



Sex markets in Teesside

Carried out by:



November 2013

Comments about prostitution and people involved

"It's like a slave trade".
Housing support worker

"They call themselves street people".
Outreach worker

"They have no networks to help them make choices, like we have friends, family, things you read, they don't have that".
Support worker

"It's very hard to stop sex working".
Project worker who used to be involved in prostitution

"The majority of women see it as the norm".
Drug worker

"They say that the first time is the worst, after that it's OK".
Project worker from a support service for women involved in prostitution

"Getting clean and getting straight and thinking about what you've been doing ... sometimes that's the hardest part and it stops people getting clean".
Drug worker

Foreword

In 2007 the Foundation launched a new grants programme, Safety and Justice for Victims of Abuse, which prioritises work around sexual exploitation. At the time we were struck by the prevailing view that, except for one or two towns which had an identifiable 'red light' area, sexual exploitation didn't really happen in the North East and Cumbria. This view appeared to be contradicted by information from some local projects working with vulnerable people and we decided to commission research to get a clearer picture. This report is the fifth in a series and takes a detailed look at what is known about adults who exchange sex for things such as alcohol, drugs, money or somewhere to stay. The research benefited enormously from the support of Durham, Tees Valley Probation which was particularly interested to learn more about the links between adult sexual exploitation, substance use and offending. The research has found evidence of a range of different types of exchange across Teesside involving both women and men. Links to substance use, homelessness and/or poor housing and debt are strong, with those involved subject to worrying levels of violence.

This report focuses solely on adults. However, we have just commissioned a further study looking at the sexual exploitation of children and young people across Teesside which will be published later in 2014.

As you read this report we would ask you to reflect on the implications it raises for your own service:

- Does your service work with adults who are sexually exploited?
- If you aren't sure, how might you find out?
- Is there anything you can do to ensure your service responds appropriately to the needs of these individuals?
- Do you need any training or additional support to provide an appropriate response?
- Do you attend any meetings or forums where this issue should be raised?

The research undertaken since 2007 in areas across the North East and Cumbria shows that sexual exploitation is an issue for all our communities, affecting the lives of some of our most vulnerable adults and children. The challenge now is to do something about it. The Foundation is responding by funding projects which provide specialist support, alongside awareness-raising and prevention. What will you do?

Cullagh Warnock
Programme Manager
Northern Rock Foundation

Penny Wilkinson
Chief Executive

Acknowledgements

There are a number of people who we wish to thank for helping us carrying out this study. This includes those individuals who gathered statistics for us, which was in addition to their already busy days. These include Gaynor Truman from A Way Out, Paul Higgins and James Johnson from Cleveland Police and Mandy Day, Barnardo's Secos. We would also like to thank Hannah Bowes, who accompanied us on some of our interviews and helped with typing up notes. Thanks also to Lucia Saiger-Burns from Durham Tees Valley Probation, as without her support and backing this study would not have been possible. Also thanks to Wendy Shepherd from Barnardo's for supporting the study. Thanks to the members of the steering group, including Jeff Evans, for contributing to the steer of the study. Thank you also to Louise Barber who trusted us with valuable material which led to greater insights. Thanks also to all those professionals who we interviewed, who gave up their time and put their trust in us. Finally and especially thanks to Cullagh Warnock from Northern Rock Foundation who saw the value in extending the knowledge of sex markets across the North East.

About Northern Rock Foundation

Northern Rock Foundation is an independent charity which aims to tackle disadvantage and improve quality of life in the North East and Cumbria. The Foundation gives grants to organisations which help people who are vulnerable, disadvantaged, homeless, living in poverty or are victims of crime or discrimination. It also supports training, research and demonstration work and seeks to share learning from the activities it funds.

More information: www.nr-foundation.org.uk

About the authors

Barefoot Research and Evaluation is a social research organisation based in Newcastle upon Tyne, working across the North East and Cumbria. Barefoot Research and Evaluation has carried out work on a diverse range of social welfare programmes in the voluntary and public sector, with an emphasis on vulnerable and hidden groups. Dr. Christopher Hartworth has 20 years' experience of research and evaluation, beginning in developing countries in poverty alleviation programmes and continuing in the North East of England in work with disadvantaged communities. Joanne Hartworth has a First Class Honours Degree in Sociology, is a qualified teacher and an accomplished project manager, having managed projects in East and West Newcastle.

More information: www.barefootresearch.org.uk

i Executive summary

This is a study into the extent and dynamics of the adult sex market in Teesside, covering the four local authority areas of Middlesbrough, Stockton, Redcar and Cleveland and Hartlepool. It presents a snapshot of information between 2012 and 2013. This work was commissioned by Northern Rock Foundation under its Safety and Justice Programme. Sexual exploitation is a priority in this programme and the Foundation wished to better understand how related issues manifested themselves in this area. This first study focuses exclusively on adults; a second report will be published in 2014 looking at the sexual exploitation of children across Teesside.

The study makes a series of key findings:

- Prostitution takes place across all four local authority areas, with the highest numbers in Middlesbrough and Stockton. There are local differences including on street sex markets in Middlesbrough and Stockton and off street markets in all areas.
- There is both male and female prostitution in all local authority areas: there are more women involved in survival sex than in commercial prostitution (n=268 and 221 respectively); there are more men involved in commercial prostitution compared to survival sex (n=107 and 35 respectively).
- There are different age profiles of women involved: younger women tend to be involved in commercial prostitution (most within the 18 to 25 age bracket); and older women tend to be involved in survival sex (most within the 26 to 35 age range). There are no significant differences in male age patterns.
- Most survival sex is linked to substance abuse. Patterns of abuse (i.e. decline or increase usage) across Teesside are mostly unchanged since 2006 (there may be a small increase in usage).
- The most prominent themes associated with prostitution are: substance misuse; the experience of violence (in many cases this is severe violence); poor accommodation or homelessness; poor health; removal of children into care; and debt.
- Many of those involved in survival sex were first sexually exploited when they were under 16 years of age.
- It is difficult to exit prostitution, with the influencing factors being: addictions; lack of money earning potential and debt; regular punters; partners/pimps; and poor accommodation (often with partners/pimps).
- The strongest service need for women involved in prostitution is suitable accommodation, followed by drug treatment, counselling and employment and training.

- There is a core of knowledge around Middlesbrough and Stockton about working with people involved in prostitution, although there are some inconsistencies with coverage and access of training. There are training gaps in Redcar and Cleveland and Hartlepool.
- Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) in Teesside have worked with only small numbers of women involved in prostitution. In the last six years, they have provided support to 10 women; five on these in the last year and these were women who had exited. In comparison to the incidence and themes presented in this report, these numbers are very low in relation to need.

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1.0 Introduction

This is a study into the extent and dynamics of the adult sex market in Teesside, covering the four local authority areas of Middlesbrough, Stockton, Redcar and Cleveland and Hartlepool. It presents a snapshot of information between 2012 and 2013. We recognise that it is not the entire picture and we know that the findings presented here are all underestimates as prostitution is frequently under reported (Efthimiou-Mordant, 2002).

This work was commissioned by Northern Rock Foundation under its Safety and Justice Programme. Sexual exploitation is a priority in this programme and the Foundation wished to better understand how related issues manifested themselves in this area. This is the fifth piece of research that Northern Rock Foundation has commissioned into prostitution and sexual exploitation in the North East, having previously commissioned Barefoot Research and Evaluation to carry out studies in the Northumbria region, County Durham and Darlington and most recently in Cumbria¹.

This report is structured into two parts: the first presents the quantitative data; and the second the qualitative data. The first section presents the quantitative data on sex markets across Teesside as a whole and then for the individual local authority areas. In this section, we also present brief narrative backgrounds of markets in those areas.

In the second section, we present the themes which are connected to sex markets. These are common to all areas, although some are more prevalent in some areas than others and this is referenced in the text.

1.1 Definitions

We started the studies on sex markets in 2008 using the term 'sex work' to refer to those who were involved in prostitution. We did this to attempt to introduce a level of neutrality to the studies and a desire to avoid the debates on nomenclature. However, in the process of conducting these studies and becoming close to the experiences of those involved, mostly in survival sex, we have changed terms from 'sex work' to 'people involved in prostitution'. This is a more unwieldy term but it more accurately reflects the realities of those involved. As a way of explanation, we refer to a recent AVA and DrugScope (Singleton, 2012) study.

There are ongoing debates around terminology in relation to prostitution. The term 'sex worker' is aligned with a view that selling sex should be recognised as a job like any other; however, this is not a view that reflects the narratives of the women interviewed for this research. The term 'sex worker' implies a level of agency and choice that was not described by the majority of women we spoke to. All but one of the women interviewed for this research described experiences of violence in the course of their 'work', alongside experiences of

¹ These reports can be seen here: <http://www.nr-foundation.org.uk/resources/publications/sexual-exploitation-research-reports/>

drug dependency, poverty and homelessness. At the same time, the term 'prostitute' is historically laden with institutional and cultural discriminations against women who sell sex, and defines and labels them by that act. For the purpose of this report, we have used 'women involved in prostitution' as a term that does not define women by the act of selling sex, but recognises that selling sex is not a job like any other. The term reflects an understanding of prostitution as a form of violence against women and girls (Singleton, 2013: page 2).

The following table further explains the key definitions used in this study.

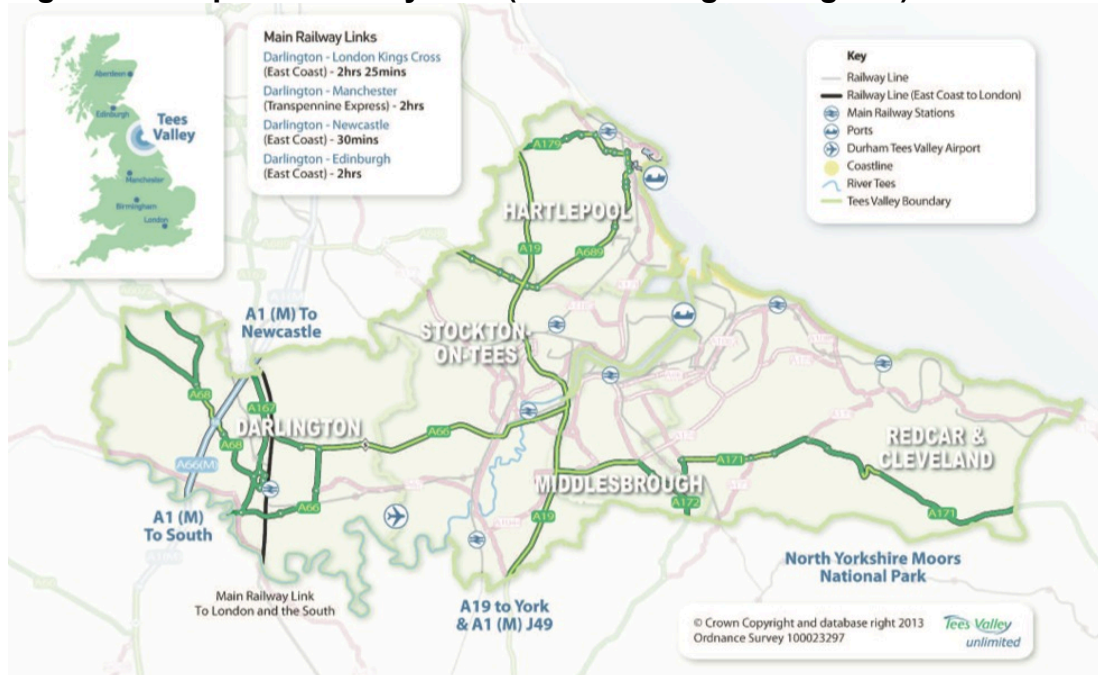
Table 1.0 Terminology and definitions

Term	Definition
Commercial prostitution	<p>This includes individuals advertising on the internet, escorts and brothels.</p> <p>This category includes both the high and middle end of sex markets. The latter has significantly higher numbers, with only small numbers involved in high end prostitution with high associated fees. The majority of those involved in the middle are 'independents', those advertising on the internet as individuals selling sex.</p> <p>In this category there is a more formal transaction between seller and purchaser and elements within commercial prostitution can be presented as businesses, such as brothels or escort agencies. Those involved are more likely to see themselves as working in prostitution.</p> <p>Those involved may experience varying degrees of vulnerability and levels of exploitation. Some with total control of their involvement and no perceived vulnerabilities; some with high degrees of control and very few vulnerabilities; some who have high vulnerabilities such as insecure accommodation, substance abuse and poor health, which may affect their control over their involvement; and some who are coerced or exploited with high vulnerabilities such as exposure to violence and poor health (these are often found in brothels but can also present as independents).</p>
Survival sex	<p>This includes those exchanging sex for essential resources which range from accommodation, food, drugs and alcohol, cigarettes and money for these resources. We thus include street prostitution as all of those involved had addictions and were engaging to earn money for substances.</p> <p>Those involved in survival sex were at the low end of sex markets and most experienced severe vulnerabilities, for example, to violence, poor health including death, poor housing, low income and substance abuse. There are varying</p>

degrees of control over their involvement, with some exercising a high degree of control, to others who are controlled by another, coerced or otherwise exploited via pimps or partners.

1.2 The study area

Figure 1.0 Map of the study area (also showing Darlington²)



Middlesbrough

Middlesbrough is a large industrial town on the north east coast of England, located on the south bank of the River Tees. It has a population of 138,700 of which a total of 92 percent are White British with the remainder being made up of a range of ethnicities, the most numerous being Pakistani (3.6 percent) and Indian (0.6 percent). It is one of the most diverse, urbanised and densely populated local authority areas in the region³. There are good transport links, via the A66 and A19 roads, access to the East Coast main railway, Durham Tees Valley and Newcastle airports and Teesport, the UK's second largest port. The town has a history of shipping and heavy industry, whose subsequent decline has left pockets of deprivation and disadvantage.

Stockton on Tees

Stockton on Tees is a unitary local authority located to the west of Middlesbrough on the River Tees. It is a mixture of urban centres, market towns and villages. It has a history of heavy industry and now has an active chemical engineering sector. It has a population of 192,400, with 96 percent

² Darlington was not included in this study, as it was the subject of a previous study (<http://www.nr-foundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Sex-markets-in-Darlington-summary-report.pdf>)

³ Middlesbrough Council Strategic Plan 2013/14.

of its residents being White British with the remainder being made up of a range of ethnicities, the most numerous being Pakistani (1.1 percent) and Indian (0.4 percent). It has both affluent and deprived communities, with 29 percent of the population living within the top 20 percent of least deprived areas of England and 27 percent living in the 20 percent most deprived areas.

Redcar and Cleveland

The borough of Redcar and Cleveland is a unitary authority on the north east coast, south of the River Tees. It consists of the towns of Redcar, Saltburn-by-the-Sea, Guisborough, and other smaller towns such as Brotton, Eston, Skelton and Loftus. These are divided into roughly two areas: the urban areas of Redcar and Grangetown and the rural area of East Cleveland. It has a population 135,000, with a total of 98 percent of its residents being White British and the remaining two percent made up of a range of different ethnicities. Redcar and Cleveland has areas of high deprivation, particularly Grangetown nearer to Middlesbrough, parts of Redcar and East Cleveland and is ranked the 48th most deprived borough in England. The local economy is dominated by heavy industry and petrochemicals.

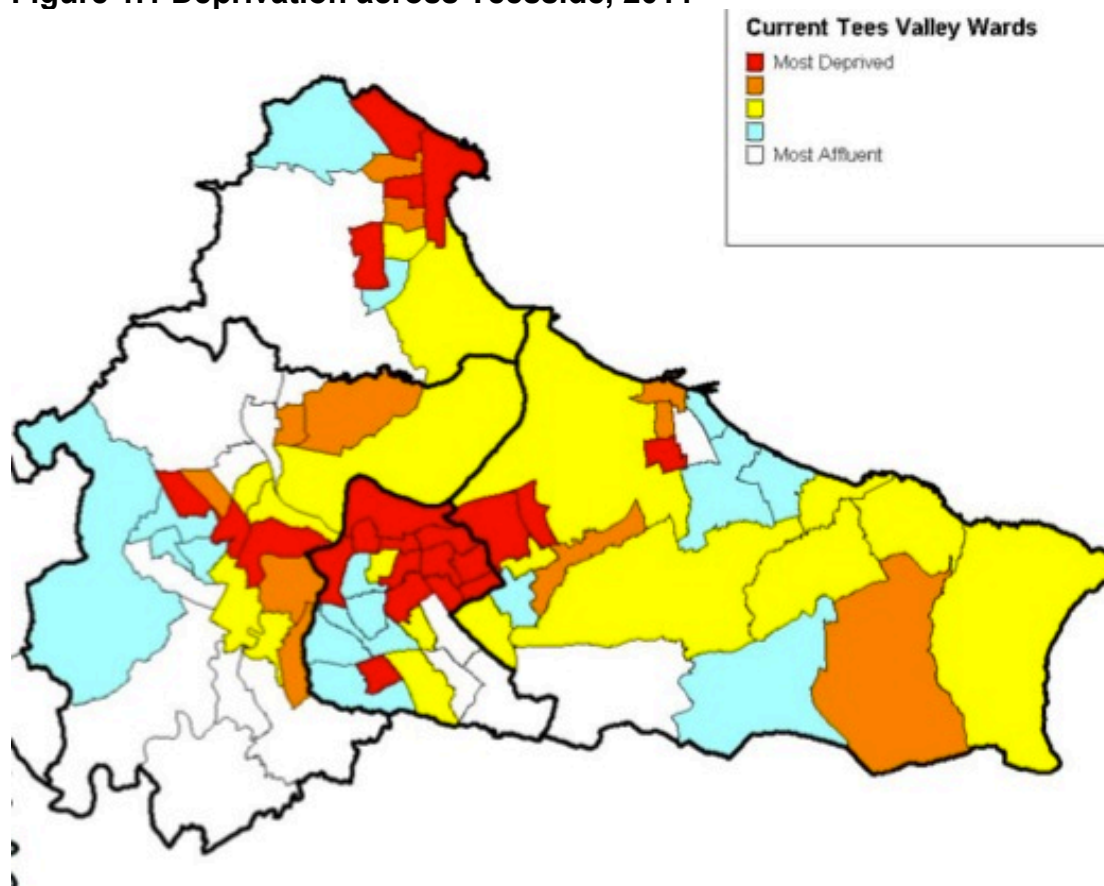
Hartlepool

Hartlepool is located to the north of the River Tees on the north east coast. It has a population of 92,200 people⁴, of whom a total of 98 percent are White British, with the remaining two percent made up of a range of different ethnicities. Similar to the other areas in the Tees Valley, it has a history of heavy industry and now has pockets of significant deprivation (see figure 1.1). There has been some significant redevelopment in the last 10 years, including local business parks and the marina. In 2010, Hartlepool was ranked 24th most deprived out of the 354 local authorities in England, an improvement from 14th position in 2006⁵.

⁴ ONS, Census, 2013.

⁵ Hartlepool Economic Assessment, 2010/11, Hartlepool Borough Council.

Figure 1.1 Deprivation across Teesside, 2011



Source: Tees Valley Unlimited, 2011 Census, Analysis of Deprivation

1.3 Methodology

As Cusick *et al.* (2009) note, it is very difficult to establish a firm estimate of the number of people involved in prostitution, and a range of methodologies have been used to investigate populations. These including observations and interviews (Pasco, 2002; Porter and Bonilla, 2000), questionnaires (Belis *et al.*, 2007), autobiographical narratives (Annadale, 2005; Efthimiou-Mordant, 2002; Landale, 2005), diaries (Gysels *et al.*, 2002), unstructured interviews (Mosedale, 2009), semi-structured interviews (McKeganey, 2006) and ethnographic approaches (Sanders, 2005, 2006).

For this study we used the qualitative knowledge mapping approach successfully developed as part of our earlier work into prostitution and exploitation in the North East. We pursued a consistent line of questioning (see section 1.3.1) across Teesside with professionals in relation to their knowledge of prostitution. We then documented that knowledge that related to the professional's direct client group (for example, drug users, homeless, offenders, etc.).

We therefore documented the direct professional knowledge of those interviewed and we took the reports with a high level of confidence, for example, if a healthcare professional stated that they knew of three of their client group who were involved in prostitution, we accepted that as 'the truth'

and documented it accordingly. We had no reason to doubt the integrity of the reports of professionals about their client group.

We minimised double counting by asking for the approximate ages of those involved, where they were from and any associated issues, for example, 25 year old from Redcar with a personality disorder exchanging sex for money near the train station. When other agencies would report similar individuals with similar characteristics, we knew they had already been counted.

We interviewed a total of 279 professionals through focus groups, individual one-to-one interviews and on the telephone (table 1.1 displays the number of such interviews). They came from over 55 different organisations from the statutory and voluntary sector agencies and included representatives from:

- Black, Minority and Ethnic (BME) services
- Cleveland Police
- Drug and alcohol services
- Housing and accommodation providers
- Integrated Offender Management teams
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) services
- Probation
- Services for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence
- Sexual health services including Genito Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinics and contraception services.

Table 1.1 Interviews and their format

Agency	Number of interviews	Type of interview
Criminal Justice Agencies	13	8 focus groups; 4 one-to-one interviews; 1 telephone; access to Police datasets
Domestic abuse and women's services	8	2 focus groups; 3 one-to-one interviews; 3 telephone
Drug and alcohol services	15	9 focus groups; 3 one-to-one interview; 3 telephone
Family services	2	2 focus groups
Housing services	6	3 focus groups; 2 one-to-one interviews; 1 telephone
LGBT and BME services	5	2 focus groups; 2 one-to-one interviews; 1 telephone
Health services	4	2 focus groups; 2 one-to-one interviews
Support services for people involved in prostitution	2	1 focus group; 1 one-to-one interview; access to datasets
Other (ex-prisoner and regional service user forum)	2	1 presentation and 1 one-to-one interview
Total	57	29 focus groups; 19 one to ones; 9 telephone

The following table shows the geographical distribution of those interviews.

Table 1.2 Geographical distribution of interviews

Location	Organisations	Individuals
Middlesbrough	20	64
Redcar	11	44
Stockton	14	37
Hartlepool	12	47
Total	57	192

Internet searches

The Internet is a key location where sex is advertised for sale. We therefore carried out exhaustive Internet searches. The majority of people advertising on the Internet posted photographs which enabled us to identify separate individuals. Some advertised on several different websites but by cross referencing images we were able to identify different individuals.

Websites with numbers of adverts for both men and women involved in prostitution include:

- adultwork.com
- ukclassifieds.co.uk
- ukadultzone.com
- bareback-escorts.info
- platinumselect.com
- vivastreet.co.uk
- escortthreesome.com
- thedollybirds.co.uk
- britishescortsdirectory.com
- escort-magazine.com
- theadulthub.com
- transstar.co.uk
- northern-angels.co.uk
- x-escorts.co.uk

Narrative data were analysed using the grounded theory constant comparison method, where each item is compared with the rest of the data to establish and refine analytical categories (Pope *et al.* 2000). Themes emerged within individual interviews and across different interviews. Recurring themes across transcripts were taken to reflect shared understandings of the participants (Smith and Marshall, 2007) and the findings section is structured according to these recurring themes.

A published academic paper that discusses this methodology can be seen here:

www.barefootresearch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Knowledge-mapping-sex-work-paper.pdf

1.3.1 The questioning of professionals

We asked professionals a series of questions about their knowledge of the extent, characteristics and magnitude of the sex market. They were asked how many people they were aware of who were involved in prostitution, what type of prostitution they were involved in and how they knew this. We only counted people involved in prostitution when the professional had direct experience of working with that person.

We used a consistent line of questioning to arrive at the data presented in this study. The questions we asked included:

1. Do you have any knowledge of what type of prostitution goes on in the area?
2. In the last year, do you know of any of your clients or service users that have exchanged sex for resources (money, drugs, alcohol, accommodation, etc.)?
3. How do you know this (have they told you) or do you suspect (and why do you suspect)?
4. Do you know how or why they became involved?
5. Are you aware of any travelling for prostitution/sexual exchanges?
6. Do you provide any services to people involved in prostitution? Is this any different to your routine services?
7. Do you know of anyone who provides services to people involved in prostitution?
8. Do you know the needs of people involved in prostitution in the area?

The research used 'snowballing techniques', i.e. asking professionals who else they thought we should talk to, and in this way we covered the majority of relevant people. Snowball sampling is particularly effective in locating members of hard to reach populations where the focus of the study is on a sensitive issue (Hendricks and Blanken, 1992). We had confidence with this approach as, towards the end of the research in each area, we reached 'saturation' where people were mentioning the same set of names so we felt we had covered the most relevant agencies. Many professionals were also approached both on the telephone and in person who had no knowledge of child sexual exploitation or sex markets and essentially proved to be 'blind alleys'. To those we interviewed, we guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. If we had not done this, we would not have been able to collect the quality and level of data that we were able to.

We have only gathered information on the extent of prostitution, not the outcomes (i.e. what has happened to the person identified).

1.3.2 Permission

This research received ratification and approval from a series of research governance mechanisms including: the National Health Service's (NHS) Research Ethics Committee; the Primary Care Trust; South Tees Hospitals, Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust.

2.0 Findings

2.1 Teesside findings

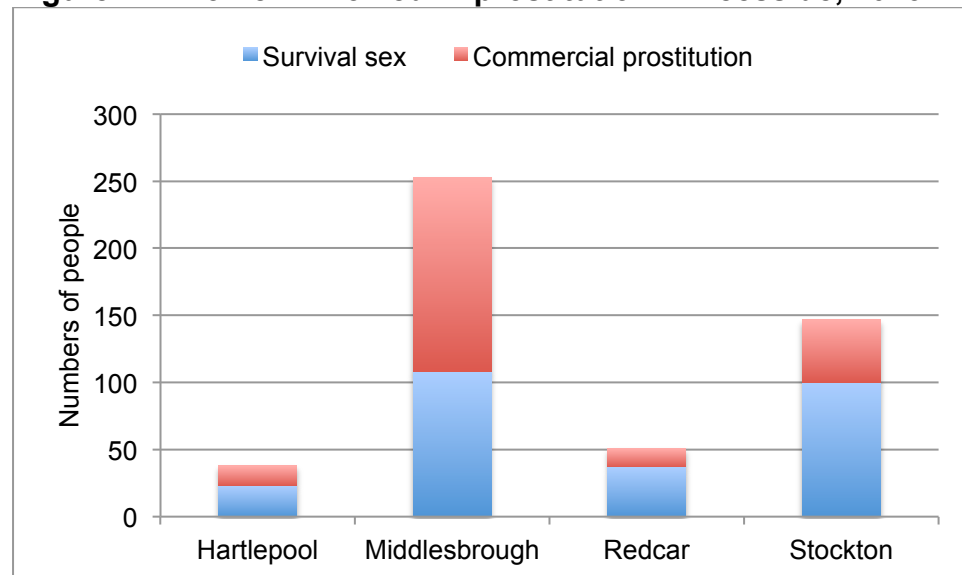
2.1.1 Numbers of females and males involved

We found evidence of 489 women involved in prostitution across Teesside. This is presented in the following table and figure.

Table 1.3 Women involved in prostitution in Teesside

	Mbro	Stockton	Redcar	Hartlepool	Totals
Survival sex	108	100	37	23	268
Commercial prostitution	145	47	14	15	221

Figure 1.2 Women involved in prostitution in Teesside, 2013



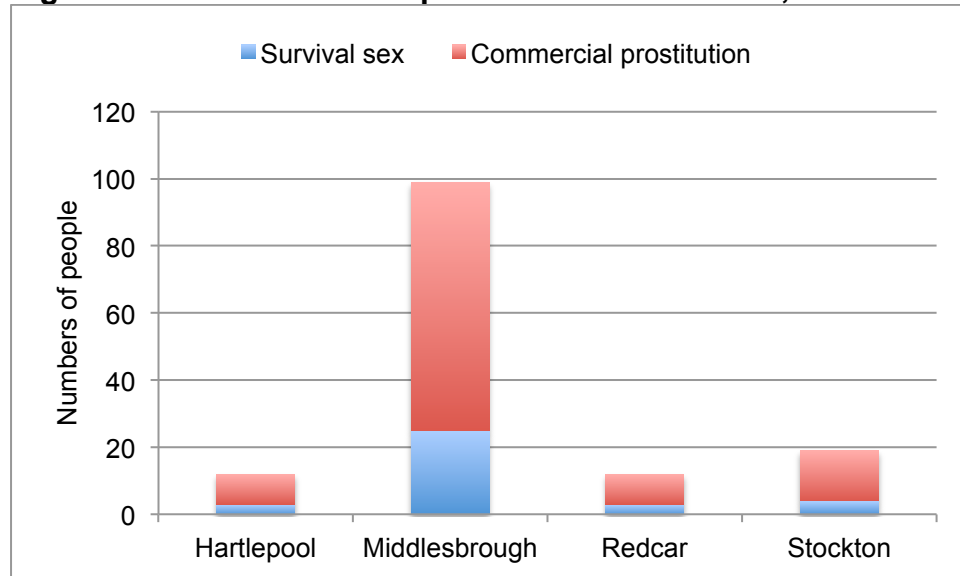
We also found evidence of 142 men involved in prostitution across Teesside as shown in the following table and figure.

The evidence of male prostitution from agencies was limited and evidence from Internet advertising was much greater. This would indicate that either survival sex amongst males is not widespread or those involved do not engage with services or disclose. The organisation, Changing Lives (ex-Cyrenians) has recently started a service for men involved in prostitution in Newcastle upon Tyne. They have found it very difficult both to identify and engage with men involved in prostitution. The evidence from this research would also indicate that male prostitution is negotiated mostly via the Internet.

Table 1.4 Men involved in prostitution in Teesside

	Mbro	Stockton	Redcar	Hartlepool	Totals
Survival sex	25	4	3	3	35
Commercial prostitution	74	15	9	9	107

Figure 1.3 Men involved in prostitution in Teesside, 2013



2.1.2 Sexuality and involvement

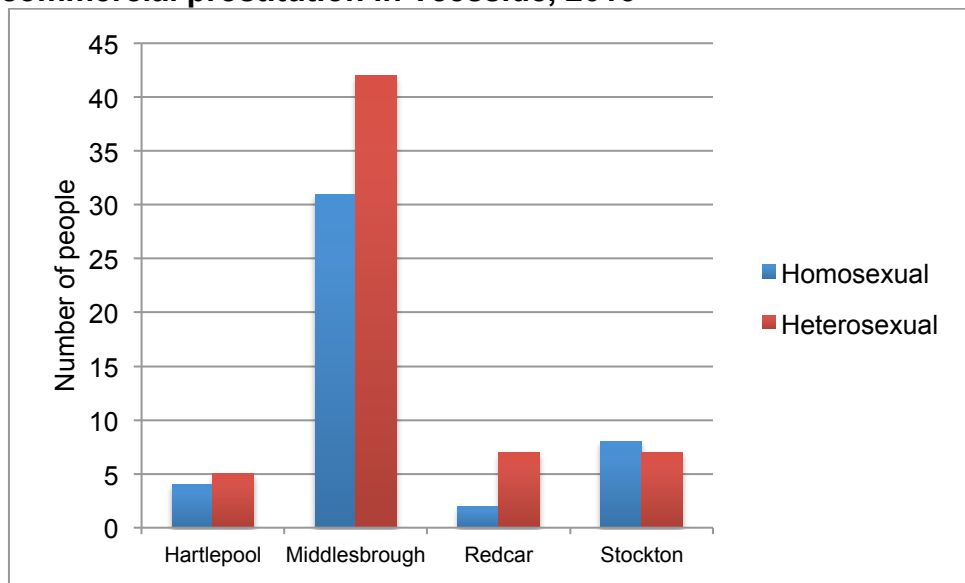
Sexuality and female involvement

All women involved in prostitution were involved in heterosexual prostitution with the exception of one woman in Hartlepool who was involved in survival sex with another woman, exchanging sex for accommodation.

Sexuality and male involvement

We found evidence of men involved in both homosexual and heterosexual prostitution as shown in the following figure. The higher number of men involved in heterosexual prostitution is a pattern that is found in other sex markets (see Hartworth and Convery, 2012). The data does not indicate whether this is heterosexual men selling sex to women or heterosexual men selling sex to men.

Figure 1.4 Numbers of men involved in homosexual and heterosexual commercial prostitution in Teesside, 2013



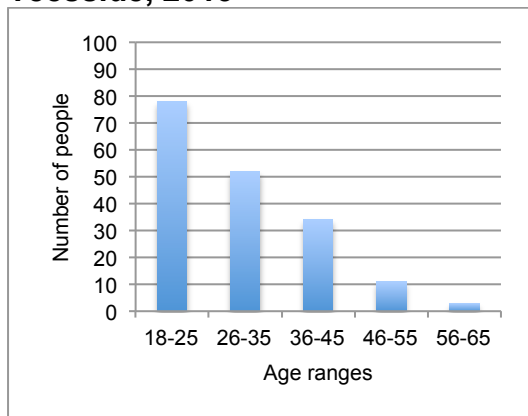
There were a total of nine transgendered people (male to female) involved in prostitution that are not included in the figures presented in the previous graph.

2.1.3 Age profiles

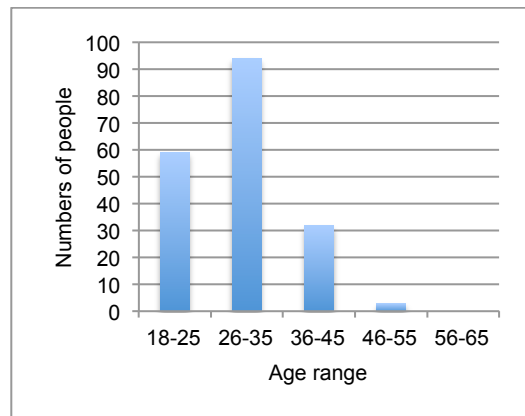
The age profiles of those involved in commercial prostitution and survival sex are different. For women, those involved in survival sex have an older age profile than those involved in commercial prostitution. For men, those involved in survival sex tend to be concentrated in the 18 to 25 age group.

Figure 1.5 Ages of men and women involved in commercial prostitution and survival sex

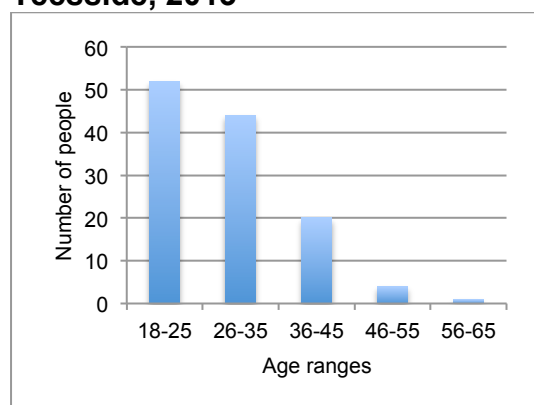
Ages of women involved in commercial prostitution in Teesside, 2013



Ages of women involved in survival sex in Teesside, 2013*

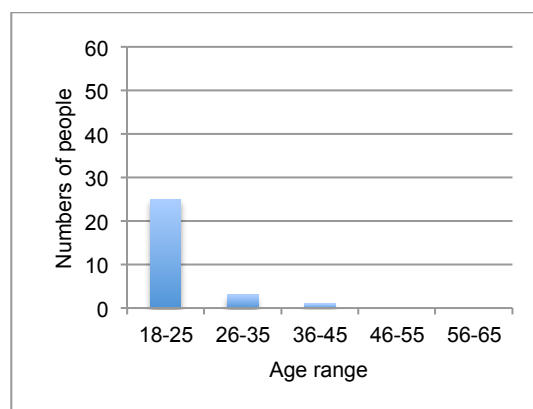


Ages of men involved in commercial prostitution in Teesside, 2013



* Where age was reported

Ages of men involved in survival sex in Teesside, 2013*



* Where age was reported

2.1.4 Prices of sex

The following table presents the prices of sex. It is based on reports from all four areas. The prices of sex vary depending on the type of person selling sex. For example, one respondent said “*services are cheap, some girls will charge £5, some £25, others will do it for a bottle of cider*”. Cases were reported of females staying at hostels who were given cigarettes and gas (as a drug) in exchange for sex.

Table 1.5 Prices for female sex

Description	Price min/max	£
Oral sex	Min	5
	Max	60
	Average	20
Penetrative vaginal sex	Min	5
	Max	150
	Average	50
Anal sex	Min	20
	Max	150
	Average	60

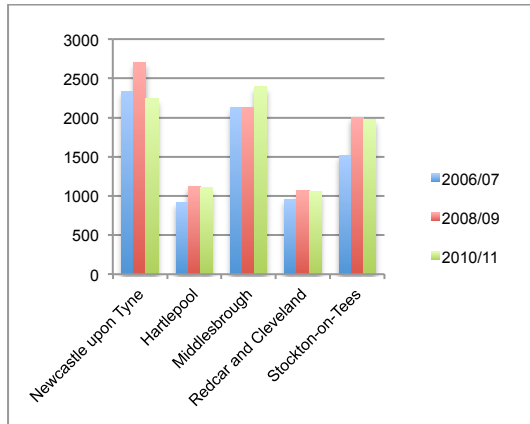
Prices for sex without a condom were reported to be an additional £10.

Prices for non-regulars were found to be cheaper than the above prices by up to half the cost in some cases.

Box 1.0 Substance misuse in Teesside

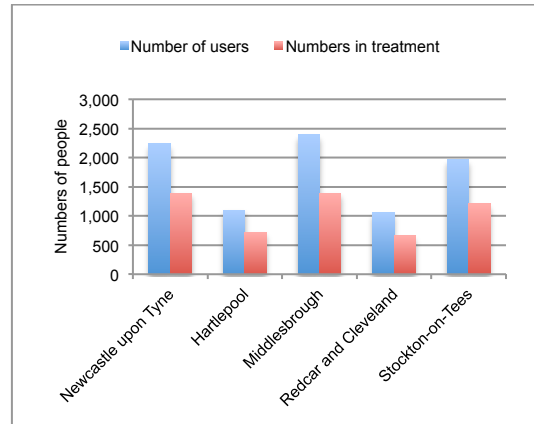
Figure 1.6 shows the numbers of people that use heroin (opiates) and/or crack across Teesside. Newcastle figures are also presented as a comparison. The objective of the graph is to illustrate usage patterns and whether there has been a decline or fall. As can be seen, opiate and crack use in Teesside increased between 2006/07 and 2010/11; it declined in Newcastle after a spike in 2008/09.

Figure 1.6 Opiate and crack use prevalence in Teesside and Newcastle, 2006 to 2011



Data source: Hay *et al*, 2008.

Figure 1.7 Opiate and crack use prevalence and treatment, 2011



Data source: Hay *et al*, 2008 and National Treatment Agency, NDTMS, www.ndtms.net

As an illustration, figure 1.7 presents the numbers of opiate and/or crack users and the number in treatment in 2010/11. As can be seen, there are high discrepancies, with an average of 62 percent of users in treatment.

From this, we can conclude that drug use across Teesside is high, but not significantly different to other areas in the North East. We can also conclude that whilst approximately two thirds of opiate and crack users are in treatment, one third are not.

This is useful to this study as it provides a context to locate much of the prostitution that takes place.

Note: it would appear from reports that drug trends are changing and whilst heroin tended to be the drug of choice in the older age group (generally 30 years plus) and Mcat, cocaine, alcohol and crack were preferred by the younger age group (generally under 30 years).

2.2 Middlesbrough findings

2.2.1 Sex markets in Middlesbrough

Middlesbrough has perhaps has the most well known of all the North East sex markets as a result of the media publicity it received in the late 90s/early 2000s and the subsequent Police operations. Around this time there were several murders of women involved in prostitution, which are the subject of ongoing investigations (the remains of one woman who went missing were found in 2012). As a result of this and due to the presence of Barnardo's as the key agency, they have produced the best response to the issue. This has been made up of a multi-agency, proactive response which has included statutory and voluntary sector organisations.

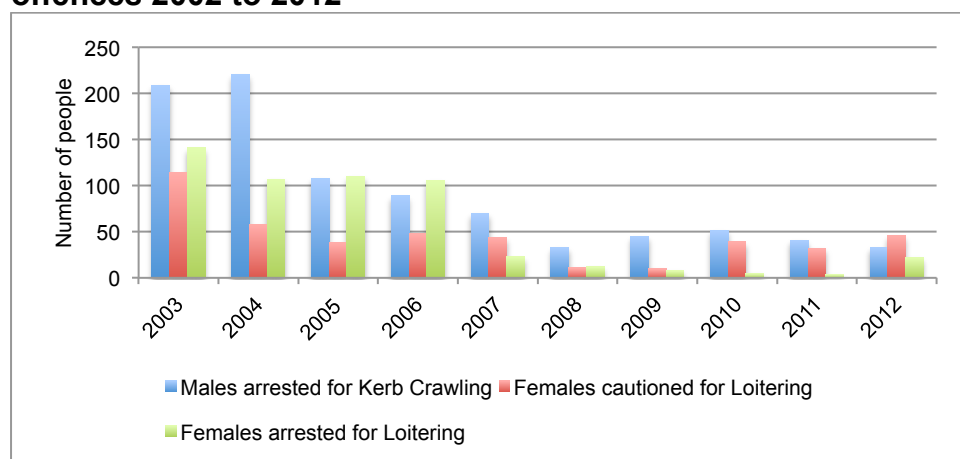
The result of this approach has been a reduction in the size of the street sex market and the removal of children from situations of sexual exploitation.

Figure 2.0 shows Police data on the number of arrests for kerb crawling and women cautioned and arrested for loitering. As can be seen, figures for prostitution-related offences have reduced considerably in the last 10 years. Police data shows that women involved in prostitution has reduced from around 200 to under 50. Whilst it has not been the task of this research study to look at the reasons for this in detail, interviewees were asked what they thought the reasons were for the reduction. Respondents gave the following reasons:

- Targeted and adequately funded Police operations, including night time patrols in hot spot areas, kerb crawling initiatives and the application of Engagement and Support Order⁶ (ESOs).
- Close multi agency working, incorporating local authority, Police, housing agencies, substance misuse and women's services and others across the statutory and voluntary sectors.
- Substance treatment services which have engaged with more substance misusers and kept more in treatment.
- Targeted support project, Barnardo's Secos, that provides wrap around, intensive work with adults and sexually exploited children.

⁶ ESOs are orders made by the courts which make engaging with a support agency (A Way Out or Barnardo's Secos) a condition of sentence. Thus, instead of imposing a fine or community sentence, the woman will be required to engage with the support agency for a predetermined period.

Figure 2.0 Middlesbrough Police data: kerb crawling and loitering offences 2002 to 2012



However, street prostitution still remains and takes place in different locations in the city centre, most of this is a result of substance misuse. The following section presents our findings.

Changing markets

Historically, there have been changes to the dynamics of sex markets in Middlesbrough and Stockton. In the late 1990s/early 2000s, there were specific areas, in particular the industrial area, commonly referred to as *over the border*, where groups of women would work/stand in the same area. In 2010, a new Police station was built in this area on Bridge Street which displaced the location of the prostitution. It is now found dispersed in the residential areas of Middlesbrough (see table 2.0).

Amongst the services interviewed there were differing opinions on the size of the sex market and if it had changed. Some agencies felt that the numbers of those involved had decreased, as one interviewee said *“more people are in treatment and treatment is working ... there was more prostitution 10 years ago”*. Other agencies however, felt that sex markets were not decreasing and had remained static. Other agencies again felt that sex markets had become less visible as they had moved away from the visible streets to more off street locations.

One agency reported, *“its [sex markets] changed in the last 10 years, a declining visible street scene to a move indoors, in flats and organised by mobile phones”*.

Agencies reported that there remained a core group of women who were still involved in prostitution. These are made up of both women who are in treatment and those who are not. These were estimated by several agencies to be between 60 and 80 in number. One agency described this as a *“melting pot”* of people who use drugs, engage in prostitution, who are involved in pimping or sell sex to supply both their own and a partners’ drug habits. Interestingly, it is the agencies that worked with this group that felt the size of

the sex market had remained static. In other words, these women had been involved in prostitution for a number of years. The effectiveness of interventions for this core group were felt to be of little impact. For example, in relation to Police activity, one agency said “*nothing really changes, it just makes them move to different areas*”. Figure 2.4 reinforces this as it shows that women involved in prostitution, particularly survival sex, have been doing it for a long time.

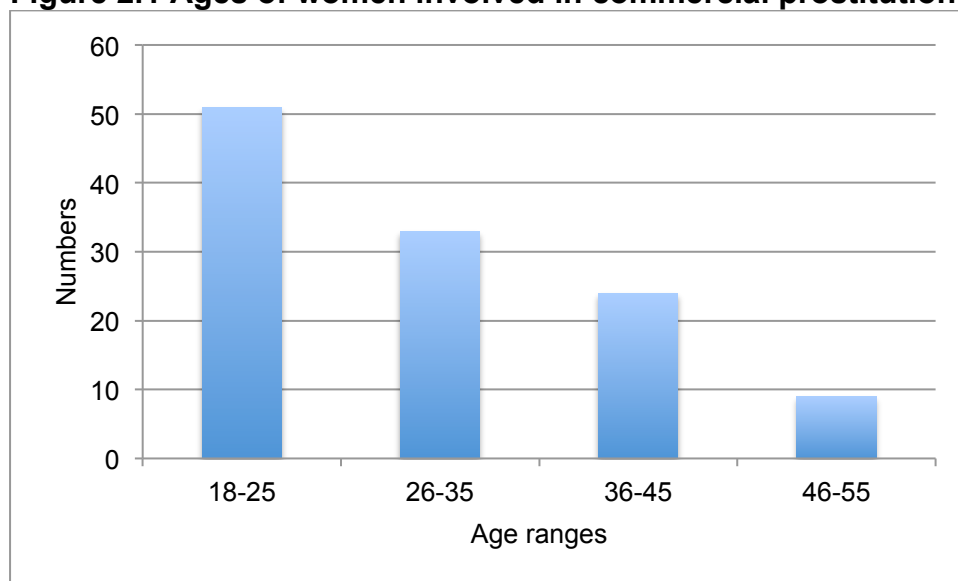
2.2.2 Categories and numbers

We found evidence of several different types of sex market in Middlesbrough, with the most numerous being commercial prostitution through individuals advertising on the Internet and survival sex through women involved in street prostitution. The layers to sex markets in Middlesbrough included:

- **Commercial prostitution:** we found a total of 121 women and 73 men involved, mostly through advertising on the Internet, which can be classed as the mid-end sex market. We also found evidence of high-end escorts, i.e. those charging high fees, and those involved in the pornography industry.

The following figure shows the ages of those involved. As can be seen, the age profile is characterised by a predominance of younger women.

Figure 2.1 Ages of women involved in commercial prostitution



Men involved in commercial prostitution are also predominantly younger with most being in the 18 to 25 year old age bracket.

Figure 2.2 Ages of men involved in commercial prostitution



As stated, included in this category are ‘high-end escorts’: these were individuals in control of their own activities and were high earners. There are estimated to be approximately 10 individuals working in Teesside between the ages of late 20s to early 40s.

Also included in this category are those involved in the pornography industry: six males, aged between 18 and 23. We could find no evidence of females associated with pornography; it is unlikely that there is no involvement, we simply could find no evidence of it. The males were described as being “*mentally sorted*”.

We have also included brothels in the category of commercial prostitution as many are run as businesses. However, it is recognised that a proportion of women in brothels may be coerced or exploited and others may share characteristics of those involved in survival sex (for example, with drug addictions and the experience of violence).

The research found evidence of eight brothels in Middlesbrough, in different parts of the city. One agency felt that there are more brothels currently than there ever has been in Middlesbrough. This may be reflective of the reduction in on street prostitution and a move off the streets.

There were also reports of known ‘sex houses’ which were distinct from brothels but where sex could be purchased. These are understood to be residential properties from where women were known to sell sex, either they lived there themselves or their friends/associates lived there. One agency commented about this, “*quite a few girls work from houses now,*

they feel safer like that, either renting or borrowing a room in another prostitute's house".

- **Survival sex:** this is the category that services had the most contact with. We found a total of 108 women involved in survival sex and 25 men. Survival sex takes place both on and off street, with women sourcing punters both in public environments and from private communications, either on the phone or working from houses (their own houses or those of associates). The number of women selling sex on-street has declined over the last 10 years as evidenced by Police statistics and reports. However, there still is an on-street sex market

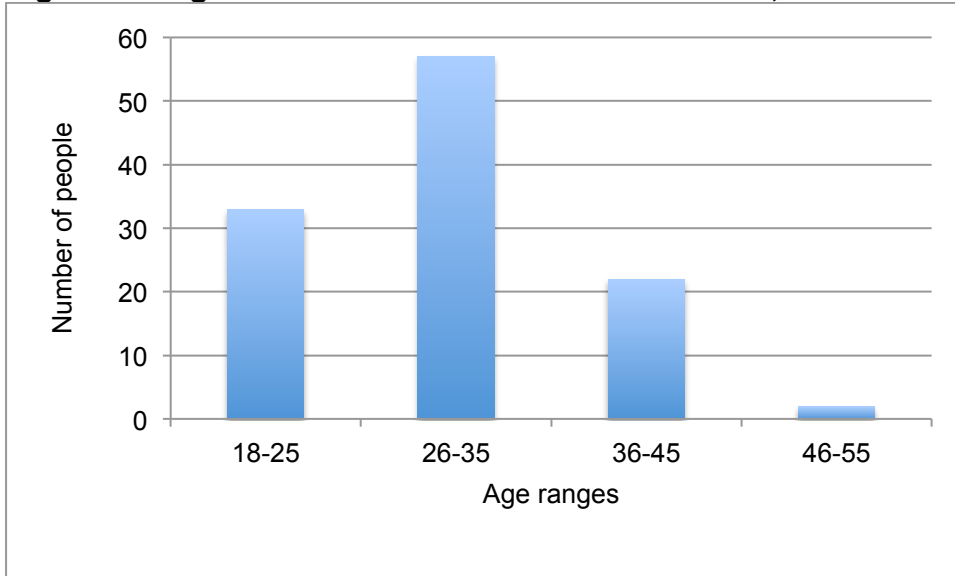
We found evidence of male survival sex taking place in Middlesbrough, in city centre locations. Included in these figures are what has been termed as 'rent boys': young males between 17 and 20 who engage in prostitution in Public Sex Environments and a local pub. There are estimated to be approximately 15 people involved. These are also likely to advertise on Internet sites and mobile phone Apps, such as Manhunt, Gaydar, and Grindr. Those involved may have substance misuse issues or may use survival sex as a source of regular income. There were vulnerabilities here associated with being young and taking risks.

Also included in this category, are older women who were involved in prostitution on a full-time basis in the past and who now have serious alcohol addictions and associated physical and mental health problems: these women may continue to have regular punters and exchange sex for alcohol. For example, one agency reported "*we have a woman in her late 40s, she used to work on the streets now she exchanges sex for alcohol, food and drugs with regulars*".

Of the 108 women we found to be involved in survival sex, 33 had children who had been removed into the care of the local authority or into kinship care.

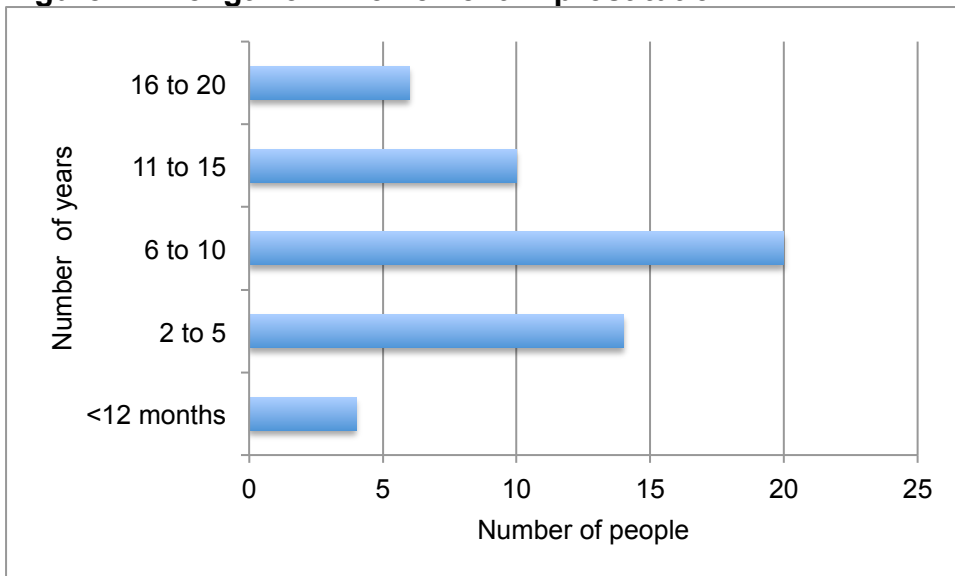
As can be seen in the following figure, the age profile of women involved in survival sex is somewhat older than those involved in commercial prostitution.

Figure 2.3 Ages of women involved in survival sex, 2012 to 2013



The age profile of women involved in survival sex contributes to the position of the following figure; the duration of involvement in prostitution. As can be seen, there is a long duration to that involvement, with the highest number of women being involved for between six and 10 years.

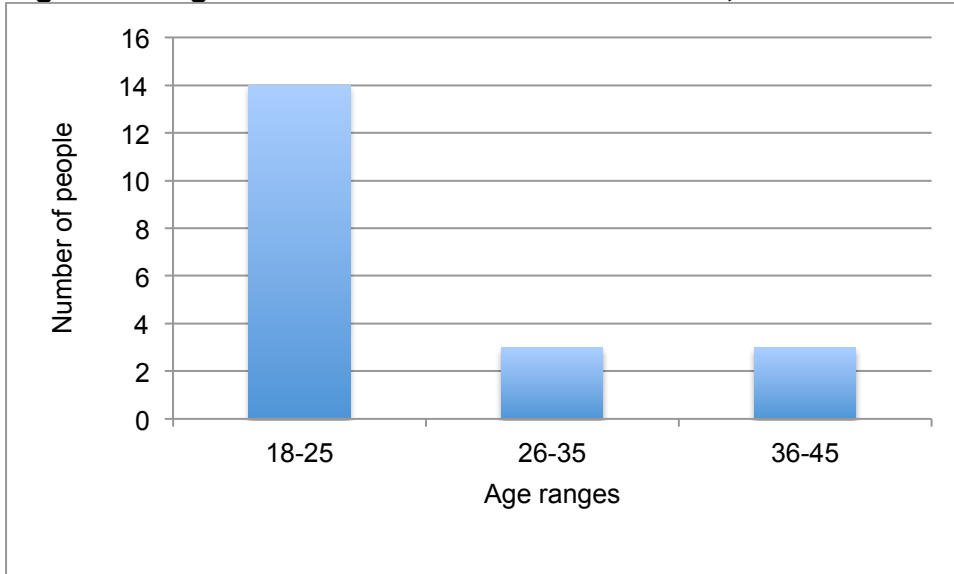
Figure 2.4 Length of involvement in prostitution*



*Where known

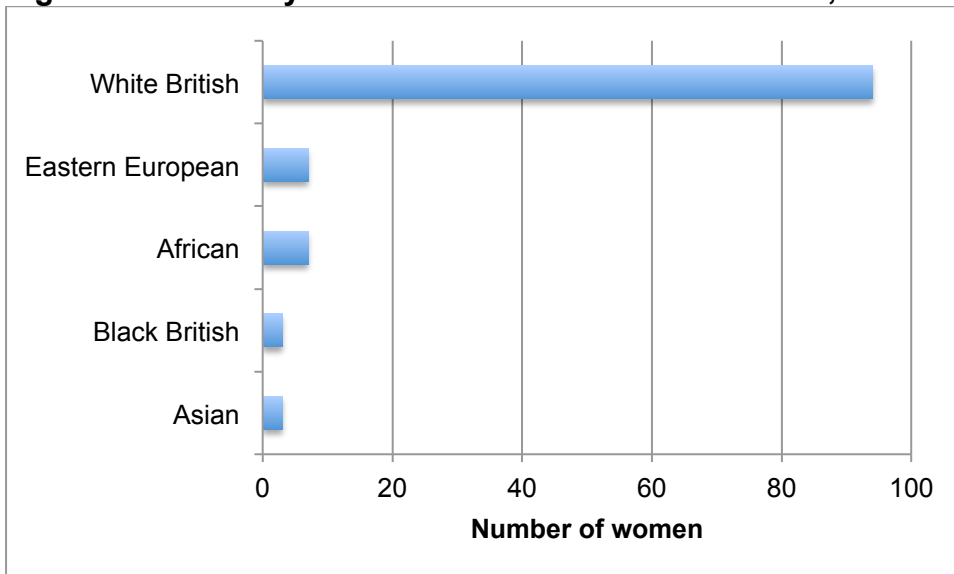
Men involved in survival sex are younger, with the majority being between 18 and 25.

Figure 2.5 Ages of men involved in survival sex, 2012 to 2013



Most women involved in survival sex are White British with small numbers of Eastern European and African. All men involved were reported to be White British.

Figure 2.6 Ethnicity of women involved in survival sex, 2012 to 2013



- **Destitute asylum seekers/women with no recourse to public funds:** numbers of these were small, around 10 each year. One service reported that “we pick up one or two each month who have been forced into exchanging sex for essential things, like accommodation, food, clothes, mostly African, from Congo or Ivory Coast or Eastern European ... they are very vulnerable young people”. The ‘purchasers’ or punters of this form of prostitution tend to be other asylum seekers or non-British nationals. There does not appear to be a route however, into local domestic sex markets for asylum seekers.

- **Vulnerable young mothers aged between 20 to 28, with young children:** they have a number of shared characteristics, including alcohol abuse, mental health issues, many have been through the care system, their children are often the focus of the Child Protection process, living in poor private rented accommodation, their partners are often abusive and violent and are likely to *“put the windows out”*. As one agency said *“they are sexually vulnerable and sexually exploited”*. They often find themselves in a position of having to provide *“payment of sex”* for accommodation, alcohol and other essential resources. Some of these young women are pimped or coerced into prostitution and the practice is reported to be normalised. One agency saw around 10 of these women each year.

Box 2.0 Barnardo's Secos⁷

Barnardo's Secos (Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Streets) which has been in operation since 1998, deliver a service specifically for adults involved in prostitution, called the Recovery Project. This supports women and men in recovery or management of their substance misuse. Women who use the project may be involved in street work, escorting or may be working independently from a premise. The service offers one-to-one therapeutic interventions and practical support to individuals around issues such as sexual and general health, drug use, counselling and housing issues. The project also engages with women in a prison settling with a view to supporting them upon release back into the community.

Barnardo's Secos is possibly better known for their children's service, which works with children and young people aged between 11 and 25 years, who may be at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation. Project workers visit and work with young people on a one-to-one basis and also in groups. Their support enables a young person to protect themselves and encourage positive decision making to achieve safer and more settled lifestyles. In partnership with other statutory and voluntary groups and led by the Police, they have developed a sophisticated identification and referral mechanism for young people in Middlesbrough. This enables children and young people to be identified and offered support and the perpetrators to be monitored and if necessary, charged. Secos also provides other services in Middlesbrough, including:

- Missing from home
- Kerb crawling programme
- FCAS: Families, Communities against Sexual exploitation
- Youth Crime Action Programme: joint outreach service to provide safe activities and awareness raising for children
- Young persons Independent Sexual Violence Advisor
- Housing tenancy support
- Outreach, young men and boys worker
- BME group work support.

⁷ More information: www.barnardos.org.uk/secos.htm

2.3 Stockton findings

2.3.1 Sex markets in Stockton

Sex markets have changed location in Stockton but their size was felt to have remained the same. In the early to mid 2000s, on-street prostitution used to take place in the industrial Bon Lee Trading Estate. Towards the end of the decade, it moved to the residential areas. It was thought that the reason the on-street area moved from the Trading Estate was related to the bridge widening works which took place in 2008. It took around 12 months to complete and during that time there was no access road from the A19 or A66 to the Industrial Estate. It was easier to come off the A66 to the residential areas, which is where the on-street area moved to.

However, as stated, agencies felt that the number of people involved has remained the same. For example, one interviewee said *“there’s been high numbers involved, both then and now”*. Another interviewee said *“since 2004, there has always been street sex work, now it is in the [name of location], people are using the bus stop. It is less visual now but the volume is the same. People are still there on the roads but they do a lot of business on the phone, with their regulars”*. Several agencies reported women using the bus stop, which was reported to provide a place to sit in shelter and somewhere they cannot be moved on from; they also make prosecuting kerb crawlers more difficult.

As illustrations of magnitude Cleveland Police maintain lists of women involved in prostitution and kerb crawlers. The list (on their internal Iris database) of women who have been cautioned or arrested for Loitering or Street Prostitution has the names of 190 women (the list has been kept since 2003). They also maintain a list for Kerb Crawlers; since 2008, the list contains the names of 210 men. Most of these are from Teesside but do include men from Durham and Darlington. During the recent investigation into the death of three women who were involved in prostitution in 1998, 2000 and 2002, the Police have interviewed 250 women who were involved in prostitution past and present. The Probation Service in Stockton estimates that there are around 100 women involved in prostitution on their client list in the last year.

Unlike Middlesbrough, the Stockton Police Area Command has no dedicated Officers or additional resources to tackle the issue of prostitution. All prostitution-related activities are enforced by their Licensing Unit which consists of one sergeant and an inspector.

There has been a multi-agency partnership approach to the issue which started in 2011 in response to DAAT-commissioned research into substance misuse and pressure from Elected Members. This was stimulated by a number of complaints from residents: at one point the Police received 120 calls a week in complaints about women involved in prostitution but it was reported that the majority of these came from two residents.

This partnership consists of DAAT, housing, Police, Prison, Probation and the voluntary sector. They pursue a model that:

- *Targets kerb crawlers and active sex workers through police patrols and after caution and possible arrest, a referral into substance misuse services will be generated;*
- *Agrees information sharing on an identified group of sex workers;*
- *Implements an Integrated Offender Management (IOM) approach thus treating the women as victims as well as offenders and provide supportive measures (Massam and Evans, 2012: pg four).*

Their initial objectives were to target the top 12 most prolific women involved in prostitution in Stockton. They did this through assertive outreach, running a weekly drop-in, information sharing and regular multi-agency meetings. Their cooperative actions were successful and they helped six of the top 12 women who were involved in prostitution exit (exiting is classed as not being involved in prostitution for three to four months). Arrests also went down from 80 to 10 over a period of three months.

Stockton has a key charity, A Way Out, which supports women involved in prostitution. They operate a very successful weekly drop-in and also carry out assertive outreach to women involved in prostitution in Stockton (see box 2.1). Good partnership working between this organisation, Probation and others has been a key factor in helping women exit prostitution.

2.3.2 Categories and numbers

- **Commercial sex:** we found evidence of 62 individuals involved in commercial prostitution in Stockton. A total of 47 of these were women and 15 were men. The following figures show the ages of those involved. Similar to the regional statistics, the women's age profiles of those involved in commercial exploitation are concentrated in the younger age brackets. However, the men's age profiles contradict this and most are in the 36 to 45 age range.

Figure 2.7 Ages of women involved in commercial prostitution, 2012 to 2013

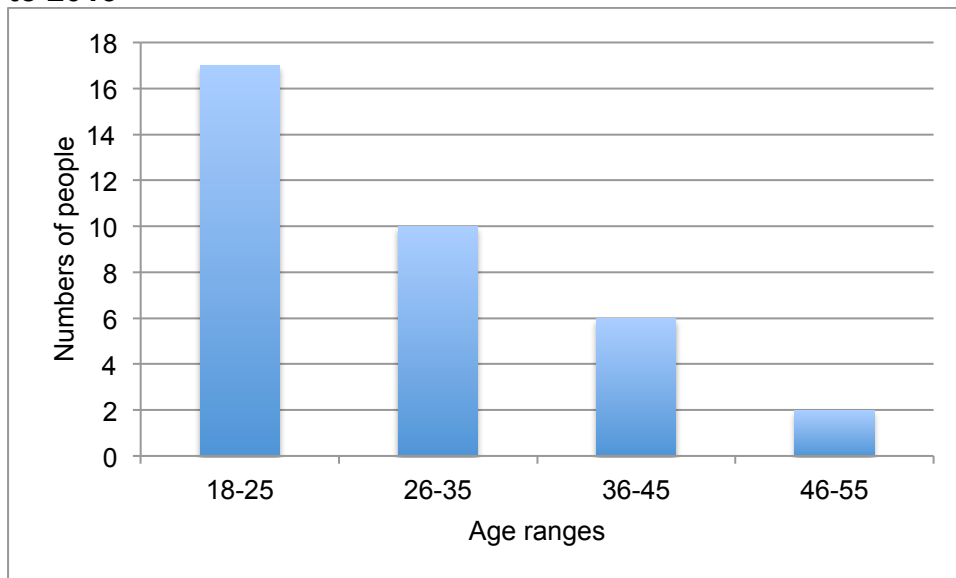
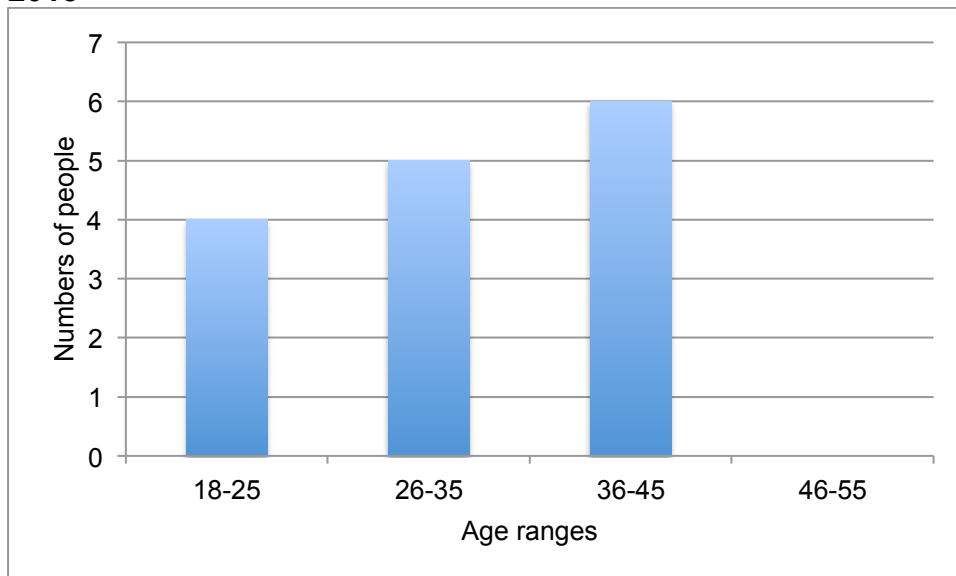


Figure 2.8 Ages of men involved in commercial prostitution, 2012 to 2013



In Stockton we found evidence of a total of four brothels. One agency reported of one of the brothels, *“there’s one with four women working*

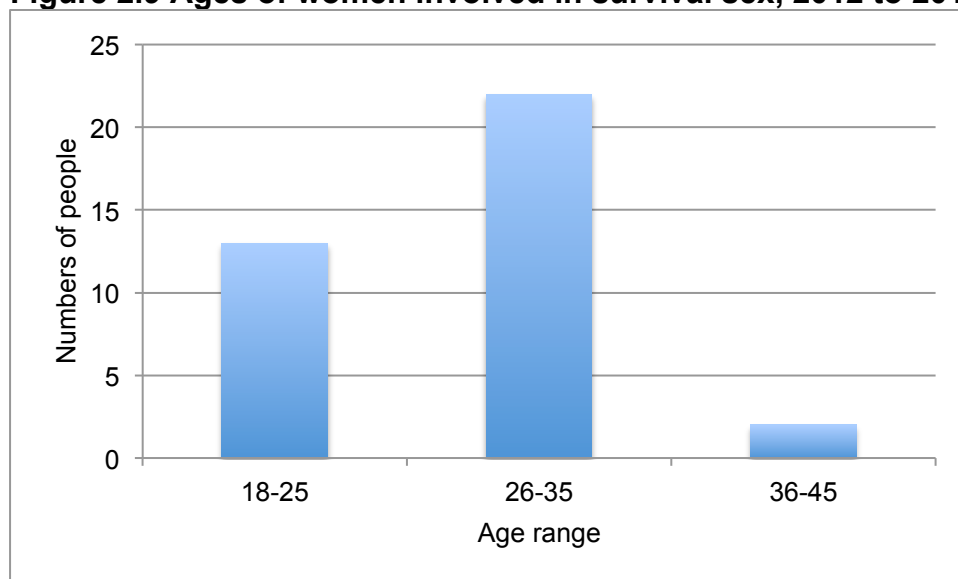
there, three Slovakian women and a local woman, they get paid £150 for sex, the owner takes 40 percent ... it's open between 11am and 5pm. The women there do it for a job, 'for the kids', one said ... 'you can't live on £53 a week' [government benefits amount]".

As well as brothels, there were reports that women were working from a pizza shop and also using a room in a hostel where the landlord would take a quarter of money earned.

- **Survival sex:** we found detailed evidence of 55 women involved in prostitution, who were part of agencies' caseloads. However, we received reports of a further 50 women who were different individuals and had been on caseloads during 2012 and 2013, but were not on currently. We can therefore be confident that there is evidence to indicate the involvement of approximately 100 women in Stockton. We only found evidence of four males involved in survival sex, between the ages of 23 and 32 years old.

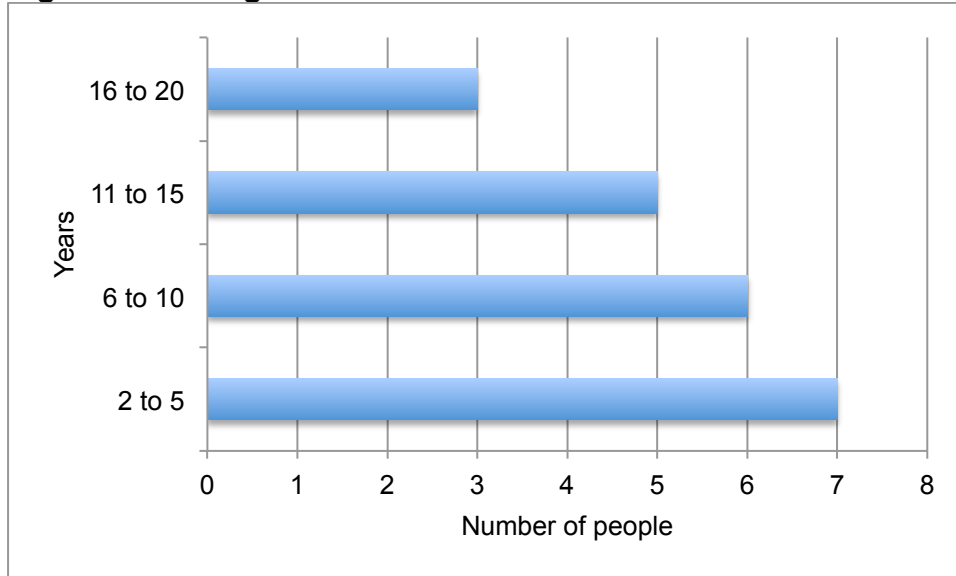
The following figures show the age of the women involved in survival sex and the length of time they have been involved. As can be seen, many women are older and have been involved for a long time.

Figure 2.9 Ages of women involved in survival sex, 2012 to 2013*



*Where known

Figure 2.10 Length of involvement in survival sex*



*Where known

Of the women whose situations were known about, a total of 24 women had children removed into local authority care. Of these, 18 women had two or more children.

- **Asylum seekers:** vulnerable young female asylum seekers in Stockton who find themselves in positions of having to exchange sex for accommodation and other essential resources. The 'purchasers' tend to be asylum seekers themselves or refugees. There were worries that these trends were set to increase as the housing provider for asylum seekers and refugees, has a high number of accommodation units in Stockton, Middlesbrough and Hartlepool. As one agency said, "*the destitute population is rising*". One support agency for asylum seekers identified four categories of vulnerable women amongst their caseload, including:
 - Trafficked women from Eritrea who come to work in Saudi Arabian households.
 - Chinese women who have been trafficked into the country for the purposes of prostitution for Chinese people. They often turn up and apply for asylum when then are pregnant.
 - Young female Africans who have been raped all the way from their host countries to the UK. Some of these end up involved in prostitution. For example, they had one client from Nigeria who had been trafficked into this country by a Nigerian Pastor who then acted as her pimp when in the UK.
 - There are also women from Pakistan who become pregnant but who are not married. This group of women sometimes become involved in the sex trade.

There were also several reports (n=4) of female asylum seekers coming into London and being forced into prostitution or trafficked around the

country. These women either fled or were resettled in Teesside. For example, different agencies reported:

- 2012, African (Gambian or Nigerian) late 20s, prostituted by a White British man in London, fled up north.
- 2012, Albanian woman in her early 20s, trafficked into London for prostitution, escaped to Stockton.
- 2013, 17 year old African, Congolese, man kept her prisoner in a brothel in London, escaped to Stockton.
- Nigerian female, early 20s, been trafficked into London and placed with a support agency. She made contact with a Nigerian man in Middlesbrough who was connected with the traffickers. She is being worked with intensely by the support agency.

Box 2.1 A Way Out

A Way Out is a charity based in Stockton that began in 2002. They are an outreach and prevention service, specialising in engaging vulnerable and hard to reach women and young people. Their service users include women and young people with substance misuse problems, those involved in prostitution, homeless, offenders and victims of abuse.

They work with between 30 and 40 women who are involved mostly in survival sex. Most are between the ages of 21 and 40 years old, with one client who is in her late 40s/early 50s. Most women have heroin and crack addictions and some have alcohol problems.

The Women's Outreach Service which supports women involved in prostitution has three workers. They carry out outreach work on the streets of Stockton and into local hostels and B&Bs and provide two drop in sessions each week, which attracts up to 30 women each session. The drop in is an opportunity for women to socialise, watch television, wash, and relax. It is also an opportunity for services, such as Probation, to engage with them. It provides food parcels and runs specific education programmes for women involved in prostitution.

Staff do a lot of housing work and advice, trying to get the women into stable accommodation and out of living with their pimps. They do this by working with the council's Housing Options team and with Rock Solid, a voluntary sector housing provider. They say *"getting a girl a good home is the most important thing ... the hostels and B&Bs are a real problem ...they put a 17 year old girl in a hostel with 17 men and no locks on the doors"*. They also work with the women around debt issues and the importance of budgeting. They work with CRI, a local drug treatment charity, to help women with their addictions. Their remit is to help women exit prostitution and they aim for abstinence when treating substance misuse.

One of their outreach workers said *"The key to working with our clients is persistence ... never to close the door, always be there, consistent"*.

2.4 Redcar findings

2.4.1 Sex markets in Redcar

There was evidence of both commercial prostitution and survival sex in Redcar and Cleveland. This included women and men involved in both off and on-street prostitution and those involved in exchanging sex for essential resources, often accommodation.

Sex markets in Redcar and Cleveland are heavily influenced by the local geography and demographics of the borough. Cleveland is roughly divided into two: the isolated rural areas incorporating Guisborough, Saltburn, Carling, Brotton, Skelton, Skinningrove and the coastal area (known as East Cleveland); and the urban area of Redcar, Grangetown, Eston and Southbank, which is more aligned to Middlesbrough. In the latter area, there are quick and cheap transport links to Middlesbrough and Stockton and there is easy access to sex markets in those areas. In the former area, there is no transport, no links and it is made up of isolated communities. Here prostitution is more home-based and localised.

Redcar is a coastal town that has always had associations with prostitution. For example, it was reported that prostitution used to take place under the arches of the cinema on the sea front, until quite recently where agencies reported, *“there were a few known girls that used to go there”*. However, because of the current redevelopment construction activities, this has stopped.

There was a feeling from some agencies that there is an undercurrent of prostitution-related issues in Redcar but that the issue was not *“in your face”*. Another agency said, *“In Redcar, it is hidden, in house, under cover”*. Other agencies reported that many of the women who are involved in prostitution travel to Middlesbrough and/or Stockton or move there. One Officer reported *“all the girls I used to know have gone to Middlesbrough to work”*.

2.4.2 Categories and numbers

- **Commercial prostitution:** we found evidence of a total of 23 individuals involved in commercial prostitution; 14 women and nine men. The ages of these are shown in the following figures.

Figure 2.11 Ages of women involved in commercial prostitution, 2012 to 2013

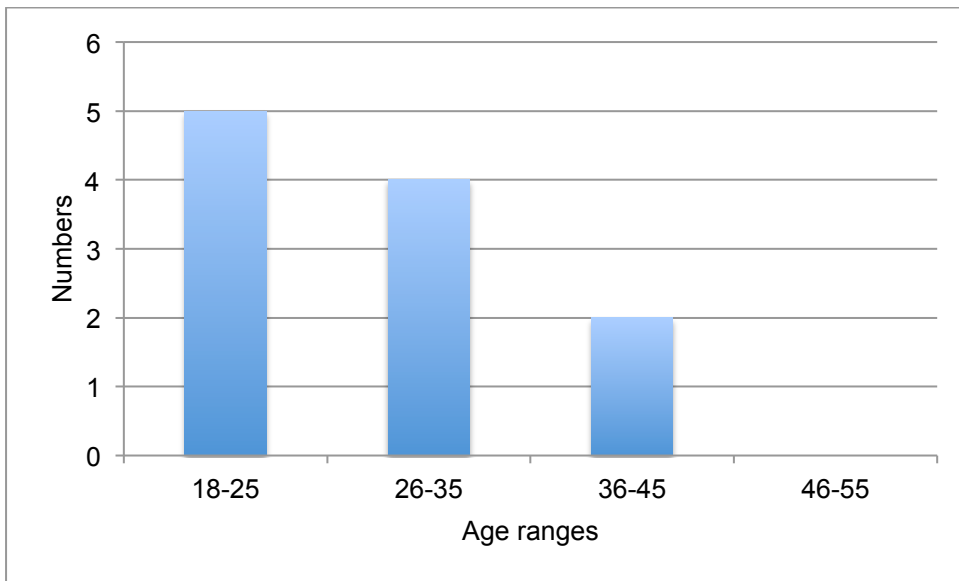
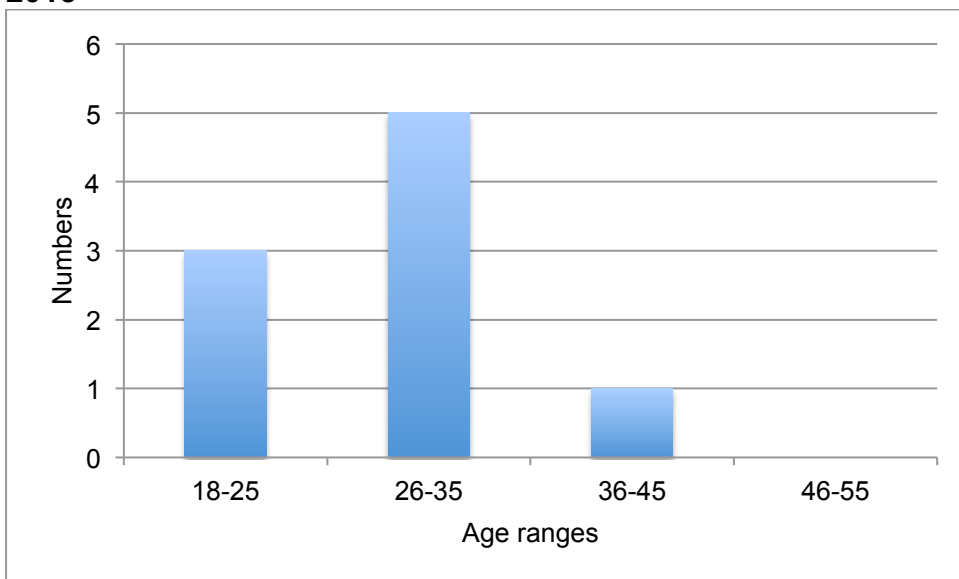


Figure 2.12 Ages of men involved in commercial prostitution, 2012 to 2013



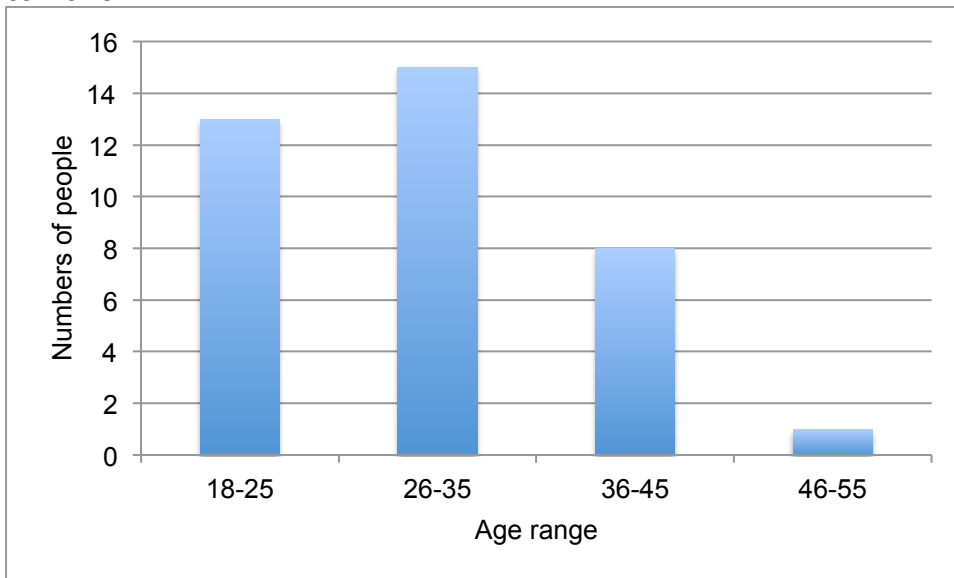
We found evidence of two brothels in Redcar, one of which was in operation in 2011 in East Cleveland (which is outside the timeframe of this study and so has not been included in the figures). Redcar Probation was asked to prepare a pre-court report on the accused (the Madam of the brothel). It came to the attention of the Police because of local parking complaints. It was suspected that three women worked in the brothel.

- **Survival sex:** we found a total of 37 women involved in survival sex in Redcar. The majority of those involved were exchanging sex for money. However, around 30 percent (n=11) were exchanging sex for accommodation and other resources, such as prescription drugs and food.

Similarly to Stockton, we only found evidence of three males involved, aged 21, 29 and 37 years.

The majority of the prostitution takes place off-street, in people's homes or the houses of purchasers. However, we did find reports of some street sex markets, particularly late at night when pubs were closing. In 2012/13, Cleveland Police cautioned one woman with Soliciting and bailed another for the same offence.

Figure 2.13 Ages of women involved in survival sex in Redcar, 2012 to 2013



2.5 Hartlepool findings

2.5.1 Sex markets in Hartlepool

There was evidence of both commercial prostitution and survival sex in Hartlepool. This included women and men involved in mostly off-street prostitution and those involved in exchanging sex for essential resources, often accommodation.

Hartlepool is influenced by its proximity to the sex markets of Middlesbrough and Stockton and there were reports of some women travelling to the street markets in those areas. This is made possible by the good transport links by rail and by bus, where fares between both areas were £6 and £2.50 respectively.

There was also evidence to indicate sex markets internal to Hartlepool. These included reports of one brothel with others suspected and areas where sex could be purchased. Hartlepool was described to be *“like a village”* where *“every knows each other”*. This influences the characteristics of sex markets as those involved are likely to travel outside of the area.

2.5.2 Categories and numbers

- **Commercial prostitution:** we found evidence of a total of 24 individuals involved in commercial prostitution; 15 women and nine men. The ages of these are shown in the following figures. Unlike the other areas, where there is a younger age profile, the women involved are concentrated in the age range of 26 and 35 years.

Figure 2.14 Ages of women involved in commercial prostitution in Hartlepool, 2012 to 2013

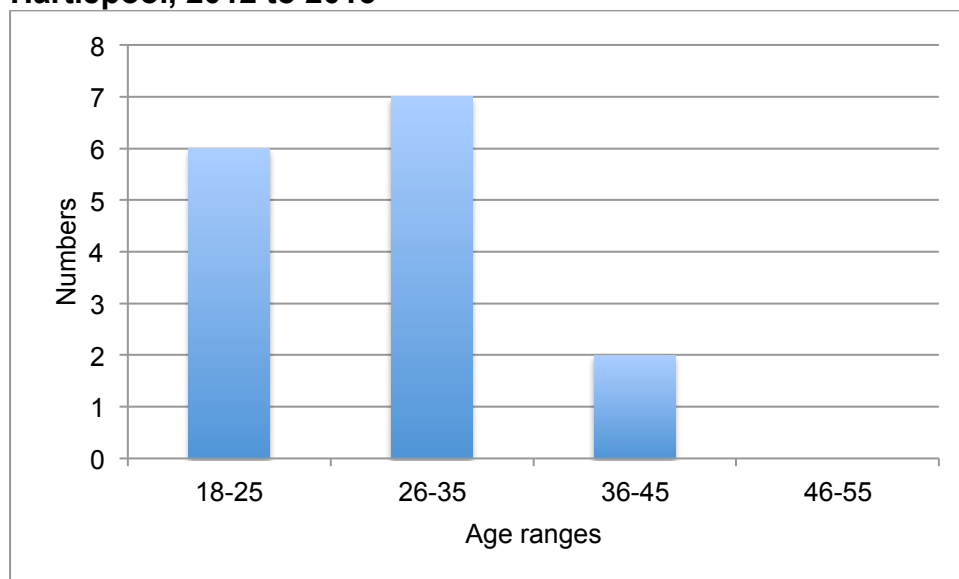
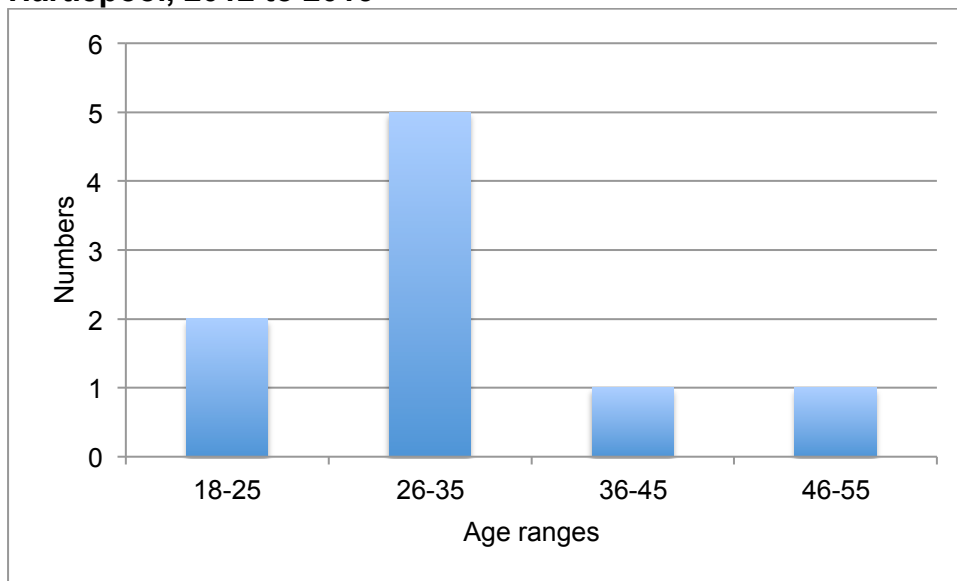


Figure 2.15 Ages of men involved in commercial prostitution in Hartlepool, 2012 to 2013

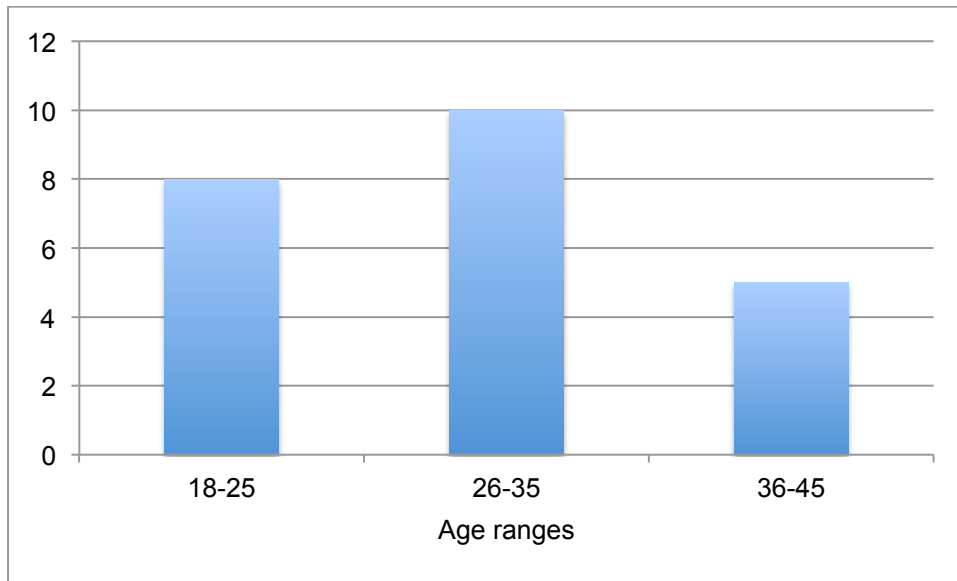


There were reports of one brothel in Hartlepool near the town centre. There were also reports of flats being used for commercial prostitution. There is a lap dancing club in Hartlepool and we have found connections between these establishments and prostitution in all other areas in the North East and Cumbria.

- **Survival sex:** we found a total of 23 women involved in survival sex in Hartlepool. The women involved were exchanging sex for a range of resources including accommodation, alcohol, drugs and money. There were reports of women having addictions to heroin, benzos and alcohol but not crack. Similarly to Redcar and Stockton, we found evidence of a very low number of men, only two, aged in their 20s. One of these was known to travel to Newcastle to engage in prostitution.

All of the reports of those involved in survival sex in Hartlepool were about off-street locations. There were some reports of past on-street prostitution although no current reports of involvement. Cleveland Police also had no reports of Soliciting from 2010 to 2013. There were reports of six women who travelled to either Middlesbrough or Stockton to the on-street markets.

Figure 2.16 Ages of women involved in survival sex in Hartlepool, 2012/13



3.0 Themes

In many ways, this is the most important part of this study as it gives an insight about the issues which affect those involved: it gives an idea about what life is like for them.

These themes relate in the most part to those involved in survival sex. This was because we were able to understand from frontline agencies the realities of those people involved in survival prostitution. We were unable to gain comparable insights into people involved in commercial prostitution as most advertised on the Internet and were not known through services.

3.1 Routes into prostitution

In relation to how people came to be involved in prostitution there were a range of responses, most of which were connected in some way to substance misuse. These included:

- Encouragement\pressure by partners: there were a number of reports (n=12) of women's boyfriends or husbands encouraging\pressurising women to start their involvement in prostitution.
- Role modeling or encouragement from family members: evidence was found of women whose mothers and/or sisters were involved in prostitution. This provides behavioural role modeling. In cases where mothers were involved, people became involved in prostitution as children. There was another case reported where a woman was pimped by her brother. Another example was:

Female in late 20s who used to live in Middlesbrough, now living in Redcar, order for Robbery, addicted to heroin. She had a partner who it was reported "*he didn't like it* [her involvement in prostitution]. It was reported "*she used to rob people, have sex for money ... she'd do anything* [to get money]". She was known to have had a damaged upbringing and "*her dad used to prostitute her*".

- Substance misuse: drug addiction was the main reason why people started their involvement in prostitution. As one agency reported, "*she started taking heroin when she was 16 and then started on the game at 17, because of the heroin*".

The majority of women whose situations were known about first became involved in prostitution under the age of 16. There were many such reports across all four local authority areas (and across the North East and Cumbria⁸), including:

⁸ See Hartworth, 2008, 2010 and 2012.

- *“People have been involved for a long time, but they’re still young, there’s one girl who’s now 22 years old, but she started when she was 14 or 15’.*
- *“Female, aged 25, known to have had a poor upbringing, with drugs and prostitution involved from 14 years old. She has really low self esteem and is attracted and attractive to controlling men. Her current/latest boyfriend is described as very controlling, including keeping her mobile phone”.*

There were also many reports of women involved in prostitution who had suffered childhood sexual abuse and rape, grown up in care, witnessed parental domestic violence and/or substance misuse.

Several agencies reported that they are working with third generation substance-misusing women involved in prostitution. For example, one agency said *“we have worked with the grandmother and we are working with the mother and daughter, all drug users, all with alcohol problems”.*

These reports (n=7) came from different agencies and concerned different families. There were more reports (n=9) relating to two generations that were involved in prostitution; mother and daughter. For example, one agency reported *“one girl living in Southbank had been involved since she was 14 years old, she was encouraged into prostitution by her mother”.* There were also a number of reports (n=5) of sisters also being involved in prostitution. For example, *‘mother and daughter (39 and 21). Mother, children removed from care, siblings died, victim of domestic abuse from family members. Daughter sofa surfing. Both engaged in prostitution and both had substance misuse issues.’*

These patterns were substantiated by substance treatment services who working with a series of parent and children groups, as one agency illustrated *“it runs in families, the drug use, the sex working ... and other stuff, children in care, alcoholism, domestic violence, unemployment ...”.* Criminality and offending was also found to be intrinsic in this group of families. There were some severe views taken on such families by certain professionals. For example, one interviewee said *‘it’s a midden, a pit, they’re alcoholic, drug addicts, you can see their children going the same way ... there is no aspiration, no desire to change or better themselves’.*

3.2 Drug addiction and alcohol abuse

There is a strong relationship between survival sex and substance misuse, particularly heroin and crack, for example, individuals exchanging sex for heroin or money for heroin. This finding of course links to broader associations between prostitution and substance misuse. For example, Gilchrist et al. (2005) note that high proportions of women involved in prostitution are drug dependent (see also Church *et al.*, 2001; El-Bassel *et al.*, 2001; Nadon *et al.*, 1998; McKeganey, 2006) and for street sex in the UK, 80 percent of women involved in prostitution need to finance a serious drug habit (Hester and Westmarland, 2004).

Drug addiction is seen as both a cause and a condition of involvement, as one

drugs worker in Stockton said *“they do it because they’re addicted to drugs and they need to take drugs so they can do it”*. A recent AVA and DrugScope (Singleton, 2013) report stated: *“Drug use and prostitution are reinforcing. For many women, drugs are the reason they become involved in prostitution, and all the women interviewed for our research reported working on the streets to get money for drugs”*.

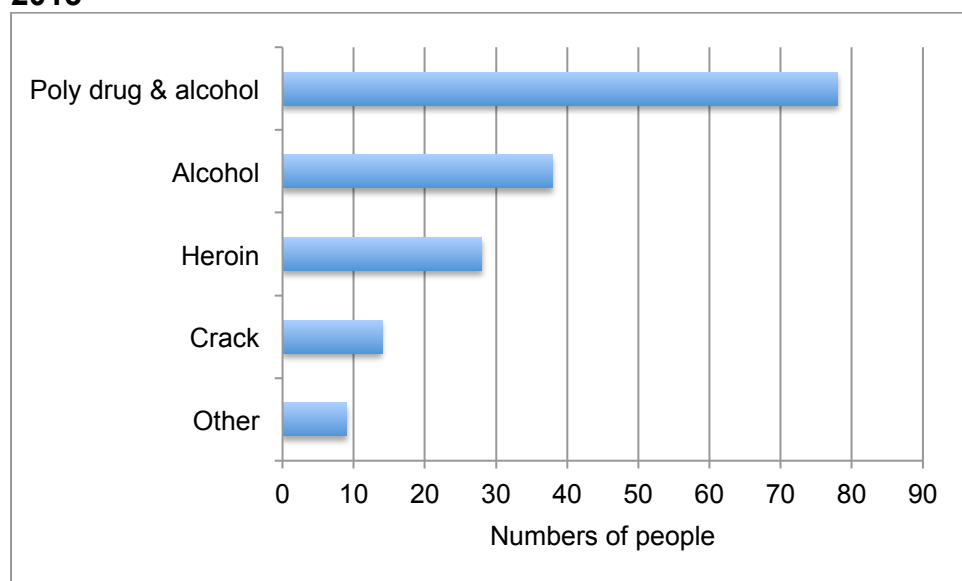
There were many reflective and astute comments about the connections between substance use and prostitution. Many of these concerned the nature of the addiction and the immediacy of the reward of drugs versus the long term emotional damage of involvement in prostitution. For example, one agency said, *“the drugs are right now ... they’ve got to think about the right now, sex work is something that happens in the past, after `I’ve got my drugs”*. Another agency commented, *“You concentrate on the prize, the outcome, not the action of doing it”*.

In Teesside, the majority of those involved in survival sex, especially those that engage in street prostitution, are addicted to opiates and/or crack. Most of those involved are poly drug users and may be addicted to a number of substances, including heroin, crack, benzodiazepines and sleeping tablets.

There are higher numbers of problematic drug users who are involved in prostitution in Middlesbrough and Stockton. Indeed, some people think that the reason street sex markets developed in these areas was a result of local drug markets. However, we found substance misusing people involved in prostitution in all four local authority areas.

The following figure shows the types of drugs that people involved in prostitution are using. By far the biggest category is poly drug use. One agency attempted to describe this pattern, *“they’ll just take anything and everything to get out of their heads, heroin, crack, zopiclone, gabba pentin, benzos ... when they rattle, they rattle for everything”*. The other category includes gas, amphetamine and Mcat.

Figure 3.0 Substance misuse of women involved in survival sex, 2012 to 2013



Note: the category of poly drug and alcohol includes tablet use.

In Middlesbrough, there were reports that amongst their female crack and opiate user clients, the majority of them had engaged in some type of prostitution and/or sex exchanges, ranging from street prostitution to exchanging sex for drugs (“*shag for a score*” as one interviewee illustrated). Female clients often request high numbers of condoms or will disclose that they are “*working*”. As an illustration, one treatment service in Middlesbrough has approximately 800 heroin and crack users on their client list; 90 percent are male, leaving 80 females, who have been involved in prostitution or sex exchanges to varying degrees.

It was reported that a number of women have come off class A drugs by using alcohol and now they have damaging alcohol habits. Other women have alcohol addictions and do not use opiates or crack. For example, one agency reported a 35 year old female who “*lived in a B&B on Queen Street and was a massive alcoholic*”.

Tablets were reported to be currently very popular amongst those involved in prostitution (see box 3.0).

We present a selection of notes of cases we found during the research to illustrate the type of issues faced by those involved:

- 30 year old female, works in the centre of town, known to be involved in prostitution since the age of 14. Heroin, crack and alcohol abuse. History of sexual abuse until aged 11 by grandfather, raped by next door neighbour (who served prison sentence for offence) and raped by client who also served time for kidnap/rape. Heroin, crack and alcohol abuse. On community order for a shoplifting offence.
- 35 year old female, works in centre of town, known to work in a pub, uses drugs and alcohol, currently on a supervision order for robbery.

- Female in her early 30s, works from home, openly discusses prostitution, crack user, under team for shoplifting offence. Refuses to engage with Secos
- 40 year old female, exchanging sex for resources with older men, in their sixties. She has been involved for around five years. She is a heroin addict, victim of domestic violence. Her boyfriend acts as her pimp and she works to supply both habits.
- 26 year old female, exchanges sex for money for food, works out of her own home, uses alcohol, Mcat and cannabis. History of childhood sexual abuse, current mental health issues. Been involved for 12 months.
- 22 year old female, order for Theft, known to have a bipolar mental health problem, a MARAC case, addicted to heroin. She had a boyfriend with whom she had an on-off relationship, he was 38 years old, known to be violent and would pimp her. She had previously made allegations of rape about him. She was in treatment and in structured day care.
- Female in early 30s, addicted to crack cocaine. Her boyfriend would pimp her in order to earn money for crack. It was reported that this started with pimping her to friends which then widened out to other people. The boyfriend was reported to be physically abusive and there was significant domestic violence.
- 35 year old female who would exchange oral sex for drinks in local pubs. In the latter it was reported that *“a lot goes on in the toilets when they have no money”*.
- 28 year old, alcohol, crack and heroin addict. She has had four children removed, *been in and out of sex working*.

There were a number of reports of women who earned money through prostitution in order to purchase drugs for both their own and their boyfriends. For example, *‘28 year old female with a history of sex work. She has just got out of custody, for theft based offences. She relies on sex work to fund both her, and her boyfriend’s drug habits’*.

The issue of immaturity was brought up several times by different agencies about certain women who were involved in prostitution. For example, one homeless charity said *“they younger ones, between 17 and 22, they’re really immature almost like children ... they get easily exploited”*. Another agency reported that addicts often become *“emotionally stunted”* from the time when they started taking heroin, which was often as a young teenager.

Box 3.0 Pills and tablets: Zopiclone, Pregabalin, Gabapentin and Benzos

Pills have become a popular choice of drug and a viable alternative to other class A drugs such as heroin and cocaine, either on their own or with alcohol. Pills include: Zopiclone, Pregabalin, Gabapentin, Tramadol and Benzos. They are all heavy duty sedatives, pain relievers or sleep inducers and when taken in large quantities, their effects can be intense and addictive. They have been described as inducing *“blinking out”, “lost days”, “complete wipe out” and “zombie-like effects”*.

Zopiclone is a drug used to treat insomnia and works in a similar way to benzodiazepines. It is marketed as a sleeping pill as it depresses and tranquilizes the central nervous system. Pregabalin and Gabapentin are pain relievers, specifically for neuropathic pain but are also prescribed for convulsions and bipolar disorder. Tramadol is a widely used pain reliever. Benzos (benzodiazepines) are the well known sedatives, sleep inducing and anti-anxiety drugs.

The pills are prescribed by GPs and are also sold on the drugs market, being sourced from thefts or ‘pill runs’ from overseas (for example, India and Thailand). The pills are small, often coming in prescription-like strips, are easy to conceal and transport.

One drug treatment agency said *“people are taking pills instead of heroin, they’re cheaper, easier to get hold of and are stronger, the heroin is of such poor quality now that people are choosing pills and alcohol in its place”*. One agency said *“we had one girl who was a known heroin user, she would have blood tests and they would come back negative, she said she’d used but it was so poor quality, so she went onto pills”*. Another agency said *“people are taking 20 pills at a time, they get so off their face, they forget, blank out ... we have one girl who’ll take a load of pills, put on a full face of makeup, then goes out [sex] working and next day she won’t remember anything that’s happened but have money on her”*.

One agency called these *Charge Sheet Drugs*, so called because people will commit crime, get arrested and placed in a custody suite. When questioned, (to fill in the Charge Sheet) they have no idea what crime they committed as they were so out of it on these downers or sleeping tablets.

There were some examples of women involved in prostitution going to extraordinary lengths to get hold of opiates. For example, the Police reported *“one woman of 35 years old, the girlfriend of a 68 year old. He was in hospital, critically ill, she tried to get the morphine from his drip, got caught pulling the wires and tubes out of him and charged with attempted murder”*.

Box 3.2 Case study one

Jane* is in her late 20s. She is an alcohol and poly drug user which includes crack and heroin. She has been convicted of a number of theft related offences including burglary and robbery and has received suspended sentences, community orders and unpaid work (which it was reported by her Probation Officer that she simply could not complete because of her addictions and poor health). She has spent a short period on remand.

Jane grew up in a normal family from a nice area, although when she was in her early teens, her mother and father separated. In her middle teens, she started being disruptive in school and became involved with a problematic peer group. She started using alcohol and drugs around this time, particularly heroin. She started occasionally being involved in prostitution when she was 15 years old when she started using drugs. She left home when she was 17 and lived in a series of transient addresses. She started to be involved in prostitution more regularly and soon she was on street full time.

Jane has had a number of partners and has had two children, although she has been unable to maintain these relationships. Both her children are no longer in her care. Jane's current partner is a drug user and a High Crime Causing Offender and her involvement in prostitution funds both their addictions. This relationship is also dysfunctional and she is both a perpetrator and victim of domestic violence.

Her housing situation has also been difficult and she has had three different tenancies in recent times and currently shares a room with her boyfriend in a B&B. She is currently a heavy drug user, consuming substances such as pregablin, methadone, diazepam, zopiclone, heroin, cocaine, cannabis and alcohol. It was reported that she is very draining to work with, and part victim, part perpetrator. She is still offending and involved in prostitution, although she does engage with a local agency that supports women involved in prostitution.

*Not her real name.

3.3 Accommodation

Poor accommodation and homelessness was a recurrent theme that was associated with people involved in prostitution. Women involved are often living in inappropriate and or temporary accommodation; they generally have histories of multiple previous tenancies with moves in and out of the hostel system. Most of the tenancies are temporary due to their chaotic lifestyles, previous non-payments of rent, subsequent build up of arrears and histories of drug dealing taking place from properties. They often find themselves moving house frequently, sleeping in risky places i.e. outside or in cars and often live with their punters (Massam and Evans, 2012). As one agency reported *“the big vulnerability is housing”*.

It was reported that women involved in prostitution were often unable to maintain tenancies, were evicted, became ‘intentionally’ homeless so could not qualify for local authority emergency housing. Women were reported to often end up in B&B accommodation with unscrupulous landlords and vulnerable to further exploitation, both financial and sexual, from both landlords and other tenants. It was reported that this was *“last resort housing”* and was used *“when they have been refused or banned everywhere else”*. One agency reported, *“they are very vulnerable women, drug or alcohol dependent and they are housed with high risk male perpetrators”*.

There was evident dissatisfaction from agencies working with vulnerable women about having to use such poor accommodation. For example, one agency reported *“we’ve heard of really bad practices like landlords managing the money of tenants staying at their B&Bs, locking women in rooms, almost keeping them prisoner, supplying alcohol, getting punters and making them engage in sex work. Some landlords appoint a tenant to manage these situations”*. An example of this was given by one agency:

“A friend of the landlord, one of his tenants, who acted as his agent ... he would let himself into one of the girls flats who was staying there who was an alcoholic, he would leave a bottle of vodka and a packet of cigarettes, then he’d go back later for sex after she’s drunk it. That’d be the payment ... she didn’t have any money”.

Another agency reported of one of these B&Bs that when she arrived there with a vulnerable young woman and saw the condition of the room, they said *“honestly, I wouldn’t have put a dog in there, and I had to leave her there because it was on a Friday ... I felt absolutely awful”*.

“30 year old woman who’d grown up in care was exploited by her landlord and boyfriend ... she was put in a three bedroomed semi in Norton, something she’d never be able to afford ... they treated her like a prisoner, a sex slave ... they took her passport off her”.

There were other reports of several notorious ‘slum’ landlords. The recent report (Spencer and Corkhill, 2013) identifies a total of five B&Bs and four hostels used in Middlesbrough for housing vulnerable people. In Stockton, we

also found evidence of women being placed in unsuitable accommodation. For example, one agency said, *“there’s women being placed in houses of multiple occupation ... they’re awful places and not fit for vulnerable women”*. Another interviewee said, *“there’s a landlord called [name] who owns a 54 room B&B and he’s got four properties like that in Stockton”*.

It was reported by several agencies that such accommodation compounds and encourages issues of substance misuse and prostitution. One agency stated *“If you weren’t a sex worker before and you were vulnerable ... being put in a place full of predatory men ... no locks on the doors ... you would end up as one”*. Although hostel and B&B accommodation for vulnerable groups are dominated by males (this broadly reflects the proportions in drug treatment; 90 percent male and 10 percent female), prostitution is common amongst the females. For example, one emergency accommodation provider said *“we have low but regular numbers of women involved [in prostitution] ... for example, in the last 12 months we’ve had four women, aged between 18 and 30, all street working, swapping sex for money, heroin, alcohol, cigarettes”*.

In addition to this, the inability of women to find suitable accommodation of their own because of substance misuse, rent arrears, criminal records or other reasons, often forces them to live with their pimps. This makes it doubly hard for them to exit prostitution. Indeed, hostels can often be a route into prostitution. For example, one agency said *“young girls get put in hostels so they get involved ... they say that the first time is always the worse [sic], after that it’s OK”*.

In addition to the houses of multiple occupation and B&Bs, there are other types of insecure accommodation. Areas of poor quality, rental accommodation are known to be areas suited for brothels.

The association of vulnerable women, predatory men, unscrupulous landlords, substance abuse and low quality housing were encapsulated by one housing provider: *“some things have happened since the olden days ... they’re the same things, you put them all in a pit and that’s what you get”*.

There were a number of women (n=18) who were exchanging sex for accommodation with a range of people. Some were reported to either identify older males almost in a predatory sense and stay with them and use their resources in exchange for sex and others were said to be exploited by older males, in their 60s and 70s, allowing the women to stay with them in exchange for sex. Our other studies have identified similar patterns across the North East and Cumbria. Other women exchange sex for accommodation with their peers and others with strangers.

Box 3.3 Best practice in housing: Roc Solid

Stockton has a very interesting and progressive housing project, run by a charity called Roc Solid. They provide good quality housing for vulnerable clients, including women involved in prostitution in Stockton and outside of the area. For women wishing to exit prostitution, accommodation which can be provided outside of area although in the region, is a very important ingredient. An example of their clients is:

- Female aged 24 and male aged 26, just released from prison. Both with heroin addictions, she was involved in prostitution and had three previous children taken into care. She is now on a successful methadone programme and has reduced from 130 milliliters to 3 milliliters each day. She engaged with A Way Out, was moved out of area and given a home in Newton Aycliffe. If she had stayed in Stockton she would have continued with her addiction and involvement in prostitution. They now form a family unit with her new child. As he returned from prison, he was given a phased return into the family home.

The pattern of exchanging sex for somewhere to stay was particularly prevalent in Redcar. The following women were reported not to be involved in prostitution but would exchange sex for accommodation. These included:

- Female in her mid 30s, alcohol, heroin and speed, sex with peers for substances and for a place to stay.
- 32 year old female, sex with taxi drivers, for alcohol, also exchanges sex for accommodation.
- 34 year old female, chaotic lifestyle, poly drug user, who has sex with anyone for a range of resources including accommodation.

All these women were classed as sofa surfers and “*their self worth is rock bottom*”.

3.4 The experience of violence

There were numerous reports of women involved in prostitution experiencing severe and current violence and sexual abuse, including serious assault, attempted murder, rape, torture and kidnap. Associations (for example, as partners, living together or through coercive relationships) between violent offenders, sex offenders and dangerous individuals were common. For example, one agency said of a client *“she would get beaten up regularly”*, another said *“there is always reports of violence, like sex workers being strangled, left for dead, in a coma for three weeks”*. These situations and associations are best illustrated through reports, which include:

“... we had a girl with a history of sex work, suffered a serious assault from a punter who beat her and began to bury her, she woke in the shallow grave and managed to escape after the punter panicked. He got a suspended sentence”.

“female aged 31, she was extremely vulnerable because of alcohol ... when she was drunk and out of it she didn't know what was happening. She was raped in July [2013], strangled and left for dead by the river, she came here just after that happened, she was petrified, she kept saying sorry ... there was no conviction”.

“A 26 year old woman from outside of the area, she was raped by Eastern Europeans, described as not a credible witness and a massive risk to herself”.

“31 year old drug and alcohol user, mental health problems, she'd been committed to a mental health hospital, street sex worker with regulars. She was sexually assaulted, beaten up and left unconscious by the railway and left for dead, the perpetrator received a custodial sentence”.

“20 years old, known to prostitute/exchange sex for accommodation. Heroin and crack addict. One incident included being held hostage and raped over a period of several days, refused to press charges as felt this was “an occupational hazard”.

Violent and dangerous offenders are managed by Durham Tees Valley Probation's Public Protection Unit. Many of these offenders have histories of violent crimes against females, often those involved in prostitution, including kidnap and rape. Indeed, it was reported that some of these offenders specifically target women involved in prostitution. This further demonstrates the level and serious nature of the violence perpetrated against women involved in prostitution.

Domestic violence was the most common shared characteristic of those involved in prostitution. Some examples include:

- Three females in their 30s who have been repeat attendees over the last few years, victims of sexual and domestic violence perpetrated by different

partners. They are described as being very vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

One agency said, *“people are coerced by their boyfriends carrying out or using the threat of domestic violence”*.

“A woman in her 30s, addicted to crack and heroin, she’d had a horrific childhood, being abused and raped. She was very vulnerable and wouldn’t engage with anyone but us [housing provider]. For some, there’s accepted norms and practices ... they do anything to get their drugs”.

Worthy of note are the low numbers of women involved in prostitution who are clients of Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs). We asked the ISVA service in Middlesbrough and Stockton about prostitution and their client group: they reported knowledge of historic prostitution in five of their clients. Considering our estimations of numbers involved and the high incidence of violence and sexual violence, these numbers are indicative of a need which is not being fulfilled.

Box 3.4 Case study two

Jude* is in her early 40s and has been involved in prostitution since she was 18 years old. She is a heavy poly drug user and uses heroin, benzodiazepines and crack. She has a number of theft-related offences, including burglary, assault and loitering offences. She served a two year custodial sentence recently for aggravated burglary.

She grew up in a family where there was domestic violence which resulted in her mother and father separating. She was sexually abused by her step-father when she was a child.

Jude has two daughters, aged 23 and 19 years old. The oldest was brought up by Jude's mother and she is reported to be doing well, with a child of her own. The younger child spent more time with Jude when she was growing up and is now also using substances and involved in prostitution.

All of Jude's relationships with men are characterised by domestic violence and she is described as "*bouncing from one poor relationship to another*". Jude was a poor tenant and no housing department would give her a tenancy. Probation managed to get her a flat and put in a package of support, but this broke down and she would not engage. Now Jude is in poor B&B accommodation, where it was said "*I wouldn't put a dog in there*".

After a recent prison sentence for a theft related offence, Jude was clean from substances and she was very motivated to change. She completed hairdressing qualifications and started a placement. However, she became drawn back into the substance-using community and is now back on the street involved in prostitution. She works on the street a couple of times a week and is said by her Probation Officer to be ashamed of what she does.

She is described by her Probation Officer to be intelligent, kindhearted and looks very respectable. However, she is also reported to have very low self esteem with feelings that she deserves her situation. She refuses to engage with any agencies.

*Not her real name.

3.5 Children

Many of the women involved in prostitution had children who had been removed or who were in kinship care. It was a common element in the reporting of cases, for example:

- 27 year old female, boyfriend acts as her pimp, history of sexual abuse, two children in care, addicted to glue & gas, has a current loitering and shoplifting offence.
- 24 year old female, addicted to crack and heroin. Has a community order for a theft (shoplifting) offence, has a partner and child but child lives with grandmother. Known history of prostitution. Works from her house.

Of the women involved in survival sex, whose situations regarding children were known about in all four local authority areas, over half (n=61) were known to have children. In almost all of these cases (n=60), the children were not in the care of the women involved. One agency reported *“the women who we know are working girls ... all of them have had their children removed”*.

A recent local study in Stockton into prostitution (Massam and Evans, 2012) found that, of the 12 prolific women involved in prostitution, two thirds had children. Of these, 37 percent of the children live with grandparents, 25 percent of the children have been adopted, 25 percent are currently involved in social care proceedings and 13 percent are in foster care with no parental contact. The author’s stated that the ‘likelihood of [the women] maintaining care for any additional children, if lifestyle issues weren’t addressed would be questionable’ (Massam and Evans, 2012, page 15). The report also noted that during a 12 month project period, 25 percent of the women were pregnant and a number of women thought at some point that they might be.

3.6 Learning difficulties

Similar to other areas, there were a number of reports (n=13) of people involved who had learning difficulties.

Examples of reports include:

- Female, late teens, learning difficulties, pimped by boyfriend, addicted to heroin and benzodiazepines staying in flat referred into service by Probation.
- 30 year old female with learning difficulties, exploited by different pizza delivery drivers, exchanging food for sex. The case was reported to Vulnerable Adults but the female did not fit the criteria for support.
- 2011, female in her 50s with learning difficulties, was sexually exploited when young and continues to be exploited by a male in his 50s.
- Female early 30s, "*with a baby face*", learning difficulties, heroin addict. Pimped by boyfriend using own premises.
- Female with learning disabilities, aged 27, smokes heroin, involved in prostitution since 13 years old, from Middlesbrough, started being involved in street prostitution. Her partner is an ex-punter and is 56 years old. She has regulars, many of whom are older in their 70s and also will sometimes work at night outside a pub. Works from home. She also sometimes works while caravanning. She does not use a condom with regulars. She will work with another woman who is involved in prostitution if there are a number of men. She can make £700 a week and she has had 15 clients in one day.

3.7 Debt

Debt was a consistent theme that was reported as the cause of many women's involvement in prostitution. Debts were found in many different areas, from debts incurred through routine living (for example, children's clothes, utility and food bills). A particular problem was drug debt and what is known as *double bubble*. This repayment, is twice what was originally borrowed and can get women into impossible debt situations, which forces further prostitution.

We came across several examples of responses to debt, including:

- Female 35 years, spent eight years working on the street, heroin addict, had children removed, got her life together, house, then she had been overpaid her Working Tax Credit and returned to prostitution to pay off the debt and now she is back on heroin and her life is a mess.
- 42 year old female from Hartlepool, ex-street worker, mental health problems of bipolar and depression, addicted to benzos, tablets and ex-heroin, had a child who was being looked after by her mother. She worked up drug and housing debts and returned to prostitution to pay off those debts.
- A homeless provider reported female tenants who had very little money and resources and for whom prostitution was there only means of earning money. They report "*they're almost forced into it [prostitution] ... it's the only way they have of making money, of getting anything, food ... and if you've got a drug problem then you've got to do it*". They gave the following example, "*there was one woman who was homeless because of debt, she'd been evicted because she couldn't pay the rent, she'd had catalogues who'd take their money every fortnight, she had no money even for a McDonald's to take her kids [who were being looked after but she could see them] ... she just used to sit and cry*".

It was felt by many agencies interviewed that prevalence and involvement in prostitution would only increase because of the current economic climate and the changes to the welfare system.

The issue of debt reinforces the difficulty of exiting prostitution for many women, i.e. women can work really hard to stay clean and not sell sex but if they run into new debts or problems its very easy to slip back. This is reinforced by the experiences of support projects, such as the Changing Lives GAP project and A Way Out's Women's Outreach Service.

Box 3.5 Case study three

Maria is 35 years old and has been involved in prostitution since she was an early teenager. Her offences include a range of theft related offences, GBH and loitering offences. She is a heroin and crack user and has been since she her early teens. Maria grew up as part of a normal middle class family in a nice area. However, as a child she was a victim of abuse perpetrated by a family member, leading to family breakdown and separation.

Maria has been using alcohol and substances since she was 13. When she was 15 years old she met a much older man, Johnny, who was reported to have groomed her with drink and drugs and they started a sexual relationship. Johnny was a convicted Child Sex Offender. Maria would also exchange sex for alcohol with other men.

Maria sells sex along different street locations in Middlesbrough and Stockton. She has also set up a website. She is reported to stay with her current partner while he can afford her drugs and engages in prostitution if they cannot. She has been a victim of numerous rapes and violent attacks although no prosecutions have ever taken place.

There have been attempts from Maria's family at helping her with her addictions and with prostitution. Some of her family live overseas and they have taken her away to try and rehabilitate her but this not been successful. Her mother takes Maria's situation very personally although the family work that Probation has attempted has not worked. Maria is described as having no stability, as quite a predatory individual and the only stable person in her life is her Probation Officer.

*Not her real name.

3.8 Organisation, pimps and other associations

There was limited evidence of organised sex markets, i.e. control and management by individuals or groups. There were a few reports of well known local 'gangsters' who acted as pimps for small numbers of women. For example, one agency said "*there's a well known Asian man who pimps girls ... he is a drug dealer, a violent gangster, a rapist ... he supplies heroin to the girls, gets them hooked, beats them up*". There were some unsubstantiated reports of Eastern Europeans pimping women to other Eastern Europeans.

There were a number of reports about male partners or 'boyfriends' who would act as a woman's *defacto* pimp, for example, be complicit or encourage them in their involvement in prostitution, make sure they were 'safe', wait for them during, sometimes arrange for punters. There were also a number of reports of women who would engage in prostitution in order to earn enough money to fund both drug habits. As one interviewee said "*it seems like an accepted way to fund both habits*". There were even reports of women who were on a methadone programme and stable in their drug use, engaging in prostitution to fund their boyfriend's drug abuse. For example, one agency reported, "*a woman works everyday to fund hers and her boyfriend's crack habit and pills*". Many male Probation clients are reported to have girlfriends who are involved in prostitution.

Most women however, controlled their own involvement in prostitution, either through working on the street on their own, or working through their mobile phones. Mobiles were particularly used to arrange work with regular punters. It is unknown who controls women working through the Internet although it is suspected that these people also control their own involvement in prostitution as there are no escort agencies in Teesside (the escort agencies who advertise Teesside women cover the North East and many are based in Newcastle).

Regular punters

Regular punters were found to play a significant role in women's lives. These include:

- **Minimum subsistence function:** when Police activity becomes too intense and they must move off the street, women may only see their regulars and thus they play a role of 'ensuring a minimum subsistence'.
- **Preventing complete exits:** regular punters represent a relatively safe and consistent earning function; when all other income earning opportunities are unavailable, regular punters can be relied upon. As most prostitution is connected to substance misuse (and much of this is heroin), earning and substance use are strongly connected. It is reported to be very difficult for women to 'lose' their regular punters, even when substance use has stopped or is medicated (through substitute prescribing) as it represents a finality to their substance use. Women historically involved in prostitution reported "*it was one of the hardest*

things, deleting my regular punters off my phone ... they were like a safety net".

- **Providing safe earnings:** there was perceived to be low risk of harm from regular punters and as such were considered to be safe clients. Some women were reported to have good relationships with some of their regular punters. Indeed, it has been identified by another local study that 'nice punters' made women involved feel happy⁹.

Difficulty of exit

It was reported by both agencies and women who had exited that exiting prostitution is very difficult. This is a result of many factors, including the issue of regular punters and accessing money.

"It's almost like women are forced into prostitution ... there's a limit to how long you can shoplift for before you get barred from every shop in town, or you rack up the fines ... so if you want to pay the fines or more likely need money for heroin, you are forced to prostitute yourself". Another agency reported of one of their clients *"her current offence is theft, she shoplifts to get away from prostitution, her partner also shoplifts to fund his habit"*.

Exiting is of course intrinsically linked to drug addiction, as much of involvement in prostitution is to earn money for substances. As one interviewee reported, *"women get involved because of drugs, if they weren't addicted then they wouldn't do it, so you got to get them clean or at least into treatment before you can expect them to stop working"*.

It was pointed out that the recovery process is mirrored in levels of involvement in prostitution. For example, one agency reported *"so you relapse into drugs and you relapse into prostitution, women go back to it when they go back on the gear ... recovery from addiction takes a long time, it comes and goes, you relapse and get clean"*.

It was also reported that there is the additional difficulty of *"getting clean and getting straight and thinking about what you've been doing ... sometimes that's the hardest part and it stops people getting clean"*.

⁹ Hidden for Survival: Peer Research into the Lives of Sex Workers within Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland, South Tyneside and North Tyneside, 2007, the Voices Heard Group, Tyneside Cyrenians and Counted 4.

3.9 Purchasers

The question about the characteristics and nature of the purchasers of sex was consistently asked across the four study areas. It has not been possible to attribute numbers to categories of purchasers as respondents were not able to provide numerical estimations. The responses can be categorised into the following areas:

- **Drug dealers:** women directly exchanged sex for drugs with dealers; exchanged sex with them to partially pay off a drug debt or pay 'interest' ("*double bubble*" was referred to on several occasions as being a means by which women become involved in prostitution).
- **Peers or associates:** women were reported to partner themselves with their peers or associates in the drug using community in order to attempt to guarantee a drug supply for themselves. Women were reported to go from person to person depending on who could provide the best supply. This related to other drug users or those that could supply them with a source of money in order to purchase drugs. The latter were reported to consider themselves as boyfriends of those involved but when they could no longer supply money or drugs or refused to, women would return to prostitution, often street based. There were a number of reports about the association of older males with women involved in prostitution.
- **Professional people:** these were those who would purchase sex from the street. There were a number of reports of them being "*clean, respectable, professional people*". There were reports of pharmacists, solicitors (including a judge) and a number of taxi drivers. Cleveland Police's kerb crawler list, which they have kept since 2008, has a total of 210 individuals. Most of these are from Teesside but do include men from Durham and Darlington. Certain agencies reported a high number of Asian taxi drivers who purchased sex sold on the street. Police data show that 23 percent (n=49) of kerb crawlers on their list are Asian.
- **Sex offenders:** there were many reports (n=23) of the association of women involved in prostitution and sex offenders.

Associations with older males

There were many reports of associations between older men and women involved in prostitution. The men in their 50s to 70s are not drug users themselves but supply women with drugs or with money to buy drugs. They will have women stay with them, take them to their appointments and sometimes be referred to as their 'uncles'. Some of these men were reported to be sex offenders.

In Redcar and Cleveland, it was reported that there was an area with a number of B&Bs, where there was known to be a concentration of sex offenders. It was reported that sex offenders would network whilst in custody, in HMP Holme House, which led to them being in that area. There were connections reported between women known to be involved in prostitution and men who stayed in the B&Bs in this area.

In 2012, there was a man of 75 years old, described as being 'highly sexual', staying at a B&B. He was reported to "*use sex workers every day*", often in public, in the car park. He has past sex offences including offences against animals.

One agency worked with a man in his early 20s, sexually exploited by older men in their 50s and 60s, in Middlesbrough and Newcastle in bars and clubs. Sex was exchanged for alcohol, money and 'favour'. He has now been hospitalised because of poor mental health.

There were other reports of women who targeted older men, often to steal from and/or use sex in exchange for accommodation or other material goods. For example, there were reports of an alcoholic 22 year old female living in Redcar. She would exchange sex for accommodation and alcohol with a significantly older male in his 60s. She had a long history of abuse and was both a victim and perpetrator of domestic violence. Her mother was also an alcoholic and had died as a result of an assault by her daughter and alcoholism complications.

Other examples include:

- 22 year old female from Redcar who had been involved in prostitution since she was 15 years old. It was reported that "*sex was the only tool she has ... she uses sex to survive*". It was known she had been in a relationship with a man in his 50s and had recently been sectioned.
- 19 year old female who alternates between living in Redcar and Middlesbrough. She was known to be engaged in prostitution since she was 15 years old. She was known to have grown up in a dysfunctional household. She would "*sleep with anyone for alcohol*". Currently she was living with a significantly older man exchanging sex for alcohol and accommodation.
- Female in her mid 20s who had a relationship with an older man. He was described as "*wealthy, living out in the country*"; it was suspected that he started out as punter but became a more stable partner. She was reported to have started the relationship with him in her late teens.

3.10 Perpetrator/victim

There were a number of reports from agencies interviewed about women involved in prostitution being both a victim of crime and a perpetrator. There was a range of crimes associated with those involved ranging from high numbers of acquisitive crimes to violent crimes, coercion and even kidnap. One agency encapsulated this when commenting "*they're both victim and perpetrator ... the boundaries get so blurred, they're so damaged and maybe because of that, they do so much damage to themselves and to others*".

Examples of this include:

- In 2012, there was one case of a man with mental health problems with an offence of child sexual assault, who would be targeted by two women involved in prostitution. They would have sex with him two or three times a week and charge him £20. It was reported that he did not want to engage in sex with the women but felt pressured to do so.
- There were reports about male asylum seekers living in residential areas being approached by women involved in prostitution who were causing nuisance. For example, one agency reported "*we had a few Zimbabwean men living on Union Street who were complaining that they kept getting approached by prostitutes asking them if they wanted any business ... they got quite upset about that and it was happening often*".
- Female aged 18 years from Redcar, long "*sordid*" history despite young age. Targets elderly men, willingly goes to men's houses for sex then calls the police when things are not going her way. She was reported to exchange sex for accommodation, money and gifts.
- Female aged 18. Known to services because of history of bullying/coercing school girls into sex. Very dysfunctional upbringing, targeted man with learning difficulties with another girl after a night out in Middlesbrough. Man blew whistle on what the girls were up to, girls beat him up and set fire to his flat (which was part of secure accommodation/housing plot).
- Female in her 30s targets older "*vulnerable*" men, goes round knocking on houses of men asking to use toilet, then uses opportunity to steal from them. Sometimes exchanges sex before stealing from them. Her mother introduced her to prostitution.
- Female, 29 years old, involved in prostitution since 14 years old. Exchanging sex for accommodation, prescription meds (orimorph) and other resources with a terminally ill man. She had been charged with attempted poisoning but was cleared.

Offending behaviour

Aside from the obvious connections to offending associated with prostitution, for example, loitering and soliciting, there were strong connections between women involved in prostitution and offending.

People identified during the research had a number of offences associated with them, most of them either acquisitive or violent crime. The most common

offence was shop lifting, followed by burglary, robbery and assault. Most offences were related to the need to fund their substance misuse. For example, one service illustrated *“they go from rattling, to working, to getting high, to rattling, to shop lifting, to getting arrested ... it’s a total cycle”*.

A considerable amount of the evidence for this study was provided by criminal justice agencies, including the Police and Probation. Many of the women involved were being supervised by the Probation Service as a condition of either their custodial or their community sentence.

For example, reports were given on the following people:

- ‘Female aged 28, repeat offender, shop theft, soliciting, heroin addict, had a child taken into care’.
- ‘Female aged 24, on community order for assault, prolific offender, offences include theft, soliciting and robbery’.
- ‘Female, 32 years old, on order for acquisitive crime, has had periods in prison, gets clean, she comes out and uses again, gets caught and goes back again’.

In relation to prostitution however, most agencies felt that women involved were treated as perpetrators/defendants and not victims. Where courts fined them for prostitution-related offences, they were forced into more prostitution to pay their fines. As one agency commented *“women are caught, fined and discharged ... then they have to work again to pay the fine”*.

3.11 Health

The health of those involved in prostitution, particularly in survival sex, was reported to be very poor. There were a range of health risks, from those associated with sexual intercourse, such as hepatitis (but not reported to be HIV), to those associated with substance misuse, like drug overdose. There were also the health risks of mental health disorders, very poor physical health, risks of assault and physical trauma.

Examples of health risks and conditions amongst women involved in prostitution given by a medical agency included:

“Female in an abusive relationship as both a victim and a perpetrator, suffered sexual abuse as a child, sniffs gas and drinks alcohol, considered to be at a very high risk of death”.

“Client is 31 years old, learning difficulties and very challenging behaviour, alcoholic and intravenous heroin user, poor physical and mental health, epilepsy, asthma and depression, three children adopted”.

“Female aged 28 years, street sex worker, poor mental health and self harms”; and “33 year old, sex works from home, two children adopted, heroin and tablet use, poor physical and mental health, has leg ulcers and depression”.

The other studies in this series interviewed health professionals from sexual health and GUM services, who provided important information. It has not been possible in this study, despite having all the required permissions from NHS bodies. The reason for this was the transfer of provider, from the NHS to the private provider, Virgin Care. Despite following up repeatedly with Virgin Care, they were unable to provide the researchers with access to those health professionals.

3.12 Engagement with services

A central method employed by this study was to identify women through local services. Therefore, people identified were by definition known to services. However, the levels of engagement of those identified varies considerably, ranging from people who have been identified through outreach services, approached and offered support but who have not engaged, to women who engage with substance misuse services as a condition of a community sentence imposed by the courts, to women who engage fully with support services.

A recent local study in Stockton (Massam and Evans, 2012) found that most of the women involved were not new to services; some women have been involved in drug services since they were 13 years old and have received numerous interventions over the years.

It is common for women involved in services to dip in and out of services on a regular, occasional or sporadic basis. An important ingredient of support projects for those involved in prostitution is to have an open door policy and never fully close client cases.

3.13 The experiences of services

The experience of services varies considerably across Teesside, with some agencies having in-depth knowledge as they are set-up to work specifically with people involved in prostitution. Other agencies' knowledge varies from considerable, for example, drug and alcohol treatment services, to limited, such as services for asylum seekers and refugees.

It was generally recognised that people involved in prostitution were very difficult to work with. Most of them were reported: *"to have serious trust issues", "to be very damaged individuals", "nightmares to work with" and "you just can't tell with them where you're at"*. Others said that *"these clients are hard enough to work with full stop, let alone talking to them about their sex work"*. Several agencies felt a certain pressure when working with people involved in prostitution as they can need a disproportionate amount of support compared to other people on their caseloads. As one agency reported *"you can spend ages and ages working with them, but you don't seem to make any progress or they make progress and slip right back, relapsing, going on the game again ... meanwhile you got your other clients who deserve the time with them too"*.

There was a considerable difference in the experience of agencies within Middlesbrough and Stockton and Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland. Agencies in the former two generally had significantly more knowledge than those in the latter areas. Indeed, there were a series of agencies in Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland who felt that prostitution in the localities was ignored and overlooked because of the strength of the markets in Middlesbrough and Stockton.

In those areas, many agencies felt that prostitution was still a taboo subject and workers found it difficult to broach the subject with their clients or service users. For example, one respondent said *"it's like professionals are too nervous or embarrassed to ask people if they are involved [in prostitution]"*. Indeed, in those areas it was reported that *"there is nothing that caters for sex workers here ... It needs to be more noted"*.

In Middlesbrough, the service landscape is heavily influenced by the presence of Barnardo's Secos, who provide services for both adults and children. Secos which has a very good reputation amongst local agencies, provides training and a referral destination. In Stockton, A Way Out provide a similar if less developed role. The presence of Secos and to a lesser extent A Way Out, was felt to be both an advantage and disadvantage. As one organisation explained to be *"a blessing and a curse ... agencies just make a referral and forget about them, like it's not their business to do anything ... and if they don't engage with Secos, then nothing gets done with them"*.

Training

Many agencies working in Middlesbrough and Stockton felt sufficiently skilled to be able to work with those involved in prostitution. Many staff from agencies

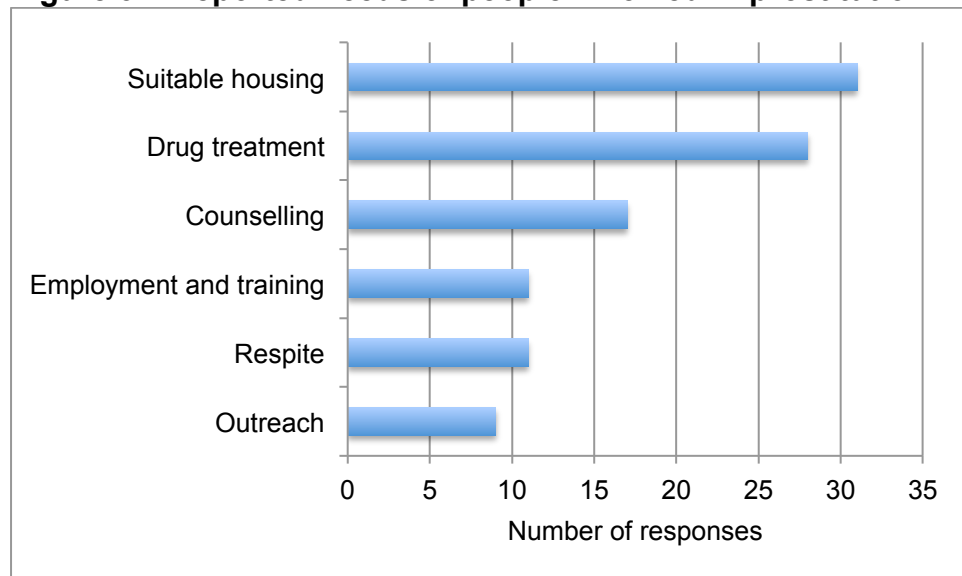
had accessed the training provided by Secos on working with women involved in prostitution and almost all gave very positive responses about that training. There were some reports that the adult training delivered by Secos, although good, was difficult to access (i.e. infrequent and over-subscribed).

Agencies in the other local authority areas were less likely to feel sufficiently skilled to be able to support those involved and more likely to want training.

Identified needs

Agencies were asked about the support needs of women involved in prostitution. The biggest response was suitable housing (this was particularly expressed in Stockton where it was felt there was very little suitable hostel or other accommodation for women). There were also other needs including drug treatment services, counselling, respite and employment and training.

Figure 3.2 Reported needs of people involved in prostitution



4.0 Key findings

This study makes a series of key findings:

- Prostitution takes place across all four local authority areas, with the highest numbers in Middlesbrough and Stockton. There are local differences including on-street sex markets in Middlesbrough and Stockton and off-street markets in all areas.
- There is both male and female prostitution in all local authority areas: there are more women involved in survival sex than in commercial prostitution (n=268 and 221 respectively); there are more men involved in commercial prostitution compared to survival sex (n=107 and 35 respectively).
- There are different age profiles of women involved: younger women tend to be involved in commercial prostitution (most within the 18 to 25 age bracket); and older women tend to be involved in survival sex (most within the 26 to 35 age range). There are no significant differences in male age patterns.
- Most survival sex is linked to substance abuse. Patterns of abuse (i.e. decline or increase usage) across Teesside are mostly unchanged since 2006 (there may be a small increase in usage).
- The most prominent themes associated with prostitution are: substance misuse; the experience of violence; poor accommodation or homelessness; poor health; removal of children into care; and debt.
- Many of those involved in survival sex started when they were below the age of 16.
- It is difficult to exit prostitution, with the influencing factors being: addictions; lack of money earning potential and debt; regular punters; partners/pimps; and poor accommodation (often with partners/pimps).
- The strongest service need for women involved in prostitution is suitable accommodation, followed by drug treatment, counselling and employment and training.
- There is a core of knowledge around Middlesbrough and Stockton about working with people involved in prostitution, although there are some inconsistencies with coverage and access of training. There are training gaps in Redcar and Cleveland and Hartlepool.
- Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) have worked with only small numbers of women involved in prostitution. In the last six years, they have provided support to 10 women; five on these in the last year and these were women who had exited. In comparison to the incidence and

themes presented in this report, these numbers are very low in relation to need.

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