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WOMEN AND JUSTICE ARE WE MAKING PROGRESS?

ROUTES OUT OF PROSTITUTION

a continuing need



RoseAnn Cameron

THE ROUTES OUT DROP IN (formerly Base 75 Drop In Service) was established in 1988 due to public health concerns in relation to HIV transmission between women involved in prostitution and their 'clients'. The approach was harm reduction focused, providing safe sex advice, condoms, needle exchange, a 'beware book' to provide information to women about violent and dangerous men, healthcare services, advice on relevant services, practical facilities such as showers, iron, hairdryers and a safe space.

The early 1990s in Glasgow saw an improved understanding of the violence endured by women. The murder of nine women in the mid to late 90s led to Glasgow City Council establishing their Policy on Prostitution in 1999 and the creation of the Routes Out Intervention team in 2000, the remit of which was to provide support to women who wanted to 'exit' prostitution. Glasgow City Council Policy on Prostitution, and Equally Safe, Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls, recognises prostitution as a form of commercial sexual exploitation and violence against women and girls (Scottish Government, 2014).

In 2009, Routes Out Drop In (formerly Base 75 Drop In) and the Routes Out Intervention team was transferred from Glasgow Social Work Service to Community Safety Glasgow (CSG) and the services were merged to form one service. In 2015, due to falling presentations and outreach observations, a review of service delivery was commenced; input from our clients was sought, analysis of available data in relation to times of outreach sightings, times of presentations at the drop in and times of arrests in relation to section 46 Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 and section 1 Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Act 2007 charges (see below). It became clear from the input from our clients as well as the data available in

relation to times of presentations, outreach sightings and arrests that our opening times were not late enough, nor had we ever offered a service on a Saturday. The same opening times (7.30pm to 11.30pm) had been in place since 1989 and the only weekend night the service opened was a Friday, in addition, the advances in technology meant that more women were using mobile phones, websites/apps rather than being on street. Our outreach delivery was inconsistent and there was a lack of awareness among women as to when the service was opened.

Service review and revision

By reviewing the service we changed our opening nights and times for our drop in service to Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday and change our operating hours to 9pm to 1am and focused on providing a consistent outreach service on each night between these times. We created a website to provide information and support to women involved off street. We have developed data collection systems to improve our understanding of prostitution in Glasgow and work closely with our partners to deliver the services required for our clients. With these changes we are better placed to meet the needs of our clients and will continue to develop and evolve.

Our approach is based on the understanding that women are exploited in prostitution through a lack of choice or alternatives. We offer support to all women involved in prostitution, whether they have decided to exit or not. Routes Out offers a wide range of services to women involved in prostitution or those who are considering involvement in prostitution. There is no obligation for women to commit to exiting prostitution in order to access our services. Our main concern is for women's safety and we can offer harm reduction supplies and practical advice.

More women involved in prostitution in Glasgow

Since introducing our new opening times in January 2016 and ensuring consistent delivery of our outreach service, we have seen an increase in women involved in prostitution in Glasgow. In preparation for writing this article I reread 'Where is she tonight?' a piece of research that was published by Audrey Stewart in 2000 and conducted at Base 75 (Stewart, 2000). What struck me was the number of individual women involved in street prostitution between 01/04/96 to 31/03/1997 was recorded as 176: 20 years later, between 01/04/2016 to 31/03/2017 we recorded 152 individual women involved in prostitution. In conversation recently regarding the number of women involved in prostitution in Glasgow it was put to me that 'Routes Out hasn't worked'. On the contrary, Routes Out has definitely worked, but for every woman we provide support to exit prostitution there is another to take her place. Last year we recorded 91 women as having exited prostitution but 88 new women involved.

Unjust enforcement

Despite concerns at local and national level that women are consistently blamed for the existence and continuation of prostitution, from our experience as a front line service, the only consistent enforcement of the current laws is imposed on women. The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, section 46(1) makes loitering, soliciting and importuning in a public place for the purposes of prostitution illegal. Women we support are disproportionately represented and disadvantaged by the current legal framework. Disposal of a section 46 charge, in the majority of cases, results in a fine for the woman which leads to further involvement in prostitution to pay the fine and a criminal record that serves as a further barrier to exiting prostitution. The women we support do not view their involvement in prostitution as 'choice' or 'exercising agency'; their involvement is driven by survival behaviour and through lack of choice. In our experience the numbers of women charged for these offences far outweigh the enforcement of those purchasing sex.



In Scotland there has been recognition since 2000 that demand should be addressed, yet we are still no further forward with holding to account those who have choice, 'the punters'. In Sweden, the introduction of the 'Nordic Model' as well as seeing a reduction in prostitution has shown a significant shift in societal attitudes towards the purchase of sex. As cited in the Scottish government's research, in 1996 45% of women in Sweden and 20% of men wanted to criminalise the purchase of sex: in 2008, in response to being asked if the law should be retained prohibiting the purchase of sex, 79% of women and 60% of men were in favour (Scottish Government, 2016). In the Scottish Social Attitudes to Violence Against Women Survey in 2014, 62% of women and 54% of men thought that paying for sex should be probably or definitely be against the law (Scottish Government, 2015).

This year we have seen the dramatisation of the Rotherham scandal 'Three Girls' (BBC1), the Twitter outcry over 'sex for rent' adverts on websites such as Craigslist and so on. Who do we think these women and girls are? They are the women who access our service every night, who have experienced childhood sexual, physical, emotional abuse, domestic violence, homelessness, chaotic poly drug use, criminalisation, physical and mental health issues, experience of the care system, debt and financial issues, to name just a few.

Prostitution does not exist in a vacuum; the young woman exchanging sex for a place to sleep tonight is our client tomorrow.

RoseAnn Cameron is the Service Manager for Routes Out, Glasgow, providing support for women involved or at risk of involvement in prostitution.

[Glasgow City Council \(2000\) Policy on Prostitution](#)

[Scottish Government \(2014\) Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls.](#)

[Scottish Government \(2015\) Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2014: Attitudes to violence against women in Scotland ScotCen Social Research](#)

[Scottish Government \(2016\) Exploring available knowledge and evidence on prostitution in Scotland via Practitioner-based interviews](#)

[Scottish Government \(2016\) Evidence assessment of the impacts of the criminalisation of the purchase of sex: A review. Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research](#)

[Stewart A \(2000\) Where is She Tonight?: Women, Street Prostitution and Homelessness in Glasgow Base 75, Glasgow.](#)