



Worth Less or Worth More?

An Evaluation of the Maze Marigold Project

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1. Introduction

This report brings together the findings of the recent evaluation¹ of the Maze Marigold Project, undertaken by the Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit (CWASU) at the University of North London.

The Maze Project, as it was originally known, was established by the YWCA in 1989 as a drug education and prevention project. By 1995 the project moved further into work with young women in prostitution, as a result of growing referrals from this client group alongside internal recognition that this was a population, which urgently needed help. The project's name was changed to the Maze Marigold Project to reflect this change, which was supported by the YWCA.

The YWCA commissioned the evaluation at the request of the project's core funders. CWASU has a national and international reputation for its research, training and consultancy in the fields of child and woman abuse, and has completed over 25 projects. We also have significant expertise in evaluation². Publication of the report has been sponsored by the YWCA, our joint hope is that the innovative practice of the Maze, and the perspectives of the women who use it can inform policy debates and practice with respect to prostitution.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation was undertaken as a co-operative venture between the Maze and CWASU, an essential link given the minimal funding that was available. The agreed aims of the research were:

- to assess progress/performance of the project against its stated values, aims and objectives;
- to reflect on potentials for future development.

The financial constraints mean this report should not be read as a complete evaluation. Decisions had to be taken about which data to prioritise, and the experiences and opinions of service users were considered the most essential to assessing the extent to which the Maze was meeting its own aims and objectives. Whilst we have used multiple methodological framework, in order to triangulate findings, some sources of data were not examined. In particular, resources did not permit: examination of the project records; interviews with community and agency partners; observation of meetings and analysis of internal decision-making and structures.

That said, however, a considerable amount of data was collected and analysed using: non-participant observation; analysis of secondary data; semi-structured one-to-one and group interviews with service users, project volunteers, paid workers and inter-agency team members. The data are outlined in more detail in the following paragraphs.

The non-participant observation included: spending one seven hour evening outreach session with the project workers (over 40 women made contact that evening); spending several days in the project office; and attending a performance of a play in a local school. Lengthy formal interviews were done with the two project workers, three service users, and a focus group held with three project volunteers. More informal conversations took place with a further 14 service users, and parts of these were immediately transcribed as field notes.

Service users were asked about: how their contact the Maze began and developed; what kinds of contact they have now, and what services they make use of; their assessment of the project services;

¹ The data were collected in 2000/2001.

² For details of all CWASU research and publications, see www.cwasu.org.

how, if at all, the project had helped them; routes into, and realities of, prostitution, including their everyday coping strategies; change for themselves and for the project. For the project staff and volunteers themes were: contact with the project; their work; what, if anything, was different about this project; unmet needs and future development; the impacts of the work on them; why women enter prostitution and what keeps them there. These questions were supplemented for the project workers with: the origin, aims and development of the Maze; links with other organisations; and issues about structure and management.

We have also sought to locate the work of the Maze in the current national policy context.³

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Throughout this report we use the word prostitution rather than 'sex work', and women working in prostitution rather than 'sex workers'. In so doing we follow the practice of the Maze Marigold project itself, but are also seek to highlight that prostitution is an institution within which women are sexually exploited and where their human rights are all too often violated.

Aims and Objectives of the project

The Maze Marigold Project re-launched itself in 1995 with a new set of aims and objectives. It is these that were used as the basis of the evaluation.

The Marigold Project aims to work with young women, most of whom are under 18 and still children, who are working as sex workers on the streets of Spitalfields. The majority are involved in the trade not only to support their drug habit, but their boyfriends (pimps) as well. Research undertaken by the Maze also indicates that these women are severely disadvantaged. Many of them are care leavers, have absconded from care and are more often than not homeless. Some have also left home because of severe physical, sexual and emotional abuse by their families. They have nowhere else to go and are extremely vulnerable. The Marigold Project takes a holistic approach to its work with this group of young women and aims not only to support them to come off drugs, but to help them to re-establish their lives away from the streets. Objectives include:

- *providing drug education and prevention information and advice to enable these young women to make informed choices about their lives;*
- *persuading young women away from the streets before they become addicted to the life;*
- *providing these young women with the opportunity to make positive changes to their lives through individual support, counselling and information and advice;*
- *assisting homeless young women to find suitable accommodation, short term and long-term;*
- *advice around sexually transmitted diseases and counselling for young women who may have encountered violence and/or rape;*
- *providing a positive link between the young women and other agencies in the area such as social services and the police.*

Brief description of the Maze Marigold project

The Maze Marigold project has two full time workers – a project manager and a project worker. At the time of the evaluation there was also an administrator and a part-time detached drugs worker. The number of volunteers fluctuates, but at the time of the evaluation there were six regulars who went out in the van at least once a fortnight. The Maze works out of a large open plan office (and a small room for private one to one sessions), in a building housing other voluntary sector groups.

³ This section of the report (Section 2) was updated in 2003 by Val Balding.

The work of the project this comprises:

- Two evening outreach sessions of seven hours per week, 52 weeks a year. One of these sessions uses the van belonging to the Dellow Centre, the other a private car belonging to one of the project workers.
- An open drop-in at the project office for all the hours it is open.
- A 24 hour, 52 week a year helpline, via a mobile phone held by the project workers

This flexible and fluid way of working, including taking services to where women are, echoes recommended best practice in work with women in prostitution (FRANKI, 1999). For groups that are not only socially excluded and stigmatised, but also have complex and chaotic lifestyles, conventional ways of working have proved inappropriate and ineffective.

The project keeps records on the number of contacts that are made, rather than the number of individual women they work with. On average each evening session involves contact with 32 women, at least some of whom will not have had previous contact with the project. The research that the Maze did themselves in 1999 involved interviews with 100 women that they were currently working with. This is an extremely large 'case load' for a small, relatively poorly resourced project. It is even more impressive when one takes into account that this is considered a 'hard to reach' client group, members of which experience frequent crises.

One particularly innovative element of the Maze's work is the link they have developed with the University of Wales, to enable their service users to move into education and training. Women who want to become a volunteer for the Maze, are then able to register for *A Certificate in Interpersonal Skills for Volunteers*. This is a modular distance learning course which can be taken singly or as part of a degree by the University of Wales that requires written work and work experience. As responses from service users will illustrate this has given a number of women both confidence and a sense of other possibilities, and many of those enrolled come to the project office in order to use the computer to complete their course work.

2. Background: Policy, Contexts and Agendas

The Maze project has developed against a background of social concern about drugs, homelessness and the spread of HIV. These public policy agendas informed the project's inception, during a period in which a plethora of initiatives in these fields were established, as government sought to find ways to manage the spread of the HIV virus and to respond to public concern around drugs. The Maze was one drugs project of many, and yet it was different from the start. A project which saw itself as having its origins in radical community work, the Maze never restricted itself to a public health agenda that focused on managing the 'problem': they were interested in changing lives. The Marigold work began with a statement of intent to persuade women to leave prostitution – extraordinary in a context that emphasised issues of information and choice in relation to both prostitution and drugs.

The Maze's own immediate context is the YWCA⁴. The YWCA was set up with an explicit aim of serving the community, particularly women and young people. Its intention was to promote 'community spirit', encouraging the development of community groups and enabling the formation of new groups and low cost community facilities. In the last six years a process of transformation has been taking place within the YWCA, modernising its image and role, and adopting a more proactive stance on

⁴ The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), founded in 1855, is the largest women's organisation in the world, currently working in 100 countries. Its programmes are developed as a practical response to local needs and in the UK has historically concentrated on providing hostels, clubs and community centres.

social justice and young women's welfare. As one element in this process, in the late 1990s the YWCA spearheaded a high profile campaign on violence against women, particularly highlighting young women's safety (See YWCA Annual Reports for 1998 and 1999). The growth of the Marigold work dovetailed with the YWCA's own refocusing on being an agency for social change. This has provided the project with a supportive base that encouraged rather than stifled innovation.

The Maze Marigold work is based in Shoreditch and Bethnal Green, in East London. A picture of the area, is provided in the project's research report *The Youngest Females in the Oldest Oppression* (1999), highlighting the significance of its history, its contradictions and the impact of recent developments.

The area where the women work today is notorious and many books have been written about it. In 1888, Jack the Ripper made the area famous and the fame has remained to the present day. There are three tour operators who bring at least six tour groups around the area every week. They each visit the streets where Jack the Ripper killed his victims. There is a pub called the Ten Bells where the tour groups go for refreshments. On the walls are the dates and the pictures of the women who have been murdered. The pub sells T-shirts and teapots illustrating the events. One working woman was asked if she would pose for a picture because she was standing on the spot where one of the murders had been committed.

The area... has been targeted for regeneration with new housing developments springing up and old warehouses being converted into flats. A one bedroom flat in a converted warehouse costs around £250 000. However, close by there is also very poor housing infested with rats; the rats can be seen running around the areas where the young women work. This is an area where the very rich and the very poor live side by side.

Regeneration has affected the locations of street prostitution as the old warehouses give way to new residential development. In effect, the residential areas are closing in on the women, with new residents making complaints to the police. As a result of new and existing complaints, there are now a lot of vice and police patrols in the area.

The Maze began the 'Marigold' work in a changing environment, in which a new language and new policy agenda - 'joined up thinking' - were emerging. The Marigold project arose out of an inspired realisation of the links between key social concerns: child abuse, homelessness, prostitution and drugs. This represents a joined up understanding of issues, which a step on from the governmental perspective which focuses more responses. Central to the Maze's success is an approach to working with young women as whole persons, rather than as a collection of problems. This approach has been echoed in subsequent government policy on a number of areas, including: child prostitution; rough sleeping and supported housing; violence against women; drugs education and crime.

Changing perspectives on young women and prostitution

Sara Swann, whilst working for the children's charity Barnardo's established the first contemporary UK project for girls and young women at risk of, or involved in, prostitution⁵. Drawing on the experiential knowledge that the *Streets and Lanes Project* generated, she identified four stages of sexual exploitation: ensnarement, creating dependency, taking control and total dominance (Swann, 1998). Taking her analysis further, she fundamentally challenged taken for granted language and concepts. Once young women have been prostituted they are trapped in what Swann calls 'the abuse triangle': which encompasses the young woman herself, her exploiter and prostitute users. Rather than classify children and young people involved in prostitution as 'child/juvenile prostitutes', Swann insisted they

⁵ Considerable 'rescue' work was undertaken in the 19th and early 20th centuries by philanthropic groups, but the work declined markedly during modern era.

were seen, and most importantly treated, as 'abused children'. Similarly, those who procure were not 'pimps' or boyfriends but 'abusing adults' and the men who paid for sex with minors were not 'punters' but 'child sex offenders'. This ground-breaking analysis chimed with an increasing recognition of child prostitution as a form of sexual abuse within the children's charity sector as a whole (see Ayre and Barrett 2000; Kelly and Regan, 2000).

The co-ordinated advocacy of the children's charities, combined with an increasing international and European focus on sexual exploitation of children (see Kelly and Regan, 2000) resulted in government action. In May 2000 the Department of Health and the Home Office issued a joint publication *Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution*, as supplementary guidance to the current child protection framework. The guidance must be complied with unless there are agreed local circumstances that require an exception to be made. One key element was the replacement of Home Office Circular 109/59; meaning that young people (those under 18) will no longer receive a 'prostitute caution' and should be dealt with under the Crime and Disorder Act, 1998 through reprimands and final warnings as with other juvenile offenders. This move, reflected the widening understanding that children involved in prostitution are victims rather than perpetrators of crimes.

The initial presumption should always be that a boy or girl is not soliciting voluntarily. Police would not normally take criminal justice action unless there had been interagency discussion to consider the full circumstances of each case (Guidance sections 6.24 and 6.26).

In 2001 the guidance was supplemented by a *National Plan for Safeguarding Children from Commercial Sexual Exploitation*⁶. One of the action points was to ensure effective implementation of the 2000 guidelines. A national review of progress by Area Child Protection Committees (ACPCs) was commissioned; it found significant differences in both how the Guidance had been interpreted and implemented (Swann and Balding 2001). Some ACPCs appeared to be making great progress: seeking out and protecting those most at risk of sexual exploitation, as well as prosecuting abusers. Others were failing to implement even the most basic of requirements. One factor distinguishing areas where progress had been greatest was the adoption of a multi-agency approach to prevention and protection.

The Children Act 1989 and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* establish that a young person remains a child until the age of 18 (Edwards 1998, p.68). However, in issues of sexual activity a young person is generally considered unable to give their consent when below the age of 16 years. The Association of Chief Police Officers guidelines issued in 1997 suggested that 'Young people (those below the age of 18 years) are protected by the Children Act 1989'. However, it also calls for 'Children up to the age of 16 years who are found to be engaged in prostitution [to] be dealt with in all circumstances under the Children Act', thus creating a differential between those children under 16 years of age and those between the ages of 16 and 18 years. This reflects the general confusion within public policy and legislation around the age at which a young person becomes an 'adult'. As Kelly et al (2000) comment:

If we think about an individual young woman on one day actions would be understood, and possibly even responded to as a form of abuse, but on the next day, because this individual has had a birthday, the same acts become for many an issue of choice and personal freedom. At what point can the young woman be said to have made a choice, at what point was she free to do so? (p.76)

⁶ Countries agreeing to the final statement from the first World Congress on Sexual Exploitation of Children, in Stockholm 1996, committed themselves to producing a Plan of Action. The UK plan was published just before the follow up conference to assess progress was held in Yokohama, in late 2001.

One area where inconsistency was evident was the age at which a young person becomes 'too old' to fit the child protection criteria.

Some protocols referred only to children and young people up to the age of 18 years, while others included young people up to the age of 21 years who are in the 'looked after' system and for whom they have a statutory leaving care responsibility (Swann and Balding, 2001, p.14).

Social exclusion, homelessness and rough sleeping

The establishment of the Social Exclusion Unit in 1997 saw a new approach to people at the margins of society with a greater emphasis on tackling causes and developing holistic responses. The Maze had already come to the same conclusions: that its client population was dealing with issues far more complicated than an 'addiction'. Drugs represented one small part of the problem: it made no sense to disconnect drugs from the client's life, their history and their place in society. As the Maze began to work increasingly with young women in prostitution – the Marigold work – their work became even more clearly linked to the social exclusion agenda.

Social exclusion is defined as:

[A] shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems, such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown. (Social Exclusion Unit leaflet, 2000)

In March 2001 the Social Exclusion Unit published the *Consultation Report on Young Runaways*, in which they outlined the inter-connections between a range of issues.

Runaways under 16 are five times more likely to have problems with drugs and three times more likely to be in trouble with the police than their peers... Most runaways find temporary accommodation with family or friends. But 25 per cent of runaways sleep rough intermittently, 13 per cent are physically hurt, and 8 per cent are sexually assaulted. (2000b, p.9-10)

The social exclusion agenda illustrated a new approach that has become known as 'joined up government'. Failure of social agencies to work together during the 1980s had been highlighted as contributing to major scandals around issues such as health and child protection.

The first report produced by the Social Exclusion Unit, *Coming in from the Cold* (SEU, 1999) was on rough sleeping. It led to the establishment of the Rough Sleeping Unit (RSU) that launched a government strategy. It is now widely acknowledged that a significant number of girls and young women who are sexually exploited through prostitution have at some point in their lives been reported as a 'missing person' and this is now used as an 'alerting factor' by many of the children's charities (O'Neill et al, 1995; McNeish, 1998; Melrose, Barrett and Brodie, 1999). In March 2001 RSU published *Preventing Social Exclusion*, in which they claimed that 'Between a quarter and a third of rough sleepers have been looked after by local authorities as children' and that 'Guidance has already been issued to local authorities to ensure all homeless 16 and 17 year olds are accepted as a priority need for housing'. The DETR Housing Policy Statement outlines the Government's target to extend this to care leavers aged between 18 and 21 years of age, individuals who have been in the 'looked-after' system and those fleeing domestic violence or harassment.

Like the Maze's approach to prostitution, the rough sleeping strategy emphasises the development of holistic responses aimed at supporting people to change their situation, as well as developing preventative services. A significant proportion of the Maze's client population are homeless young women, some of whom are sleeping rough. Unfortunately they have not benefited from the significant

investment in services heralded by the establishment of the RSU as they are not sleeping on the streets but in derelict buildings.

There is no clear policy on how local agencies should respond to the problems of young people who go missing, although guidance is in preparation. As a result, services have infrequently been organised around what young people may need, and access to services is dependent upon whether they fit into a particular category such as 'missing person' for the police, 'child in need' for social services, or 'person estranged from parents' for the benefits agency. Most significantly, supported or independent housing cannot be provided for children under 16 year of age and they cannot legally stay in foyers or hostels, due to the laws on 'harbouring', which states that if a child under 16 years of age stays with a person (other than a person with parental responsibility or a relative) for 28 days or more, the person providing the care must notify the local authority that they are privately fostering the child under the Children Act 1989. Anyone who 'takes or detains' a young person under the age of 16 who has been reported as missing without lawful authority, may be prosecuted under Section 2 of the Child Abduction Act 1984.

As a direct consequence of these legal restrictions, there are few options for young people who run away, making them even more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. As of 2002, there is only one refuge, in London, for children under 16: three outside the capital were closed in the last few years. The remaining safe house can provide accommodation for up to 14 days for young people under 16. For 16 and 17 year olds requiring more permanent accommodation, accessing housing can be difficult. At present this age group are not automatically classified under the priority need categories of homeless people although it is hoped that forthcoming policy changes will address this. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 extends local authorities' responsibilities to include the provision of accommodation and support to 16 and 17 year olds who have been in care for 13 weeks or more in the two years before their 16th birthday. It is intended to ensure that all care leavers have a young person's adviser and a pathway plan to map out a route to independent living. However, not all needy young people are care leavers.

Research has demonstrated a connection between poverty and sexual exploitation (O'Neill et al, 1995, Barrett et al, 1999). The Social Security Act 1988 withdrew income support payments to 16 and 17 year olds and levels of unemployment benefit for those under 25 have gradually reduced. The lack of access to social security payments may force young people who have gone missing to become involved in highly risky behaviour, including street prostitution. Social security benefits for 16 and 17 year olds are only paid in specific circumstances. Consultation with young people has highlighted the difficulty many 16 and 17 year olds face in getting benefits. They often do not know what they may be entitled to and may have to prove estrangement from their parents to access benefits (Jones 1995; Bentley and Oakley et al 1999). Obviously this situation limits access to that most basic resource – housing.

Many of the young women the Marigold project works with 'fall through the gaps' of current social policies intended to address this age group – and as a direct consequence prostitution may become the only way in which they are able to survive.

New policies, new opportunities?

The government's policy on supported housing, *Supporting People* (1999) may offer greater hope for some of the women that the Maze works with. The *Supporting People: Policy into Practice* report (2001) lists the sections of the population this initiative aims to benefit: women suffering violence; single homeless people, including rough sleepers; people who misuse drugs or alcohol; young vulnerable people; ex-offenders; people with mental health problems, HIV, physical or learning difficulties; people in sheltered housing. The Maze's client population all fit into several of these categories: many into all of them. It remains to be seen how many housing projects choose to focus on young women in the sex industry through the Supporting People initiative; they may be perceived as a 'difficult' client group,

since they tend to have multiple problems. However, at least one project in London – the Poppy Project – is developing supported housing as a resource for women wishing to exit prostitution⁷.

The first national UK policy document on violence against women, *Living Without Fear* (1999) emphasises models of good practice which represent integrated approaches and multi-agency solutions. Community violence against women projects were amongst the first to develop joined up solutions, building their practice from recognising the complexity of the lives of the women and children they worked with. In the context of work around prostitution, this 'joined up' approach was particularly innovative. In the post-AIDS era, the priority was to prevent the spread of disease. Education projects, street health projects, information and outreach work, burgeoned in relation to prostitution. The emphasis was on safe practices and harm reduction – in relation to drug use, prostitution and sex generally, with projects focused specifically on providing free condoms and clean needles, or needle exchange. Work around prostitution had traditionally been separated from its wider contexts of violence against women and children, homelessness, leaving care and drugs. However, as has been demonstrated there are clear links between leaving care, 'going missing' and poverty. Similarly, research has indicated a high degree of drug use by girls and young women sexually exploited through prostitution (O'Neill et al, 1995; Barrett et al, 1999). Goulden and Sondhi (2001) report that:

Over 80% of 'serial' runaways (i.e. those fleeing home more than once) had used illicit drugs at some time compared with 42% of young people who had never run away from home. One in 12 'serial' runaways were regular Class A drug users. (p.iv)

Melrose et al (1999) confirm this connection noting: '... it is 'not uncommon' for young people to become involved in prostitution to support their own or others' drug habits' (p. 29).

The limited attention paid in *Living Without Fear* to the sex industry, and the lack of integration of work on prostitution and trafficking subsequently, speaks to a lack of 'joined-upness' in government thinking. Whilst there are clear opportunities for this to be addressed through the inter-departmental and joint ministerial working groups on violence against women and domestic violence respectively, these have, as yet, not been grasped, nor, one suspects, understood.

The Maze Marigold project works with young women who have a history of offending or who may be at risk of offending. In 2002, the Sentencing and Offences Unit of the Home Office published *Breaking the Circle: A Report of the Review of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act*. With respect to young people the report notes:

Many young people entering the job market after a criminal conviction are simply not 'job ready'. In common with adult offenders, this may be exacerbated by practical issues such as a lack of basic skills, drug or alcohol addiction, or homelessness. (p.39).

These factors have already been addressed by the MAZE, whose programmes include offering free childcare, mentoring and pre-vocational courses for young women who are keen to improve their education and employment opportunities. However, MAZE recognised that other factors affect re-offending, such as housing and homelessness, health problems, substance misuse, poor basic skills and low levels of confidence and motivation, and argue that a lack of professional support and holistic working between agencies contributes to the difficulties of finding employment. NACRO (1997) point out that:

... a 1997 survey of 69 London employers found that, while 93% were willing to offer jobs to unemployed young people, 71% to young people with no qualifications and 47% to homeless

⁷ This project is sponsored by Eaves Housing, a women's homelessness project.

young people, only 46% would offer jobs to young people with criminal records. Even when assured that a young person with a criminal record had the right abilities and qualities for the job, most would still not offer a job (p.12).

Young women in prostitution may have been convicted of offences such as soliciting, exposing them to particular prejudice. One study found that young women with even minor sex offences on their records are turned down for ninety percent of vacancies due to their conviction (Metcalf et al, 2001). Government policy aims to ensure that employers are aware of their legal obligations in relation to the rehabilitation of offenders, and in particular when they may and may not take a person's previous convictions into account in their recruitment process. The recommendation that young offenders are offered a 'Clean Sheet' at the age of 18 would only benefit those young women whose offences are defined as minor; it would not apply to a conviction for 'loitering' and 'soliciting'.

Early Intervention

The Maze's work also focuses on early intervention. Education and awareness raising among young people had developed a particular philosophy during the 1980s and 90s: the danger of HIV and drug-related deaths led to a wider acceptance of the need to provide young people with information on harm reduction - rather than simply 'lessons' about 'saying no'. Much community work has focused on wider public health issues, rather than on promoting alternatives for the individual young people caught up in these situations. Again, the Maze approached awareness work – both in relation to prostitution and drugs – with the aim of providing young women with accurate information and changing attitudes about violence and relationships. This approach is in tune with recent government thinking on drugs. *Protecting Young People: Good Practice in Drug Education in Schools and the Youth Service* (DFEE, 1998) emphasises the importance of interagency working and the inclusion of community-based services in particular. Examples of good practice include drama and theatre, the Maze's own preferred methods of awareness raising. The Government's 10-year anti-drug strategy *Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain* places a general emphasis on education and information to young people and parents but also seeks to "ensure groups of young people most at risk of developing serious drugs problems receive appropriate and specific interventions". It marks a shift away from a drugs management approach - focused on clean needles and provision of methadone - and introduces a target to reduce the proportion of drugs takers under 25. Reduction of heroin use - the drug that is most widely used by the Maze's current client group - is a specific target. Sharing the Maze's emphasis on change, solutions and pathways out, the White Paper recognises education as a cornerstone to tackling drugs and emphasises 'helping young people realise their full potential'.

A positive postscript

One aspect of the government's commitment to violence against women has been allocation of funding to demonstration projects through the Crime Reduction Programme. In 2001 (after this evaluation was completed) additional monies were made available for projects focused on prostitution. The Maze was one of the 11 projects funded under The Tackling Crime and Disorder Associated with Prostitution Initiative. The initiative explicitly recognised the limited information available on the effectiveness of responses to prostitution, and prioritised three areas: young people, policing and exiting/support, and all projects are being evaluated. The Maze also accessed funding from other sources, including the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, The Church Urban Fund and the Neighbourhood Support Fund. This welcome recognition of their groundbreaking and innovative practice at a national level is welcome.

Since the evaluation was completed the activities have expanded to three outreach sessions per week, and encompass a specialist domestic violence worker and a female police liaison officer. In addition a fast-tracking system for health services has been established. The creative element of the Maze has also grown to encompass art and drama.

3. Origins and Development

The success of the Maze's relationships with its client group, lies at least partly in the organic nature of project development. The inspiration for the Marigold work came from frontline experience gained by outreach into the community. The project did not begin with a politically driven, or policy based, intention to tackle prostitution. Rather, the impact of being confronted by this client group's needs fuelled the next stage of development.

The Marigold work really came through links with the community. Obviously, I was aware that there was prostitution going on in the area and that drugs would be a huge part of it. But I didn't necessarily think it was our role to take it on. But then we started getting women referred to us through Father C. They were working on the streets, they were drugs users, they were suffering terrible abuse... I was so moved by the plight of the women. (Project manager)

The project then set out to learn more about the needs of young women, marking the beginning of an evidence-based approach, which has characterised the Maze's model of work throughout its development. It became immediately clear to the project workers that outreach work was needed for far more than research.

We got a bit of funding as health promotion - we said we were going out in the van for four weeks. We'd get in touch with the women; we'd get a feeling of what it was like on the streets. We did that...The situation of the women was horrendous in the early days. The fact that they were homeless, drug users, no support from anywhere. Some knew about other drug projects but had not felt comfortable to get in touch. At the end of the four weeks we wrote a short report and I thought if we stopped working with the women now we would have abused them too. We took all this information from them, we learned from them - I felt strongly we should continue doing the work. (Project manager)

This 'hands on' approach to learning has continued in the recruitment and training of workers and volunteers. Both volunteers and paid workers regard it as one of the project's strengths that the learning process has developed through encounters on the streets. In this way the project began to develop a rather unique mode of practice, quite different from other initiatives in the field and, at times, outside of current thinking on the subject. All our interviewees regarded this as crucial.

We had nothing to measure it by. We didn't know how other people did it. (Project worker)

One of the benefits has really been that we knew nothing about that work. I'm so glad we didn't all go off on courses - we started from where the women were and they taught us how to be with them. Between us we've learned what the needs are. (Project manager)

This does not mean that workers at the Maze have not taken opportunities for professional development as time has gone on, or provided volunteers with those opportunities. Like the paid workers, those volunteering found themselves learning rapidly and becoming passionately committed to tackling an issue that was in many ways completely new to them.

I wasn't really interested in the Marigold work, 'cause I didn't know anything about it. I was interested in the schools work. But it opened my mind so much - I got the shock of my life. (Project volunteer)

I think this project is one of the purest forms of community work that I know. This is what it should be: going where the people are, when they're there. Long may they continue with the

sort of attitudes they have. Even if the project never got more money I don't think the workers would ever give up trying to do their best for the women. (Project volunteer)

What this has meant, however, is that the work has sometimes taken unexpected directions and has met needs of the client group which were never anticipated. One example is a need identified by the users and workers - that in order to feel change is possible, women have to re-enter the social world as legitimate members of society again; to be socially included. The project users talked powerfully about how they had come to feel a sense of belonging only to a night time world, where they did not exist as 'real' people, with little ability to function in other contexts. The project manager also understood this.

If you take the women out of that context where they can appear street wise, they don't feel confident about going into a restaurant, or a pub or a library. But those skills are developing. I don't think we identified that as a goal we would be working to, it just happened. (Project manager)

The project users also identified this process of learning and development as one of the Maze's strengths, stressing that it was a two way learning process.

When they first started coming out they didn't really know much and we didn't really know who they were, so nobody really had a lot to do with them first of all. You get wary – because we've had other groups before come out here and maybe you'd see them for a few weeks and then you'd never see them again. They were always trying to glean information from you, but with [the Maze workers⁸] it's not really like that. I know that, because you test them you see, so I know that for a fact. With them it's different – they do actually help people. (Service user)

When they first come out they didn't question us or hit upon us. They wouldn't come to you and say ' Oh how has it been tonight, how many punters you done' it wouldn't be like that. So eventually all the girls would come round the van and they would want to talk to them, and then they would tell them things that they wanted to tell them – not necessarily things that they wanted to hear. A lot of girls out there have a great need to talk to someone that's not like just down the street from them or another working girl... When you're out there you're all sort of big and brave and you don't care. But a lot of people do have problems – you know, but you don't really talk about that. (Service user)

The nature of the project's development has involved the Maze in two crucial aspects of good practice: developing a pro-active service and establishing a protocol based on the needs of their client group. As the project grows in experience and structure, it remains responsive to the changing environment and continues to identify new areas needing a response and to develop innovative strategies.

4. 'Joined Up' Solutions

If you break one thing you can tackle the others. (Project Volunteer)

The Maze Marigold project is unusual in its holistic approach to the lives of young women involved in prostitution. The project's innovative work brings together service provision across a range of key, interconnected social issues, to create one initiative that tackles: drugs, violence, homelessness, prostitution, care leaving, child protection, the spread of HIV/STDs and crime prevention. The evaluation revealed this 'joined up' approach to be central to the project's success - for this population,

⁸ Wherever we use the term 'project workers' or 'workers' in quotes from service users, invariably the original quote referred to them by name.

any attempt to tackle one of these issues without dealing with the others makes it impossible to bring about lasting change. The joined up approach was particularly appreciated by service users, who expressed confusion and weariness in relation to the plethora of fragmented services offering them needles and condoms.

Building relationships

The project workers believe that joined up thinking follows automatically from an *approach* which treats women involved in prostitution as 'whole human beings' rather than as embodiments of multiple social problems.

The Maze has always believed in a holistic approach – from the beginning, with the drugs work. As soon as you talk to someone who takes drugs, you realise that behaviour is one very small part of a very complicated life. (Project worker)

Volunteers also emphasised this as key to the Maze's success.

You aren't going to get anywhere by offering clean needles or methadone. Ok – so you might manage a bit of social regulation of health issues. But if you're in the business of change – if you believe in offering alternatives to people on self-destruct – then you know that traditional approach is going nowhere. (Project volunteer)

When asked about what forms of contact she had with the Maze and its services, one user responded simply:

I see them at work. I come in to the office to see them. We go for lunch. If I need any help with college work or anything else, they're one of the first people I'll phone. I'll phone them for anything and everything that I need. (Service user)

Although joined up thinking has been promoted by government, as best practice, this has been slow to permeate the culture of intervention. Our interviewees pointed to piecemeal and short-lived projects springing up in the Shoreditch and Bethnal Green areas, which aim to tackle one of the issues dealt with by Maze Marigold. A baffling range of services is targeting the same client group, offering them condoms, needles, soup, health care and one-off hostel accommodation. Women referred to these projects as 'flyby nights' and expressed a sense of disconnection from them. This highlights a central feature in the Maze's practice: viewing each service user as a person in need of support to change their lives, means that 'best practice' for The Maze is building relationships that become the catalyst for change.

The Maze has developed its practice in the face of a orthodoxy in the field of social and community work which discourages the building of relationships and the forming of attachments; they are viewed as unprofessional or impossible in the context of limited resources. Moreover, offering alternatives to the sex industry is viewed by many health and social care agencies as patronising or paternalistic. The evaluation suggests, however, that building relationships with people who care about what happens to them, is valued above all else by the project's users and has direct results in terms of measurable change. When asked if their lives had changed and what had helped them to change, most service users talked both about the content of the relationship they had with the Maze and having a desire to leave prostitution reinforced and supported.

I used to think I was a bad person but I don't think that anymore. I don't disrespect myself. I think I'm quite a good person now. It's my attitude that's changed. I used to think I wasn't worth anything. When I look back, I didn't care if I died or not. I wouldn't have cared less. I have got so much to live for now. I count the workers among my friends, not just people I

know... and I know they care about me. They brought me on a long way you know because when I actually met them I was quite sort of down. I sat in the van and when I started college I said to her 'But what am I doing it for. Nobody's going to want me. So I'm going to do all this for nothing'. I probably would have ditched it, but she said to me 'You are worth something. You can do more'. (Service User)

The workers have given me lot of help, I've got a daughter who's on crack as well. When things went wrong there I went to them. If I hadn't known them I wouldn't have gone anywhere, I wouldn't have known where to go or what to do... They've helped me as well. After I met them I did a year at college – an Open University course. I don't think I would have done that without them, because you don't believe you can do it. It makes a difference to have someone believe in you, that you can do more than just go out there and stand on the corner. (Service user)

Service users also referred to specific moments in their relationship with the project, which had proved a turning point in making them feel they were worth something and had the potential to change their lives.

I've changed, I feel like I'm realising my potential. They helped me boost my self-confidence. Made me believe in myself. I went through a stage when I was feeling very low. My family were in Nottingham and I'm really close to my Dad and my Dad was ill. He had thrombosis. I also had problems in my family life and they gave me emotional support, which I really needed. When I broke my foot I was really low. I remember it was my birthday – I was 26. I knew they were up to something, but I wasn't sure what. They kept asking me where I was going to be on my birthday and they told me to come down here. When I come down here there was the biggest bunch of flowers and it just – I know it sounds silly but I did cry. They bought me flowers because they liked me for who I was and there was no ulterior motive. I was so touched. I started crying, I felt a right plonker. (Service user)

Me and my mum don't have a relationship. It's like, in her own little way, the worker has taken my mother's role. 'Cause she's there to give me my little cuddle when I need it. Do you know what I mean? When I was in hospital they brought me evening primrose oil, they brought me deodorants, they brought me toothpaste, they brought me chocolates. They went beyond what they had to do. They didn't have to do that but they did. And it's those little things that are special and that are important. (Service user)

The project workers saw these examples as highlighting the fact that joined up solutions are essentially unique solutions for each service user.

You couldn't make a policy that you must celebrate someone's birthday or visit them in hospital and that will help them leave prostitution. You have to get to know the whole person and meet them at the point where their needs are. (Project worker)

The services users placed their experience of the Maze project in the context of their histories, emphasising the significance of feeling they mattered to someone after years of feeling they meant nothing to anyone.

I didn't really want to be on drugs but I was put on drugs and then I got the habit. You must know how hard that is to just come off it. You need something to make you stop... A lot of the kids out there have got nothing, nothing at all. They haven't even got anyone who cares about them. I didn't really feel anyone loved me and that's the sort of kid these guys prey on. I was

really angry as well when I left home. I had a lot of anger in me and I was basically alone until I met them. (Service user)

Women in contact with the Maze also referred to the practical support they received across a range of basic areas – from providing sandwiches, condoms and information to help with emergency accommodation and drugs. Interestingly they noticed forms of support that they may not need themselves but which they knew benefited other women.

Thank God for them. God must have sent them to our patch. They are good. I don't know what we'd do without them really because you'd just have nowhere. People wait for them to come now; when they first came out it was 'oh I don't want anything to do with them'. But now people are 'have you seen them? Are they out tonight?'... And some of those girls down there they don't eat from one day to the next either. This is the thing – all the money goes to the pimp, or on the crack and they're absolutely starving. I mean, I've seen girls eat like they've never eaten before. Because they're not allowed to spend their money on food. There's one girl down there, she's obviously on drugs, she's got a pimp. She came up to me and said 'Oh have you got a condom' because they always give extra to give out to the girls anyway. So I give her a couple and she said 'Oh thanks, he wouldn't let me buy any I've had to do without'. (Service user)

Project volunteers also identified the joined up approach, and building genuine connections with women as key to the project's success.

Most of the other agencies around that will take people on a temporary basis don't want sex workers. They don't want drug users. So it's very difficult to get accommodation for the women in an emergency. I've seen them try in this project endlessly; refuges and hostels want 'clean' people... I think it's hard when you've been building a relationship with a woman and she doesn't come out on the streets. You start worrying about where they are, hope they're not lying dead somewhere. The workers will sometimes go out looking for particular girls who might have gone missing or have not been seen for a while. (Project volunteer)

A lot of it's associated. If you break one thing you can tackle the others. Taking drugs to work for example. (Project volunteer)

The first time I went out – you go out with all these preconceived ideas. The way you see the women approach, how they interact with the workers, you know it's because of their attitude to the women, why the women feel able to so freely approach them at any time...The workers are very strong on the whole range of issues, not only sex work but things like drugs issues – they know a lot about rehab, different drugs. They're very well informed and they get a lot of girls to give up drugs. (Project volunteer)

One interviewee pointed out the importance of creating human connection in the context of women's relationships with their pimps: for many this relationship, in which the man is usually seen as their 'boyfriend', is the most powerful attachment in their lives. Most have never experienced secure, loving relationships, and are also very isolated. This combination affords pimps enormous power. In such a context, offering an alternative attachment, an ongoing supportive relationship, can create a foundation on which other changes become real possibilities, rather than dreams or fantasies.

I think people don't realise what a hold these men have over the women and how manipulative they can be. It is very clever: even older and mature sensible women could still end up being sucked in – they still want to be loved, they still get involved with these men. So, apart from just having a place to stay the women also need support and someone who can understand

and discuss these issues with them – like any woman who is trying to leave a violent or abusive man. There's always a temptation to go back and if they've got kids to this man as well... they need some sort of worker or someone just to offer the women support. And it all takes time. (Project volunteer)

The project manager spoke powerfully about the necessity of linking approaches to the wide range of difficulties in these women's lives and of paying detailed attention to the specific situation of each individual woman.

For example, there was one kid, a teenager, who used to call me 'mumsy' – she was severely isolated and neglected, living in Tower House, no clothes, no food – I used to persuade her to eat sandwiches. There's another woman, we bought her flowers for her birthday. I suppose she really is a bit special to me. (Project Manager)

At the core of the joined up approach of The Maze is a huge, imaginative leap: a leap which enables a service to approach each woman on the streets as a unique human being whose survival matters, and who has the right to be part of a community which cares about what happens to her.

There are women on the street I feel I have to be strong for – so that they can get their head together, so they can fight their battle. Some of them ran away from home and they're totally on their own out there – no one would look for them if they got lost. They could be found dead in a ditch somewhere and no one would know. I want the women we work with to know that wouldn't be the case with us. (Project manager)

Partnership and inter-agency working

A key factor in enabling the Maze to put joined up thinking into practice is effective inter-agency working. The project has worked in partnership with the police, social services, Church groups experienced in work with rough sleepers and probation officers. The evaluation also highlighted the Maze's excellent partnership work in relation to health issues and developing educational opportunities.

As is clear from the Maze's origins and development, the project was already building effective inter-agency relationships during its initial work around drugs. The Marigold work emerged through a close relationship with the Dellow Centre, an emergency hostel.

I started here about 12 years ago and it was a brand new project. We were doing the drug education work, meeting up with lots of agencies in the area – parents, vicars, teachers. We were working with young people and then we started to do drug education projects for parents. It was very successful. (Project manager)

The previous work experience of the project manager included setting up an Asian drug project – an initially controversial initiative, which involved thorough and painstaking work in building partnerships with community leaders. She also recognised that the support of the YWCA has been crucial to the Maze's success.

The Y has given me a free hand to develop pieces of work, where I may not have got that anywhere else. They've been really supportive. (Project manager)

As the work developed the Maze built relationships with a growing range of services. Workers from the Dellow Centre accompany the Maze in the van when they go out onto the streets and the Dellow is able to provide emergency accommodation in some circumstances. Father C from the Dellow Centre, who first referred women in prostitution to the Maze, remains very involved with the project. Some service

users specifically mentioned Father C as having had a profound impact on their sense of self or their perception that the church would view them as 'sinners' or 'bad'.

Father C's nice as well. He comes out with the girls sometimes. He's cool, he's all right. My Mum's a Christian – her church and Father C's church are very different...I could go to a church that Father C goes to, because it's not so hard. That's a big change for me, I was brought up in a strict Christian family, my mum was a Sunday school teacher and my uncle had his own church. We had to go every Sunday, prayer meetings and watch night and conventions – it was all too much. I never felt loved; I always felt I was in the wrong. (Service user)

Then Father C, who helps with the project, I was going to college and I was saying to him that I wanted a thesaurus dictionary and he brought me one. And he gave me a bible that he got when he was ordained as a Priest from the bishop that ordained him and it was signed by the Bishop and everything. I was in tears. I couldn't believe he would do that. (Service user)

The Maze's work with other agencies is most successful where strong one-to-one relationships have been forged. Where supportive contacts have been made with local social services, for example, the effects of joint work have been highly productive, promoting positive change for the women involved. The Maze has also built very successful partnerships with health professionals. A nurse now regularly accompanies the van, providing women with a range of services and assisting them with hospital appointments. This has meant that many more women have attended appointments for essential tests or treatment, as their fears of intrusion or sense of shame were allayed.

Because of its history, the Maze was already strongly linked with drug rehab centres and could provide accurate advice about hostel provision. A new development, however, has been the partnership with the University of Wales, which has enabled the Maze to provide women with an opportunity to gain training and qualifications, essential elements in finding a sustainable pathway out of prostitution.

Service users commented on improvements in the responses of other agencies, which they saw as the outcomes of partnerships built by the Maze. This was most evident with respect to the police. Service users undoubtedly felt safer knowing that the Maze liaised with the police on their behalf, and this was one area where there was a strong sense that the Maze was a project that made a difference in their everyday lives.

I've noticed a difference in the way they treat you – in their attitude. When I first worked, they would always arrest you, and you were always called a slag – they would arrest you two or three times in one day. And there was never understanding, you could be out there with two black eyes. You were arrested, you get let out, you're back there again. Don't they think there's a reason for that? No one cared to find out. They do more now. They liaise a lot with the workers and if there's a problem they'll work together. Years ago they wouldn't have done that. (Service user)

I think they [the Maze] have got a pretty okay relationship with the police. Some of the police officers are a bit negative. I'd say about 5 per cent are negative but 95 per cent are okay... If you're near the van or talking to anyone from the project they won't come up to you and arrest you – I'm not saying we use the van as a safe haven because we don't. You can't chat a punter from around the van because it's not about that and [the workers] are very strict on that. And I can understand because at the end of the day if she allows that to happen that will cause a rift with the police. She doesn't allow it and everyone knows that. It's a definite no, no. No chatting to punters around the van. We respect that. (Service user)

There are some police officers that are cool... The project has got a pretty good relationship with the police. If there's any dodgy punters going around they do tell the police. (Service user)

There are areas of interagency working that are still in need of development and workers from the Maze acknowledge just how difficult building effective relationships with other agencies can be. The reasons for this are multiple and have been well documented. Competition for meagre resources can cause enormous tensions, as can the conflicting cultures of longstanding agencies not used to teamwork with professionals from other contexts. The Maze experiences familiar frustrations in the voluntary sector where obstacles to progress are the bureaucratic procedures of state agencies. As a small, voluntary sector project the Maze has been able to build an innovative, outcome focused culture and this often clashes with more procedure driven cultures in other organisations. Project workers expressed particular frustration in relation to their work with young people in care. The Maze has contact with many young women who are part of the care system. Most have run away in the short or long term, feeling disaffected or unattached. The Maze works hard at encouraging teenage girls back into care, and off the streets, but has been disappointed by the lack of co-operation from some social services teams and care workers.

I got a phone call on Monday evening at 9.00. I couldn't go but I phoned my colleague: we had to run around and get things organised so that it was possible for her to take a young woman to court. Before she got there, we had a call from the children's home, and she was given a mouthful by the care worker. They didn't and wouldn't have been able to organise for her social worker to take her to court: what would they have done with her? We had to use our own money. No one in the children's home would have done any of that but there's no recognition for that. That's about us as individuals. In the project we have 100 per cent commitment to the girls and women we work with. It's not just a job to us. (Project manager)

The young women we interviewed shared this disappointment with the care system.

The care system does set you up to fail. They take you in; they do everything for you to a certain degree. Then you reach a certain age, they kick you out and they don't give a shit anymore. What about the aftercare? There's no follow up. (Service user)

Project workers have also been dismayed by the lack of available support for emergency housing for women in danger or who have made the decision to get off the streets.

I suppose we thought that because of our close relationship with the Dellow, and because the Y is known for its emergency hostels, we thought it would be easier than it has been. The Dellow, in particular, was a relationship that we hoped to get more out of than we have. I thought we would have more access to housing than we have, I don't know why we haven't. (Project worker)

The complexities of building relationships with other agencies is further complicated by the surfeit of new projects set up to tackle different issues covered by the Maze. The project workers expressed frustration at the unnecessary duplications which can occur because of this and the lack of 'joined up' thinking on behalf of funders.

One charity in the area got duplicate funding around street workers. Despite the fact that the Maze was successfully up and running, there was no collaboration or consultation in getting it off the ground. (Project worker)

However, the project has perhaps struggled the most – with the most and the least success – in its relationship with the police. Although there have been many excellent pieces of joint work between the Maze and the police, it has been an uphill struggle and continues to present great challenges.

The police still need more training around how to work: they still call women 'the Toms'. We have to challenge them about making jokes about women who've just been raped. This copper – said to my colleague 'I really fancy you'. (Project manager)

I think some of them see us as real troublemakers. They really don't like that we're trying to help the women – they have nothing but contempt for them. I don't have a good reputation because I'm always challenging them. (Project manager)

Perhaps most seriously, lack of support for the project by some of the local police has at times put project workers, and the women they are working with, in increased danger:

We have been in dangerous situations and they've made it clear they're not interested in helping. I don't feel we could call them out and get any support from them. That worries me. It worries me but I'm glad I know, rather than think they would. (Project manager)

5. Preventing and Reducing Crime

One of the strengths of the Maze Marigold project is its link with a wider government agenda on crime. Joined up thinking and interagency working have made it possible for the Maze to address the complex and interlocking strands which both criminalise and victimise this client group.

Typically, the culture of work in the voluntary sector around drugs and prostitution in recent years has set itself apart from a crime-based agenda or a crime reduction focus⁹. Many of these projects were set up in the context of public health panics around the spread of AIDS, HIV or hepatitis. The focus was on prevention of disease, to be achieved through distribution of condoms and needles, provision of free, accessible health checks, and/or easier access to Methadone (which does not have to be injected). The prevention of sexual exploitation and physical and sexual assault, let alone prostitution itself, was seldom articulated outside of feminist discussions¹⁰. Accompanying the public health agenda was a wider philosophical framework, comprising an emphasis on choice and individual responsibility and a concern about what was termed the 'Nanny State' was current when HIV/AIDS work first emerged. Thinking in health promotion and social policy was, and continues to be, heavily influenced by these related agendas. Many of the projects working on drug use, prostitution and even homelessness presented these issues as 'positive', or at least 'rational', choices which young people could make. The Maze project entered this arena with a radically different perspective.

The Maze's mission statement commits the project unashamedly to 'persuading women to leave' prostitution. Although this fits in with government and local community agendas to reduce street crime, from the project's point of view their interest in crime reduction comes from a concern for the women's welfare – the Maze sees prostitution as a crime, most significantly as a crime against the women participating in it. FRANKI, a project that worked with women involved in street prostitution in Manchester has a similar perspective.

⁹ The funding of demonstration projects under the Home Office Crime Reduction Programme is a welcome departure from this disconnection.

¹⁰ We are not suggesting here a consensus within feminism - in the UK or internationally - about prostitution, since there is none; merely that it was only within some feminist writings and activities that such perspectives could be found.

Prostitution is an occupation that is fraught with danger. Women working in street prostitution are subject to systematic violence of every description – physical, sexual, emotional... What other job has as part of its job description the possibility that you could be raped, beaten or murdered? Where at the very least you may be sworn at or spat on by members of the community where you are working? There is an assumption that the payment of money somehow negates and denies the validity of the women's experience of violence. (FRANKI, 1999, p4)

For the Maze, tackling crime in relation to prostitution needs to be seen in its widest possible context: the crimes by families or pimps that often lead girls and women to enter and/or stay in prostitution; the high level of violent crime against women in prostitution; the vicious circle that women become trapped in once they have a criminal record, and are unable to find alternative employment, or once they are addicted to drugs¹¹. The pattern of using crime to pay for a drug habit is also well documented. The Maze is also aware that many of the young women they work with are under-age and emphasises the need for recognising this as another criminal matter: child abuse.

The findings of a study in Glasgow (Barnard, 2001), published in the British Medical Journal, revealed that more than 80 per cent of all prostitutes have experienced violence whilst working in the sex industry, more than half of this group had been attacked within the last month: one in five had been kidnapped, one in four had been raped. Only 34 per cent had ever reported assaults to the police. Marina Barnard, also notes that 90 per cent of the women in her sample were addicted to drugs, most commonly heroin. The scale of crimes of violence committed against women in prostitution has become more recognised in the last five years, especially within the health based projects focused on the sex industry. That said, however, there has been limited change in the philosophical harm reduction and choice discourse.

For the Maze, the points of intervention with respect to crime reduction involve both primary and secondary prevention. Through their work in schools they seek to prevent entry into prostitution in the first place, and through early intervention, targeting the youngest women on the streets, they seek to enable them exit before they are entrapped. Secondary prevention involves the work with women on the streets to offer alternatives, which begins from a human rights philosophy: that women involved in prostitution have rights – to a life free from violence, in which their dignity and the right of access to education, health care and housing are respected. The notion that women in prostitution share citizenship and human rights may sound obvious, but putting this belief into practice has radical consequences and an enormous potential impact on crime in relation to prostitution.

Helping women to exit prostitution

The service users interviewed described how their relationship with the project had led to them beginning to believe there could be an alternative to prostitution. Initially, this was simply through valuing their contact with the project's workers and getting used to being with people who were genuinely concerned about their welfare.

I've seen a lot of the girls, every Tuesday and every Thursday, 'Have you seen the condom women'. They come out especially to see them. Not just to have a cup of tea – they come out to have talk. You have to go out to see it for yourself. They congregate round that van. People come to work and they forget about work. Sometimes I go to work and I'm there at the

¹¹ A survey on street prostitution found that 70 per cent of women had been sexually abused as children, more than 80 per cent suffered violence at the hands of pimps, 60 per cent had been raped and sexually assaulted by punters and 40 per cent had suffered physical assault. Between 1995 and 2000, in England and Wales, 60 women working as street prostitutes have been murdered (cited in FRANKI, 1999, p.4).

van, I'm so content being at the van I don't even bother working. I'm just there all night, driving around with the van, talking to them and we really do have a laugh. (Service user)

Women described the process of change for them as an organic one. For some the most significant change came about internally, through beginning to believe they could move on in their lives, could relate differently to themselves and other people. This then enabled having enough faith in themselves to try something new – education, coming off drugs, for example.

I've got my cold streak as well! I don't let people in that easily. But with sitting down and talking – I've spoken at length about it to the workers... I can't let that affect me. I've gotta just get over it. I can't keep dwelling on my past. I've gotta just do the best that I can do. There's nothing else I can do is there? (Service user)

I can trust them. There's not many people I can say I do trust, but I do trust them because I know that any advice they give me, and anything that they do for me will be what's best for me. They will always do what's best for me. You know, I've got quite a bad temper and the other day I did lose my temper. I tell you something if it wasn't for the fact that I have the utmost respect for both of them I would have lost it because I had a disagreement with someone. It was that that stopped me. I thought if I lose my temper now I'm going to destroy all this, I'm going to lose all this and it was too much to lose. So I just bit my tongue and it was the hardest thing I ever had to do! But I did it. So I've learned self-control, I've learned through this project a lot of things. (Service user)

Central to the Maze's philosophy is the view that prostitution is abuse – the crime inherent in it is not that defined by the law: namely, the woman's crime of soliciting. Rather, the existence of prostitution represents an abuse of the girls and women's human rights. The Maze aims to persuade women to leave, firstly by giving the message that they deserve to live a life in which they are not abused and secondly through helping to provide alternatives. The service users, as well as the workers, recognise that in order for a woman to get off the streets and stay off, both of these forms of support need to be accepted by the women. In answering how the Maze enables women to think about getting out, some women emphasised the emotional aspects and others practical support, but most mentioned both.

When I left home I moved in with this woman who was a worker. I wasn't making any money and I was too young to have a proper job. The first night I made £200. That was 12 years ago - £200 was a lot of money. I felt rich. And I thought 'this is easy'. But now I'm at a stage – well I have been for quite a while – where I want to give up and I want to get out of this before it destroys me.

I'm getting out by realising my self worth and that I am bigger than this. It's paid my bills but there's more to life than standing on a street corner. (Service user)

I'm doing an access course. Youth, community and social work. I've had a lot of trouble with my course... I'm doing a course with modules. It's do it at your own pace and I've had really a lot of problems with it. One of the workers done a course, access, pre-access, then she went on to university. She said I didn't need to worry about any of the books because she had the books. And any help that I need. I'm always welcome to come and sit down and use the computer. She will help me with my college work. (Service user)

The workers and volunteers are clear that although persuading the women to leave prostitution is their explicit aim, this is a dialogue, part of a relationship in which the woman's overall welfare comes first. Helping the women to find alternatives because they are a victim of crime, provides the project with a very different agenda from one which approaches the women as criminals themselves.

They really do try, not in any forceful way, but to get the women to think about their lives and think about what they can do other than sex work. Some of them have gone to college, they come up and use the computers – they're getting that self assurance that they can do something else if they want it. There's no pressure, that's important because lots of people say to me what's the point in you being out there, the women want to be there. So how are you getting them off the street? I say we give advice, help and support but we're clear that it's for the women to make up their own mind. (Project volunteer)

In seeking alternatives to prostitution, women encounter an enormous number of obstacles – both internal and external. Getting used to the structure and routine of studying after many years of a chaotic lifestyle can be extraordinarily difficult. Additionally, trying to find work in a world which labels the women as sex offenders, makes the struggle to get out of prostitution much more difficult:

The workers helped me apply for a couple of jobs and I didn't get anything. Sometimes I sit down and I think to myself, 'well is it worth it? Am I going to get anything in the end?' You get like that sometimes, because the jobs I apply for you have to declare your convictions. (Service user)

There's eight modules to this University course I'm doing. I've done three and I've passed them. But it has been a bit of a struggle to keep the motivation up, especially working at home. (Service user)

One of the key barriers to making change happen in their lives is what some of the women describe as thinking short term. This is a well-documented survival strategy for survivors of violence and abuse and the unpredictable nature of life on the streets reinforces it. To create a context in which women dare to believe they have a future is central to the Maze's aims, and the emphasis on the future provided by the project has proved to be extremely effective in challenging the 'one day at a time' thinking of many of the women.

Everything in life's hard work. I know if I stick at it and I work at it that a couple of years down the road I'm going to be okay. I can't look at it short term and that is what they say – 'don't look at it short term, look at it in the long term. You're going to have your wages coming into your account, you're going to be able to pay your bills, you're going to be able to get a nice car, you're going to be able to pay your mortgage and go on holidays – you're not going to have to stand on a cold corner. Not short term, long term.' And that makes sense. When you look at it like that it's an investment into your future. Don't think about now, you've got to think about when you're 40. What pension am I going to live on? That's what they tell you. They don't say to you – get off the street. Come off the street, it's no good or whatever. They try and show you that there's another life, apart from prostitution. You don't get pressure – like 'why are you out on the corner' and stuff. They don't do that. But they make you think long term. I never used to think like that before, but I do now. What they say – it makes sense. (Service user)

There was a great deal of evidence of long term thinking when the service users outlined their motivations for leaving prostitution. Looking into the future enabled the women to imagine a different life.

I will give up 'cause I want to get married this year. I've been with my partner for nine years. He's the only man I've ever been with that wants me to give up work. He wants to get married and have kids. We're going away to get married abroad. I want my children to be brought up in a family unit, in wedlock. (Service user)

I don't want to be doing that when I have kids. I know children can be cruel and I don't want my kids to go to school and get comments about it. When I was younger I used to do that – I used to slag off girls standing on the corners. I used to shout 'you dirty prostitute'. (Service user)

The extent to which the change in perspective has taken place in the community targeted by the Maze was summed up by one of the women interviewed.

Sometimes we go to work and at the van the conversations gone from, how much money we want tonight, to what bit of the course are we on... It's amazing the way the conversation's changed over the months. We're all talking about what essays we've got to get in; it's good actually. Quite a few of us have started to do college courses and stuff like that. Before we wouldn't have been talking about stuff like that and now we do – we all support each other. We don't feel so isolated in the college course, because we're all at it, we're all struggling together in it. It's kind of good. It makes you feel good inside. (Service user)

Tackling crimes of violence and abuse

Enabling women to leave prostitution is only one aspect of the Maze's work around prostitution-related crime. The project has also focused on violent crimes committed against the women: aiming both to prevent assaults where possible and to have them prosecuted when they do happen. This has the added impact of reinforcing the Maze's message that the women do not deserve to be abused and contributes enormously to the women's emerging self-confidence.

Since I've been back – five years – in that time I got beaten up by a guy whose flat I went to. I had him arrested, but I did that because I had support. I'd been beaten up previously and I never did that. He got two years in prison. And then I had another one beat me up in the street. Another girl came to help me because he was absolutely decking me, but this was all because he wanted the money back or something – I never understood why he did it. I took him to court as well and he got convicted. So I think I've got stronger in the fact that I don't let people get away with anything any more. I've been there, done that and I'm not letting anyone do that. (Service user)

I remember when I went to court when I had this guy arrested. It was terrible you know but I was determined, absolutely determined that this guy was going to get convicted. You know when you've got that in you. I think I'd have given up if he hadn't. I'd have had no faith at all. I remember getting up there, and I thought well I'm going to tell them what I'm really like first. I saw the jury sitting there, and they're like schoolteachers and I said to them that, because I'm a prostitute doesn't mean I'm a bad person. I said, 'I wash, I cook, I iron, I shop, I take the kids to school – all the things that you do normally'. I said, 'to me going out there at night is just like going to Sainsbury's doing my shopping.' I can remember saying that to them and I thought, I hope they understand what I'm saying. I thought I'm not going to let them think I'm just some little tart out there, I didn't want them to look at me like that. I wanted them to look at me as someone who is educated and see I have got a brain. I'm not doing that because I can't do anything else. Those girls out there – a lot of them could do so much. I realised that later in life. I was never silly – I got good grades at school and that. I look back and I think, I could have done so much. (Service user)

Tackling crime against them has involved women acting in solidarity with one another: contrary to popular representations, there can be a lot of rivalry and disrespect between women involved in street prostitution (see also, FRANKI, 1999). If one of the women has a frightening experience with a man, she is able to pass on his details to the other women on the streets through the Maze, and 'Ugly Mugs'

is a scheme which the project has used to tackle violence and abuse, working closely with the police. Photographs of men known to be dangerous are distributed amongst the women in order to alert them. In this way the Maze acts as a central input and output for sharing knowledge about dangerous men. On other occasions, women have phoned project workers on their mobiles, to let them know they felt another woman was in danger. At times, the van has also provided refuge from violent pimps and the project has helped women escape into emergency accommodation. In these circumstances, the project contacts the police.

Ensuring prosecutions against men who rape or attack the women, as the women describe above, has also involved a partnership with the police; this has not always been an easy alliance, but all parties seem to believe that the situation is improving. Women have grown to trust that the project will not involve the police without their consent, but will work constructively with the police wherever this is necessary and desired by service users.

Whatever you say, it's in strictest confidence. They'll advise you if you have problems with a pimp or whatever, they'll advise you or support you but they would never go behind your back to the police or anything like that. If you do need their support they will be there for you. (Service user)

The project has got a pretty good relationship with the police. If there's any dodgy ones going around they do tell the police. We tell the project if there are any dodgy men around. They go round and they tell the girls what cars to look out for. Sometimes, they're driving around, they know the places that we go to, they check we're okay. You feel a lot safer knowing that they're out there. (Service user)

Women using the project recognised that the Maze and the police had made considerable efforts to pursue a shared agenda on crime. One woman whose attacker had been successfully prosecuted thought that it was the combination of the Maze's support, plus the fact that she was a lot older than some, which had enabled her to do this. Her impression of the police was that most of those involved had been unhelpful, and that she was fortunate to have had contact with one officer who was supportive.

That night I had that guy arrested who attacked me in his flat, about 15 police officers turned up. I was naked and I felt they all just stood there and took the piss out of me. Now basically if I'd been younger I'd have grabbed my clothes and just gone, but because I was older I stuck with it... This one copper said 'Oh don't I remember you from years ago', and I said 'I'm not really interested in that, I want my clothes'. They took me to the police station, left me in an office for an hour on my own. I made my statement, then I talked to the workers. I listened at the door and I heard the Chief Constable come down and say to the policewoman 'Take the statement and we'll trash it'. I was lucky because this Asian policewoman who said she got stick all the time from the police, she helped me because she said she believed me. Usually they don't do anything unless it's a really big case where girls are getting stabbed and raped. If that had happened to someone else they'd have walked out. (Service user)

The women we spoke with described lives saturated in violence: some had ended up in prostitution through trying to escape violence at home in their childhood, others had managed to leave prostitution only to end up back on the streets after escaping a violent marriage.

My first boyfriend who said he 'loved me' was very violent, but he was violent to get me to go out to work. Well first of all he used to bring people to me, you know that was how I started and then he would beat me up if I didn't go to work and I didn't have enough money. The two things go together. I can remember later when my partner, a different man, started beating

me up – he used to drink and come in and kick the door in. I thought, 'I'm not putting up with this. I've had it all my life. I'm not putting up with it'. One morning when my youngest one was two months old, he started smashing all the windows. I thought, I've had enough. So I just called the police. They only sent two officers which was a mistake, 'cause he laid them both out and I realised that if he got in the house he would have killed me. Even the police said that to me. So they sent half the police force who arrested him and he eventually got four years. The council refused to re-house me before he came out. I had an injunction stopping him from coming near my little one till he's 18 because of a previous conviction for child abuse. So I just put myself in a refuge the day he came out of prison. I found I'm not afraid to speak up anymore and go for what I want. I think I've learned to be strong. Back in my 20s I would just take anything that came at me and just let people abuse me, however they wished to do. But now I'm really strong and I try to get that over to other people as well – you can be different, you can be strong, you don't have to put up with it. But it's hard especially when you're young. (Service user)

All of the women interviewed had been involved with violent pimps and had experienced violence from 'punters', and were typical of the stories The Maze project is now familiar with.

I was attacked by someone. I'll never forget it actually. I was wearing a white skirt and a white top. I picked up this man, I went to do the business and everything and he just went for me. He bust my neck, I had stitches. The thing that was going through my head was – 'this man's going to rape me, he's not going to use a condom and then he's going to kill me'. I thought to myself, I'm not going to let this happen. I don't know where I found the strength from but somehow I managed to get away from him. (Service user)

Workers and volunteers reported being haunted by the danger women face on the streets. Women themselves appeared to dissociate from the violence: 'yeah, it's a risk every time you get in a car, but everything in life's a risk' was a typical response. To many of the women interviewed, danger and violence were a part of everyday life – an occupational hazard, whether coming from pimps or punters. One woman described being raped and beaten by a punter and forcing herself out onto the streets the next night. 'You have to confront your fears' she said, reporting that she switches herself off from feeling fear when she goes out there. But as witnesses, the workers remained aware and afraid for the women.

There should be someone out there every night with the van. Last night there was a girl who was being followed and she was very frightened and she jumped in our van and we took her away 'till the bloke had disappeared. I'm not saying anything would have happened, but let's say it happened again tonight when nobody's there she could be stabbed and murdered. The guy was aware of the van being there and did seem to back off. And the pimps know there's someone looking out for the women. So an even stronger presence would be great. And perhaps to co-ordinate it with other groups so there's someone out there every night. The girls could call the van and say there's trouble happening. There would need to be more workers. (Project worker)

This visible surveillance by the Maze workers and volunteers is a different approach to tolerance zones and CCTV. Not only are they not the police, and therefore more likely to be trusted by women, but they are physically present, and thus witnesses to any abuse that takes place in the vicinity.

For most of the women, violence was the point of entry into prostitution. The most common route into prostitution was through coercion by a violent 'boyfriend' as a teenager – something also recorded in the Barnardo's publication *Whose Daughter Next*. Some of the women interviewed looked back with anger at the failure of any service, but particularly the police, to intervene in the escalation of crime and

violence that was spiralling out of control. Being forced onto the street through violence, being forced onto drugs by pimps, led to repeated arrests, fines and then going straight back onto the streets to earn money to pay them. The rare occasions in which an intervention on the part of the criminal justice system seemed to actually seek to tackle the causes of the problem, and hence its escalation, stuck out forcefully in women's minds as exceptions.

I can remember sitting in the van and saying to one of the workers – this is when I first started doing my college – 'I get angry at the time I've wasted. I get angry that no one was there for me when I was young'. I got arrested an awful lot of times when I was young. Very often I'd be beaten up. One day I was taken to court and I had two black eyes, this guy had taken me to court but it wasn't my boyfriend. Now the judge in that court had him arrested on the way out, thinking he was my boyfriend. That's the only person who ever said anything when they saw me. He looked at me and he knew this guy was with me 'cause I walked in with him, and he made them take him out of the court. That showed me he must have cared – a bit. But all the times I've been arrested and I've been beaten up, fat lips and black eyes – no one ever said anything, nobody cared. I do get angry that people didn't care. I think that's why when I see young girls now I feel really sad you know – especially at what they're going through. I can remember. The other day we could hear all this screaming and shouting and we all went over there and there was this big guy and he had this little girl on the street corner and he was screaming at her – you could see that she was terrified. We were all frightened of him as well. There's no phone box round there and no one wanted to phone from their mobile in case the police came and said 'Oh we got a call from so and so'. You know, they absolutely terrorise them. Minutes later we saw her in his car – obviously had no choice. They get away with it – that's why they do it. I don't think the police do enough to catch the pimps. Years ago they used to have a big thing where they'd wait and watch and catch the girl handing him money. I don't think they do any of that now... If I can see it the police can see it. A lot of these guys have several girls. The pimps walk round like they own the place and the police don't do anything. (Service user)

Pimps and Drugs: Making the right connections

The subject of pimps raises a series of complex issues about crime. Both the women and the project workers understood prostitution to be part of a constellation of organised crime – the same men making money from the women are also making money from drugs. In many cases, the pimps had deliberately induced a habit in the young woman to create a dependency on him and a reason to stay on the streets – an expensive drug habit is hard for a teenage girl to feed. The Maze's aim is to find a point of intervention into this cycle of drugs, prostitution and violence – assisting the woman to escape one, enables her to begin to tackle the others: as one volunteer put it 'if you break one, you break the 'others'. The Maze began as a drug project and this expertise serves them well in the Marigold work.

One of the volunteers, who had been involved in prostitution, described how the danger of OD-ing remained, in her view, the greatest threat to the women's lives. Drugs are the link that connects women's own sense of worthlessness and despair and pimps and punters (and wider society's) disregard for the women's lives: a potentially lethal cocktail.

I worry when you see the girls who are very high. You think they look close to OD-ing sometimes and then they say they are going to get more drugs. It scares me 'cos I've seen people die from heroin overdoses before and I've seen pimps just leave them and let them die. It's very difficult, and then other girls are scared of the pimps so they won't go and help and they don't want people involved. So sometimes I worry when I see a young girl who looks really wrecked on the drugs. Some girls they can't string a sentence together. But then if you've got nowhere to take them and they want to stay out working and then they want to buy more drugs, there's not really anything you can do but it's upsetting to see people in that state,

standing out there so far gone. Because they're vulnerable anyway. You see people beaten up and everything and then they're back out. (Project volunteer)

Some of the women we interviewed who had now been able to come off drugs saw this as essential to their survival, indeed it was often the key factor in enabling them to change. One woman described how her own daughter was now an addict; watching her struggle to come off drugs was a reminder that the decision was a lot more complex than simply entering rehab. Coming off drugs requires deciding that there may be something to live for. Women's stories supported the Maze's view that the most crucial intervention is one that enables a woman to believe that her continued existence matters.

I fell pregnant with my second child who I did really want and the drugs just stopped. I just stopped. I've been in untold rehab units and just walked out. I had a really good probation officer that would get me in everywhere. But it's not until you're ready – you're not going to stop until you're ready to stop. I stopped because my baby needed me. I say that about my daughter as well. She's got a year old baby, She stopped while she was pregnant, she stopped for nearly a year, but she's back on it. I don't think I can cope with it so close to home, that's why I asked for help. She'll come and talk to them but she won't talk to me. (Service user)

The relationship between prostitution and drugs is a complex one. On the one hand, prostitution can be seen as part of the cycle of drug related crime: addicts developing a criminal career to finance a drugs habit. For women, an obvious route is prostitution. However, the women themselves have a different perspective on this: the drugs enable them to *do* prostitution. Taking drugs in order to go to work was a common pattern amongst the women. Decisions about change are, therefore, crucially interconnected.

Running through all our interviews was the fact that pimps were the link between the different forms of crime related to prostitution: creating and feeding the women's habits; dealing; perpetrating violent crime; and coercing the women onto the streets. Interviewees felt strongly that tackling pimps was the key to crime reduction and were frustrated by the tendency of the police to focus on the women, and less often, on the punters – instead of tackling the issues at the root (see also Barnardo's, 1996).

Pimps are the particular problem when it comes to street girls. Girls in escort and massage agencies see pimps for what they are. They're making money, it's a business. Street girls need protection from the pimps but they think the pimps are protecting them from the police and the other girls, dodgy punters. Girls in massage parlours will say 'yeah, the boss is a pimp he's taking 40 per cent of what I earn'. But street girls are usually handing over 100 per cent just for a roof over their heads and drugs. The women do have a huge bond with these men and they can't see any bad in them and they accept the relationship they want a boyfriend and they want to be secure. There's a huge element of control and mind games. They really want to believe what he says. (Project volunteer)

In relation to crime reduction, the Maze is quite clear that this must involve encouraging and fostering women's own desire to leave. One volunteer explained that when involved herself, she was aware that everyone had a plan to leave, if they got the chance to survive, get older and become more independent from pimps.

I made a decision to leave myself. I wasn't that trapped in the way some of the girls on the streets are. I had lots of friends. I'd gone in and out over a long period of time, there's always a pattern where you stop, but then you go back when you need the money. And I was getting ill from using drugs and drinking, and everything around the lifestyle. It's such an unhealthy lifestyle. I could see what it was doing to me and I had to make that choice. I think most of

the women as they get older realise that – everyone's got a plan! They'll make the money and they'll leave. A lot of the women we work with at the Maze are in a position with a bit of support that they could make that break. A lot of them are talking all the time about moving out of the area and doing different things. (Project volunteer)

Analysing our interview data revealed a sobering point: that when discussing crime in relation to prostitution we are talking about life and death issues. Rape, gang rape, HIV, murder, being left to die from an overdose, these are the dangers women routinely encounter. This is a far cry from the media representations of women in the sex industry, and the legal context in which the only crime involved is arranging to exchange money for sex. The youngest women on the streets, teenagers with no home, sometimes with no one to notice they are missing; were considered the most vulnerable. This concern was graphically illustrated by the stories the workers had to tell about young women they had helped escape terrifying situations:

We were going down Wentworth Street and we saw what I thought was a bundle in this doorway. She was supposed to have fallen over and cut her knee. When I started talking to her she told me she was working for five Asian boys all of whom had drug habits, and they were chasing her. She looked about nine but she was actually about 17. I had never seen anyone so vulnerable and so scared out there. I wanted to hit one of those blokes later when I saw him. She had run away from somewhere and ended up on the streets. The boys had gang raped her, and threatened that unless she worked for them they would do it again. We took her to social services the next day and they placed her somewhere a long way from those boys. It's that that makes me go out even when it's cold. (Project worker)

All our interviewees, believed that trying to deter women from entering prostitution, by the threat of legal punishment – fines or prison – was fundamentally pointless. The threats and realities of violence from pimps would always be more powerful. Routes into prostitution could not be seen as a decision made to choose one path rather than another.

People talk about choices all the time, but lots of the women we work with don't know they could make a choice. They don't think they could have a choice. It's about encouraging them to realise they can make a choice. (Project manager)

6. Primary Prevention and Early Intervention

The Maze Marigold project deliberately targets the youngest women out on the streets, many of whom have recently left care or run away from home to get involved with 'boyfriends' who are pimping them. The decision to do so was driven by observing the conditions of these women's lives, and also builds on findings from the Maze's own research which demonstrates that early intervention is crucial. Critically, the Maze places an emphasis on primary prevention, reaching out to young women in schools to raise awareness at an early stage about the tactics and ploys of pimps. The Maze's joint work in schools with the LoudMouth theatre group is a particularly positive example of this.

The Loudmouth workshops focus on the relationship between a teenage girl, J, and her older 'boyfriend' Marcus, who initially presents himself as an admiring, attentive would-be lover. As time moves on, J gets into conflict with her parents about having an older boyfriend and staying out late, and Marcus persuades her to leave home and move in with him. Once there, Marcus increasingly isolates her from family and friends, undermines her confidence and eventually persuades her that in order to get him out of debt, she must have sex with his 'friend'. This escalates, with him bringing men back, until Marcus has her working out on the streets for him and is violent when she refuses. Fear becomes the key dynamic of the relationship. The actors pause at regular intervals and take the school students

into groups to ask them about what is happening: what should J do at this stage? Why is she behaving the way she is? What is Marcus up to? The students also have the opportunity to cross-examine the actors whilst in role.

Before the workshop begins, the actors ask the students to come up with words to describe 'prostitute' and 'pimp'. For prostitute the teenagers invariably come up with: slag, slut, dirty, junkie, bad. For pimp: clever, cool, tough, rich, dealer. At the end of the workshop the students are asked if there any words they would like to change. Almost all of the words for prostitute are withdrawn and the words for pimp are exchanged for words like violent and sleazy.

J's story is typical of those told by the Maze's service users. Prevention can mean two things: one, raising awareness before the girls end up in this situation. But, secondly, it means intervening early: getting in there before the situation spirals and the girl becomes stuck in an escalating situation – violent pimp, a habit, a criminal record, homelessness - which becomes harder and harder to escape.

In answering how they ended up on the streets most of the women began by talking about problems at home, which led to them running away from home or leaving home to be with a boyfriend when they were very young.

I was unhappy at home. My mum hated me, I hated her. Well maybe I don't hate her I love her, I just don't like the way she acts. I want to sometimes ask her why she did what she did to me. Why did she beat us the way that she did? For all those years I used to think that I was wrong. Now as an older person, I now know that I wasn't wrong. For my mum to phone me or knock at my door, I would forgive her straight away. I know it would be the hardest thing to do. She had a bad upbringing. She was the only stepchild. She was her mum's daughter. Her father got married and had other kids but her ste-father used to batter her. I know she had a hard time, she's not in contact with any of her family. My mum is one of the coldest people you will ever meet. But even now, if she would just knock on my door, I'd forgive her. (Service user)

I didn't feel anyone loved me and that's the sort of kid these guys prey on. I was really angry as well when I left home. I had a lot of anger in me. And I felt shitty thinking my mum and dad didn't really love me. (Service user)

They never used to say I love you or anything like that. I was the one that introduced that word into my family. Now my dad always says 'I love you'. (Service user)

Coming into contact with a man who told her he loved her had an enormous impact on the young women in this context. Looking back on it, the women felt they could understand why it was so hard to get away from him and how much they needed to believe that he meant what he said, even when – or especially when – the situation was escalating.

When I left home I was really really angry because I was adopted, my mum and dad had three children of their own – I really resented that. As a child you don't understand that your mother doesn't want you. I had this vision as a child of my adopted mother dragging me away from my real mother. So I just built up this resentment and I fought against them all the time and I was always in trouble. Then at 16 I just left and I came to London. Well I worked first of all and then I met this guy who said he loved me. That's all I wanted was someone who loved me – someone of my own. Once he said that to me, then the ball started rolling – violence and all that. It's a downward spiral, then the drugs get introduced... I used to cry, I can remember I used to cry. He used to bring people back to the flat first of all – people that he knew. It was really when he started wanting me to go out that he started beating me up

because I didn't want to go out. But he wanted more money and he'd obviously brought them back to the flat just to get me into it. I don't even know if he ever got any money for that. I only know they'd come into the room and do it and go. So whether he got money for that or it was just to get me interested... When they beat you up they always go 'I love you, I love you'. And they're so clever, they know how to manipulate. (Service user)

I did it because, I left home because, I couldn't see that they loved me. They did and I was really naughty. So I thought they were always picking on me. I left home to hurt them, but I didn't go on drugs or on the game to hurt them. I mean that came later. I just wanted to get away from them – I couldn't stand to be with them. (Service user)

I met a guy and I fell in love at 14. I lost it. That is where I made my mistake. He was 10 years older than me. Instead of him telling me to go away and get an education and go to school and stuff like that, he just encouraged me in everything I did and used me for my money. If I'd never met him, I probably wouldn't have done it. I was going through a bad patch in my life– when I was younger I used to confuse sex with love and now I know the difference. I thought I loved him – now when I look at it, I didn't love him. (Service user)

The older women looked back on what had happened in their lives with regret and a sense of loss for the teenage girl for whom it could have been so different.

I used to be very good at sports. I did sport for my county and swam for my county – that was always my dream, but somewhere the anger inside me just took over that. There's nothing I wouldn't have done for him. Literally nothing. I absolutely adored him. Even when he put me out on the street I absolutely adored him. I started running away from home I was about 14. Sports was my whole life. I was going to train to be a PE teacher or something, That was what I originally wanted. (Service user)

I used to have a French tutor. When my Dad found out what I was doing he was so upset I had so much going for me. All my sisters were in really good jobs. We used to go to Saturday school. (Service user)

My Mum's over 70 now and when I talk to her I can tell she has regrets. She was brought up in a big family in Ireland. They were very strict, you know. That's what she was like. My Dad never said or did much. My parents were foster parents. They are good people. I think over the years my Mum's learned – I don't think she understands how I felt. But now I've sat down and told her and I feel really close to her. And that was enough for me – just to think that they were mine, and they loved me. (Service user)

I didn't really want to be on drugs but I was put on drugs and then I got the habit. You must know how hard that is to just come off it. You need something to make you stop. I was just lucky – getting married and having my son did that for me. A lot of the kids out there have got nothing, nothing at all. They haven't even got anyone who cares about them. (Service user)

It is important to these women to continue contact with the Maze even after they leave prostitution, because they have a strong desire to help girls on the streets now and enable their lives to be different, even though they cannot go back and change their own histories.

Because I've been there and done that I can see what a lot of the young girls are going through. They need someone that they can phone up to talk or have a cup of coffee with. I think years ago when I was like I was, if I'd had someone to talk to I probably wouldn't have stayed in that situation as long as I did. But there was nobody. (Service user)

In the time I've known the Maze they've changed my way of thinking already. And I think that things would definitely have been different if I'd met them when I first left home. It's important for them to be there because the young girls out there, they do need that. Even when I give up work I want to still be involved because I want to be able to turn around and say to those young girls, I've turned my life around, I'm turning my life around, you know and you can do it too. (Service user)

I think maybe if I met the workers when I was like 14, 15 when I started working, that maybe she would have talked me out of it. (Service user)

For the women with children, there was a particular determination that their children's lives would be different and that they would have the opportunities which they themselves had missed.

I haven't got the energy to get out there and do that now! But I do back my youngest son all the way. In a way I probably live my life through him now. I would hopefully make sure he wouldn't go off the rails. (Service user)

For the project's workers and volunteers, being a witness to the pimps' control over the women can be extremely hard – particularly in a context in which little is done to target the pimps.

I think the pimps are a bitter pill to swallow sometimes, especially when you see them in their nice comfy cars in the winter and they've got their women out there freezing cold, shaking with the cold. Some of them are not even allowed to come over to the van, because they're supposed to be working... and then the girl thinks he's her boyfriend – their boyfriend not their pimp. The girls look at it differently because he's supposed to be their boyfriend. They think he sits in his car because he's protecting them. (Project volunteer)

Descriptions of pimps' strategies were clear and precise – the women themselves were able to describe them and the Maze's workers had learned from them very quickly. This knowledge enables the Maze to work effectively with young people and also to recognise the pattern early in an intervention.

Pimps are clever. They pick on vulnerability – they see what they can abuse in a girl, just like any abuser would. With the young girls it does start off as a boyfriend/ girlfriend relationship. They build up a relationship so there is this element of trust so they start getting them to work. It's just manipulation, it is very clever and it's a long process as well sometimes. (Project volunteer)

Some of the young girls, they're having other problems. Maybe with their mum or their dad. Sometimes just teenage problems about staying out at night. The pimps are able to zone in on these things. They pick up easily on any young woman who is having problems at home. They're saying come with me – have a good time, don't worry about your family. Then it turns into a relationship of fear, they're too scared not to do what they're told. Also the young girls, if they've been giving them drugs, they are reliant for their drug supply from these men and if they've run away they need a bed. (Service user)

They isolate them from their friends and families so they have got nowhere to go. They've done such a work on them they feel they can't go back home, they've lost all their friends. Some of them leave school. When you see the 14 year olds on these streets I just have to take a deep breath – they're acting like they're 16 or 17. (Project worker)

For some of the volunteers it was particular experiences on the streets that had brought home the situation of teenage girls out there. For all the workers, when a teenage girl they have got to know goes missing, the possibilities of what might happen haunt and distress them.

I got close to these two young teenage black girls and they went missing for about three or four weeks. I was coming out of Stratford tube station and I saw them and we gave each other such big hugs and I said, 'where have you been?' One of them was in the mothering role, she was looking after the younger one who was pregnant. She said 'I've been keeping her off the streets'. So she was out doing all the work. The last time I saw them, the older one was with the younger one's pimp. The older one had come over from Paris to look for her Dad because she'd found out her Dad was over here. She never did find him. (Project volunteer)

One of the volunteers, an ex-prostitute herself talked about her own concerns about the young women she works with on the streets, and the need to intervene as soon as possible. She reflected on how quickly 'the life' comes to structure time and space, decreasing the space for action or even thinking that things could be different. It is only after years of living in this narrowed context that the need to stop begins to grow stronger.

I realised that if I stayed I'd be dead. Because things would happen all the time, but you just carry on working. You might be raped but you'd go working the next night. You do get so desensitised. I thought, 'what am I doing?'. And I couldn't physically work every night any more. I was working in a situation where I was doing shifts and you're fined if you don't turn up. All you can do is work or sleep, you wouldn't have time to spend money anyway. Then I got to a point where I couldn't work straight. You realise it's getting too much. It's over time, that wasn't something that happened over night. I'd had friends who left too. (Project volunteer)

The benefits of early intervention and the opportunity for rapid change was noted by project workers and users alike.

The women have grown and changed in the time we've been working with them. There's measurable change. They see themselves as being worthwhile. They believe they can access education and do it. They know they have rights – not to be abused, not to be raped. (Project worker)

The Maze, therefore, combines all the elements of prevention in its work - primary, secondary and tertiary - and draws on the concept of early intervention in its preventative focus. It is also worth noting that prevention works on many levels, extending beyond the harm reduction focus of most prostitution projects to preventing entry in the first place, and encouraging and enabling earlier exit through its human rights and social inclusion principles and practice.

7. The Maze: A Resource for and of its Community

'This is community work at its purest' (Project volunteer)

A key aspect of the Maze's practice is that it sees itself as a part of the community in which it is based, rather than as simply being there for its community. The project's workers have lived and worked in the area for many years. Both see themselves as members of the community they work in and feel they share many experiences with the women they work with – both volunteers and service users. The project has prioritised community involvement from the beginning: its management committee represents a range of local community groups. Most significantly, the project has seen the involvement

of its target population as central to its practice and this is intimately connected to the role it has developed within the community providing opportunities for volunteering, skills development and employment.

User participation

The Maze involves service users significantly in the project. As already described the needs and views of its target population have directed the project's development. Plans and strategies are discussed with the women, and consultation is effective. Women's feedback is consistently used and has been central to the evaluation process itself. Conducting the research revealed a strong sense of ownership and belonging on the part the women who use the project; the term 'service user' is inadequate to describe the relationship between the women and the project. Women talked of the Maze as something they were involved in, and those who had got to the stage of being ready to leave prostitution talked of their strong desire to remain connected to the project, believing they have a lot to offer those still on the streets. All were eager to give up time to be interviewed, and every one of the women we met on the streets talked about how excellent the project was¹². We met none of the frequently encountered suspicion of researchers – women took us on faith, because we were with the Maze's workers. They made clear they were willing to give time when they could have been earning was because they hoped the Maze would get more funding and more recognition as a result of the evaluation. 'We wish they were out here every night' was the most frequent comment we heard.

The Maze is aware that women often distrust many of the services aiming to help them; from their perspective the people involved and the practices used appear to come from another world.

Some of the older women's distrust I think comes from, 'Well I've lived through all this, I've had all of these experiences, can this young person really understand. They don't know about my past'. They can think that about all the workers. Some women think the only person who can understand is someone else who's done it. (Project volunteer)

Experience in the United States suggests the most successful projects in enabling women to exit prostitution are those where women who have left are central to the organisation. *Exit*, set up by Fiona Broadfoot, has also found this to be the case. These projects, like the Maze recognise that in order to escape prostitution, women need an organisation to offer them opportunities that the world is reluctant to do.

Working with the Maze has been good for me, it has made me positive that I can do this work and I can get into it. They've given me the chance. A lot of projects won't, which is a shame – a lot won't let ex-sex workers go out with them. They don't take volunteers or people who aren't qualified. Even in this work you don't know if it will go against you that you were in the industry, they think you might be risky, have a criminal record. Some projects are funded by Health Authorities and are wary about taking ex-workers on. But a lot of women could use their experience to help other women. And they are strong women; they've got the experience and knowledge to share and use in a really good way. (Service user)

Even when trying to apply for further education or voluntary work, women can run into difficulties: long periods of unexplained unemployment and a lack of recently acquired skills can make all of these routes hard to follow. The Maze therefore aims to provide opportunities for development within the project itself. This includes access to computers, offering voluntary opportunities to women who have left or are leaving the industry, and also (through their partnership with the University of Wales) offering support with further study. The qualification offered through the University essentially enables the women to develop skills and experience in working with people, those needed for community work. This fits with the Maze's longer-term aim of offering job opportunities and voluntary work for the women within the project or in partnership agencies.

¹² We should note that, unlike many studies on prostitution, no payment was made for interviews.

I used to be a sex worker. I stopped working and I wanted to do something – when I was working, I was helped by projects myself. I wanted to do a straight job and I thought the Maze would be a good place to start. I want to get into a paid position so this is work experience really. (Project volunteer)

I've got big gaps in my work history. I've studied but I've got big gaps where I can't explain what I was doing. So it's good in that way – the project will give me a reference. (Service user)

For women who have escaped prostitution, the decision to stay involved in an organisation like the Maze is a significant one. Many women talked of feeling that they had lost many years of their life through prostitution, and expressed a strong commitment to using the future to help other women get away more quickly – even though this work can be distressing.

I've been working in London since I was like, 15, and this is the only place I've known that does the project thing. I don't know if they do it anywhere else now, but when I first started working they never had that. I think I'd have been able to leave then if I'd met someone like them and I'd like to help girls out there now have the chance. (Service user)

You hear a lot of distressing stories that you just accept because obviously I'm desensitised to it, I'm hardened to it and I have been for a long time. I've heard all these stories in the past and you just hear the same thing again and again. But this is the work I want to do: not in a religious way, but I think I was meant to do this because of all my experiences and stuff I've been through. I think now there's not really another job that I would find fulfilling and that I would want to do. (Project volunteer)

Women who had been enabled to exit prostitution expressed forcefully the sense of responsibility to other women.

I've heard a lot of stories I can relate to and that bring back memories for me, so it can be distressing for me working here. It just frustrates me because I had trouble getting help when I wanted help in the past and then you see people in the same position. They can't get help. And when you see the young girls and they are a lot more stuck – especially 14, 15 year olds. They haven't got any support network and they're desperate for help but they can't get a roof over their heads. It's more frustrating than anything for me that the whole cycle keeps going on and on – it just continues... There's a lot more that could be done even by the council. Like putting these kids in safe places, so they don't have to live on the streets or in squats. (Project volunteer)

Use and development of volunteers

The project applies the same principles to its work with volunteers as to service users. Volunteers are encouraged to be involved at all levels of the project and are offered opportunities to develop their skills and improve educational and employment opportunities. Some volunteers are ex-prostitutes; others come from a wide range of educational and social backgrounds. All the volunteers involved in the evaluation believed that their career opportunities had been enhanced by their work at the Maze, and the project itself benefited from the energy and commitment of these unpaid human resources.

The main resource in this project is the people who work in it. We struggle to find money for residential, courses, condoms – we rely on the commitment of the people who work here. (Project manager)

As mentioned above, the Maze involves ex-prostitutes, and those trying to leave, in voluntary work. However, the Maze has also drawn many volunteers through student placement schemes; one of the workers originally came into contact with the project through her student placement. Many of the volunteers began this way, and are still there: either in a voluntary or paid capacity. One volunteer, for example, came to the Maze on a placement, stayed to volunteer and by her third year was a paid administrative worker. Once volunteers begin working with the project, they seem very quickly to develop a sense of loyalty to it.

A lot come from college to do placements. Some are still helping out, who did placements nine years ago, which is a long time. People do feel like that about this project! (Project manager)

Most volunteers are women from the local community, who are taking the opportunity to go back to education later in life. Getting to this point has often been a struggle for the women – bringing up children alone, finding a home and being the provider has often meant that getting to the stage where it was financially possible to study and train for community or social work seemed virtually impossible. The Maze sometimes provides a volunteer's first experience of employment; at other times, even when volunteers have experience, the nature of the project's work means that there is a great deal to learn.

I finished my course in July '99 and I haven't got any full time work yet, so any application form that I fill in I always say what I'm doing here, so it really helps to have it down as an experience. (Project volunteer)

It's given me so many different skills – I was scared of computers for a start. When I came here the worker said 'there's the computer'. I said 'I can't do that!' But I had to learn. We had to do fliers and all sorts and I got my confidence back. I've learned about office systems, how to do the accounts. (Project volunteer)

It's given me confidence to apply for jobs, to know that I can get reference now. I think the work's really valuable and it's what I want to do. Without this experience it would be hard to get into this kind of work. (Project volunteer)

Most significantly, even those volunteers who joined knowing little about the Marigold work – who had initially applied the Maze as a drugs project – soon became passionately committed to the work. For some, it had been a transforming experience.

It's opened my eyes so much. Because you think that you have problems, but you haven't! You haven't at all. When you see somebody out there, they haven't got a roof over their heads they haven't got clothes, they haven't got money, they have no resources available to them... my attitude has changed so much towards the women. I went out there with these ideas. I'd never seen a prostitute before. I didn't know what I was supposed to be looking for. Was I supposed to be looking for the television one? The one with the short dress, the stereotype. It shocked me because there were women who were dressed like me! How could you tell they were prostitutes? Only because they were standing out on the street corner and the workers knew them. That was the only difference. Some of them have families, some have children, not all their families know what they're doing. Some think that they're minicabbing, some think they're doing shifts. They're out there for so many different reasons. It's mind blowing. (Project volunteer)

Some of the volunteers talked about experiences they had had through working with the Maze that had stayed with them, and created a commitment to wanting to stay with the project long after their placement ended. The volunteers talked about the skills necessary to work with the Maze, the

strengths they could observe in one another that made it possible for them to make a difference to the service users. Two volunteers described each other.

She's down to earth, understanding and friendly. She's an easy person to chat to and I can see why people would want to talk to her and approach her. She's not judgmental; she can talk to them as an equal. It doesn't feel like you're just part of an organisation. (Project volunteer)

She has a strength of character, knows a lot but is not overpowering with that. It's in a down to earth way. She's very strong-minded. She knows a lot about what's going on. She interacts without telling people what to do – she's gentle. (Project volunteer)

All of the volunteers spoke with gratitude about the opportunities they had been afforded by the Maze, and admiration of the project workers' determination to practice in a way which genuinely provides a resource for the women who offer their unpaid support.

8. Good Practice – Creating an Enabling Culture

Throughout the evaluation it was clear that women who used the Maze thought the project was 'different' from others in this field; the project's volunteers and partners expressed the same feelings. Trying to pin down what makes this difference was not easy, but it was clear that respondents felt that the culture within the Maze itself created a space in which a dynamic for change was possible: a culture which enabled everyone involved to believe they could make things happen.

In this section we outline the elements the evaluation revealed as distinguishing the Maze, and which should be seen as components of good practice: most apply beyond the issue of prostitution, to all voluntary (and even statutory) sector contexts.

Clear core values

The first factor is that the Maze has a clear set of core values: values that are understood and held by everyone who works in the project, or with them as a partner. These values are expressed clearly in the Maze's mission statement and make the Maze unusual in terms of current work in the UK on prostitution.

Because the Maze explicitly states that it aims to persuade the women to leave prostitution, much can flow from this. Change becomes the core agenda, whilst a clear perspective that prostitution is exploitative fuels this and clarifies how to approach making it happen. Underlying this view of prostitution as exploitation, is a perspective on human rights, social disadvantage and the realities of women's lives. The Maze regards its users as amongst the most socially excluded in our society – no secure family, sometimes growing up in care, little education and barriers to accessing further education, employment, and housing. For the youngest women, life is lived almost exclusively within a twilight world, with many literally hardly ever seeing daylight. As a direct consequence their social contacts are limited to pimps and other prostituted women and customers. Contact with the Maze – people who only want to chat and offer soup and sandwiches – can be revelatory.

The project workers define what provides their core values forcefully.

We care and we want to make a difference. Somewhere along the line somebody has to intervene and make a difference to improve these women's chances. (Project worker)

I'm determined that the needs of the women we work with are met. I believe 100 per cent in what we do. (Project manager)

When asked about the Maze's values, those working for the project were clear about their own understanding of it. First and foremost was the view that prostitution is an abuse of women and children, and that the women involved should be given support to escape it. Typical comments were:

Coercion doesn't stop when young people reach the age of 17. Charges should be wiped off the women's records. (Project volunteer)

Women in their 40s were coerced when they were 15, it became a way of life, it's hard to break out. How can you see that woman as making a free choice or committing a crime? (Project manager)

The majority is coerced. It's that simple. (Project worker)

For the women on the streets, this perspective is experienced in practice as respect and caring. Respect includes the project's commitment to fundamental but essential boundaries in the work: confidentiality, honesty, sticking by commitments. For many of the women, this was the first time that their boundaries and their integrity had been treated as though they mattered. This was clear when the service users were asked what the Maze's values were.

I know that if I phoned in the middle of the night and I said 'I'm in trouble', I know they would get out of their bed and come. (Service user)

Other projects, you felt like they just wanted the details. With them it's different – they do actually help people. I think to myself if they only help one person every year, it's worth it. (Service user)

They gave the respect. I broke my foot and they came to the hospital to see me. They came to my home, they met my Dad. And like, they gave me emotional support and any problems that I've got I can phone them and talk to them, have a good old moan down the phone, a good old cry down the phone. And they're there. (Service user)

It is not just that these actions convey a sense of being valued by others who have no financial or sexual interest in the women, but that over time this translates into increased self-respect and self-worth.

It's abuse, it is abuse – you're abusing yourself, you're selling your soul at the end of the day. If I could walk away from it today I would. But I need the education first. I'm trying to sort my life out and I will give it up eventually. I'm 27 now and I don't want to be doing this when I'm 30. I want to get out of it and try something different. It's time to give up. (Service user)

One of the volunteers described how the Maze's aims represent these *values* rather than an *agenda*, which she perceived many of the other projects operating in this field had. These agendas may be dictated by immediate social policy concerns, such as management of the spread of HIV and/or safer drug use or it may be an explicit or implicit legitimization of the sex industry and 'sex work'.

Other groups may have their own political agenda – like ECP¹³ – here the agenda is just to help the women. Women feel that they can trust them. (Project volunteer)

¹³ English Collective of Prostitutes.

The Maze's values are never more evident than when one of the young women is missing. The project wants first and foremost for the women to know that they matter to someone: that they are not disposable people – as they feel they are seen by pimps and also sometimes by the police. During the evaluation, a teenage girl the Maze was working with, disappeared from her care home. The concern of the project workers was intense: they involved the police and other agencies, and they drove the streets themselves looking for her. The project workers missed and worried for this girl as friends and family might for someone who is included, rather than excluded, from society. The project's work is the beginning of social inclusion.

The Maze's philosophy signals a need for change: moving away from management of the problem, and/or assistance in staying on the streets more safely. This emphasis means that the project becomes an organisation which makes things happen, which measures itself by its success or failure in doing so. The Maze intends to change lives and its practice is dictated by this.

Change doesn't come quick enough for me. I want the premises now, I want to get all the kids out of Tower House and I want it now not in 10 years time. (Project manager)

Resilience

When addressing the issue of what has made the Maze different – what makes it a force for change, resilience emerged again and again. Resilience is itself complex, at its most basic, it means staying power and persistence. On another level, resilience means enduring setbacks, failures and difficulties, absorbing shocks and disappointments, without imploding or burning out - both hazards of this work.

Work on violence against women, and prostitution in particular, is notoriously difficult and many projects are short lived or have a rapid turn over of staff. The Maze began with no illusions about how much there was to learn, and a determination to stay with it until this had been achieved. The evaluation identified consistency and reliability as key to building relationships with the women and to bringing about long-term change. Life on the streets makes the women understandably suspicious of agencies and resistant to interventions. The Maze has withstood these difficulties and has now reached a point of being welcomed and trusted by the women.

The girls are dependent on them. Not just to see them and talk to them, but most of the girls have no consistency in their lives. To have something constant in their lives – they like that. (Service user)

I stood back and watched for a long time. I'm very wary of people – especially out on the beat. I weren't too sure who they were, what they were about and what they wanted. I sat back and watched but then they started to be there, they were there all the time. So it was after quite a while – a good couple of months before I got involved with them, but I saw how they operated. I saw my friend talking to them and she's a bit wary like me as well, she's very reserved in her own way. She's well spoken, she really nice. When I saw her talking to them I thought 'maybe they're not that bad'. (Service user)

The project's resilience convinced the women that The Maze was safe. Safe in a number of respects – safe to get attached to because it was not going to disappear overnight. But also safe, in that the project was strong enough to contain the conflicts in the women's lives and to provide an alternative to the powerful fears and dangers the women confront every day. Having experienced so much violence, so little regard for their feelings, many of the women have survived by surrounding themselves with a very hard shell. Caring and nurturing have come to be regarded as weakness; survival in a brutal environment is what counts. Beneath this, women described fearing that no one would be strong enough to break through that shell and that if they reached what was underneath, it would be

overwhelming. Knowing that the Maze and its workers can face obstacles, tolerate women being 'difficult', and listen to life stories full of abuse, meant that even some of the more suspicious women thought it might be worth giving them a chance:

She's safe... I respect her because she's just as strong and as hard faced as I can be. I respect that: you need to be that way. I call her 'ghetto girl', she just knows the score. I'm always singing her praises – she's my babe. She's doing a good job. I crack jokes about the van. (Service user)

I love her – she's just like – she's so strong. When I first met them I didn't want to really get involved with them. I thought 'set of do-gooders', fly by nights, gonna be here for a couple of weeks. But they stood the test of time, they gave me emotional support. (Service user)

In the longer term this can mean that the women themselves decide to let go of some of their more ingrained barriers to building and maintaining relationships. Slowly, trust can replace a need for an aggressive and ultimately self-destructive set of coping mechanisms.

Resilience also includes the recognition of limitations.

For a worker, one of the main difficulties is to recognise and accept their own limitations. There is often a desire to ensure that 'something can be done' when often there is little or on occasions nothing to be done. This can make this area of work daunting and at times depressing. However there are some women who do leave prostitution sometimes against all the odds. The catalyst for this may be something external – the birth of a child, the death of a relative or sometimes the woman is impelled by something internal, which she may not even be able to explain herself. Certainly, in our experience 'leaving the life' is something that women talk about constantly and something they aspire to. As workers, campaigners and activists it is our responsibility to be as well prepared as we can be to help them do that. (FRANKI, 1999, p.3)

The Maze's volunteers also recognise this.

I do get upset when I see young girls doing it, but there's not anything personally I can do. Like all you can do is hand over some money but that doesn't solve the problem because they would be the same situation the next night. So sometimes I worry when I see a young girl who looks really wrecked on the drugs. Some girls they can't string a sentence together and that's worrying. But then if you've got nowhere to take them and they want to stay out working, then they want to buy more drugs. There's not really anything you can do - but it's upsetting to see people in that state, standing out there so far gone. Because they're vulnerable anyway. You see people beaten up and everything and then they're back out – so it's upsetting, but I think really when I get home I just have to leave it behind me. (Project volunteer)

Some don't think about it because they're blocking it out with drugs and that. They can't even remember what they did. That is the scary thing. But I think a lot of women have that mental capacity to cope by switching off. They've built it in and they do block it off. I'm sure they don't go home and think about all the punters they've had because it would do their head in. We have to find our way of leaving it behind – that is professional detachment. I think the workers have got that as well. They do get involved and care about people but there's only so far you can go. You've got to realise that. Or you would be taking the girls home with you! (Project volunteer)

One ex-prostitute stressed the importance of recognising the limitations whilst continuing to offer the help when the woman may be ready to take it up.

From my own experience I think people have to be ready to leave. There's always going to be the temptation and money. But the Maze is ready to help when women want them to help. They do offer alternatives, but they don't force it. That would be patronising. They let them know that if they do want something else the help is here and available within the time and resources they have. (Project volunteer)

The project's service users are very clear themselves that for all its strengths, the Maze cannot rescue women – its role is to assist the women in building on their own desire for change, encouraging a belief in themselves. This is a lengthy process, a subtle one, and there may be many occasions on which a woman will try to leave, only to find she is not ready after all. All the women interviewed felt, however, that the crucial issue for the Maze was not to be discouraged – to stay with the women, despite the disappointments, and not to be deterred by the fact that some women cannot leave.

Being there for the girls and talking to them is the most important. They're not going to stop till they're ready, no matter what anyone says or does. But these girls don't have anyone who cares about them. All they have are the other girls on the street and the project. They know they can phone. I wish I had that years ago. I grew up the majority of my life believing that nobody cared. I was about 26 or 27, I really can't say that I felt anybody cared. They're genuine and that's hard to find. They never force you to tell them anything... You know, at one time nobody really said much. It was – 'What do you do if you get raped, who do you talk to?' Now we know who we'll talk to. (Service user)

You see, the project can't stop you from going back if you want to go back. But they need to be there for when they need them the next time. Because they might help them this month and they go back next month, but next month they might come out again and the next month they might really want to stay away this time. So constantly be there, they need something constant – it takes a lot to pick yourself up and leave someone who's violent because of your fears and everything. But if they're constantly there, you've got a number you can phone – because you can phone on the helpline at any time. They need to be constantly there. Somewhere you know you can turn and maybe one day they will decide to leave permanently and they will be there. There's only so much they can do. There's only so much, but being constant is important. Because one day – that girl, whoever she may be, might say: 'this is the time'. Because we have a lot of fly by nights that try and come and take over and take the workers glory. I'm not having it. We're not interested in the other projects. They come when the weather's all right, but when it's winter, when it's raining but the Maze are still there come rain or shine. That's what you need – someone there come rain or shine Tuesday and Thursday. They know everyone's patterns but they'll stay out till two am even though they've got to come to work the next day. It's the consistency. They are always there. (Service user)

One explained some of the difficulties projects, and the women themselves face, in relation to leaving.

You'll never get 100 per cent - whatever you do in this job, your rate will never be 100 per cent. But if you help two or three people – well I think it would be more than that. I talk to the young girls sometimes and they do want to get out of it. They don't know what they want to do either – and once you're used to money... Money has no meaning when you do this. There was a time when I would just go out and make it and spend it – but obviously I'm not like that now. You have to de-glamourise it from a financial point of view. A lot of people think 'It's easy money' but it's not easy. When you think mentally and physically what it takes out of

you. With a lot of women as well it's the only friends they have. A lot of my friends are ex-working girls or working. (Service user)

The project manager captured some of the project's resilience, including an openness to trying things out, however difficult and challenging.

We've got through via bloody mindedness. I really and truly believed that it should happen. I thought, well if it goes wrong, we'll learn from it. (Project manager)

Effective team working

The working culture within the project reflects its core values and practices: respect for others; valuing everyone's worth; and understanding the importance of relationships to enabling growth and development. The Maze is characterised by excellent team working, both with other agencies and within the project itself. This is due to skilled management and to a strong working relationship between the project's full time workers.

There is no competition between us. I trust her completely and vice versa, which makes the relationship work. We've both had similar backgrounds. (Project worker)

When asked about how they dealt with the difficulties of the work both paid and unpaid workers stressed that they felt able to turn to one another for support, since they anticipated and received constructive rather than critical responses.

Team working is integral to the project's strategies for working with women out on the streets and the workers explained how individualist or power-based dynamics would have made their work on the streets less effective.

You get to know who wants to speak to you and who doesn't. One of the workers has a strategy. Those two girls approached me, so the two workers backed off, because I was more involved with them. If they don't want to speak to you, they won't even if you're the one that pursues them. Some will only speak to the workers. You get a feeling of whether they'll talk or not, and you don't go further than they want you to because they won't let you anyway. If they just want to say hello that's all you'll get from them. (Project volunteer)

We work so that women have that choice – we don't push in if we can see a connection is forming. We recognise that different women will work better with different ones. (Project worker)

The manager endeavours to make the project as non-hierarchical as possible, whilst retaining a clarity that she takes ultimate responsibility for decision-making and hence mistakes, if there are any. Respect for the skills and input of all workers is paramount, whether paid or unpaid, and everyone has permission to take risks. In this way, the staff team has developed a confidence in themselves as workers and a realistic assessment of their skills and limitations. No one felt they had to be perfect, no one felt part of a blame culture in which management would not take responsibility. At the same time, the passion and commitment in the project was experienced as infectious.

Everyone is 100 per cent committed. They enjoy being here, working with the women and they enjoy working with each other. The fact that they will give more of themselves, than other people might in their job, should be recognised. (Project manager)

The key quality the Maze is looking for in its workers is a belief in the basic equality of all women, and that all women have the right to dignity and respect. One volunteer talked about working briefly with someone who was not able to become part of the Maze's team.

We took one woman out and she was very shocked. She flinched when a woman went to touch her. It just wasn't within her world, she'd never come across anything like it. (Project volunteer)

Finally, in relation to team working, the two paid workers are clear that respect for expertise is essential in terms of future development. They are always looking for new ways to develop partnerships with other agencies and professionals from whom the whole team could learn.

We really want access to professionals with expertise we don't have. Around areas like self-harm, for example. We know there's lots to learn. We want to keep learning from others. (Project worker)

Skill and experience

The Maze has employed committed and skilled staff, has a low staff turnover and excellent employee relations. The project manager has admirable leadership qualities, but is also able to work effectively as part of a team. The project runs smoothly and efficiently, evolving from organised but enabling office systems and administration. In relation to client work, the paid workers are viewed by service users and volunteers as having both personal and professional capacities to empathise and to make a difference, and to face up to the challenges of this demanding work. More than any other single factor, the skills and personal qualities of the two paid workers were mentioned by service users as facilitating change in their lives.

I think it was her strength. She doesn't back down from anything. She's not intimidated by anyone. She speaks her mind and I respect that. That was what finally swung it for me, I think. She's safe. (Service user)

They came from everyday backgrounds. She had five kids, then she went to college, she went to university – and she's done it. I was thinking, well she did it with five kids. It made me realise, I can do this, I can change my life around. I can do something positive with my life. If someone had took the time out to talk to me and not at me – I would have listened. I do listen to proper reason. If someone comes and chats rubbish at me then I don't listen. (Service user)

The Maze is a lifeline – because the workers are so down to earth, they're non-judgemental, they're consistent, they're approachable, and they're always there for the women. (Service user)

The project's volunteers also identified qualities in the workers as making a crucial contribution to the Maze's culture.

I think it's down to them, it's about their attitude and their outlook. (Project volunteer)

One volunteer who is an ex-prostitute herself was able to pinpoint what this 'attitude' is.

Without them actually being sex workers, they're the closest people you could get, who could understand the women. They're on the same level as the women without them having had the personal experience. They've got enough life experience to empathise and relate to a lot of the women out there. (Project volunteer)

Both workers have the capacity to empathise and to build relationships with service users that see them for who they really are and identify what is needed. This is illustrated by an example of the manager's ability to see beyond women's sometimes rejecting and hostile defences.

When we first met this one woman on the street, she was just so aggressive, I was terrified of her. I think we were all terrified of her. I thought – 'You're not going to get the better of me, I'm going to get through to you if it kills me'. She was quite childish – she'd take what was on offer, but act as though she was saying 'no thanks' at the same time. I thought, 'Oh, you're not going to walk away from me – we're here and we're going to be coming here all the time'. I suspected the aggression was a barrier. I felt I needed to find out. It took a long time, but we got there. I suppose she really is a bit special to me. (Project manager)

Determination and willpower were seen by the project manager as key qualities that she brings to her role at the Maze, whilst recognising that some people can also find these qualities daunting.

Some people think I'm aggressive. I am assertive and I am single-minded. If I've made a decision that this is what is needed then I am single-minded in getting that. It may not be exactly what is needed, but the only way to know that is to get it in the first place. (Project manager)

She is realistic about her skills: she knows she is good at what she does. She also knows that some of her methods are unconventional.

I know I do a good job out on the street. I go out to do a good job on the street. I wouldn't be doing it otherwise. You tell me the women have said I'm containing and warm. I have argued with myself about how professional that is. I am a natural carer, I can't deny that, but I don't mean that to come across as mumsy. Some professionals would not approve of me caring. (Project manager)

Both workers are aware that it is essential for the Maze to be up to the job, in the sense of being tough enough to stand up to the barriers and obstacles to progress. Sometimes these barriers come from the women themselves, who will subject potential helpers to vast amounts of hostility before accepting what they have to offer. Others come from the wider society: other agencies which do not sympathise with their approach; a social rejection of the women as human beings who matter; the belief that they are, instead, littering the streets, sully the neighbourhood, or are second class citizens who are asking for the abuse they experience.

Evidence based practice

The Maze has excellent monitoring procedures, has carried out its own research to further inform their practice and acts on the basis of the evidence gathered. During its first year the Maze undertook its own social action research, determined to base the development of the project on how women themselves viewed their situation, their history, their needs and, especially, their hopes for change.

In 1996 we found we were working with more and more young women under the age of 18 who were working on the streets.... 70 per cent had been in care and all of the young women were regular drug users. A high proportion had dual addictions to heroin and crack and 17 per cent were homeless. At the moment we are incorporating these young women in our ongoing programmes. However, because of the age of these young women and the constant risks associated with their work and lifestyles we considered it important to undertake research and evaluate our findings and decide whether or not we should seek ways of funding a project which would work directly with these young women. If the results of our research indicate that

there is sufficient evidence to indicate the need to initiate a specific project, we consider the Maze should take a lead role in setting up such a project. (Project Manager)

The project followed up this research with what it described as 'a study of 100 prostitutes in East London' during the period of February 1998 – August 1999. The findings from this study informed the further development of the project and the Maze would like the opportunity to disseminate these findings to others in the field. For example, the research established that many women who wanted to leave felt there was little point due to their criminal records. A high number wished to work in the caring professions, a field in which their convictions would present particular difficulties. As a direct result of this finding the Maze developed its partnership with the University of Wales as well as the volunteer opportunities within the project mentioned earlier. As the project grows, the Maze continues to ensure that it carefully monitors progress and collects feedback from its users - including this external evaluation.

Building a women only culture

One significant factor about the culture of the Maze is the fact that it is a women only environment. This follows recommendations for good practice in this area (FRANKI, 1999, p.9), but interestingly, very few of the projects working with young women on the streets put this into practice. Both FRANKI and the Maze recommend the creation of a culture in which the women feel valued and safe – safe to talk about a range of experiences, from sexual health to sexual violence. This aspect links the project to the YWCA more widely and in particular to the YWCA's agenda of challenging women's oppression. This is a wider recognition of these women's lives as part of a society in which male violence against women is a widespread problem.

The Maze also demonstrates the possibility of solidarity between women in the face of women's oppression, and the project – through its day-to-day work and its ethos of warmth and respect – seems to be beginning to heal some of the divisions women have felt in their relationships with one another. Friendships between women on the streets are sometimes seen to be unlikely, if not impossible. The very nature of enduring abuse together can make it hard for the women to support one another. Questioning what is happening to someone else may inevitably lead to questioning your own life. Yet, through its ways of working, the Maze has not only built relationships between workers and women on the streets but also fostered relationships amongst the women. This in turn means women increasingly look out for each other, enhancing one another's safety and also encouraging each other in their efforts to study and to look for other work.

I don't agree with this idea that the women can't be friends. Friendships with other women have really been developing – the women are sharing info about dodgy punters. They're getting to know each other through meeting up in the van. A woman from Open Door (a sexual health project) was shocked when she came out with us, about the relationships that were going on between the women. (Project manager)

It's worked that the women now worry more about each other, even women on the outskirts of the friendship groups. I think it's important that they know somebody out there will look for them. (Project volunteer)

Older women on the streets now point new young women in the Maze's direction. This has proved extremely effective. One service user described the ways the women are beginning to support one another and to encourage each other off the streets.

Sometimes you do have to ask questions directly. Once there was a young Asian woman out there – we did not know what she doing there and were worried about her safety. She had pawned her mum's jewellery and she needed to get the money back. This was the only way she could think of getting it. It was shocking. She was at the end of her tether. One of the

other girls tried to talk her out of it. We told her it was best for her not to be here. We did persuade her, we were right. (Service user)

Clearly this growth in relationships between the women is, at least partly, emerging from the positive relationships they see between the women working for the Maze. The relationship between the workers, and in the staff team as a whole, provides a model for what is possible and out of the mutual respect, caring and warmth between them, a creative force for change has developed which encourages rather than excludes other women from entering its orbit.

9. Moving Into the Future

In this penultimate section we reflect on the current situation for the project, highlighting the tensions and dilemmas it is currently struggling with. This then leads into a discussion about future developments and recommendations.

Tensions and dilemmas

Rapid early development has brought the Maze to a point of frustration. They have learned quickly about what works and what does not. Effecting change in the women's lives has been rewarding, but has also highlighted even more forcefully the limitations and obstacles, which the project encounters the more proactive and effective it becomes. 'We could be doing so much more, we know what we need to do' was the most frequent remark made about the future and captured the sense of having got as far as they can with current available resources.

As the Maze has created an enabling and 'can do' culture, this has highlighted an increasing tension in relation to inter-agency partners. Arising out of the traditions of community work and the voluntary sector, the Maze brings with it a healthy suspicion of bureaucracy and a client centred approach that often conflicts with the state agencies it depends on in order to implement the changes women seek in their lives.

When a teenage girl goes missing we need the police, her social worker, her care home to help us find her, to care like we do about where she might be and the danger she is in. We don't clock off because it's the end of the working day. We don't leave her to it because our caseload is too big or because 'that's not the way it's done'. If it's possible to intervene then we should - like we would if it was our own daughter out there. (Project manager)

Some of this tension is a conflict of perspective: with the police, for example, the Maze expresses the most difficulty in shifting long held attitudes. The police's approach was described with a range of exasperated phrases - from old fashioned sexism experienced by the workers, to what can seem to be a total disregard for the women's human rights and a view of them as somehow 'throw away' citizens who matter less than others. This particular conflict is one that can be extremely perilous, as without a positive relationship with police, both workers and service users are more at risk on the streets. The Maze is aware that this partnership is both the most complex and the most crucial of all. The relationship needs to be worked with, constantly responded to, and both sides need to find a way to work together. The project workers have found allies in the police and these links are built on. Encouraging experiences from multi-agency forums on domestic violence and from the (short-lived) West Yorkshire Kerb Crawlers programme, suggest that change is possible in this arena. For the project to get further in meeting its aims - of preventing and prosecuting crimes against women involved in prostitution, of safeguarding women, of breaking the 'arrest and fines' cycle - more co-operation is needed. This connects to issues of the criminal justice system more widely and the problem women face in trying to escape prostitution with a criminal record as a sex offender. The Maze would like to play a greater campaigning role in these areas.

Tensions with other agencies arise from the Maze's own frustration with its lack of resources and an awareness that they have the specialism and the skills to be providing the service that the other agencies cannot. Specifically, issues around sanctuary are dominant, as the project becomes increasingly successful. As more young women become involved with the Maze and are ready to try alternatives, or are in immediate danger, where can they go? Historically, the Maze has built on its relationship with the Dellow Centre and with social services to provide women with the help they need. As the project develops, these routes have come to seem increasingly inadequate, as the Dellow has its own limitations around length of stay and drug users. Housing and emergency accommodation are fraught resources in London, often heavily over-subscribed, the focus of intense competition and not sensitive to the needs of vulnerable women. 'Rough sleepers' are the subject of very intensive funding in London, and yet homeless women rarely fit the specifications. Like many homeless women, most live 'inside': with pimps when permitted, on people's floors, in squats or condemned buildings.

A lot of the young women we know live in Tower House. The council condemned it because it is full of asbestos, but it hasn't been pulled down. There's no plumbing, no toilets, no water. Most of the young women who live there are teenagers, they've run away from home. They've got heavy drug habits and they rarely eat. Sometimes when girls disappear it turns out they're in there, but we can't often get the police to go in. They have to wear protective gear, not just because of the asbestos, but because there are a lot of used needles hanging around and HIV has also spread in there. These women wouldn't count as rough sleepers. (Project manager)

The struggles which the Maze has in finding emergency housing for young women, was described as something of an 'irony'.

I was amazed. I came to work for the YWCA, I imagined housing was what we were about! I never anticipated just how hard it would be to get help with that. I thought it would be obvious that if you're dealing with young runaways and care leavers, housing is the first thing you'd need access to. (Project worker)¹⁴

Over time, the Maze has developed its links and moved mountains to get women short-term places to stay in emergencies. But it continues to be a struggle. Longer-term accommodation is also extremely hard to find. Many of the women need to escape violence from the men they live with, usually pimps, but being in prostitution and often having a drugs habit, excludes them from accessing most women's refuges and hostels. Both emergency and longer stay refuges are the Maze's dream for the future. Even if work can be done with other services to improve access, the Maze recognises that ultimately the needs of this client group are complex and that specialist knowledge would be enormously beneficial for housing support workers.

Limited resources impact on the Maze's potential for influencing work around prostitution more widely. The excellent research they carried out is essential evidence for practice in the field, but priorities have meant that the manager has been unable to promote and publicise their findings. Equally, the learning process and successful impact of the project provide examples of good practice, not only for projects that work on prostitution. They have implications for work in all areas of social exclusion as well as projects working around violence against women. Some of the frustration felt by the project could be counter-balanced by feeling they are able to impact on policy making, and on practice in other agencies and the voluntary sector. Networking between groups developing good practice models on violence against women and track records in multi-agency partnerships would be beneficial cross-fertilisation for all concerned and would also provide a support network for an innovative but essentially isolated project. Other projects with similar values could help the Maze feel less alone. Recently, for example,

¹⁴ This will be even more acute since the YWCA has made a decision to move away from housing as its core provision.

the Maze has begun to make links with Eave's Housing for Women, a project which shares feminist values and a concern about women in prostitution. Links with the campaigning group Exit and successful projects interested in good practice like South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre (SERICC) and FRANKI would be highly desirable.

In particular, the evaluation highlighted the heavy load of uncounted, unacknowledged work carried out by the Maze's paid workers. Much of the time, the workload can involve being available for helpline calls 24 hours a day (including weekends). If the workers are worried about a woman, they can be out night after night until they track her down. As the project expands these issues will become even more apparent – the women feel the van is needed out there every night. Clearly, the current two paid workers could not physically manage this (let alone psychologically). The workers firmly believe that their relationship provides the support needed to prevent burnout, as does the commitment to the work. Nonetheless, they do acknowledge that sometimes more professional support, particularly from specialists in related fields – in relation to some of the more complex issues around mental health and self harm – would be desirable.

As the project expands, as a result of its success, tensions will arise about priorities and time management. More work will need to be delegated if the hoped for funding for more workers materialises. In this context, boundaries would need to be drawn around the current worker's roles; they would need to spend more time training and managing new workers and volunteers and promoting the project. If the project is able to expand, so will the intensity of the work. In this context, ensuring a space for reflection, to unpack complexities and frustrations and to look at areas for development, will be essential. Working with women on the streets brings workers into contact with a culture that is very much about coping, no matter what, being 'tough' at all costs and defensively believing that help is unnecessary. It is important that this way of thinking is not reflected in the Maze's workers! Ensuring that the brutalising nature of work in this area does not undermine the confidence and democratic process currently evident in the project will be a challenge in itself, given the track record of small women's organisations working on these issues is one of implosion and burn out.

The manager's concern to develop learning in the mental health field is timely. For many of the women who use the project, the workers are highly idealised figures, who offer the nurturing they have never had. The project deals well with 'rescue fantasies' through its down to earth acknowledgement that the women must ultimately save themselves and make their own decision to leave. However, as the project expands and possibly moves into refuge provision, a deeper understanding of the impacts of trauma may provide workers with tools to understand the anger, attacks and destructiveness which some of the women may begin to focus onto the project. The Maze's resilience means that it is well placed to get through this with the women, but it is an area in which training, links with other professionals and further support for workers can only be beneficial to all concerned. As Judith Herman (1986) illuminates, working with survivors of violence and abuse is demanding, involving complex emotional and psychological processes.

The survivor's intimate relationships are driven by the hunger for protection and care and are haunted by the fear of abandonment or exploitation. In a quest for rescue, she may seek out powerful authority figures who seem to offer the promise of a special care-taking relationship. By idealising the person to whom she becomes attached, she attempts to keep at bay the constant fear of being either dominated or betrayed. Inevitably however, the chosen person fails to live up to her fantastic expectations. When disappointed, she may furiously denigrate the same person whom she so recently adored. Ordinary interpersonal conflicts may provoke intense anxiety, depression or rage. (p.102)

Areas for future development

The acutely traumatised person needs a safe refuge. Finding and securing that refuge is the immediate task of crisis intervention... Once the traumatised person has established a refuge, she can gradually progress toward a widening sphere of engagement in the world. (Herman, 1994, p. 162)

The issue of sanctuary looms large for the Maze. Sanctuary can take many forms and the Maze has already begun to symbolically provide this for the women. The van has exactly this meaning for the women on the streets: they associate it with physical and emotional safety. Time in the van is time to be fed, to be nurtured, to be protected, to be listened to, to be cared about. The Maze's office can also provide this role, although in a less dramatic way: the van is there at times when women feel closest to danger - during the night, out with the punters - the risks are literally waiting a few feet from the van. The Maze enters that arena in which they are most vulnerable and offers an alternative and women recount how, sometimes, once in the van they do not go back out to work that night as they find it is too hard to leave.

The Maze intends to expand on the sanctuary offered, to be literally able to offer women: a place of safety; a means of escape from abuse and violence; a refuge from pimps; an arena in which it is safe to let go of their relationship with drugs or dangerous men. The Maze knows it is limited in genuinely being able to offer the sanctuary most badly needed by the women if leaving is to be a more realistic prospect. Workers and service users alike share this view.

The best thing would be if the project had the safe house and some crash beds or somewhere the women could go. They still might get calls on their phone but ideally the bloke couldn't find them. Where they don't feel threatened and know they are safe. If they escape a pimp and then have to go back on the street to get money to pay for somewhere to stay for the night, that's a really dangerous situation. (Project volunteer)

They need a house. Maybe something short term – maybe only a week or two. But if someone phone's up desperate what do you do? They come here; they've got nowhere to send them. They have to send them back out. I think that's the major problem. Having somewhere to go where you can talk to people in your own situation as well and think – most of these girls probably wouldn't go back to their pimps, but they do because they've got nowhere to go. They need somewhere for the girls to go short term – having them in that situation long term wouldn't be too good. If everyone there is in the same situation, after a few months you're all going to get fed up and you're all just going to go back. If you can get these people into something else quickly, they're less likely to go back. (Service user)

The concept of creating sanctuary also has other meanings for the Maze. Housing is only part of this vision. The Maze feels that the unpredictable and chaotic lifestyles lived by many of the women mean that the most effective service would include a 24-hour drop in centre. At the moment the resources are not available for opening outside office hours and the workers can only go out with the van two nights a week. The project's successful experience with multi-agency work has fuelled aims of developing these links further: the project can now anticipate the importance of a centre that incorporates health care and rape counselling.

We'd like a centre where we can offer tea, coffee, laundry. The aim would be to work towards the women giving up and make choices. (Service user)

We need a centre providing condoms, with a nurse available, a dentist once a month, drug advice, a rape counsellor. (Service user)

Anything that seemed formal they wouldn't come – it needs to be a drop in, dealing with issues around abuse and violence. In this environment, where they know the workers, vouching for them, they might be more likely to talk to a counsellor. Women need to know it won't be recorded, they need to be reassured they won't go to the police – which is another element. Or they may need the morning after pill etc. without having to explain. (Project volunteer)

One of the volunteers echoed this plan for a centre, but also talked about the need for outreach work to isolated women working in flats, often the hardest population to reach in work around prostitution:

We need to expand into flats as well. Women who work inside need support as well. There are women isolated inside, with no one to talk to. We need more people to be accessible. The workers can't work 24 hours a day. We need more people involved to help – maybe counsellors and nurses, working from one place. If there was a nurse here who could do blood tests, that would be great. When the nurses come out in the van it's really beneficial, but there's only so much they can do – if we could say the nurse would be here every Tuesday morning they would be more willing to approach them. (Project volunteer)

The Maze is also determined to expand the opportunities it can provide for women seeking alternatives. Building on the Interpersonal Skills training, the Maze has also applied for funding for providing computers and computer training. The women who were seeking routes out spoke powerfully about the struggle to find work, with a criminal record and few or no qualifications or job experience.

Issues surrounding women's criminal records are a key example of the need for the Maze to also to play a campaigning and lobbying role. Currently, there is little time for writing up, for attending events, for meeting with policy makers or participating in wider forums.

I would like to spend time writing up. For example, it's important that we develop our thinking on pimps – these days it often is not one guy and one girl. Sometimes there's a group. They get her to work for them by gang raping her the first time, then out of fear of them doing that again she will then work for them. It's not even a pretend love affair. More increasingly, it's this fear of violence from the start, rather than the seduction, which is the issue. (Project manager)

There has been little opportunity for promoting the project or the excellent research they have carried out. As the Maze now moves towards spending 100 per cent of its time on the Marigold work, the opportunity for this will grow and time does need to be taken for this as a priority. Equally, the Maze would benefit from being a more active part of the community working around violence against women: in terms of support, networking with those with expertise on issues like rape or providing refuge, for example; and passing on their knowledge and skills around working with drugs for instance, or furthering links with the police.

Recommendations

The recommendations for future development emerged from reflections on the project's success in meeting its aims and objectives, and the views of the project and its service users about unmet needs.

- ***Crisis accommodation***

The Maze has quickly found that its relationship with a local hostel has been extremely effective in helping women escape violence and/ or leave prostitution. However, as the project's work has become more successful and has expanded, the hostel can no longer provide what is needed. The service provided by the hostel is limited and not adequate to the project's needs. Short-term crisis housing is essential so that women can stay longer while plans are made. It is typical in this work that women will

attempt to escape pimps or the streets several times before leaving for good. This would provide the space for women to have the choice, to apply for rehab or to leave London.

- ***Longer term solutions***

If women in the crisis/emergency service decide they are ready to leave, but need refuge, the Maze cannot currently provide long-term solutions. Refuge provision specifically for this population, staffed by those with experience and skills in this area, could provide the opportunity for women to stay off drugs, away from pimps, to study and apply for work, to have counselling and medical support.

- ***Developing education and training opportunities***

The Maze has successfully assisted women in getting off the streets and onto University courses. It would like to further develop this work, offering resources such as computers for training around the Internet and other skills.

From our perspective as evaluators we add the following recommendations, which extend those the project has already set for itself.

- ***Enhanced resourcing***

The street-work sessions, especially those involving the van, recur in service users' accounts as a source of sanctuary, support and inspiration. It is here that first contacts are made, relationships developed and maintained, and problems highlighted. This is seen as a vital resource by staff and users alike, yet currently it takes place once a week in a borrowed vehicle and once using the workers' car. Clearly this is an area where provision that has been proved to work could, and should, be enhanced. There is also a need to provide the project with its own mobile phone, since the emergency service currently utilises those belonging to the project workers. They should not have to use – not to mention publicise – their personal contact numbers in this way. If only a few more women enroll on the University course, the current offices will be ill-equipped to cope with the increased need for access to space to study and a computer.

- ***Expanding skills and specialism***

The levels of violence in women's lives, and the impacts these have on their sense of self have been documented in this report. The combination of these and the stigma of being known to have worked in prostitution are both barriers for change for service users, and sources of complicated dynamics between users and workers/volunteers. Having enhanced skills in enabling women to deal with legacies of the past, and in understanding the ways these complicate support work, would be of considerable benefit to everyone.

- ***New structures for support and non-managerial supervision of workers***

The analysis of why the Maze is so effective pointed to the key role of the project workers. If plans for expansion are successful, this will increase the need for management, supervision, planning and external liaison. Both workers are currently committed to direct work, and derive intense satisfaction from it, but as the project grows the demands on their time and skills will increase and change. Making this transition will not be easy, and both workers will need support and supervision to enable them to adjust, set priorities and juggle competing priorities.

- ***Further development of partnership work***

We have already noted links that might be useful for the Maze to develop further, both in the local area and more broadly. Developing a partnership with Eaves Housing, for example, might be of benefit to both organisations.

- ***Promoting the Maze as a good practice model***

The Maze has, understandably, focused its resources and attention on developing relationships with its service users, and the local agencies that it needs to have strong and effective links with. Within both groups it is respected, and known to be effective in working with a client group that is socially excluded, and considered by many as 'difficult to work with'. The Maze's success needs to be more widely known, and here the YWCA has a role to play in promoting one of its innovative local projects. Resources also need to be found for the project workers to write up and promote their model. Some kind of publication linked to a conference and/or a seminar to begin this process.

- ***Contributing to public debates on prostitution and social exclusion***

The Maze workers, volunteers and service users have considerable insight into 'what works' and what could work even better in relation to women coerced into and/or entrapped within prostitution. They are one of very few projects in the UK that have not only set themselves the goal of, but also been effective in, enabling women to exit prostitution. Given both the commitment of government to evidence based practice and the recent Home Office Crime Reduction Programme initiative on prostitution, the Maze have much to offer, and this 'window of opportunity' should not be lost.

10. Conclusions: Innovative, Effective and Unique

The evaluators found that the Maze project has achieved excellence in its practice and recommend that its model be replicated elsewhere as 'good practice'. Through an organic process of development the project has established a innovative, highly effective strategy for work around prostitution. We conclude noting a number of key factors which have enabled the project to meet its aims and objectives and which are fundamental to its achievements and popularity with service users and other stakeholders.

- ***'Joined Up' Solutions***

The Maze Marigold project is unique in its holistic approach to the lives of young women involved in prostitution. The project's innovative work brings together service provision across a range of key, interconnected social issues tackling: drug; violence; homelessness; prostitution; care leavers; child protection; HIV/ STDs and crime prevention. The evaluation revealed this 'joined up' approach to be central to the project's success, since any attempt to tackle one of these issues without dealing with the others makes it impossible to bring about lasting change for service users. The joined up approach was particularly appreciated by women in contact with the Maze, who expressed confusion and weariness in relation to the plethora of fragmented services offering them one element in a range of needs.

- ***Partnership and inter-agency working***

A key factor in enabling the Maze to put joined up thinking into practice is effective inter-agency working. The project has worked creatively in partnership with the police, social services, Church groups experienced in work with rough sleepers and probation officers. The evaluation findings also emphasise the excellent partnership work in relation to health issues and to providing women with educational opportunities.

- ***Crime prevention and crime reduction***

Partnership working with the police has enabled improvements in crime reduction and law enforcement. The evaluation highlights successful innovations, such as the 'ugly mugs' strategy to alert the women to known perpetrators currently in the area, and joint work with the police to ensure prosecutions against men who rape or assault the women involved in street prostitution. This has been a significant development, from which a number of successful prosecutions have resulted. The evaluators also note the success of the Maze's interventions to enable women escape violent pimps. The underlying

aim of the project is to get women off the streets and into education or work, thus decreasing their exposure to both violent crime and potential prosecution for soliciting.

- ***Emphasis on primary prevention and early intervention***

The evaluation notes the Maze's emphasis on primary prevention, including the positive impact of joint work in schools with the LoudMouth theatre group. This is supplemented by targeting the youngest women out on the streets, many of whom have recently left care or run away from home to get involved with 'boyfriends' who are pimping them. The project is building here on findings from the Maze's own research which demonstrates that early intervention is crucial in interrupting this damaging cycle for vulnerable young women.

- ***Resilience***

Work in this field is notoriously difficult and many projects are short lived or have a rapid turn over of staff. The evaluation identifies consistency and reliability as key to building relationships with women, which, in turn, was the key to long-term change. Life on the streets makes the women understandably suspicious of agencies and resistant to interventions. The Maze has withstood these difficulties and has now reached a point of being welcomed and trusted by women. Older women on the streets now point new young women in the Maze's direction. This is one example of the impact of the project locally.

- ***User participation***

The Maze involves service users significantly in the project. Plans and developments are discussed with them, and feedback is consistently used and has been central to the evaluation process itself. They are also fairly unique in the UK in encouraging and welcoming women who have/are currently exiting prostitution to become volunteers.

- ***Clear core values***

Prevention and reduction of prostitution lie at the heart of the Maze's philosophy. This clarity has enabled the project to move beyond those that limit their vision to harm reduction targets. The commitment to seeing and treating the women working in prostitution as whole people, who have hopes, dreams and untapped potentials feeds into developing strategies that create social inclusion by building out from strong, respectful and challenging relationships with the project staff. The dedication to social justice, especially the right of all women to live free from violence and abuse, fosters a resolve to build access to redress and support when women are assaulted, and a belief that policy should target pimps and exploiters.

- ***Effective team working***

The Maze project is characterised by excellent team working, both with other agencies and within the project itself. This is due to skilful management and a strong, durable working relationship between the project's full time workers.

- ***Use and development of volunteers***

The project applies the same principles to its work with volunteers as to service users. Volunteers are encouraged to be involved at all levels of the project and are offered opportunities to develop their skills and improve educational and employment opportunities. Some volunteers are ex-prostitutes; others come from a wide range of educational and social backgrounds. All current volunteers felt their career opportunities, and their lives more broadly, had been enhanced by their work at the Maze, the project undoubtedly benefits from the continuing involvement of long-standing team members, who care passionately about it and its service users.

- ***Skill and experience of paid workers***

The Maze has employed committed and skilled staff, has a low staff turnover and excellent employee relations. The project manager has strong leadership qualities, but is also able to work effectively as part of a team. The paid workers are viewed by service users and volunteers as having both personal and professional capacities to empathise and to make a difference, and to face up to the challenges of this demanding work.

- ***Evidence based practice***

The Maze has excellent monitoring procedures, has carried out its own research to further inform future practice and acts on the basis of the evidence gathered.

Worth less or worth more?

Three aspects of the Maze's work with service users shone through in this evaluation: the establishment of real and meaningful relationships with women who have been, and continue to be, socially excluded and mistreated; ensuring that the support the project offers is consistent; and creating sanctuary. What we observed was that in everything it did the Maze challenged the view that women in prostitution are worth less than others, and most impressively created a climate in which women began to feel and see themselves as worth more. It was this re-evaluation of their own worth that established a basis from which they could imagine, and then take steps to create, lives which were of their own choosing, lives outside the dangerous, reinforcing triad of prostitution, drugs and pimps.

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