

Policing Sex Work on Merseyside – Hate Crime Approach

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Policing Sex Work on Merseyside – Hate Crime

- 2006: then Chief Constable Hogan-Howe made a decision that crimes against sex workers should be dealt with as Hate Crime
- Recognition of vulnerabilities & targeted victimisation re: sexual / violent & other crimes
- Beyond enforcement to protection approach
- Assessing THR and legal framework
- ‘Merseyside Model’ Good practice in national guidance (Home Office 2011, CPS 2012, NPCC 2011 2015).



Policing Sex work on Merseyside – Hate Crime

- Partnership work - 1st Sex Work Independent Sexual violence advisor (SW ISVA)
- Hate Crime approach
- Public protection ethos -address vulnerabilities and treat sex workers as victims of sexual / violent crimes
- Enforcement alone approach reviewed
- Target perpetrators of violence against sex workers by increased reporting / intelligence
- Increase in convictions for perpetrators of violence
- Media messages & publicising prosecutions
- Strategic enforcement & intelligence lead policing



Outcomes and good practice (Campbell, 2014)

- 400% increase in “Ugly Mugs” reports to police (from 2005 to 2009)
- Improved relations between police & sex work community
- Increase in convictions for perpetrators of violence: N=36 cases to court 2006-2013
- Conviction rate for crimes against sex workers in Merseyside, reported to police making it to court from 2007 to June 2011 - 83%
- Conviction rate for cases involving rape and sexual offences for same period - 75%
- 150 years+ for crimes against sex workers



Policing Sex Work on Merseyside – Red Umbrella

- Early intervention and support through a sustainable multi-agency approach with local knowledge and interest in the community
- Protection and support for sex workers, gather intelligence, increase reporting for law enforcement to pursue and prosecute perpetrators of crimes against sex workers
- Keep victims safe
- A locally led, holistic, victim focused service responsive to the needs of sex workers across all sectors, who are victims, or at risk of sexual and / or domestic violence and abuse and / or exploitation and human trafficking.
- Dedicated police sex worker liaison officer



Policing Sex Work on Merseyside

Dedicated Sex Worker Liaison Officer

- The focus of SWLO roles should always be on vulnerability rather than enforcement. The SWLO role should include:
- Investigating or supporting investigation of crimes against those who sex work, overseeing intelligence pertaining to sex work and monitoring crime patterns
- Engaging proactively with sex workers in a range of settings (street, indoor, online) to build trust and increase/improve reporting
- Acting as a hub for liaison work, co-ordinating responses to sex work-related incidents, ensuring sex worker voices are heard
- Sustained community relations and development work with partner agencies



Policing Sex Work on Merseyside

Dedicated Sex Worker Liaison Officer Cont/d...

- Advising in-force on responses to sex work-related incidents in line with Authorised Professional Practice (APP).
- Ensuring effective monitoring of reporting of crimes against sex workers; including direct reports and reports via the National Ugly Mugs (NUM) report scheme
- Working closely with colleagues involved in responding to Modern Slavery, exploitation and other relevant departments such as Intelligence teams
- Leading targeted outreach and engagement in places where sex workers may be at higher risk of exploitation and harm



Policing Sex Work as Hate Crime

- Chief Constable / Chief Officer approval & PCC priorities
- Hate crime policy (local and national)
- Governance & performance – Vulnerability Portfolio
- Education and enhanced training (Call takers / hate deployment / referrals to services)
- Media and Marketing
- Dedicated Sex Worker liaison officer & SPOCS
- Partnerships / ISVA
- CPS – aggravating features
- NPCC guidance – 5 principles



Policing Sex Work on Merseyside

Current position;

- Post Covid 19
- Sexual Violence – local & national picture
- NPCC (National Police Chief Council) lead
- Red Umbrella – sustainability and growth
- Partnerships



Policing Sex Work on Merseyside

Hate Crime – Why?

- Treat sex workers as victims – not as offenders
- Sex workers as good witness / victims
- Hate Crime approach – police policy
- CJS - not policy / uplift in sentencing powers (agg features)
- Symbolic – message to victims, perpetrators and society and acknowledges the harm and supports that victims warrant protection (Corteen, 2018)

