

**Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Travelling Fellowship**

**Laura McIntyre, Fellow of 2011**

**Changing Lives; Building Futures for Women on the Margins**

# Content

- **Acknowledgements**
- **Background Information**
- **Aims and Objectives of the Fellowship**
- **The UK Sex Industry** Law and Legislation, Responses to Sex Work, Vulnerable People
- **The Local Picture** Northern England
- **Planning my Fellowship and WordPress Blog**
- **Sydney** Decriminalisation of Prostitution and Diverse Sex Markets, Shadowing SWOP Staff 'Sex Work is Work' Debate
- **Perth** The 'One Stop Shop' Model, Addictions and Recovery, Sex Worker Service Identity
- **Hong Kong**
- **Conclusion and Next Steps**
- **Project Summary**

## Acknowledgements

**Winston Churchill Memorial Trust** - With huge gratitude I would like to firstly thank everyone at the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust (WCMT), I wouldn't have been able to travel so far and learn so much without their support, this was a once in a life time opportunity for me. Thank you also to Julia Weston from WCMT who was appointed as my Fellowship Manager, who assisted me during every stage with planning and other queries.

**The Cyrenians** - I wouldn't have known about the Churchill Fellowship opportunities if I wasn't made aware by Ollie Batchelor, Executive Director at the Cyrenians, I'm very thankful for this, and the support I was given with the application and the positive and encouraging contact he made during my travels. The Cyrenians allowed me to take 6 weeks out of my normal work time to experience the Fellowship which I'm grateful for. Laura Seebohm, who was my Manager when I first started with the Cyrenians, left the organisation in October 2010 but is still a massive inspiration to me, and who also supported me during my application stages and continues to provide me with excellent supportive advice.

### **Sex Work Outreach Project, SWOP Sydney**

Kylie Tattersall, Outreach and Community Services Manager, Jackie McMillan, Administration and Resource Officer, Gareth Ernst, Male Outreach Officer, Chantelle, Transgender Outreach Worker, Maggie Moylan, Counsellor/Community Worker and to all the sex workers who allowed me to attend the self defence class.

**Women's Health and Family Service, WHFS** - To all the women and children at WHFS who I was able to spend some time with and the staff who explained their individual projects to me. A special thanks to Nona for taking time out to help coordinate this placement and for introducing me to staff at Cyrenian House and all the women from the Sarna Project for allowing me to sit in the recovery awareness group. Yolanda Strauss, Counselling/Psychotherapy Worker at the DVAS centre, we shared some very thought provoking conversations, which I found inspiring and will remember in my own practice.

**Sex Work Outreach Project Western Australia, SWOPWA and Magenta Project** - To all the staff who spoke to me when I called in without booking an appointment and for the information you shared with me.

## Background Information

I have worked with vulnerable men and women since I was 19 years old. In the main these have been people living very unstable lives, with complex needs, and requiring specific support packages. They are usually chronically excluded, exposed to sexual exploitation and experiencing homelessness at some point in their lives, involved with the criminal justice system, addicted to drugs and/or alcohol, with limited social networks and no contact with any immediate family or genuine friends. For most clients I have worked with and formed any meaningful professional relationship, a common factor is that they have experienced some form of childhood trauma, particularly sexual abuse. My experience is that this has a significant impact on how people cope with their feelings and emotions when becoming adults. Most individuals who I have work with don't usually have one complication in their lives, but experience many of the above issues one after the other. Sex work is something that the majority of women involved have "fallen into" and it is unusual to see someone make a planned and conscious decision to do such work. Again, a disclosure of childhood trauma amongst sex workers with whom I have worked is very high.

I am currently employed as a Project Manager with The Cyrenians in Newcastle Upon Tyne. The Cyrenians help people to make lasting positive changes in their lives. They are innovative, progressive and courageous in the work they deliver; I continue to work with this organisation as I believe I have the same drive and values. We work holistically – combining appropriate services and needs led support for each individual. Our support ranges from emergency intervention, through stabilisation and progressing to training and employment. I have worked with Cyrenians since October 2007 delivering services to women, specifically those within The GAP Project. The GAP Project helps women who are involved in sex work and women who are exposed to sexual exploitation. GAP provides a holistic service to address a wide spectrum of personal, social and economic needs. Before being employed by The Cyrenians I gained specialised skills and knowledge around dangerous drug taking behaviours and substance misuse, working for 24/7, a National Health Service led drug and alcohol service in Gateshead. I worked on the front line with injecting drug users within a harm reduction environment. Most clients were very chaotic, unaware of what was really going on around them or in fact what was going on for them, concentrating more on surviving and where and when they would next 'score' - the reality of most addiction.

Women Services at Cyrenians have developed specific expertise to address a wide range of issues including prostitution, homelessness, mental health and re-offending. Using a range of needs led interventions we aim to achieve positive, long-term successful outcomes with clients which help them to make the choice to exit from prostitution and live independent, fulfilled lives.

Many Sex Work projects around the UK focus on harm reduction and health promotion whilst others focus solely on exiting strategies. The GAP project uses a person centred approach which empowers and enables women to exit when they are ready to do so and it is realistic for them. Women we currently support are either actively still doing sex work or have exited. The women we see operate in many different ways to access punters or clients. We see very little street based sex work in Newcastle; it is far more common for sex work to be women working together in flats / houses, women working as escorts for local escort agencies or women working independently. We also provided intensive outreach support to more vulnerable women who will offer to do sex acts in return for a place to stay if their homeless, for alcohol and drugs and sometimes for cigarettes, this is what we have called "survival sex" and is very clearly a form of sexual exploitation.

I am now 27 years of age and over the last 8 years of working with people on the margins, I have gained a great deal of insight and knowledge, but I am still eager to learn more, with a particular focus on positive interventions that have long lasting and sustainable outcomes. I would like to think I could use this knowledge to have an impact on the work in GAP, where I'm responsible for leading a dedicated and passionate team who have the ability to make changes.

## Aims and Objectives of the Fellowship

In a broad context the main aims and objectives for this project are the following:

- To gain knowledge to be able to improve service provision for female sex workers in Newcastle Upon Tyne
- To gain knowledge to be able to improve service provision for women who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation in Newcastle Upon Tyne and surrounding areas
- To learn about the positive international responses to prostitution
- To understand the current international debates around prostitution which impact on health and wellbeing
- To identify good practice when working with women who have multiple and complex needs, including holistic interventions, specialist services working together (substance misuse, criminal justice and mental health)
- To learn and reflect on what is important to women and what things makes women want to achieve in life.

Professionals continue to see the 'same faces' walking into services after years of intensive, specialist support (the revolving door syndrome) and planned case management. This raises a number of questions in my mind that I and other practitioners need to reflect upon: What is the common timeline for someone to be involved in prostitution and does this always impact on mental health? How do we know our services are productive? How might we do things differently? How can we do things better?

Sex work remains a hidden, 'hard to reach' group within our society. I've always been keen to develop new ways to engage with women involved in this work and to learn more about how they regard themselves as sex workers. My project is Changing Lives; Building Futures for Women on the Margins.

# The UK Sex Industry

## **UK Law, Legislation and Responses to Sex Work and Vulnerable people**

In the UK prostitution has always been legal however there are many activities surrounding the exchange of sex for money or other goods which are criminal offences.

The ongoing debate worldwide: Sex Work is Legitimate Work Vs Sexual Exploitation

Some experts within the field would describe any persons involvement in the sex industry as being sexual exploitation and the effects of doing sex work as life threatening. Others will state that the sex industry is a business like any other and people have a choice to work as a sex worker, people should stop judging and discriminating against sex workers.

However, UK legislation is tailored around prevention and managing the demand for prostitution. In a major Home Office consultation paper called *Paying the Price* in 2004 calls to reform were highlighted. This was after anxieties around organised trafficking groups came to the fore, encouraging more punitive responses against pimps, managers and traffickers who profit from sex work. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 introduced a package of new offences designed to tackle various forms of sexual exploitation including: Causing or inciting prostitution for gain, Controlling prostitution for gain and Trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

In 2006 a Co-ordinated Prostitution Strategy was published, this strategy was considered to be the responses to *Paying the Price* Home Office paper in 2004. The key objectives of the strategy were to: Challenge the view that street prostitution is inevitable and here to stay, To achieve an overall reduction in street prostitution, To improve the safety and quality of life of communities affected by prostitution and to reduce all forms of commercial sexual exploitation. The prostitution strategy also included: Prevention – from children and young people becoming involved, Tackling Demand – kerb crawlers, Developing Routes Out – Support and advocacy services. Ensuring justice – to those who exploit individuals through prostitution. Tackling Off Street Prostitution – especially in

relation to trafficking. Underlying ideas include the view that prostitution is an exploitative industry that no woman would freely choose to work in. The strategy also curtailed any discussion of managed zones.

In 2008 there were proposals within The Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill that sex workers arrested for soliciting could be ordered to attend three appointments with a Court-appointed expert to consider exit routes from prostitution. Magistrates could summon those who fail to attend the sessions before a Court and those who do not obey the summons can be arrested and imprisoned for up to 72 hours. This new approach to street prostitution addresses the criticism of current penalties for soliciting, where sex workers are routinely fined. The counterproductive consequence is that women have to carry out increased levels of sex work in order to pay these financial penalties and there is no mechanism to help them address presenting needs. It appears that the new ideas within the Bill emanate in part, from the public concern following the murders of five women involved in sex work in Suffolk. Reflecting the explicit stance of the National Prostitution Strategy, the proposed legislation focuses on assisting women's exit from prostitution through rehabilitation.

Although the proposal to deal with street sex workers within the Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill initially presents as a rehabilitative and welfarist disposal, further analysis suggests it runs the risk of increasing the gulf between the deserving and undeserving so that only those who responsibly exit and resume 'normal' lifestyles are socially included, leaving those outside increasingly marginalised. Routes out of prostitution require more sophisticated responses including genuine choices to build up economically and socially viable existences. It is of limited appeal to women exiting sex work to become morally acceptable yet remain on the margins of economic survival.

The Police and Crime Bill 2009, which came in to force in April 2010 makes it an offence to buy sexual services from anyone "subjected to force by psychological means and the exploitation of vulnerability." This recognises psychological control as a form of force, similar to the Forced Marriage legislation. Exploitative conduct is considered to be force, threats, other forms of coercion or deception. Even if the person buying sexual services is not aware the sex worker is subject to this type treatment it is still a Strict Liability Offence. It is also an offence for a person to persistently loiter and solicit in a public place for the purposes of prostitution, where persistent means two or more occasions within a three month period. If a street based sex worker has committed a soliciting or loitering offence they could be issued with a fine and a rehabilitative order which are known as Engagement Support Orders. Three appointments with a specialist must be attended to consider and look at exit routes out of prostitution; this is managed over a 6 month period, if a sex workers doesn't engage with this they could be imprisoned for 72 hours. This order is supportive for those



who are addicted to drugs and/or alcohol and need the correct support to recover from this issue. It is helpful and is acknowledging that sex work can be complex, with other problems being an issue for some people. Offences relating to street sex work is less concerning in Newcastle Upon Tyne as there is no known 'red light district' or visible street market. Indoor bases sex work - It is an offence to keep, manage or act in the management of a brothel, the penalty is a fine or up to 7 years in prison. Legally one sex worker can work in a indoor premises but they must be offering services alone, the premises will be classified as brothel if more than one person is providing services in relation to prostitution, even if at different times. Police have the power to close any premises thought to be running illegally i.e. a brothel. One interesting fact to mention is that it is legal to have a maid or housekeeper to assist you and increase your safety, police may allege that the maid is selling sex and therefore count it as a brothel, especially if the person is young. If the maid has no control over money and duties relate to safety and cleaning only this is legal but this can sometimes be difficult to prove.

Some argue that the current UK law and legislation are too weak and will not prevent women being trafficked into sex slavery; others say that the plans to close brothels will drive prostitution underground. Justice has said that it will do "vanishingly little" to help prostitutes leave the trade and would make working conditions "more dangerous".

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) have a Policing Prostitution and Sexual Exploitation Strategy - The purpose of this strategy is to provide a framework for future policing in the UK, and to tackle crimes relating to prostitution. The aims of this ACPO are to

- To protect individuals and communities from risk, threat and harm and exploitation caused by prostitution
- To investigate and disrupt organised criminal activity associated with prostitution through effective and innovative use of current legislation,
- To support or create effective partnerships with other agencies, organisations or individuals, which help minimise or eliminate the harm that can be caused through prostitution to individuals or communities,
- To undertake or support research, which furthers the ends of this strategy.

137 sex workers have been murdered since 1990 in the UK, and reports lead us to believe that street based sex workers are more likely to be victims of violence and are at greater risk of being murdered, the recent Bradford murders showed us that this fact is true.

I believe that the best responses from issues created by prostitution are from the local agencies themselves. Local agencies know how best to respond to their local community and sex workers will generally be more honest with workers in the sex work project about their situation. Multiagency work with specialist sex work projects is important to really understand the nature and extent of the problem and Local Authorities and Community Safety Partnerships are encouraged to work together with local services to deliver a proactive approach for each person effected by this issue.

Some Local Authority areas have good local prostitution strategies which have been instrumental in the management of concerns relating to prostitution and how they should be tackled. Voluntary organisations and statutory services, local residents and people involved in sex work are all consulted to help tackle raised concerns.

The UK Network of Sex Work Projects (UKNSWP) is a UK network bringing together all the individual sex work projects from across the country, sharing good practice and information. Members can be individuals that support sex workers whilst projects are part of the voluntary or statutory sectors. The network together are involved in consultations that impact on local and national policies.

## The Local Picture

### Northern England

**The Cyrenians, Girls Are Proud, GAP Project** - Unlike any other major city in the UK Newcastle Upon Tyne do not have a 'red light district' or active street market. This is very unusual but Newcastle still has an active sex industry with many concerns about women vulnerable to sexual exploitation in certain parts of the city.

The GAP Project was established in 2006 after a piece of research was carried out in 2005 by the Drug Interventions Programmeme Team (DIP) by Government Office North East. This study helped create an understanding about the nature of the industry in the local area and why women don't street solicit. One predicted factor within this sample group was the link between sex work and substance misuse as well as other forms of vulnerability. Further studies have been carried out with the GAP project including a piece of peer research called 'Hidden for Survival'. See [www.thecyrenians.org/resouces/research\\_reports.htm](http://www.thecyrenians.org/resouces/research_reports.htm) The GAP project are currently working in partnership with Northumbria University and a group of peer researchers to develop a second piece of peer research. This second study will cover all areas of the female sex industry in Newcastle Upon Tyne, including sexual exploitation, in door based work, sex trafficking and the escort industry.

The GAP Project Peer Research studies have been unique pieces of work in the UK. The research promotes empowerment and education for all those involved. Individuals who become peer researchers have all experienced sex work personally, either currently or in the past. Peer researchers can build up genuine and honest relationships with their peers which enables them to ask sensitive and personal questions that can be extremely emotional. GAP's peer research work is about women taking ownership of a project that provides a detailed qualitative survey of the needs of participants and sex workers in the Northeast. The impact of peer research has created excellent service provision locally. Sex work outreach projects can tailor services and provide training to social welfare providers accordingly. GAP have produced targeted and detailed knowledge useful for informing local prostitution strategies for the City Councils across the Northeast. Peer research also helps develop academic theory and debate concerning the banishment of socially excluded groups from public space, whilst untangling the real and damaging impact banishment can have in terms of lack of access to services.

The GAP Project remains a grant funded service and continues to develop. The Project works with a diverse group of sex workers and women at risk of sexual exploitation. GAP work with street based sex workers, in door based sex workers and women working within the local escorting industry who all present to the service with a need. The project provides case management support to around 45 women at any one time, providing 1 to 1 support and facilitated group support. Groups offered are varied from weekly peer support drop in sessions, a 12 week coping with emotions group (focused around Personality Disorder), educational groups (where qualifications are achieved), monthly cooking classes and a group for victims of domestic violence which runs every 12 weeks. The project uses innovative techniques to engage some of the more 'at risk' women within housing, criminal justice, drug treatment and health services thereby reducing and addressing health risks, housing crisis, reducing crime and positive engagement with treatment services. It is important to understand the different client groups we work with to ensure the correct services are offered. The escort services look different and the way in which we engage escorts is very different, i.e. using escorting forums to promote our services and offering peer support groups in a non-service or clinic environment.

The GAP Project offer a local reporting scheme called Worksafe, this is a way in which women can report any negative incidents they have experienced anonymously if preferred to the police. The reports are usually about dangerous punters/clients who pose risks to sex workers, descriptions of the incident and the perpetrator are given to the project then passed to the police. The information reported is then shared with other sex workers accessing the GAP Project. Worksafe is 'peer protection' and helps women to keep each other as safe as possible. The project follows national good practice guidelines from a policy named Ugly Mugs, other sex work projects call their schemes Dodgy Punters.

Many women seem to engage very well with fun and innovative interventions for example, peer research, play writing, making films, pamper days, cooking and horse riding. All of these activities help build up confidence and self esteem, this supports the development or achievement of ambitions, a feeling of belonging and of becoming.

In May 2011 the GAP Project decided to run a pilot study around the male sex industry in Newcastle Upon Tyne - the pilot was called MAP Male Action Project. The work of 'MAP' (Male Action Project) draws on the 'GAP' (Girls are Proud) Project. GAP have worked through a powerful Programme of both strategic and operational work so that sex work is beginning to be addressed through effective multi-agency practice. Yet, this provision remains gender-biased, focusing only on the needs of women, with the voices and needs of men remaining unheard and unknown.

**Manchester Services** - After a recent visit to Manchester I thought it would be useful to highlight the range of services offered to sex workers and cover the extent of the problem in this area, this visit was also an opportunity to share good practice on a national level.

Manchester Action on Street health , MASH - A outreach sex work project working with female sex workers only, providing support into the saunas and on the street markets. MASH are also funded by grants but also have a Primary Care Trust (PCT) funded nurse who offers health screening in the in door premises and on out reach for street based workers. Money is also provided from the Drug and Alcohol Strategy team (DAST) for some of the core services.

Many of the women working with MASH services have disclosed that they started doing sex work at a young age, around 16years old. This is a common disclosure within other sex work projects, with parents and friends introducing them to prostitution.

In the MASH building different clinics are available to women, counselling services, screening with a nurse for sexual health and contraception, alternative therapies, drop in sessions and arts and crafts, use of the computer is also on offer. In the corner of the drop in room there was a list of all the risky punters who had been reported over the recent months for women to take a note of.

The GAP team's next stop in Manchester was with staff from Manchester Public Health Development Service (MPHDS). We met with a senior Public Health Development Officer, and two workers who dealt with sexual health and substance misuse. The MPHDS have recently transferred into the Mental Health Trust, a NHS Partnership Trust.

The substance misuse worker explained that Hepatitis C is a major concern in the North West and he is currently a member at the Hepatitis Strategy group which has had an impact on prioritising sex workers needs. Over the years many developments have been made to make services more accessible for female sex workers but less work has been done for male sex workers. When services started to address the problem around sex work, people felt that drug treatment services struggled to approach the subject with clients. This is similar to Newcastle before any research was carried out. One interesting fact which was shared was that services for male sex workers should not be part of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) services, as it is not appropriate. Men who are doing sex work, selling sex to other men and don't identify as being gay are a very vulnerable group. They will not identify with a LGBT service, a project in Manchester tried to set up a group for heterosexual men selling gay sex in a LGBT centre and it didn't work. Manchester now have separate services for male and female sex workers, the male service is called the Men's Room. The Department of Health initially funded a pilot for a male sex work project, from 2005 - 2008, 50 male sex workers were working

with staff, the Men's Room is now grant funded (Comic Relief). The focus of this work is around prevention and vulnerable adults, training to police was also a key area to concentrate on. Policing issues around the male street sex market in Manchester have been concerning and allocated officers for this work that kept changing didn't help. Male sex workers have often had experiences of prison life and in children homes. A service for male escorts was looked at but this piece of work didn't carry on as male escorts said they didn't require any support.

The Men's Room are well known for the creative art work and the video's they make with male sex workers, this is an activity that the men have taken ownership of and shared their experiences through media. An art therapist is funded by the local council to work full time with the men to create different pieces of work. After watching one of the films it became clear how important the session were for the men and I gained a real understanding of how they view their personal experiences and their next steps in life. 3 workers are now employed at the Men's Room, the Arts Worker, a Director and a Support Worker who case manages 6 men at anyone time. Every Thursday night a outreach session is offered to the men working on the notorious 'Canal Street'. The support worker is based in the probation service and the arts worker delivers groups to men in the criminal justice system and male sex workers, these groups sometimes overlap. Once every 6 weeks a drop in session runs with only male staff, different disclosures usually come out here that wouldn't normally if female staff attended the group. Cooking sessions have been popular amongst this group, even sitting together to eat the meal afterwards; here again is this sense of belonging which I find with the females I work with. Main source of referrals is peer, as with most sex work projects.

A Local Prostitution Forum meet twice a year in Manchester, around 20 people attend, this is any service that is working with people involved in sex work. Sub groups are then formed from this looking at specific issues and operational work. The sub groups will look at policing problems, case management of clients, young people and sexual exploitation and commissioning.

## Planning My Fellowship

In order to accomplish all my aims and objectives it was vital that I chose to visit the right services. I contacted a range of services working specially with women who have multiple and complex needs. I chose Australia because prostitution has been decriminalised in marked contrast with the current laws in the UK. Some people say New South Wales and New Zealand have the most effective and safest laws for sex workers, regardless of the type of involvement you have in the industry or whether you are forced or coerced into doing sex work. Perth, Western Australia was one of the only cities that I could find which had a holistic service for women and their families, and this is the model we hope to achieve in Cyrenians in the future, bringing all the services together.

I have also written a blog whilst travelling, this is still accessible to view - day to day up dates of where I was and what I was doing, with direct thoughts and feelings about daily experiences, also some related pictures to view - [cyrenianslaura.wordpress.com](http://cyrenianslaura.wordpress.com)

Please see below my itinerary of travel - **'Changing Lives, Building Futures for Women on the Margins'**

Duration - 1 month in Australia, volunteering/work placements in Sydney and Perth, 2 weeks in Hong Kong learning about the nature of the sex industry

### **Part 1**

Newcastle Upon Tyne, United Kingdom to Sydney, Australia

Fly - 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011

Arrive - 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011

Sex Work Outreach Project (SWOP) - Level 4, Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010 - SWOP provides sexual health information and support to people who engage in sex work. They are the leading sex worker organisation in New South Wales for HIV, STI and Hepatitis C education and prevention. Start date - 21<sup>th</sup> September 2011, End date - 30<sup>th</sup> September 2011

## **Part 2**

Sydney, Australia to Perth, Australia

Fly - 1<sup>st</sup> October 2011

Arrive – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2011

Women's Health and Family Services (WHFS)

227 Newcastle St, Northbridge WA 6003

WHFS staff specialize in women's health and family issues, providing medical, counseling, drug and alcohol support, domestic violence, mental health and other health services for women, their children and their families. Start date - 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2011 - End date – 14<sup>th</sup> October 2011

## **Part 3**

Perth, Australia to Hong Kong

Fly – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2011

Arrive – 16<sup>th</sup> October 2011

I had no work placement arranged in Hong Kong, but took the opportunity to investigate the nature of the sex industry in a densely populated major service economy.


**Part 3** Hong Kong to Newcastle Upon Tyne, United Kingdom , Fly - 28<sup>th</sup> October 2011, Arrive home – 29<sup>th</sup> October 2011



## Maps and Areas of Destinations



Sex Work Outreach Project (SWOP) - 

Women's Health and Family Service (WHFS) - 

Hong Kong Destination - 

# Sydney

## **Sex Work Outreach Project - SWOP**

### **Introduction**

SWOP provides sexual health information and support to people who engage in sex work. The project runs a variety of health promotion Programmes and provide out reach to sex industry work places, they also work with sex industry owners and operators to encourage acceptance and maintenance of safe sex practices. SWOP cover the New South Wales area and they work with a diverse group of people with particular regard to gender, culture, age and language. The service also provides support to people who do sex for favours, drugs, clothing, a place to stay or anything else, either often or on occasion. Some of these individuals may not describe themselves as a sex worker. I found it encouraging to know that the project identified with forms of sex work that could be described as sexual exploitation in relation to 'sex for favours', I was keen to know more about this and how the service would support this particular client group.

SWOP is a peer driven environment, all the staff working at SWOP have had or currently have some type of involvement in the sex industry. You must have a personal experience within the sex industry to work at SWOP. Knowing this made me feel slightly anxious about my placement as I have had no personal involvement and thought this could impact on how other workers accepted my involvement.

On my first day I met with the Outreach and Community Services Manager who I initially made contact with in England to set up this placement. I was asked about the Fellowship in more detail and exactly what I wanted to get from my short visit with SWOP. We made a plan to look at the following areas; Scarlet Alliance (Association for Sex Workers), Peer involvement, engagement of different clients (independent workers and people doing sex for favours), Training to professionals (Police), Writing an article for SWOP's quarterly magazine, Law and Legislation, Services available for men, Mainstream services working with sex workers and Stigma and Discrimination. I will be spending time with all the different workers in the team to help understand about all the above issues.

Over the first couple of days in this placement I read over lots of literature and information trying to become more familiar with the New South Wales set up. One of the first things I noticed was the way sex industry language was used. The project reclaimed words, for example, 'The Hookers and Strippers Ball' (an annual event for sex workers), posters and booklets with language like 'no bad whores just bad laws' and the 'voices-whores' group, it wasn't unusual to read an article with this type of language in it and it would not cause offense or harm to sex workers, it was always used in the right context. This type of language would normally be used in negative and derogatory manner and would relate to the stigma attached to sex workers. Many people within society use these kind of words as a definition to describe a sex worker, we know that words like this could not define who or what a person is.

Prostitute - The 'debasement of oneself or of others for the purpose of ill gotten gains'

- Key area of reflection - Sex Industry Language

### **Decriminalisation of Sex Work and Diverse Sex Markets**

I would like to provide an overview of the New South Wales (NSW) sex industry law and legislation, this will support the information around my Sydney experience.

In 1995 law reform decriminalised sex work in New South Wales. Decriminalisation is considered to be the best model of legislation for sex workers health, safety and well-being. Australian sex workers have the lowest rate of HIV in the world.

Soliciting - Soliciting is legal in New South Wales, but there are laws against soliciting i.e. having sex in a public place or car park, soliciting in an area of residence. If sex workers are working on the street they can take their clients/punters to a place called a 'Safe House' or the punter would usually take the sex worker to a hotel or an inside premises. In King Cross there is only one Safe House and it is a run down building what street workers would only use, there's dark rooms and drug dealers are known to hang around in the buildings, the argument to still have Safe House's in some areas is so that a sex worker can take the client to a premises knowing where she/he is going rather than the client take the sex worker somewhere, this system is meant to reduce violence.

Sex workers on the street can be issued with a 'move on' with valid reason. The police would usually ask someone to move on if they were harassing members of the public or if they have good reason to think drug dealing is an issue. SWOP staff have concerns that some police are moving sex workers on when none of the above has been raised as a concern. Some officers are nicer than others. A move on is verbal but it will be written up at the police station on the person's records. After one warning if you don't move on you can be given a fine and if repeatedly refused to move you can be arrested and charged, the maximum penalty is \$220 (£150) which is thought to be extreme. This system is similar to the UK law for soliciting concerns, but in the UK no areas are authorized for soliciting. Undercover police have been known to pose as punters and encourage sex workers to walk over to a car in a non-legal zone, in this situation SWOP will promote that sex workers should explain to punters that they should meet on the correct side of the streets. SWOP provided information booklets to all their sex workers, they have specific booklets for street based sex workers, in door workers, male worker handbooks and a general sex industry legal hand kit book. The SWOP outreach team provided 2 weekly night outreach sessions to street based workers.

Strip clubs have a different license called a Place of Public Entertainment, POPE. It is unclear if many acts in a strip club are illegal. Technically someone could make a complaint alleging offensive conduct in a public place but it is unlikely that someone in a strip club is going to do this. It is not routine for police to enter a strip club and charge people for indecent behavior but the police can be there for an authorized operation. Many women working as an escort in Newcastle have once been dancers in strip clubs. This raises the question as to whether there is a link between strip dancing and sex work; Is sex work for some women often a natural next step from being a strip dancer?

Running a sex worker business is legal as well as being a sex worker. New South Wales Government Brothel Taskforce requires the development consent of home based brothels. Decriminalisation has provided New South Wales with many benefits, especially in relation to health and reduced police corruption, not always well understood by local government. Brothels must be in legal zones i.e. commercial or industrial areas and they shouldn't be established in residential areas. The SWOP outreach team visit around 50 brothels every week this is not including the saunas. Many women would rather work with other women in a brothel instead of working independently, reducing risks around any potential violence. In most brothels and parlours there is a room called the 'girls room' this is where many of the women will form positive social networks.

Private Workers would be described as an Independent Escort in the UK. This is a growing client group with the GAP project, who have presented to the service with emotional and psychological needs, as well as saying that life is lonely and that they feel

isolated because of the stigma attached to sex work. Private workers in NSW must apply for a development approval; they will usually work from home in residential places and because of this they are less likely to disclose about their involvement since they are in effect running an illegal brothel because it is in a residential area. This group of sex workers have been difficult to engage with they are hard to reach and their services remain hidden.

- Key areas of reflection -
- Safe Houses
- Developmental Consents
- Private Workers and isolation / mental health

### **Shadowing SWOP Staff 'Sex Work is Work' Debate**

The SWOP project is part of a larger organisation called ACON. ACON is a organisation that represents the diversity of NSW communities and provides services to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities (LGBT), drug using communities and the sex work industry (SWOP). I was able to spend an afternoon within the harm reduction centre in ACON. I was really excited about this afternoon because my previous job before Cyrenians was working in a needle exchange / harm reduction team which I loved and gained a lot of my core beliefs and understanding from when working with individuals using drug. Working with people on the front line who are extremely chaotic provides you with a good understanding of what life is really like when being dependant on high levels of illicit drugs, and how people cope with everyday events.

Many of the individuals accessing SWOP also use the drug services so having all the services in the same building worked well for clients. Sex work and drug use are commonly known to be linked together. The staff member who I shadowed in the needle exchange, Needle and Syringe Programmeme (NSP) was a current injecting drug user, again the same policy applied in the harm reduction team as in SWOP, being a peer or in the NSP case having personal experiences of taking drugs was essential to work within the project. This is virtually unheard of in the UK; the Cyrenians employs people who are in recovery and abstinent from drugs and alcohol but employing people still using and injecting illegal drugs would almost never happen in the UK. The main aims of the needle exchange are to prevent people from sharing injection equipment and to prevent the spread of HIV among people who inject drugs. The NSP have records to show that HIV infection is very rare among both injecting drug users and the wider

community. The main drug people are injecting in Sydney at the moment is crystal meth, causing many physical and mental problems. The needle exchange had vending machines around some of the hot spot areas in Sydney, injecting drug users could buy their own equipment for \$1 when the exchanges were closed. Also, sharps bins were dotted around the city for people to dispose of their used needles. Most users called their needles and other equipment 'fits'. The worker explained to me that there was a medical injecting room in Kings Cross, this was a place when medically trained staff would inject people with their own drugs to try and prevent damage to veins, this is meant to reduce the risks around sharing equipment and injecting in the wrong places which can cause abscess if not done properly. The needle exchange were very good at promoting safer injecting techniques and I got the feeling that drug use was very much tolerated and the whole focus was on harm reduction. One poster in the room had a quote on it reading 'Don't make any bloody mistakes' with images on how to keep safe. They provided overdose awareness training called 'Save a Mate'. We did also have conversations about some recovery models, one of which was called SMART recovery. This is now something the Cyrenians are now introducing to clients in Newcastle upon Tyne, England to complement existing work which uses a 12 step philosophy. SMART recovery was described as being similar to NA and AA models but without necessarily being abstinent and without a spiritual element. Alcohol Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) provides intensive step by step Programmes, 12 steps in total as a set of guiding principles (accepted by members as 'spiritual principles,') outlining a course of action for recovery from addiction, compulsion, or other behavioural problems. The steps offer members an avenue for growth and change to maintain their recovery. People learn how to apply these steps in their lives, in fellowship with others who are also in recovery, staying abstinent from drugs and/or alcohol one day at a time.

My next session was with the SWOP Counsellor and Community Worker. This worker would usually see individual/private sex workers and sometimes couples, her support is a short term intervention and she would usually move clients on. The counselling sessions were offered over the telephone and face to face, and the majority of the clients are female, seeing 3/4 clients per day. If any of the clients drop in to the service in crisis and if the worker is available she will see them, many of the discussions are around housing problems, legal advice and relationships. Assessments will be taken to identify the urgency of the clients situation and sign posting will be offered if its not urgent. One of the most interesting conversations I had with the counsellor was around work stress, the impact of being a sex worker and how this can cause daily distress. Clients will often state that they feel like a slave to their mobile phone and internet business, leaving them feeling drained. The worker would provide advice around how to structure their time when doing sex work and how much time to offer to this work is realistic without becoming burnt out. For private sex workers an awareness of feeling lonely and isolated is common. Some of the forums used for sex workers and punters have been known to

give sex workers bad reputations, details being written by punters on the 'feedback' sections causing bad business, this is an issue that's discussed with clients, clients present to the counsellor with lack of confidence and self esteem. This particular problem was described to me in this way - like any other performers, TV presenters and actors not meeting all the buyers expectations. Facilitated groups are offered to talk about how to deal with this problem in the most appropriate way. Some men have been known to pressure women into doing acts they wouldn't normally do saying things like 'go on do it, I'll give you a good review' the woman then feels under pressure to do other thing in case her review is bad. Many women have their own rules to not read review pages.

We also talked briefly about migrant sex workers. Many men and women from overseas emigrate to Australia because earnings are much better in all forms of work be this farming, work in restaurants, or retail assistance; it is not just sex work that attracts people to emigrate. However, sex working money can be very attractive for some individuals, particularly students. Many of the parlours know where to place the adverts for maximum effect, such as in backpackers hotels and some of these more vulnerable people aren't aware of the 'better' areas of sex work to operate in and become exploited.

This next session was one of my favourites, I gained so much knowledge about a client group I knew very little about. I met with the Transgender Community Worker. SWOP have specific workers to offer services to the diverse groups of people involved in sex work. The Transgender Community Worker engages the client's by providing outreach sessions to the well known 'tran's street market', William Street in Kings Cross, only transgender workers would street solicit here. Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights seemed to be the busy nights here, and were described as being the 'action nights', with many purchasers travelling from the West to meet with a transgender sex worker.

From my experience I believe that in the sex industry world you often find the people who take over the leading roles, i.e. 'managing the business' can be dangerous and exploitative. The Transgender Worker told me about a person who would manage the street transgender market, who was named the 'Top Dog'; there were pros and cons with this person. Some of the positives are that there would be less under cutting payments; all the workers would be encouraged to stick together if any trouble kicked off, the "Top Dog" would meet on a regular basis with the police to discuss any problems on the street and people who are at risk. The transgender sex workers saw this as being their protection. The reason I find this a bit worrying and maybe exploitative is because I was then made aware that the majority of the transgender sex workers were addicted to class A drugs and sex work is seen as quick money to get them what they desperately need. As mentioned earlier crystal meth was one of the main drug of choices in NSW. Crystal meth is a powerful stimulant drug that gives a sense of euphoria and acts as a disinhibitor. It is highly addictive with a

very significant depressive "come down" when regular use ceases. It is very common among transgender sex workers with nearly the entire street worker community using it, this drug is also known as speed or base. The worker I was speaking with had massive problems with crystal meth but is now clean after finding recovery through NA, and still attends meetings as part of the ongoing recovery stages, every week. Crystal meth is one of the drugs that NSW have less information about, this is purely because it hasn't been around as long as other illicit drugs, so some of the long term effects are unknown, I found this very scary! Memory loss is already becoming a problem because of the misuse of the drug.

Punters who prefer to buy services from a transgender sex worker are often bisexual. Many cross dressers who are married also see transgender sex workers, stating that its like getting the best of both worlds. Also, men who have not fully identified as being gay but think that its what is right for them, and feeling like its more acceptable for them personally to have sex with a transgender rather than a man until they have fully identified as being gay.

The whole experience of becoming transgender is mentally draining and distressing for many individuals. Most transgender sex workers will go through a full body transition before becoming a sex worker. Its confusing for a transgender if a punter asks for certain acts that they yet aren't fully comfortable with because their body is still changing, hormone replacements also cause this confusion and different emotions. This is why people would usually wait until the transition period is fully complete.

I'm not a man, I'm not a women, I am transgender!

In the gay bars and night clubs sex work is very common and the transgender worker said that if we wanted to develop work for male sex workers we should look in the gay bars, as sex work will, without a doubt, be happening.

I then met briefly a worker who is doing some additional work within her community role, who is trying to develop services for the private sex workers. Engaging with private sex workers is a more difficult client group for SWOP to work with, they seem to be very private and less open about what their doing. The services which are being prioritised to private workers are things like legal advice, advice on creating and safeguarding websites, sexual health, and social groups. This was clear to me due to becoming more involved with independent escorts in Newcastle Upon Tyne. Women doing private work don't always identity as being a sex worker and most of the language used in SWOP is explicit to sex work



Male sex workers in NSW are mainly escorts and parlour workers, street sex work has been less problematic over the recent years. The Male Outreach Worker I spoke with was unsure why the street markets were disappearing. We had a conversation about how modern technology makes street work in every country less prominent. The worker was really impressed with the male packs MAP have started to give out to men in Newcastle Upon Tyne. The SWOP project also give out safer working packs to men they call this scheme the 'male out', packs are mailed to men upon request. In Newcastle Upon Tyne we are trying to concentrate on men who sell sex and do sex for favours, more vulnerable and exposed to many risks and harm. I felt this was something less focused on in SWOP concentrating more on men who do identify as a male sex worker.

An Ugly Mugs scheme was used as SWOP, very much like the UK model, exactly the same really. Reporting a 'Mug' can be done online anonymously and sex workers can speak to a community police officer to report if they wish, from the police station. Small booklets are handed out every 3 months to highlight Ugly Mugs in the area, Mugs that have been reported since last booklet was released. These resources are not displayed in a public space and are for the attention of sex workers only.

Fight Like A Girl – Self Defence Group – On the second last day I was able to join in a self defence class with staff and 10 sex workers all working in different environments. The sessions bring people together, women especially, developing effective fighting skills. Based on hand to hand combat systems developed by Military Special Forces, the aim is to survive violent confrontations. The guy who ran the class has worked with sex workers for many years, he's passionate about his work because his mother was a sex worker and was exposed to violence when working. The workers were able to ask about any situations they could be in and how they could reduce any harm posed to them, it was very specific to sex work. The workers left feeling more confident and some workers signed up to an ongoing self-defence class to continue to improve their skills. I know many women in Newcastle Upon Tyne who would benefit from this and would feel more confident when working alone. The majority of the workers who attended the session were brothel and strip club workers. I was able to leave my contact details with one of the male sex workers who is thinking of coming to London, he was keen to keep in touch to help MAP develop services for men, I explained what we had already done with the male pilot. He is member of Scarlet Alliance and is instrumental in their campaigning for male sex workers.

Scarlet Alliance (SA) – Before leaving Sydney I met with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Scarlet Alliance. One of the first things CEO said to me was 'Hi, I'm the CEO at Scarlet Alliance and I am a sex worker', this was very empowering I felt. Scarlet Alliance Sex Worker Association is peer driven and is the main body for all sex workers and sex work projects in Australia. The association was set up in 1989 by people who understood the need to develop a network for sex workers. The aims are to achieve

equality, social, legal, health, political and economic justice for past and present sex workers. SA produce resources and guides for best practice. They also inform government and policy makers about any legislation that can impact on sex workers health and well-being, internationally.

I also met briefly with the migrant sex worker advocacy worker at Scarlet. Scarlet Alliance have a migration project steering committee. The migrant worker had been to an recent event to campaign about meaningful engagement of migrant sex workers. Many migrant sex workers in Australia come from Asian countries such as China, Korea and Thailand, they come with the intention to work in the sex industry to make good money. They are often unaware of their legal position they are in as a sex work because of limited access to translated and accurate information.

After meeting Scarlet and reading through some of their literature I felt ambivalence, especially when I heard about police corruption, lack of human rights and stigmatisation. Street based sex workers make up only 2% of sex workers in Australia, but get the most attention in relation to law. Street sex work is legal in NSW. The arguments to make this work more tolerant in other states is that not all street sex workers are vulnerable and to also stop police corruption. I heard of some street sex workers being victims of horrific abuse from local police officers. NSW is the only state where street work is legal at the moment.

Allowing a sex worker to make their own decisions is key, I believe services should continue to be needs lead. Being needs lead may still involve someone continuing to do sex work and if this is the case then harm reduction, health promotion and reducing stigma would be the key areas to focus upon. We know not to make any assumptions that all sex workers are victims of abuse and are vulnerable. It is interesting to note however that Hidden for Survival research showed that sex workers were abused and had experienced some kind of abusive trauma when they were a child. The PEER research project this year at GAP may reveal some other evidence to highlight trauma, the researchers will interview escorts, migrant workers, street workers and women doing sex for favours.

Campaigns and policy focused work carried out by SA has increased the number of sex workers accessing mainstream services. Most sex work projects have a 'service friendly' guide this is because some people and services hold stigma about the people working in the industry. One sex worker said in the provision magazine which is published by Scarlet – 'When someone tells me I'm too smart to be a hooker, I just think about my friend who was told she was too pretty to be an aboriginal'.

From GAP's experience we know sex work can be an exploitative industry and peoples vulnerabilities are targeted, but could media worldwide be giving people the wrong impression about the sex industry as a whole. Stigma and discrimination and people's knowledge of the sex industry is often lead by the media rather than the people working in the industry. In the media we never seem to hear anything positive about the sex industry. We do hear about murders, violence, pimps and trafficking cases. All of the above are reasons why the GAP must remain a needs led service, we come in to contact with sex workers from all different walks of life. However, I do still have many worries about people vulnerable and becoming caught up in type of lifestyle when lack of choice is an issue.

Every season SWOP publishes a magazine for sex workers in NSW called the Professional and during my time with SWOP I was able to add in an article about my Fellowship. The Professional is a closed publication which means it is only available to sex workers. I like the idea of providing a regular magazine for clients accessing GAP, which could be written by GAP women and maybe MAP men. The Professional content was varied from letters sent in, sexual health advice and information, events and conferences, working in hotels advice, drug advice, directory of services and the list goes on.

- Key areas of reflection -
- Holistic services (LGBT, D&A, Sex Work)
- Peer involvement
- Recovery and maintaining drug use
- Punters causing psychological distresses
- People who emigrate to work in the AU sex industry
- Ugly Mugs International scheme and Self Defence

## Perth

### **The 'One Stop Shop' Model**

The Cyrenians Women's Service have no appropriate premises to offer a 'one stop shop' however, In an attempt to resolve this issue Cyrenians have created a 'virtual' one stop shop service. The individual projects will take the services to the clients and clients to the services. This requires excellent partnership working with external agencies and positive relationships with individual women.

My placement in Perth, Western Australia was with Women's Health and Family Services (WHFS). WHFS staff specialise in women's health and family issues, providing medical, counselling, drug and alcohol support, domestic violence, mental health and other health services for women, their children and their families. Programs and services at WHFS are open to all West Australian women including Aboriginal, migrant and refugee women, and their families. In my opinion WHFS had the best model I've ever seen for one stop shop. As soon as I walked into the WHFS building I was impressed, everything was visible, clear and comfortable. I could tell lots would be on offer at this service.

The services:

- Domestic Violence Abuse Service
- Aboriginal Services
- Alcohol and other Drugs
- Medical Services (GP)
- Mental Health
- Health and Nutrition
- Community Work

The Domestic Violence Abuse Service (DVAS), this service was not only the one stop model for clients but also for partner agencies, they are known as the first point of contact for all DV cases. Within this team is a manager, a counsellor/psychologist, support workers (tailored for each group), a child protection officer, legal aid, solicitors for refugee support and DV issues. At present the service continues to only provided 121 support, the specialist areas of support are family therapy and sexual abuse.

DVAS is funded to provided case coordination to all services who work with any DV cases in Central Business District (CBD), this reminded me of a similar service we have in the UK called Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). DVAS will chair multiagency meetings where all the senior managers from the DV services attend. If a client is a great risk of harm and services are struggling to move a case forward the group can put a case forward to a higher strategic group at government level.

The counselling service at DVAS provides 1-2-1 sessions and is looking at developing group work using a guide from the UK's Women Aid model. It was interesting speaking with the Counsellor about the work she does around personality disorders and attachment disorders. Staff supervision is something DVAS are currently developing, the counsellor will hope to provided staff consultancy. I think every organisation should have therapeutic staff consultancy, especially when working with challenging clients.

The DVAS Multicultural Worker worked with clients from countries like Thailand, China, Poland and Russia. Many women are stuck in very difficult situations, there's limited resources available to them due to their refugee status and the risks around being deported are extremely worrying. Women at risk of being deported feel embarrassed, feel shame and are sometimes at more risk of harm going back to their narrative countries. Most of the Multicultural Workers work is advocacy support around finding legal status and support with housing issues and homelessness.

DVAS was set up initially as an advocacy service and because clients kept coming back when crisis had settled for continued support they developed in to providing extra interventions. Education and employment, counselling, family therapy and peer support.

Alcohol and other Drugs team had 2 WHFS workers working within Perth prisons delivering a course called Criminal Conduct and Substance Abuse Treatment for Women in Correctional Settings. This is basically a Programme that's for female offenders that uses strategies for self improvement and change. The Programme reminded me of the work being delivered at Cyrenians Women Services Personality Disorder group, Coping with Emotions. The prison course is around looking at offending events and the thoughts women may have about these particular events, then looking at the emotions and feelings people have which in effect is what makes someone's decision to commit crime. The activities used for this were very good and visual, the groups would work through all their events together.

STEP – Situation, Thinking, Emotions, Positive actions

Another group I thought would be very good to use with women back in Newcastle Upon Tyne was the 'getting off and staying off' group. The group worked on an activity around problem solving, each person talked through a problem they were currently dealing with, turned it into a goal and worked out the best way to deal with it. We helped the women brainstorm to decide which route would be best to use for each situation. The women at this group were either past or present drug users.

The Community Development Team do activities with all the children whose parents use the services at WHFS, so this can be any of the services i.e. Domestic Violence service, Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health services. All the kids and parents from different backgrounds mixing together, women recovering from drug addiction, women on treatment for BBV's, women with mental health issues and women who work with the DV service. I found this to be a very unique service and I thought it worked very well. It made me think about how we can integrate people back into their communities without feeling stigmatised. When the kids go back to school they can talk about all the fun things they did in the holidays, feeling more connected with the community and other families.

A new Programme has been recently introduced at WHFS, an in-reach video link service. Some of the more rural areas where limited services are available can contact WHFS via video link. Women can have counselling sessions this way and receive advice and information from specialist workers every week. This I thought would be particularly useful for the aboriginal communities. It then made me think about sex workers in our rural areas being offered support such as in Northumberland and Cumbria.

A holistic service working with the most marginalised and vulnerable group of people of our society, using skills from a variety of people, working together daily addressing a whole host of needs. The opportunity to have a centre that women and their families can walk into without feeling judged and get the highest standard of services that deals with 'real life' issues is fantastic. We have all these great services in Newcastle Upon Tyne but being based together, working towards the same goals and aims is something we don't have, offering genuine choices for families to live happy stable lives.

WHFS offered staff clinical group supervision which was very much like the sessions at Cyrenians, this was encouraging . One worker talked through a family she was working with, which was very challenging. It made me realise how services who support the whole family work best when their all from the same service, the worker mainly worked with the child but knew the dynamics in the family a lot better because of the other WHFS workers involvement. the conversations weren't about problems with services it was all about the family, and this is what we should always be focusing upon. The aboriginal worker I met with was preparing for a kids disco as it was the school holidays. The aboriginal project first started as a service supporting aboriginal grandparents. This was because grandparents will care for their children's children, due to parents having addictions. The grandparents would be under so much pressure and demands from all members of the family. Very similar to some situations in England. There's also a government policy called 'closing the gap' for aboriginal communities. This is because aboriginal communities are currently living 15 years less than other groups of people in Australia. Closing the gap is something the aboriginal project is focused around, now meeting the needs of women and their families, the grandparent project is still running well with peer support groups and group activities.

One of the interesting things about the mental health team at WHFS is that they had a special free Programme for women who have experienced trauma during consultation with a health professional. This made me think about people being vulnerable to sexual exploitation in a professional setting and how sex workers could be at more risk? A recent case in Newcastle Upon Tyne showed us that this can happen, with a police officer who targeted vulnerable women and sexually exploited them.

WHFS professionals are either social workers, therapist, counsellors or nurses. The child therapists are mainly art therapist, they use different creative ways to interact and communicate with young people. I found this a fascinating process and thought some of

it could be implemented when working with adults. All 121 sessions have a charge at WH however, charges can be waived if a woman is struggling financially and is a priority.

Key areas of reflection:

- Domestic Violence leading services
- virtual one stop shop in prison - continued support
- Family integration

## **Addictions and Recovery**

One of my final visits in Perth was with Cyrenian House, which was a really powerful experience. Cyrenian House is a non-government funded service and offers residential and non-residential support to people in WA suffering from drug and alcohol addiction. I had the opportunity to visit Saranna Women's Project, a residential rehab Programme for women with children. I was able to sit in one of the groups and I was absolutely blown away by the energy and strength in the group - it was very powerful. This was the part of the journey where I felt I finally understood spiritual personal growth and was one of my aims of the Fellowship. I talked earlier in this report about people coming back into services because they haven't dealt with their inner personal emotions, the Saranna Project was one place that accomplished this part of the 'becoming journey'. I would also like to think that this kind of programme could be adapted for sex workers or women who have struggled in life, not just with addictions. The whole programme requires a minimum of three months contact but women usually stay for around a year. Women are encouraged to gradually develop a therapeutic community and network, this ensures that women are supported properly in the general community once discharged. Women will attend NA / AA meetings during the week, externally from Saranna but as part of the rehab Programme. The accommodation is self-contained cottages, there's 14 cottages on the land. The land was in the sticks, it was so peaceful and relaxed, wild animals were close by...including kangaroos!! The land was donated years ago by a man whose two daughters died of drug overdose. On the other side of the land there was a mixed residential unit, which I was able to visit briefly. The Saranna Programme requires you to believe in your own GOD. Everyone's GOD can be different, it doesn't need to be Jesus if this is something that people struggle to think about, I learnt this at Saranna. GOD is something or someone a person feels connected to,



GOD should be caring, nurturing, powerful, someone you can hand something over to and who is loving. When we talk about the 12 step Programme some women get worried about the concept of having faith in GOD, when you know GOD is something that helps and guides you through recovery you trust in it, and it does work. One women said her GOD was her Good Orderly Direction.

### **Sex Worker Identify**

Sex Work Outreach Project Western Australia (SWOPWA) is funded through health and is one of many specialist sexual health services in Family Planning WA (FPWA). The team is a mixture of nurses, social workers, peers and support worker. A GP also works in the centre once a week. They work with parlour and street sex workers and are responsible for the whole of WA. Megenta is a separate service for sex workers but is also part of the FPWA, a team of workers that work with indoor based sex workers. Magenta and SWOPWA are both part of Family Planning WA. I really liked the fact that they had two different teams for the different sex workers. This made lots of sense to me and it was excellent for service user identity, the two client groups will usually present with some very different needs. I realised that the sex work projects I was visiting didn't provide any case management to their clients including clients who were exploited or wouldn't describe themselves as a sex worker, and people doing sex for favours didn't really engage with sex work projects. This is why I felt it was important to have different project identities, why would someone doing sex for favours use a sex work project? Sexual exploitation and sex work can be different things, separate services are essential in order to engage with people appropriately.

Magenta and SWOPWA are not part of Scarlet Alliance (SA) because they are not a fully peer lead service, only peers can attend any conferences or events delivered from SA.

### **Hong Kong**

The last part of my journey was in Hong Kong where I stayed with a relative. I didn't have a placement set up in Hong Kong but I was able to gain an insight of how the sex industry operates in the City and its surrounding areas. This experience made me aware of how different lifestyles and cultures can impact on our whole life experiences and expectations.

Prostitution in Hong Kong is legal, but subject to various restrictions, including soliciting and advertising for sex, running brothels and organized prostitution. Many women working in the industry are from mainland China coming into HK on working visas. Women from a range of nationalities are working in HK sex markets women from China, Poland, Russia, Thailand and the Philippines. I've learnt about some of the diverse local sex markets in Hong Kong, some being the same like everywhere else in the world. I had some interesting conversations about 'short time hotels' and 'one women' brothels and women working inside the bars and clubs. I've also been concerned about young girls doing sex work, I thought this was visible when in the bars and clubs.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

### Conclusion

Sex Work is a highly debatable subject and has many areas to consider when thinking about the best interventions and laws for the people involved. I believe that all the services offered to sex workers need to be individually led and be tailored to specific needs. Many women involved in sex work are on the margins of our society and do hope to exit the industry at some point in their lives.

I was able to learn about gender related problems with particular regard to male sex work, this was an area additional to my Fellowships original aims and objectives. The GAP project have worked through a powerful programme of both strategic and operational work so that sex work is beginning to be addressed through effective multi-agency practice. Yet, this provision remains gender-biased, focusing only on the needs of women, with the voices and needs of men remaining unheard and unknown. I'm keen to investigate the male sex industry further.

New South Wales, Australia are most definitely in agreement of Sex Work is Work debate, the 1995 law reform for a decriminalisation model focuses around safer working practices and harm reduction for people involved in sex work. I found that this model works very well for many individuals working in the NSW sex markets but was concerned that there could be a gap, especially for people vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

The women we support at the GAP project are often exposed to dangerous situations where they may place themselves at great risk of physical violence. GAP carry out intensive case management for each individual, focusing on reducing harm and raising awareness of the potential of violence against women doing sex work. The international Ugly Mugs schemes are very positive and provide consistency for all sex workers and people at risk of significant harm whilst doing different types of sex work.

My first placement left me thinking about the UK laws and legislation and how effective they are. Is UK legislation protecting people or making lives more destructive? Do weak and unenforced laws, allowing sex work to become a more legitimate line of work make people more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, also does this allow organised crime groups to become more organised?

Currently it is estimated that around 80,000 people work within the sex industry in the UK which includes all people involved in the industry - managers, drivers and maids. Sex work is inevitable and will always happen wherever you go in the world. The sex industry is one of the biggest money making industries world wide. The money that is generated in the sex industry in the UK is estimated to be £500m. Money from the oil industry, the illicit drug industry and the sex industry make the largest yearly incomes in comparison with any other industry.

As a means of working with a diverse group of women who present to services with a whole host of complex but genuine needs, Cyrenians Women's Services use a virtual "one stop shop model". Many women are unable to access mainstream services for a number of reasons, one of which is that some of our women struggle to form positive relationships with all professionals, but yet they begin to open up and trust in one particular service, the sense of belonging again! Cyrenians seek to offer a full range of specific services to a vulnerable client group where they receive a good service, and all needs are met in a holistic service or in a 'walk in' centre.

Understanding your inner person in a therapeutic community as a model of treatment is very important. It is fundamentally a self-help approach which strives to sustain the main characteristics of a prosocial and positive family environment. This includes structure to provide order in daily living; nurturance through physical and psychological safety; individual acceptance and encouragement, conditional only upon honest participation! The Becoming Person.

The therapeutic community (TC) could be used in many of the Cyrenians groups as well as in residential settings. We can design groups to intensify those life experiences attached to sex work, domestic violence, drug misuse, offending and childhood traumas. This would help individuals learn about themselves, gain self-esteem, develop self-respect, learn about others, and foster mutuality and respect for others. By adapting this TC model, concepts of responsibility, authority and meaningful codes of behaviour are established. There is an expectation for clients to be responsible for maintaining values and codes of behaviour held important to their community.

## Different legal approaches

- Abolitionist - seeks to abolish prostitution by penalizing clients and pimps but not prostitutes. Buying sex is illegal - Sweden
- Legalisation - where certain aspects of sex industry work are controlled by the government and permitted under specific conditions– The Netherlands
- Decriminalisation – repealed legislation which criminalizes, provided rights to sex workers conducive to health and well being. Prostitution Reform Act 2003. New Zealand and Australia
- Between abolitionism and regulationism? Prostitution tolerated but controlled – moving towards a more abolitionist approach? England and Wales

## Next Steps

- Divide services up for sex workers and victims of sexual exploitation - Identity (sexual exploitation, gender and escorts)
- Improve local training packages - International responses to sex work and best practice
- Peer Involvement and peer led services
- Strategic steering groups to help take the projects forward
- Women Service therapeutic community groups
- More holistic approached services

## Project Summary

# Changing Lives; Building Futures for Women on the Margins

### Aims of Fellowship

- To gain knowledge to be able to improve service provision for female sex workers in Newcastle Upon Tyne
- To gain knowledge to be able to improve service provision for women who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation in Newcastle Upon Tyne and surrounding areas
- To learn about the positive international responses to prostitution
- To understand the current international debates around prostitution which impact on health and wellbeing
- To identify good practice when working with women who have multiple and complex needs, including holistic interventions, specialist services working together (substance misuse, criminal justice and mental health)
- To learn and reflect on what is important to women and what things makes women want to achieve in life

### Key Learning Points

- Sex work/prostitution being described as legitimate work for some individuals - 'When someone tells me I'm too smart to be a hooker, I just think about my friend who was told she was too pretty to be a aboriginal' (Scarlet Alliance)
- Holistic services working with the most marginalised and vulnerable group of people of our society, using skills from a variety of people, working together daily addressing a whole host of needs, and how this is achieved from one service provider
- Intensive physiological support, understanding what has happen in life to fully be prepared to move on positively

- Working with children and families is as important as working with the individual woman, seeing the child as an individual, offering separate services and interventions
- How national networks support regional work
- Family integration
- Domestic abuse becoming a leading service
- Virtual one stop shops in prison and continued support
- Holistic services (LGBT, D&A, Sex Work)
- Peer involvement
- Recovery
- Maintaining drug use and harm reduction
- Punters causing psychological distresses
- People who emigrate to work in the AU sex industry
- Ugly Mugs International scheme
- Self defence
- Safe Houses
- Developmental Consents
- Private Workers and isolation / mental health