



Toynbee Hall

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Insight into the current state of prostitution and the potential impact of the Olympics in the host five boroughs

By Kristen Neumann

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I. Executive summary

This paper sets out to gain insights into the current situation around prostitution in the host five boroughs and anticipated changes, including considerations around service provision. It is beyond the scope of this paper to give concrete numbers around prostitution or findings from past Olympic events.

There are already some signs of increases in the levels of on and off-street prostitution within the host boroughs; although it is difficult to establish a direct correlation between the increase and the Olympics, and other factors such as the recession are likely to play a part.

Drawing from the lessons of past Olympics and information from interviews about London, women involved in prostitution are likely to be negatively affected by efforts to clean up districts and pressures on housing. Already limited resources may also be stretched to address the impact of the Olympics on the wider community, while women involved in prostitution become further marginalised. These negative impacts pose a serious risk for women currently involved in prostitution, whether or not an increase occurs.

On-street and off-street prostitution is already present in all five of the host boroughs at varying levels. Women involved in prostitution are not a homogenous group, and include British, migrant and trafficked women, many of whom have varied and sometimes complex needs. Service provisions remain patchy at best for this client group particularly in relation to addressing the multiple issues faced by many of these women, such as health, poverty, homelessness, substance misuse, and child care.

Limited funding currently results in reactive policing policies which vary across boroughs and sometimes only serve to displace women. Only two of the host boroughs provide diversion schemes specifically for people involved in prostitution. Women are more likely to receive ASBOs where diversion schemes are not in place, creating further barriers to accessing the services they need and increasing risks by displacing them into unknown areas. Policing policies around prostitution need to be planned carefully to take into account how support could be provided to those affected by the enforcement. Women in prostitution experience high levels of serious violent crime particularly in street-based prostitution, and proactively policing through prevention and investigation needs to be increased and support for victims improved.

Many women involved in prostitution are amongst the most vulnerable in our communities. Two host boroughs lack outreach programs and specialised services and more service provision, along with stronger relationships between service providers and law enforcement are necessary. In order to address the complex issues of women involved in prostitution, properly planned joint-commissioning and long-term individualised support is also needed. Without adequate funding and cooperation, prostitution will continually be displaced within and between boroughs by reactionary policies failing to address its root causes.

Multi-disciplinary cross-borough planning is needed to ensure that London 2012 is able to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of women involved in prostitution whilst avoiding potential negative impacts.

II. Recommendations

A strategic multi-disciplinary group include representatives from the five boroughs and key organisations should be established to oversee the implementation of plans around prostitution and the Olympics. The needs of women should be prioritised to minimise negative impacts and improve their health, safety and wellbeing. The group should have a broad remit including women's needs such as health and support services, housing, and violence prevention, as well as broader issues around community safety, enforcement and public health.

This group should overview implementation of the following recommendations:

- Ensure that the holistic needs of women are assessed and provided for in each of the boroughs while cross borough provision is considered where appropriate
- Plan enforcement across the five boroughs in a coordinated manner, ensuring that measures to minimise negative impact on women affected by the enforcement are built into the plans through partnership working.
- Ensure consideration of all approaches to enforcement including establishment of Diversion Schemes in the boroughs which do not currently have these.
- Focus policing on the serious violent crime experienced by this group of women including through prevention, assisted reporting, proactive policing and reactive policing as a priority over low level nuisance issues.

I. Introduction

This scoping exercise was conducted to inform plans for minimising the negative impact of the 2012 Olympics on prostitution in the host London Boroughs of Greenwich, Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets, and Waltham Forest. It is beyond the scope of this paper to give concrete numbers around prostitution or findings from past Olympic events. The objectives are to gain perspectives on: the current situation of prostitution, service provisions for those involved, the perceived impact of the Olympics, any preparations to address the potential impact, and the capacity for organisations to respond. This research required some speculation, as prostitution remains a hidden topic and the impacts of past Olympics differ across host cities. However, predictions of the potential impact and subsequent recommendations are informed by desk-based research on past mega events and interviews with individuals aware of the issues pertaining to London. The report will first discuss over-arching issues faced by women involved in on-street and off-street prostitution. Next, the signs and perspectives around increases of prostitution during the Olympics will be discussed, along with other issues raised regarding the Olympics, and preparations underway for the Games. Finally, information on prostitution, policing measures surrounding it, and services provided for women involved will be discussed in greater detail for each of the host boroughs.

2. Methodology

Desk-based research was conducted to find contacts for interviews and contextualise the situation of prostitution in the host boroughs. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine service providers, five law enforcement agents, and two key researchers to gather information from various perspectives. At least one service provider and one law enforcement agent was interviewed for each host borough, with several people providing information regarding more than one borough (and, therefore, listed under multiple boroughs above). Interviews lasted around an hour, with follow-ups arranged as necessary.

3. Limitations

There is little data, on the extent of prostitution across the five boroughs. Service provider statistics showed that in 08-09, 260 women selling sex on-street were in contact with services, and in indoor premises across Tower Hamlets, Newham and Hackney a total of 956 women were worked with. It was beyond the scope of this paper to interview extensively in each borough, and the local information relies on the views and knowledge of those interviewed. Waltham Forest and Greenwich were particularly problematic for collecting information as no specialised services for women involved in prostitution were found. Waltham Forest was also the only borough in which a local law enforcement agent could not be identified for an interview surrounding prostitution. Researching such a broad, complex and hidden issue as prostitution poses many difficulties. This paper only attempts to gather insights from various sources that could be accessed in a limited period of time. Furthermore, there is little serious research on the impact of the past Olympics on women involved in prostitution. Moreover, London forms a different context onto which only so many lessons from past mega-sporting events can be transposed.

4. Central findings across the host boroughs

4.1 Current issues regarding prostitution

4.1.1 Impact of limited resources

The 2006 Home Office *A Coordinated Prostitution Strategy* redirected policing measures towards buyers of sex, using a more victim-centred approach for women involved in prostitution. However, limited funding impairs these policies from translating into effective measures. Some noted improvements are specialised diversion schemes from the judicial system and third party reporting schemes for assaults. The number of women arrested according to a Clubs and Vice inspector has also dropped from about 10 to 15 per night to 60 within an entire year (compared to 200 kerb crawlers). However, all the police interviewed suggested limited resources result in reactive policing directed by complaints of residents whose quality of life is prioritised. A local sergeant said that targeted crimes receive much more financial support than prostitution due to political incentives. According to a health care worker, prostitution only enters the policing agenda when drug dealing is involved or residents complain. A Clubs and Vice inspector said certain issues are prioritised for operations surrounding prostitution due to limited resources. There is a drive to increase policing in town centres to address 'hot spots' of anti-social behaviours, reported a sergeant. However, ASBOs and brothel raids are criticised by some for being costly while creating superficial results, displacement and increased risks.

4.1.2 Issues regarding on-street prostitution

Policies and policing measures vary according to boroughs and the type of prostitution that they seek to address, as women working on-street are in very different situations from those working off-street. Women working on-street are generally from the UK, have a long history of involvement in prostitution, and are in poor health. Many of the women are working on-street to feed their own substance-misuse addictions or their partners'; mental health issues, poor physical health, an abusive childhood, social deprivation, chronic poverty, and homelessness are also key factors that place and keep them there. Several service workers also speculated that the recession has led older women back into prostitution and reduced the demand from business men. A Clubs and Vice inspector noted that women are only tested for drug treatment programmes (Drug Intervention Programme) at the discretion of law enforcement in because prostitution is not considered an acquisitive crime. At the same time, drug treatment programs often fall short of the specialised support required by these women – a great example of one that does not is the Specialist Addiction Unit at Homerton that works in partnership with Open Doors. Tower Hamlets and Hackney have specialised diversion schemes while Newham is possibly developing one. There is a complex picture of service provision and gaps across the boroughs. Several service providers also said that agencies are often focused on one particular issue, such as housing or drug addictions, when women involved in prostitution require long-term and holistic support addressing the various problems faced by each individual.

Violent crime perpetuated against women is a serious issue that often goes unreported. At least three-quarters of UK women in prostitution have been physically assaulted and more than half have been raped and/or seriously sexually assaulted. (Hester and Westmarland, 2004). Ward, Day and Weber (1999) found that women involved in prostitution had a mortality rate 12

times the normal rate for women in the same age group. In Kinnell's recent research (2008) between 2004 and 2007, the current toll of homicide cases of sex workers ran at an average of 9 per year, that's an average of one every 6 weeks. No charges are known to have been brought in 30 of the 118 homicide cases (25%) identified. London and the South East have the highest number of cases where no suspects have been identified. Tower Hamlets are currently piloting an Assisted Reporting Scheme, but a greater focus on the violent crime experienced by women involved in prostitution is needed.

4.1.3 Issues regarding off-street prostitution

Women working off-street generally have better health and living conditions, but this does not hold true for women such as those who have been trafficked, forced or coerced. According to an outreach worker in Hackney, Newham, and Tower Hamlets, migrant women are generally involved in off-street prostitution, working in flats with 1 to 3 other women and a maid. This outreach worker also noted a decrease in British and Thai women and increase in Brazilian, Romanian, and Latvian women working off-street. Concerns were expressed about small Thai networks trafficking women, as well as Eastern European women held in debt and forced to work by "boyfriends". Of the women encountered through outreach by the key off-street outreach provider in the host boroughs, approximately 75% are undocumented migrants, 10-15% are in debt bondage, and 5-10% are trafficked, although situations are difficult to assess. The outreach services in Hackney, Newham, and Tower Hamlets have been refused access to some flats and are only able to provide limited access to healthcare for undocumented immigrants. Clubs and Vice carries out eight to ten surveillance led operations each year, avoiding showy raids, to recover women and arrest traffickers. Although Waltham Forest has been the focus of Clubs and Vice anti-trafficking operations and Greenwich has mostly off-street prostitution, no outreach services exist specifically for women involved in prostitution in these boroughs. Various agencies provide women with accommodations for debriefings and resettlement into home countries, however, a local law enforcement agent noted that, women found in raids may become more vulnerable without access to housing.

4.2 Potential impact of Olympics

4.2.1 Changes in demand

Several interviewees were alarmed by the impact of past mega-events in other cities, however, many pointed out that because each city is different, lessons cannot be directly transferred to London. There is not conclusive evidence from previous events about changes in demand to draw definite conclusions due in part to the lack of research in this area. The significant increase in people in the borough, both construction workers in the run up to the games and the numbers arriving during the games could have an impact, but any increase in demand will probably vary across boroughs and could have a broader impact across London. Newham, Tower Hamlets, and Hackney have historical reputations for prostitution which, which some interviewees believe the Olympics will not effect. Greenwich is different from the other Host Boroughs because it is somewhat secluded from the main Olympic activities and prostitution is inconspicuous.

4.2.2 Signs of increases in on-street prostitution

There are some signs of increases in both on-street and off-street prostitution, however, opinions surrounding this issue vary widely while substantial evidence and direct links to the Olympics are lacking. Clubs and Vice has found an increase in construction workers during

kerb crawling operations within the Host Boroughs. In Tower Hamlets, a drug support worker noted more women coming to the centre just for free condoms, yet an outreach worker said any influx in on-street prostitution is probably due to the recession. Several service providers and law enforcement agents saw no evidence of an increase in on-street prostitution connected to the Olympics, yet it was noted that demand may increase with rotation shifts and when construction peaks. The Clubs and Vice inspector expressed concerns about tourists increasing demand. Demographics of those arrested for kerb crawling however show that buyers cut across social class, employment, ethnicities and marital status and several service providers said that buyers of sex vary widely. Whether or not women working on-street will move into the Host Boroughs due to anticipated demand was also debated amongst the people interviewed. A drug support worker raised concerns, should women be attracted from outside the Host Boroughs, as their knowledge and access to services may be limited

4.2.3 Signs of increases in off-street prostitution

Carding in the East End has never before been an issue, suggesting either more brothels or attempts to attract more customers according to Clubs and Vice. Off-street premises may be attracting Olympic construction workers, particularly in Waltham Forest and Newham, because they are well publicised. In Newham, adverts for brothels are appearing in the Newham Recorder and an increase in off-street prostitution is suspected near the Westfields, however, several outreach workers were sceptical of any increases. The Clubs and Vice inspector heard that one brothel closed because the demand was less than anticipated, yet concerns remain that such expectation may attract traffickers as brothel owners try to acquire more women.

The off-street outreach service in Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Newham have seen a year on year increase in the numbers of contacts they have with women selling sex off-street over the last four years, with a larger increase noted in 2008-2009. However, they cite a number of factors which may contribute to this and suspect the recession is likely to be a key factor. Most of the women are older (late 30's to late 40's) and anecdotal evidence coming from the women suggest that that they are returning to sex work after many years absence to make ends meet (cash in hand jobs dried up etc). Furthermore, none of the women that the service comes in contact with in the streets of Hackney works near the Olympic site.

Across the three boroughs, Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Newham, the outreach service has seen a 25% increase in the women seen in flats and saunas with the service now seeing just under 1000 women. Another factor for the large increase in the number of contacts is the increase in women that the service sees in the flats who are Brazilian (approx 40%). From 06 to the beginning of 08 numbers were stable at just under 200 women per year selling sex on the streets in Hackney, but in 08/09 there was a 35% increase to 260 individual women.

4.3. Further issues raised

4.3.1 Concerns about short-term impacts

Information from previous interviews and secondary sources suggest that women involved in prostitution may suffer from a reduction in public funds and increases in street sweeps connected to the Olympics. The currently limited resources of local councils and law enforcement, according to a sergeant, must now be stretched to address problems generated

by the Olympics. An outreach worker felt the lack of coordination and funding would continually raise problems, but was also concerned about agencies over-reacting and wasting resources. Concerns were also expressed about media hype negatively influencing service providers and law enforcement, heightening residents' awareness and animosity towards women involved. According to a sergeant in Greenwich, if there is an increase in prostitution, more enforcement measures (e.g. ASBOs) will probably be used along with education and prevention, although it is unclear what form education or prevention initiatives would take or how they will be funded. According to local law enforcement, no zoning has been planned. However, the Clubs and Vice inspector said that licensing pressures have already mounted and speculated there will be a drive to clean up the area around Stratford, near the Olympic Park. Furthermore, concerns were expressed about the Newham Council possibly requesting Clubs and Vice to clear the area or brothels, which would be resource-intensive.

4.3.2 Concerns about long-term impacts

A health care worker in Newham also noted housing issues associated with the Olympics such as rising house rates, estate closures, and the lack of replacement private housing, which may eventually increase prostitution. According to this care worker there was already a shortage in housing and now even PCT properties are so scarce that finding a building for a new women's centre (currently under bid) proved difficult. Although housing issues associated with the Olympics were not mentioned in other boroughs, service providers from Hackney and Tower Hamlets identified lack of adequate housing as a major problem. An estimated 22 percent of women first entered prostitution when they were homeless or in temporary housing (Cusick *et al.* 2003), which is concerning when past Olympics have exacerbated housing problems.

4.4 Preparations underway for perceived impacts

4.4.1 Preparations by law enforcement

Concern was expressed about stretching resources as the level of demand, prostitution, and trafficking may increase. Clubs and Vice are bidding for extra resources to further investigate trafficking and set up structures for educating the public. Funding has been allocated for a new vice unit to cover the Olympic footprint, with 1 sergeant and 5 constables. According to an inspector in Tower Hamlets, hundreds of special constables are being recruited over the next couple years, while the number and capabilities of regular officers may expand. Most local law enforcement said resources are limited and measures reactionary, so little to no preparation regarding prostitution is currently underway. Prostitution has not been raised at the bi-monthly meetings of Safer Neighbourhood Teams at which concerns regarding the Olympics are considered, however, the Operational Command Unit for the Olympics addressed prostitution and related support services. Clubs and Vice has been training Safer Neighbourhood Team to prioritise issues surrounding prostitution.

4.4.2 Preparations by support workers

Support workers sceptical of an increase in demand are preparing for other negative impacts the Olympics may have on women involved in prostitution. Several said they would watch trends in demand for any new dangers, recognising the levels of violent crime that women already experience. Enforcement around prostitution can also have a negative impact on the women involved in prostitution including greater displacement and risks associated. A health care worker said that agencies in Newham agreed measures must be taken before the Olympics to address current issues. Several agencies are trying to develop a specialised

diversion scheme in Newham and a women's only centre is currently under bid. A drug support worker in Waltham Forrest had not heard any other organisations discussing the potential impact on prostitution. To provide more specialised services for people in prostitution, which are entirely absent in Waltham Forrest, this support worker suggested that agencies with such experience could supply information, training, and support to local agencies.

5. Borough findings

5.1. Greenwich

Greenwich has mainly off-street prostitution, however, Clubs and Vice has recognised an increase in on-street prostitution. There are no specialised diversion schemes. Women working off-street used to have access to health care through outreach services, which is no longer available. In addition, no specialised services for women involved in prostitution were found.

5.1.1. Current state of prostitution

Clubs and Vice has recognised Greenwich as a developing area for prostitution and work there regularly. Two kerb crawling initiatives were conducted this past year, but no proactive operations aimed at trafficked and coerced women were undertaken. Several addresses just outside the centre have been investigated for suspicious activities, one of which was involved in drugs, but not prostitution. According to law enforcement, there are few brothels and the on-street activity is very localised to Plumbstead Street. However, a former outreach worker estimated 100-200 women work from private dwellings distributed throughout residential areas in Greenwich and Bexley. Flats usually have 1-3 women and a maid, however, outreach workers were sometimes denied access to flats with male owners.

Most women working off-street entered prostitution for economic reasons, while on-street prostitution is often linked to drug addiction. The drug support worker has worked with at least two women funding crack addictions through on-street prostitution. Waves of young Eastern European and Brazilian women will work off-street to fund courses, travel, and relatives back home. Women in their 40s have been selling sex like a 9-5 business for decades and some women are involved in high-end escorting agencies. According to the health care worker, on average, two buyers enter the clinic each week. These men are generally married, between the ages of 35-45, and may have only bought sexual acts once.

5.1.2. Services provided and gaps in provisions

Everyone interviewed discussed the lack of specialised services for women involved in prostitution. Several services specifically targeting drug users provide needle exchanges, drop-in services, GP referrals, group counselling, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, and condoms. Sexual health clinics provide screenings, vaccinations, checkups, family planning, and contact tracing. However, these services address only some of the issues that these women face without providing a holistic approach to issues that are often multifaceted. In addition to developing a diversion scheme, more specialised safe houses and health services were also recommended.

Concerns were expressed that women working off-street are unable to access services, particularly younger women lacking awareness of sexual health and available services, while

needing greater confidence to negotiate sex. According to the health care worker, outreach workers are key and the PCT identified this need years ago, but it remains unmet. The sexual health worker accessed around 50 women through outreach, but since funding was cut, only 25 women involved in prostitution come to the health clinic due to the low profile of walk-in services and inconvenient opening hours. This worker said some type of informational network, such as Ugly Mugs, is needed for women to access and exchange information especially in the absence of outreach services.

5.2. Hackney

As in other boroughs, a broad range of social exclusion and deprivation factors can lead to women being trapped in prostitution, including health, housing, substance misuse, self-esteem, poverty, and debt. Hackney's services are well coordinated. The outreach and clinical service coordinates with other partner agencies, including having fast track Service Level Agreements with housing department to facilitate women's access to temporary accommodation, low threshold prescribing with women able to receive methadone on the day if it is safe to administer and fast track access to various medical treatments including around tuberculosis and genitourinary medicine.

5.2.1 Current state of prostitution

Hackney is known for having extensive prostitution which attracts buyers from outside of the borough. In 2008-09, 260 women were known to be involved in street based sex work. Clubs and Vice has conducted proactive trafficking operations and kerb crawling operations this year. Men caught kerb crawling, according the local sergeant, are generally deterred by the shock of being charged with a sexual offence. According the local sergeant, women receive 2 cautions before being arrested in line with legislation, at which time, they may enter a diversion scheme. It was recognised that ASBOs just displace women rather than help them engage with services.

The main areas identified for on-street prostitution include; Shacklewell Lane, Kingsland Road, Lordship Lane, Brownswood Road, and Finsbury Park, although a service provider noted that women tend to move around boroughs, congregating in areas with demand.

According to the drug support worker, women either enter prostitution to feed a drug habit or enter due to poverty, eventually developing an addiction. S/He explains that some women begin exchanging sex in crack houses to have a roof over their heads. A local sergeant also said many women working on-street live in crack houses and are discretely controlled by pimps involved in drugs, however, the outreach service said that the majority of the men they see in associated with women involved in prostitution are in co-dependent relationships as boyfriends or partners.

5.2.2. Services provided and gaps in provisions

One organisation works with the women and has created effective partnerships across the broad range of agencies required to support the women effectively. Through partnerships, women gain access to counselling, housing, health care, drug support programs, skills training, education, and employment opportunities. Relationships between these organisations and law enforcement helps women in prostitution access services and avoid the judicial system.

Inadequate housing in Hackney was mentioned by service providers and law enforcement as a major issue with women entering or remaining trapped in prostitution due to homeless or

unsatisfactory living conditions. One support worker emphasised the great difficulties faced in supported housing. An outreach worker also discussed the limitations in services available to who are undocumented, although this is identified as an issue with very few clients.

5.3. Newham

Clubs and Vice have been targeting Newham with brothel raids and local law enforcement is considering using more ASBOs against on-street workers. No specialised diversion schemes. The extent of off-street prostitution may be beyond the reach of current outreach services while the drop-in centre is unable to address all these women's needs.

5.3.1. Current state of prostitution

A local vice team was disbanded in 2008, even though it reduced the number of people in prostitution in the borough and reported building a rapport with people involved. An estimated 90 women worked in on-street prostitution in 2005 (Women on the Streets Forum 2005). A local sergeant said that around 45 women (15 to 20 regulars) are currently working on-street within his ward, the vast majority attracted from outside Newham. The cash point and garages along Francis Street attract on-street prostitution, while Leystone Road and Green Street have historical connections. A lack of funds prevent local law enforcement from calling in Clubs and Vice for kerb crawling operations, however, concerns regarding the amount of saunas lead to proactive anti-trafficking operations this year. In December 2007, Clubs and Vice closed a large sauna on High Street for involvement in trafficking. High class brothels are increasing along Angel Lane, according to the sergeant, and a researcher noted increased requests for sauna licenses in Redbridge, located at the end of the main road (Romford Road) for on-street prostitution. This researcher also said the influx of Lithuanian women was suspicious. An outreach worker is aware of 15 flats/saunas in Newham, yet a health care worker expressed concerns about the undocumented immigrants thought to be hidden in the borough without any access to services. This care worker believed that Newham presents a good environment for trafficking, discussing how sky cameras found many sheds in backyards suspected of housing undocumented immigrants.

Recently, a school's council revealed to local law enforcement that several girls may be involved in prostitution. Many women working on-street have been involved for over 20 years and, therefore, are known by the police and service providers. According to everyone interviewed, on-street prostitution is mainly linked to substance abuse, although some women may work occasionally for financial reasons. The health care worker said that women sometimes enter prostitution by exchanging sexual acts while sofa surfing because they are homeless. S/He explained that some women do not have a real address to give to law enforcement or service providers and will use the address of family members. Since November 2008, around 5 crack houses were shut down and, according to local law enforcement, around 2 to 3 women involved in prostitution were found in each of these premises. Police also report concerns about women taking buyers to discreet locations where they are mugged by another person.

5.3.2 Services provided and gaps in provisions

The ASB notice packet, given to women stopped by police, contains contact information for health agencies, housing services and drug treatment programs. There are outreach services for women off-street and on-street, which provide case management, condoms, clean needles, referral forms, clothing, food, and emotional support. Case managers also refer women to social services, drug treatment programs, sexual health agencies, and housing support. A

multi-agency drop-in centre provides clean needles, food, and condoms while helping women register with GPs and attempting engagement with drug services.

There is no specialised diversion scheme. A recent meeting amongst local law enforcement and service providers discussed handing out 16 complete borough ASBOs to women involved in prostitution, while plans are to target 50% of the regulars. According to a service provider, the ASBOs are being used to push prostitution outside of the borough since the level has risen after disbanding of the local vice unit. According to local law enforcement these measures are a response to the ineffectiveness of crack house closures and the need to protect the community. Although there was some discussion about the impact of ASBOs on the women involved, the larger community's needs are ultimately prioritised by police.

Several organisations are attempting to establish a direct intervention scheme, therefore, relationships with law enforcement and various other organisations are being developed. A bid has also been made for a 24-hour women's only centre, catering to all women's needs at once, by providing intertwined services for multiple issues (e.g. sexual health, maternity care, benefits). The current drop-in centre, according to local law enforcement and several service providers, is open at inconvenient times and provides the very basics for women. Most people interviewed discussed how services can act as a revolving door without long-term engagement. Fulfilling housing needs of women working on-streets has also proven particularly difficult.

5.4. Tower Hamlets

Tower Hamlets has a historical reputation for prostitution and has developed an assisted reporting scheme and specialised diversion scheme, as well as outreach programs for women working on and off-street. Drug addictions trap many women in on-street prostitution, especially when prison sentences interrupt their treatments.

5.4.1. Current state of prostitution

Within the past year, Clubs and Vice have carried out proactive operations aimed at trafficked/coerced women and 3 to 5 brothel raids. However resources are limited for these operations. The raids were a response to complaints about brothels at the Ward Panel Meetings. The Tower Hamlets Drug Action Team (2005) estimated that 250 women worked on-street in the borough. Local law enforcement said that around 4 to 5 women are usually along Commercial Street, while an outreach worker estimated around 160 are throughout the borough. Brick Lane, Montague Street, Valence Road, and Whitechapel have obvious on-street prostitution. Several service providers explained that all ethnic groups are involved in prostitution, but expressed concerns around Bangladeshi women being coerced to work off-street, hidden due to cultural taboos. A sergeant estimates between 5 to 10 brothels exist, using carding in kiosks as tip-offs, while an outreach worker says s/he know of at least 9. Brothels are dispersed throughout residential areas, however, many are near the city of London and tend to get businessmen off work because they are well publicised on websites (Clubs and Vice). Tower Hamlets has a historical reputation for extensive on-street prostitution, attracting buyers from other districts.

Of the 100 new women seen at a drug treatment centre this year around 80 to 90% have exchanged sexual favours, but only 70% are regularly involved in prostitution. Another service provider noted that prices for prostitution have dropped, leading to greater risk-taking, such as unprotected sex and increased injecting of limited drug supplies. At the same time, Clubs and

Vice noted that some women in their 30s and 40s became involved in prostitution during the pre-drug era in Tower Hamlets, possibly drawn in by the family business and desperation after an abusive childhood. As one service provider said, most of the women were actually born in Tower Hamlets and should be recognised as part of the community, but they are socially isolated due to their involvement in on-street prostitution.

5.4.2. Services provided and gaps in provisions

There are outreach services for women working both on and off-street, as well as a drop-in centre specifically for women involved in prostitution and the only exclusively female drug support centre in London. Through partnerships, organisations help women access domestic violence workers, needle exchanges, counselling, drug support programs, health care, condoms, clothing, food, housing, social services, and intensive case management. A Diversion Scheme and an Assisted Reporting Scheme operate under the Safe Exit Partnership. According to local law enforcement, Criminal Investigation Department officers are working on a scheme to address historical, previously unreported, assaults against women in prostitution to arrest the perpetrators.

A service provider discussed how short term prison sentences, due to crimes associated with prostitution, often set women up for returning to prostitution and drugs. This service provider explains that prison may disrupt drug treatments while women lose social links, children, housing, and their possessions. When they are released from prison, they return to drug use and prostitution because they have lost everything. Furthermore, service providers mentioned difficulties with fulfilling housing needs, especially when Council housing is always in demand, while Toynbee Hall (2006) found that 4 out of 5 women accessing services had some sort of unmet housing needs. A service provider noted that no outreach workers specialising in crack addiction are currently in the borough. At the same time, several service providers said more specific interventions for women in prostitution are needed because many are just aimed at substance abuse. Although enough specialists are working with women, according to a service provider, a lack of funds and coordination amongst groups impairs efforts. Several service providers said they would increase the number of women reached with greater funding rather than services provided, so as not to replicate others' work.

5.5. Waltham Forrest

On and off-street prostitution is not highly visible, but Waltham Forrest may have problems with trafficking. No diversion schemes or specialised programs are available for women involved in prostitution, while most outreach services focus on drug addictions.

5.5.1. Current state of prostitution

According to at least two sergeants, interviewed briefly on the phone, on-street prostitution is not an issue in Waltham Forrest and there are only a few brothels. At the same time, the extent of off-street prostitution in this borough concerns Clubs and Vice partially because it is inconspicuous. Throughout the year Clubs and Vice carried out proactive operations, aimed at trafficked/coerced women. There have also been reports about local women taking men to hotels along Leewood Road. A service provider who works with people addicted to drugs and often homeless was also aware of on-street prostitution occurring within this population. This service provider speculated that prostitution is difficult to identify because it is fairly dispersed throughout such a large borough and women tend to drift amongst boroughs to work and then

return to various places where they have ties. These women seem to work in isolation, although their relationships with others remain unclear.

5.5.2. Services provided and gaps in provisions

Drug support agencies offer outreach teams, community programs, intervention services, and an open access centre which provides condoms and emotional support. Support packages are created for individual cases, developed around the various risks identified. Prostitution is not identified as an isolated issue, but as a part of the risks that individuals are facing. Good partnerships amongst various organisations over drug issues; however, prostitution has not been identified for special focus.

In attempting to meet the needs of a large drug-using population, prostitution has been overlooked and not many, if any, programs specifically deal with prostitution. As Clubs and Vice noted, there is no diversion scheme in place which results in women receiving ASBOs for their involvement in prostitution. The lack of housing was also identified as a major problem. The support worker discussed how stigma may interfere with women accessing services and mentioned how the issue is overlooked, partially because it can be difficult to identify. Concerns were also expressed about the opening hours of the clinic which are inconvenient for people with chaotic lives (particularly those involved in prostitution). More outreach based teams are also necessary for those who are unable to access services (with New Horizon at Kings Cross being suggested as a model) and to keep track of people once they have left services. Although a small outreach team for drug addictions was recently established, the borough is so large that many more are needed. Increase networks amongst agencies and training for dealing with high risk issues were also mentioned as necessary for working with women in prostitution. Risks associated with the involvement in prostitution are a concern and needs to be more fully explored, according to the support worker.

6. Summary

There have been limited preparations for the Olympics, and debate still surrounds the actual impacts on demand. Housing issues, policing measures, and the extension of limited resources have also raised concerns in the wake of the Olympics. The impact of the Olympics may vary across the Host Boroughs, however, prostitution does exist in each one as do gaps in services which may be compounded by the event, and there is a risk that enforcement will further marginalise women and increase the risks they face. Adequate funding and coordination amongst organisations across sectors are required to address current issues surrounding prostitution and mitigate any negative impacts the Olympics may have.

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Appendix I:

Semi-structured interview for service providers

1. What is the situation of prostitution in your borough?
 - a. Who is involved in prostitution? (sellers, pimps, partners buyers)
 - b. Why are these groups involved? (context: drugs, financial issues)
 - c. Where is sex sold? (specific streets for mapping)
 - d. What's the scale of prostitution? How many women if known? (both street and off-street)?
2. What services are provided in your borough?
 - a. What services do you provide?
 - a. Who benefits from your services? How many? In what ways?
 - b. How is your organisation's capacity able to meet current needs?
 - b. What approaches do you use to provide these services?
 - a. What are the aims of your organisation?
 - b. How do you wish you could improve services (given more resources)?
 - c. What other organisations are providing services in your borough?
 - a. How are you coordinating your efforts?
3. Are there any gaps in the services available in your borough?
 - a. What are the gaps?
 - b. How can these gaps be addressed?
 - c. What measures, if any, have been taken to address them?
4. How does the implementation of laws regulating prostitution impact prostitution in your borough?
 - a. Have you noticed any changes or patterns in the implementation? In the numbers of people selling sex?
 - b. How has implementation of the law impacted your work in providing services?
5. What impact, if any, do you think the Olympics will have on the situation of prostitution in your area?
 - a. In terms of off-street and on-street?
 - b. Can you address the anticipated changes in need for services with your current capacity?
 - c. How is your organisation preparing for this change?
 - d. What needs are likely to remain unmet?
 - e. What can be done to meet these needs?

Final questions:

1. Are you happy for Safe Exit to represent your views amalgamated with the views of others at the Conference?
2. Could you provide me with any other contacts that you think would be helpful in this research?
3. Are you happy to allow me to use the information you provided as part of my dissertation on prostitution?

Appendix II:

Semi-structured interview for law enforcement

1. What is the situation of prostitution in your borough?
 - a. Who is involved in prostitution? (sellers, buyers, pimps, partners, dealers, gangs)
 - b. Why are these groups involved? (context: drugs, financial issues)
 - c. Where is sex sold? (specific streets for mapping)
 - d. What's the scale of prostitution? (both on-street and off-street)?
2. What are the policing and/or arresting patterns in your borough?
 - a. Who is arrested? How often? Where? When?
 - b. How are decisions made locally on how to police prostitution?
 - c. How effective have they been in achieving their aims?
 - d. What has been the involvement and response of the community?
3. What services are provided in your borough?
 - a. How are your partnerships with other organisations addressing the impact of prostitution? Do you refer to other agencies/support services? Who? When?
 - b. Do you know of other organisations providing services to people in prostitution?
 - c. Are there any gaps in the services available in your borough?
4. What impact, if any, do you think the Olympics will have on the situation of prostitution?
 - a. In terms of off-street? On-street? Trafficking? Demand? Violence against women?
 - b. How is law enforcement preparing for this change?
 - i. Within your specific department?
 - ii. Amongst the 5 boroughs?
 - c. How able is your department to address any impacts of prostitution around the Olympics with its current capacity?
 - d. What problems are likely to arise?
 - e. What can be done to address these problems?

Final questions:

4. Are you happy for Safe Exit to represent your views amalgamated with the views of others at the Conference?
5. Could you provide me with any other contacts that you think would be helpful in this research?
6. Are you happy to allow me to use the information you provided as part of my dissertation on prostitution?