be involved include those who deliver:

- mental health and healthcare services;
- welfare benefits advice;
- housing support and advice; antenatal care;
- childcare and parenting support;
- education and training; and
- employment services.

Dealing with changes of mind

As said, the literature suggests that those engaged in sex work vacillate. It is important to be aware of a non-linear pattern of exiting when planning and implementing intervention (Hester and Westmarland, 2004: 31). Put simply, it is a patience game.

Facilitating free choice

Another key principle of best practice identified by Hester and Westmarland (2004) is that services need to offer choice to sex workers, allowing them to go down routes which suit them best. Free choice is seen as a key factor in sex workers deciding to move into a more stable situation and then finally to exit. It is accepted, of course, that choice is a relative matter, and is dissipated when economic necessity is the main driver for working in the sex industry.

Facilitating free choice may be particularly important for young people, who will resist being pressured into exiting (Saphira and Herbert, 2004).

Dedicated services and brokerage

Dedicated services gain much support as a way of brokering the provision of mainstream services. Sex workers can frequently be disengaged from the usual service infrastructures making it difficult for them to access mainstream services without some form of signposting or advocacy. The Home Office *Prostitution Strategy* (2006) report sees dedicated support services as having the advantage of one individual (or agency) taking responsibility for ensuring that a coherent package of support is available – within the mainstream sector if possible, to avoid sex workers being treated as a ‘special case’.

Hester and Westmarland (2004) identified one-to-one support as an important feature. Having a ‘key worker’ seemed especially important for young sex workers. It is likely to mean better continuity of service, and a stronger building of trust.

Building trusting relationships

The need to build trusting relationships emerges from the literature as a best practice principle – perhaps a fairly obvious one. Outreach is important here as a basis for exploring routes out.

For services targeted at those involved in off-street sex work, a relationship of trust needs to be established with brothel owners so that support workers can visit brothels and gain access to sex workers. Projects that define ‘management’ as ‘pimps’ may find this difficult. Services need to

be set up that make it possible to offer information and support to those working off-street without allowing any collusion with abusers and exploiters (e.g. Bindel, 2006).

Building relationships based on mutual respect and trust has implications for how projects are staffed. Many of those who support sex workers are highly in tune with them, but when new resources are put in place careful selection is crucial. This is especially so for dealing with younger sex workers who are unlikely to accept advice other than that from 'credible' supporters. Greater understanding may be created when ex-sex workers staff services.

Adequate resourcing

Competition for funds for social welfare programmes is of course tight across the board. Added to this, programmes to assist sex workers can be costly, with the expenditure possibly not as popular with the community as diversionary schemes for young offenders for instance.

Suffice it to say, though, that one principle to emerge was that adequate resourcing is vital to ensure good service provision and so that ongoing relationships with sex workers can be maintained. *Continuity* of funding is also important, in particular to give staff a sense of job security. Funding issues will apply in New Zealand. MacGibbon and Greenaway (2005), for instance, report that a major problem for the Street Youth Work Project in Christchurch is finding funding to ensure the project continues.

Where sex work has been legalised, funding may be harder to get. Bindel and Kelly comment in relation to Victoria (Australia), Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden that *'much promised funding for projects to assist women out of prostitution... never translated into action. It would seem that once prostitution is legalised governments want to pretend the problem has gone away'* (cited in Bindel, 2003, p13).

Public education

The view that those in sex work do not deserve support can be common in the community. To overcome this, support workers and advocates for those in the sex industry need good public education and awareness tools for use within communities (Bindel, 2006; Home Office, 2006). Projects have a clear public education role in terms of raising awareness about the issues associated with prostitution. In particular, projects should emphasise that part of their purpose is to develop routes out of prostitution, especially to counteract any community perception that services for sex workers may increase their numbers.

Outreach

Outreach work with sex workers is that which, simply put, takes support to sex workers, rather than expecting them to access it themselves. It can involve youth workers, ex-sex workers, church groups and others. Outreach is central to efforts made to support sex workers outside the context of exiting strategies. But a point made in many discussions was that outreach remains crucial for specific exiting strategies, since it maximises the chances of engaging with someone who might be considering exit and who needs extra reinforcement. Outreach work can engage sex workers with services, and allow the opportunity to develop trusting relationships as a basis from which routes out can be explored. It will be part of a holistic approach.

Location of services

The location of services emerged as a best principle issue, but not a clear one. Where treatment centres are located in a 'red light' area, sex workers wanting to exit can find it difficult to go there. Treatment centres elsewhere may offer better chances of success, as long as they are reasonably proximate. Opening hours can affect accessibility: rigid opening times and appointment systems can be deterrents.

Drop-in centres are a common initiative to provide support and advice in a way that accommodates the working patterns of sex workers. These are well-endorsed as best practice, especially if location and opening hours are tailored. Some decisions about location might be difficult. In one of the five Home Office evaluations, a problem was that younger women felt inhibited from attending drop-in centres on the older women's 'territory' (Hester and Westmarland, 2004).

Tolerance zones

While tolerance zones are mainly used to regulate the industry and minimise public nuisance, one element of them can be the provision of 'living rooms' within or near the zone. These are seen as offering sex workers a safe place to go, but also allowing a means of accessing sex workers to provide support, including help with exiting. While tolerance zones have limited applicability to New Zealand where street based sex work is allowed, they are often promoted in countries where it is not.

3.5 Best practice as opposed to 'what works'

The term 'best practice' can be seen as encompassing good project design (on a programme logic model), success in implementing and delivering a programme, the programme represents value for money, and what impact it has. The 'impact' component – does it work? – is most illusive, and few exiting interventions have tried to assess it even in terms of the numbers of sex workers exiting, and staying out of the sex industry.¹¹ The best evidence is that from the five Home Office projects set up under the Crime Reduction Programme – though even here there are limits. These projects are looked at in Section 5.

Without labouring the point, the difficulties of assessing whether exiting interventions 'work' include:

- Lack of baseline measures to see what an exiting rate would have been without an intervention.
- Lack of control groups not covered by exiting intervention services.
- Knowing whether an exit was the result of a maturation process or an extraneous event.
- Difficulty in following up sex workers.
- Principally, whether exit was achieved rather than a period of 'time out'.

¹¹ We found no evidence on which *particular* strategies work best to help sex workers develop sustainable lives outside the industry – though in truth this may be a tall order.

4 Types of exiting provision

As seen, many forms of provision may be needed to ensure successful exiting. This section looks at three areas of provision which have featured most in the literature. These are:

- (i) drug treatment;
- (ii) housing; and
- (iii) training, education and employment.

In the Home Office research, those working in support projects overwhelmingly reported that suitable supported housing and access to drug treatment were most crucial to establishing the stability needed to enable sex workers to contemplate leaving prostitution (Hester and Westmarland, 2004). Other reviews also highlight housing as a dominant concern (e.g. Farley et al., 1998).

Some reference is made in discussing these findings to five of the 11 Home Office evaluations of exiting projects.¹² These are described later, but in brief they are:

- i. Manchester Real Choices
- ii. Stoke-on-Trent Peer Support and Community Development
- iii. Hull Way Out
- iv. Hackney Maze Marigold
- v. SWEET Kirklees

4.1 Drug treatment

Dealing with drug addiction has been prominent in exiting interventions in overseas countries. It has been prompted by evidence that many sex workers have addiction problems, particularly those working on the streets (Hunter et al. 2004; May and Hunter, 2006; Cusick and Martin, 2003). Dealing with addiction is seen as crucial as a first step towards exiting, especially as it often forces sex workers back onto the street.

The literature suggests a number of best practice principles about drug service delivery:

- There needs to be **fast tracking** to addiction services and protocols with drug treatment providers to ensure that services can be engaged immediately.
- **Points of crisis** can provide a good opportunity to engage sex workers in drug treatment.

¹² Seed funding for them was provided under the Crime Reduction Programme (CRP) introduced by the Labour Government shortly after the 1997 general election. The CRP funding was used to extend service provision in previously established projects.

- Success is more likely where **treatment is entered voluntarily**.
- There needs to be a great deal of support from a **dedicated support** project – to help with childcare arrangements for instance.
- The best drug services focus on **all client needs** and not just the misuse of the drug. They also work in partnership with other agencies to provide a range of support at local level.
- To be fully effective, counselling and treatment must be available for **pimps / partners** as well in some cases.

New Zealand

Jordan's (2005) review concludes that very little research has been conducted regarding drug use amongst sex workers in New Zealand, although the few studies that exist indicate drug use is not uncommon.¹³ As elsewhere, drugs are assumed to be more closely linked to street work, with brothel operators being reluctant to employ addicted women. Jordan notes, though, that while there may be few intravenous drug users in brothels, various other drugs may be consumed more unobtrusively. Members of the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective (NZPC), interviewed for the Prostitution Law Review Committee report, argued that the perception that drug use (particularly injecting drug use) is high amongst street workers was misguided. Instead, the few sex workers injecting drugs tended to work primarily in the indoor sector (PLRC, 2005: 50).

4.2 Housing

A clear best practice principle is that adequate provision of settled accommodation for sex workers is critical to finding routes out. Farley et al. (1998) argue that there is “widespread evidence” that women with access to refuge and housing are more likely to exit prostitution than those without. Housing also seems key as regards young sex workers served by support projects in other countries. Homelessness and chaotic lifestyle lead some to seek ‘refuge’ in squats or crack houses, thereby adding to their vulnerability.

The response to the Home Office consultation suggested that a range of accommodation is required to meet differing needs at each stage of the exiting process. This also emerged in other literature.

- **Crisis intervention** – specialist high-level support refuge-type accommodation, equipped to take in substance misusers and those who may still be active in prostitution. The ideal would be 24-hour staffing and the provision of counselling and health care.
- **Stabilisation** – at this stage there is need for transitional housing for those needing safe and affordable accommodation on a short-term rental.
- **Aftercare** – finally, independent tenancies with floating support to help women sustain their tenancies, develop skills to budget, pay bills and claim benefits if needed.

¹³ The causal relationship between sex work and drug misuse is not straightforward. On the one hand, some sex work starts to finance a drug habit, so the causal relationship appears to be drug misuse ‘causing’ sex work. On the other hand, the stresses associated with prostitution may promote drug use as a means of managing the job.

One theme with regard to short-term housing provision was that those involved needed to understand the particular difficulties involved in exiting sex work. In the POPPY survey, for instance, there was support for revising policies of not providing accommodation for those using drugs (Bindel, 2006). Several writers noted the unsuitability of mainstream hostels and refuges for dealing adequately with the difficulties involved in exiting prostitution.

Helping with suitable accommodation can be difficult because of limited provision, and the background of housing applicants. In the POPPY survey, for instance, very few projects could provide direct routes into appropriate accommodation (Bindel, 2006). The Home Office (2006) report also highlighted significant difficulties in relation to both capacity and accessibility of suitable housing for sex workers, particularly those with mental health or drug addiction problems. The projects that had done best had successfully negotiated the involvement of a dedicated housing officer.

The Hackney Maze Marigold project achieved some success on the housing front by defining the abuse some women were experiencing from pimps / partners as domestic violence. Six women were supported to gain emergency accommodation because of this, and three women were rehoused via Women's Aid services. The small number of women who were interviewed (n=5) explained how they valued the support they were given when trying to exit prostitution and leave violent partners. For many, support in accessing housing was key.

In the Bristol Pandora project aimed at supporting young people (one of the eleven in the Home Office study), a lack of appropriate local housing was a major difficulty; hostel accommodation being seen as unsuitable. Nonetheless, interviews with practitioners and a small number of young people (n=10) themselves indicated that when they were able to access appropriate housing, they could begin to feel settled and make plans for the future (Hester & Westmarland, 2004).

4.3 Education, training and employment

The literature puts emphasis on education and training in relation to exiting, not only to improve employment opportunities but also in helping to build self-esteem. Employment itself was also seen as important. (A common theme in countries where prostitution is illegal was that there needed to be ways around having to reveal convictions when job searching.)

Some of the recommendations were:

- **Fast-tracking** to training and employment services.
- **Specialist support** and assessment to help sex workers access and sustain work.
- Provide access to **employment opportunities that match skills** and interests.
- Dealing first with other issues that might be a **barrier to employment** – e.g. housing, health, and childcare. The Hull and Kirklees evaluations showed clearly that basic needs had to be addressed before the women were able to concentrate and apply themselves fully to education or training.¹⁴

14 In the Hull project, one of the main interventions discussed early on was helping women to access training and educational courses. However, when it emerged that interest in such courses was small, the funding was used instead for one-to-one tuition for the small number of women who had shown an interest in training and education (Hester & Westmarland, 2004).

5 The five UK Crime Reduction Programme projects

5.1 Overview

The five 'routes out' projects evaluated as part of the Home Office's Crime Reduction Programme (CRP) offer the best material there is on the impact of different types of exiting interventions (Hester and Westmarland, 2004). What was delivered in the five projects is also, of course, relevant to best practice principles, which were discussed in Section 4. These five projects, and the other six in the group of eleven, were evaluated using a number of methods.¹⁵ One was interviews with project workers, staff from other key agencies, and key community members. Some women and young people involved in prostitution were also interviewed, with the evaluators relying on projects to act as gatekeepers to them. This may have skewed the sample towards women who had had positive experiences with the projects.

The evaluation period ran for between one and two years. This is a limitation given the forward / backward nature of exiting. Projects also differed as to what they were aiming for with respect to exiting. Some saw the main goal as harm minimisation, rather than exiting *per se*, although they recognised that this could be a stage towards exiting. Others viewed their objective as enabling women to exit from street prostitution rather than all forms of prostitution, or to reduce the number of hours in which they were involved in street prostitution. The evaluators encouraged projects to agree on definitions of exiting that involved specific time periods, such as one year. However, this relied upon the project workers maintaining contact with the women after they have exited, and this was often difficult.

Box 3 shows details of the five projects. A range of interventions and types of support were implemented relating to sexual health, drug use, domestic violence, housing and other needs. The work included outreach, one-to-one support, drop-in, information gathering and sharing, and referrals to other agencies. As well as helping with exiting, the projects had other aims – for instance to improve quality of life for local residents. Box 3 shows the aims most pertinent to exiting.

Hester and Westmarland (2004: 85) stress that it is difficult to draw direct comparisons between the five projects in terms of the number of women who had exited – since this depended on how the project worker who monitored the figures defined exiting. The figures in the *Outcome* column of Box 3 do not include women with whom the projects had lost contact as it was not known whether or not these women had exited. They also reflect the situation at the end of the

¹⁵ The five projects were evaluated by a research team from the University of Sunderland. The projects were all funded from January 2001 until March 2003 with the exception of Hackney whose funding ended in July 2005. The evaluations were conducted between October 2001 and July 2003. As well as interviews, the methodology included the collection of input (cost) and output data from projects. The evaluators also observed meetings, attended drop-ins and / or accompanied outreach workers.

21-month evaluation period. It is not known whether some of the exited women returned to sex work, or whether others exited after the end of the evaluation.

No figures are given on the number of women who exited as a *proportion* of all women dealt with over the 21 months of the evaluation. Rather, evaluation data collected *outputs* such as the number of contacts made, which will count multiple contacts with the same woman.

5.2 The model of support

Hester and Westmarland (2004: 131) propose a model of needs and support involving four elements, and a likely cyclical movement between them. The four elements are:

Vulnerability → Chaos → Stabilisation → Exiting / moving on

The move from chaos to stabilisation is often associated with a 'turning point' which leads to a reassessment of options (see Section 2.3). The move from stabilisation to exiting can again come from catalysts such as pregnancy, or recovering children in care.

The main lessons drawn from the CRP evaluations are that:

- Times of crisis are when sex workers are most likely to want to change their lives. Thus, intervention at this stage is crucial to move them towards stabilisation. Interventions at this stage might include referral to a fast track drugs programme, access to health care, counselling, a means of escape from controlling partners, rehousing options, and benefits / debt support. As discussed, education and training support is unlikely to work at this stage.
- Once the basic needs have been met, it is important to assess what sex workers *want to do* once stabilised (the principle of *allowing choice*).
- At the exiting / moving on stage continued offers of support are important to ensure that 'crisis factors' such as debt, domestic violence and housing problems do not reoccur. Exiting sex workers may also need professional counselling to deal with past experiences.

Box 3 The five evaluated UK Crime Reduction Programme projects

Project aims	Exiting interventions	Outputs	Outcome
MANCHESTER REAL CHOICES			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer women involved in street prostitution and /or reduction in hours by offering them alternative 'choices'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low threshold supervised methadone programme (fast-track). 	<p>5,200 outreach contacts.*</p>	<p>8 women ceased all involvement in prostitution. Three had ceased for 12 months; three for eighteen months (the end of the evaluation period).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce demand for drugs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach service for range of information, advice and referrals (two workers). 	<p>An average of 96 women were supported through outreach per month.</p>	<p>22 women reduced the hours they spent involved in prostitution.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase take-up of services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one support for women who want to exit prostitution. • Production and distribution of newsletters. 	<p>29 women referred for sexual health advice.</p> <p>10 women rehoused.</p> <p>84 women advised on personal safety.</p> <p>44 women referred to the Low Threshold Supervised Methadone Programme of whom 29 engaged.</p>	
STOKE-ON-TRENT PEER SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of women involved in prostitution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach service. 	<p>1,440 contacts made on outreach.</p>	<p>21 women had exited prostitution for at least 3 months by the end of the evaluation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heighten public awareness and increase community confidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one services (including drop-in, peer support and fast track referral to drug support). • Police 'crackdown'. • Media and publicity work. 	<p>97 women supported through one-to-one work.</p> <p>81 women given advice on benefits.</p> <p>97 women attended drug programme.</p> <p>139 women referred to emergency housing.</p>	<p>18 further women had reduced the hours they spent involved in prostitution.</p>

* Contacts does not indicate the number of prostitutes, as some individuals will have received multiple contacts.

Box 3 Cont'd The five evaluated UK Crime Reduction Programme projects

Project aims	Exiting interventions	Outputs	Outcomes
HULL WAY OUT			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved quality of life for women in prostitution. • Diversion of women away from prostitution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop-in and consultation to improve drop-in service. • Drugs arrest referral scheme. • Courses for women involved in prostitution. 	<p>937 contacts with women in drop-in.</p> <p>Health advice was given on 134 occasions.</p> <p>18 women were fast-tracked onto drugs programme.</p> <p>Women received self-defence instruction on 83 occasions.</p> <p>46 women were consulted about drop-in provision.</p> <p>Needle exchange service used 115 times.</p> <p>24 attended a computer session.</p>	<p>6 women exited prostitution (no fixed definition was given).</p>
HACKNEY MAZE MARIGOLD – YWCA			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce number of women involved in prostitution through workable exit strategies. • Reduce number of girls under 17 being abused through prostitution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach service. • Drop-in service and advocacy for individual women. • Distribution of leaflets. • Advice. • Basic skills classes. 	<p>958 contacts were made during outreach.</p> <p>145 referrals made to sexual health clinics.</p> <p>160 contacts were made during drop-in.</p> <p>21 women received one-to-one support in the form of advocacy.</p> <p>33 women were referred to Women's Aid.</p> <p>6 women received advice on benefits.</p> <p>9 women were rehoused.</p> <p>6 women received clothing.</p>	<p>3 women exited prostitution (no fixed definition was given).</p>

Box 3 Cont'd The five evaluated UK Crime Reduction Programme projects

Project aims	Exiting interventions	Outputs	Outcomes
SWEET – KIRKLEES			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce number of women involved in prostitution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach service. 	<p>1,100 contacts were made during outreach.</p>	<p>5 women exited entirely from prostitution.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stabilise women involved in prostitution from the streets or from saunas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop-in services for wide advice. 	<p>1,050 drop-in contacts were made</p>	<p>15 found alternative employment in the project's second year.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase referral options for police and other agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to drugs services. 	<p>60 arrest referrals were made to the project.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase police information gathering, particularly on violent crime. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive policing (inc. arrest referral scheme, supporting victims and liaison with agencies). 	<p>63 women were referred for counselling in 2002/3.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of women exiting prostitution. 		<p>157 health referrals were made.</p> <p>65 women were rehoused.</p> <p>133 contacts made offering support after violent incident.</p>	

Adapted from Hester and Westmarland (2004)

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Appendix 1: Project examples

This appendix gives details of some projects which have been set up with a particular focus on helping sex workers to exit. A Ministry of Justice internal note supplied at the time they commissioned this review mentions some of these (Numbers 1-4). It also mentions 'Children of the Night' (Los Angeles, California) which is based more on a 'rescue mission' approach. The Ministry of Justice report notes that 'rescue missions, or the uplifting of young people from street prostitution situations in New Zealand is not favoured. The Manukau Working Group has expressed doubt about the efficacy of such actions. They consider that, should CYF remove young people from the streets, they would invariably return within a short period of time'.

Project 1 Awhina Teina, Onehunga, Auckland

Housing

This opened in April 2005 to house up to six young women (aged seventeen and younger) involved in, or at risk of involvement in commercial sexual activity. It aims to enable young women to make lifestyle changes if they want to. The house also provides emergency accommodation for those who need a safe bed overnight.

Awhina Teina can accommodate up to six residents, and referrals have been steady (Ministry of Justice, 2006).

The house was set up with charitable funds from Baptist Action (a Manukau Working Group member). Ongoing funding comes from Child Youth and Family (CYF) bed-night contracts.

Source: Internal note of the Ministry of Justice.

Project 2 Tui House, Nelson

Housing

Tui House is now closed but was run by volunteer social workers from agencies such as Rape Crisis, Young Women's Support (now Nelson Women's Support) and the Area Health Board (who provided the house itself). Funding came from Lottery grants, COGS, the Area Health Board and the then Ministry of Social Welfare through the unemployment benefits of some of the residents.

Tui House aimed to help young teenage women living on the streets of Nelson. (The average age was fifteen years.) Although sexually active, the girls were not involved in prostitution. A former staff member described the rules for residents as very strict. (There were behavioural standards and curfews.) However, a resident described a 'no rules' ethos and – indeed – felt this partly helped her turn her life around.

Residents contributed to the running of the house, and were responsible for cooking and cleaning.

Tui house closed in 1991 due to staff 'burnout' and problems in securing reliable funding.

Source: Internal note of the Ministry of Justice.

Project 3 Safe House, San Francisco, California

Housing service

The Safe House describes itself as a 'clean and sober living community.' It provides transitional housing, counselling and rehabilitation services for up to two years for women seeking to exit the sex industry. Vocational, educational and life skills training are also offered.

The Safe House caters for twelve residents at a time.

A residents' committee self-manages aspects of the house such as a recreation budget. After-care is provided for graduates of the programme.

Source: *Prostitution Research & Education (2007)*. <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com>

Project 4 The 'Mary Magdalene Project' in South Gate, California

Housing service

This offers long-term (eighteen months to two years) residential care for women who want to exit prostitution.

It provides counselling, medical care and job training, as well as food, clothing and shelter.

Source: *Prostitution Research & Education (2007)*. <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com>

Project 5 St Mungo's (London)

Housing service

The St Mungo's charitable housing service for crack-dependent women in Lambeth provides women involved in prostitution with a safe place to live to enable them to contemplate a life away from the streets. The project has had success in bringing 'hard-to-reach' groups to drug treatment and other forms of rehabilitation as part of a route out of prostitution.

There are two hostels supporting women at different stages of exiting prostitution. Clients at the first hostel receive an intensive needs assessment, and are allocated a key worker and a drugs worker. They are also helped to claim benefits and access healthcare. Women move to the second hostel when they become stable. They are encouraged to live more independently.

Source: *Home Office (2006)*

Project 6 My Life My Choice (Boston)

Service for young people

This programme was established in 2002 with US\$60,000 funding from the Dept. of Social Services (DSS) in Boston, Massachusetts. It runs in conjunction with *The Home for Little Wanderers*

There is a ten-week curriculum delivered weekly in 90 minute sessions. It aims to:

Those delivering the curriculum are trained to:

- understand teenage prostitution; and
- assess the teenager's involvement, help improve safety, and assist in recovery.

- decrease the glamorous role of prostitution, and increase knowledge of its danger;
- help understanding of all aspects of prostitution including recruitment tactics;
- increase ability to avoid or at least stay safe on street; and
- help teenagers find the resources to leave.

Source: *Goldblatt and Grollman (2005)*