

## Street Prostitution in Southend-on-Sea

Street prostitution has existed in Southend-on-Sea, especially in the area around York Road and Ambleside Drive for many, many years. Various police operations have succeeded in moving the women selling sex from one road to another and various organisations have tried to support women selling sex but no intervention has had a significant impact on reducing the number of women selling sex or on the numbers of men buying sex.

Women who sell sex are at significant risk of psychological, emotional, physical and sexual harm. The psychological impacts of selling sex are immense and multiply the longer a woman remains in prostitution. Trauma responses make managing everyday life more difficult, so accessing services and agencies is more challenging which, in turn, leads to increased vulnerability and further exploitation. Being in prostitution becomes a cycle that is incredibly difficult to break.

There is also a significant impact on the local community with high levels of anti-social behaviour as a result of the women selling sex and the men in the area who are pimping the women or buying sex, including drug-dealing, hazardous litter and noise nuisance.

Southend-on-Sea needs a long term and coherent approach to street prostitution within the Borough that seeks to end the harms caused by those who purchase sex.

This Council resolves:

- to recognise street prostitution as adult sexual exploitation and a form of violence against women and girls, to acknowledge it as such in the Borough's violence and vulnerability strategy and to consider the specific needs of women who sell sex on the street in the strategy.
- to recognise the public health risks associated with street prostitution and ensure harm reduction measures are in place for women selling sex on the street, including provision of condoms and sexual health testing in a way that is truly accessible to women.
- to enable departments within the Council to work with local third sector organisations to develop exiting pathways that allow women who wish to stop selling sex to do so, including helping to facilitate a forum for services to fast-track women into trauma-informed support, promoting collaborative working and holding organisations to account for the support they offer.
- that, once exiting pathways are in place that are shown to be appropriate and working to enable women to exit street prostitution, the focus moves to ending street prostitution in the Borough and sending a clear message that this town will not tolerate perpetration of sexual harm.

Proposed by: Cllr Helen McDonald

Seconded by: Cllr Dan Nelson