

Male Action Project (MAP) Summary of Outcomes Report

Introduction

In April 2012, the Cyrenians, supported by Northumbria University, secured funding from the Millfield House Trust and Northern Rock Foundation for a full-time support worker to: expand the evidence-base regarding the needs of male sex workers in Newcastle; establish a dedicated and holistic support service for male sex workers within the Cyrenians; and undertake a programme of campaigning activities to stimulate and facilitate policy change. This report provides a summary of the key activities undertaken during the funding award period, as well as the key findings, outcomes and impacts which emerged from these. The data has been drawn from a review of two bi-annual reports provided by MAP, outreach notes and client outcome records, and is split into four sections: outreach, MAP service provision, campaigning and lobbying and dissemination.

Outreach

Central to the funding proposal were the findings of a limited scoping exercise undertaken by a pool of outreach volunteers during 2011/12, which identified that off-street male sex work takes place in various public spaces in the city and is opportunistic in nature. The men engaging in this were identified as chronically excluded, with high incidences of homelessness, addiction problems, poor physical, mental and sexual health and experiences of violence and exploitation being reported. They tended to have high levels of engagement with the criminal justice system but low levels of engagement with support services. The scoping exercise also revealed that men often feel unsafe in the 'cruising' areas (spaces where men meet other men for sex) in the city, and rarely reported violent incidents which occurred. The presence of an outreach team was felt by the men to be an important step towards addressing this. They also agreed that they would access or make their peers aware of a dedicated project for male sex workers if one was established. Post the award, outreach has continued on a regular basis. The team aims to undertake two outreach sessions per week: a morning outreach session to explore and leave sexual health resources in known cruising areas and a night outreach session to engage with male sex workers. Although this is dependent upon volunteer numbers and the presence of any events that are likely to result in low levels of activity (such as adverse weather or big public events taking place in the city). Outreach has proved a highly effective means of establishing trusting relationships with male sex workers and the wider gay community who attend the cruising sites to socialise. It also provides male sex workers with an opportunity to access advice and support from professionals, along with 'Worksafe' packs which include sexual health resources. The packs were described by the men as 'great', 'excellent' and 'good'. Outreach has also been useful in further developing the evidence-base regarding the working practices and experiences of men engaged in sex work.

In addition to engaging with men involved in opportunistic sex work, MAP has also sought to engage with male escorts. Reflecting the experiences of projects across the UK, however, engagement with this group (either with an agency or independently) proved difficult, with men being un-contactable or declining offers of support.

MAP Service Provision

A dedicated male sex work project – Male Action Project (MAP) – has also been established. MAP is modelled on and works closely with the GAP Project; a specialist project for female sex workers, run by the Cyrenians. From April 2012 to February 2013, MAP has supported the case management of six men engaged in opportunistic sex work, assisting them to engage with mainstream services and to exit sex work if they so wish. At the point of engaging with MAP, two service users were aged 19-24, while four were aged 25-34. Most of the men are from Newcastle (n=5); one is from Sunderland. All of the men had housing problems, with the majority living in supported or temporary accommodation. The men's physical health was described as satisfactory in two cases, poor in three cases and very poor in one case. All six men reported problems of depression. One reported bouts of anger and anxiety and one expressed suicidal thoughts. All of the men were financially excluded and were not in education, training or employment. All of the men also had problems of drug addiction and five of six had problems with alcohol. In three cases, service users had needs relating to relationships with their children, two had difficulties associated with abuse, one had experienced rape and one had experienced domestic violence. In three cases, men reported to have experienced a significant life event, including the loss of a parent at a young age, familial addiction and family rejection. All six service users had had contact with the criminal justice system prior

to engagement with MAP, while three had on-going contact at the point of accessing support. There were low levels of engagement with support services and in three cases, problems keeping appointments were reported.

All six men reported entry into sex work between the ages of 16 and 21. In all cases, entry was linked to problems of addiction or the need for food or shelter. All six men were considered to be at risk of sexual exploitation. They typically reported engaging with clients via the internet, mobile phones and in one case, begging. All of the men engage in sex work in Newcastle, but some also work in other areas of Tyne and Wear; two reported to work in North Tyneside, one works in Gateshead, one works in Sunderland and one works in South Tyneside. One also works beyond Tyne and Wear.

All service users were referred into the project via the outreach team and all had disclosed their involvement in sex work to the team. Regular contact with MAP was reported in four of six cases. One service user has been supported to exit sex work during the pilot period. Through engagement with MAP, men have been supported to access GP support, dental treatment, GUM, drug and alcohol treatment, benefits, housing advice, support around relationships and attend probation appointments. Assertive outreach has been critical to supporting the men to address their needs. Positive outcomes were most likely to be achieved in respect of the following needs: accommodation, physical health, drugs and alcohol and attitudes and behaviour. In one case, positive change was achieved in respect of supporting service users to access/sustain benefits. No changes have occurred to date in respect of employment, training and education and mental health. Positively, however, no deterioration was measured in respect of any of the service users' needs. Following one service user's first experience of accessing a sexual health service (with the support of MAP), the MAP development worker reported, '*the visit to GUM seems to have motivated him to improve his general health. He was also impressed with the staff at GUM*'. In relation to another service user who was reported to have made positive changes in his life since engaging with MAP, the development worker reported: '*[Provider] was pleased with his attitude. He stated that his relationships are going well, especially with his girlfriend and his sister. He has proven that he is capable of holding down a job and [he is] using his time constructively and reducing his drug and alcohol addiction. He is keeping appointments*'. In supporting service users, MAP access clinical advice from the Personality Disorder Lead for Northumberland and Tyne and Wear Foundation Trust who is on secondment with the Cyrenians. Opportunities for MAP clients to engage with clinical support in-house are in discussion. This is likely to be of significant benefit to the client's emotional wellbeing; a similar service has proved beneficial for GAP clients.

Some of the male sex workers engaging with MAP are taking part in a photography project being run by the Cyrenians, whereby they use photography to visually document their experiences. This project is scheduled to be completed by October. In addition to providing service users with an opportunity to reflect upon their experiences and thereby potentially enhance their wellbeing, the final photographic exhibition produced will help raise awareness of the experiences of male sex workers among policy-makers and service providers.

MAP have also began developing relationships with other male sex work projects across the UK, including those based in Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow, with the NHS-funded 'Open Road' project in Glasgow being seen to provide a particularly effective service model. The focus of this is the learning of best practice from other projects to inform the development of MAP.

Campaigning and Lobbying

In parallel to developing a specialist sex work project for men, various campaigning activities have taken place across the 12-month funding period. The key objectives of the campaign were to inform the development of:

- More proactive service delivery models in relation to the mainstream needs of male sex workers (*Objective One*)
- Efficient reporting systems within a regulatory framework to ensure that instances of exploitation, assault and abuse are dealt with in a coordinated and appropriate manner (*Objective Two*)
- A comprehensive government policy around prostitution and exploitation that recognises the specific needs of male sex workers (*Objective Three*).

In relation to *objective one*, the findings of a scoping exercise into male sex work in Newcastle undertaken between May and November 2011 were summarised into a four-page report and disseminated to a range of local, statutory and voluntary organisations, across a range of policy areas, including housing, health, criminal justice and adult

social care. Strong themes within the study related to problems of chronic exclusion, exploitation, poor health and wellbeing, violence, stigma and discrimination. The report highlighted the need for a significant package of activity to be undertaken at local and national levels in relation to male sex work. At the local level, a number of steps have been taken to take forward the recommendations from the report, including the establishing of an operational sex work steering group (OSWSG) for Newcastle. The group meets bi-monthly and consists of practitioners from a range of statutory and voluntary organisations including MESMAC Northeast, Sexual Health in Newcastle (SHINE), New Croft House (GUM), Adults facing Chronic Exclusion (ACE) Project, Safeguarding Children at Risk (SCARPA), Probation and Northumbria Police officers from Intelligence, LGBT and Newcastle West, as well as academics/researchers from Northumbria University. The foci of the group are information sharing and driving forward service developments in relation to health and wellbeing, addictions and criminal justice. The discussions at the group allow for a more co-ordinated response to engaging with the client group. Developments in these areas will have significant positive impacts on sex workers who live and work in Newcastle.

GAP/MAP has also provided sex work training to agencies across Tyne and Wear for several years and male sex work is now embedded in the syllabus. The findings of the scoping exercise carried out in 2011 are summarised and discussed, together with case histories and an introduction to the law and sex work. The training is administered by Safe Newcastle.

In relation to *objective two*, MAP has successfully negotiated with Newcastle City Council that violence committed against (male) sex workers be classed as a form of 'hate crime' and therefore eligible for inclusion on the city's Anti-Race and Hate Crime (ARCH) system which is administered by Safe Newcastle. MAP is now a referral centre for ARCH which means it is able to input reports of violence committed against sex workers to the system. Reports can be made anonymously. MAP also accepts information from the other reporting/referral centres. The incidents recorded on ARCH remain live until all relevant parties are satisfied that the incident has been addressed appropriately. MAP has submitted ten reports to ARCH over an 18-month period, with incidents typically consisting of verbal abuse, assault and damage. The inclusion of sex work-related hate crime on ARCH will help raise awareness of issues around male sex work to a range of services across Newcastle.

MAP has also become a member of the UK Network of Sex Work Projects (UKNSWP) and within that, the National Ugly Mugs Scheme. National Ugly Mugs is a scheme whereby members (agencies who have front line contact with sex workers and individual sex workers) can submit reports of violence, assault and other offences committed against sex workers to a central intelligence team. These reports are then sanitised and sent out via alerts to members nationally, thereby warning sex workers of potentially dangerous and violent clients. MAP follows the national Ugly Mugs process when violent encounters with clients are disclosed to them and submits the reports to the central team where consent is given; the local Ugly Mugs process is known as 'Worksafe'. This was established in 2007 in conjunction with Northumbria Police.

In relation to *objective three*, MAP is a consistent agenda item on the established multi-agency Strategic Sex Work Steering Group (SSWSG) for the city. The group is chaired by a local counsellor and its members have the capacity to influence and deliver policy change. The group was established in May 2012 and meets bi-monthly. The primary aim of the group is to develop a co-ordinated, strategic response to sex work in the local area; central to this is the development of a local Prostitution Strategy, as well as ensuring sex work is embedded in other relevant policy contexts. The group are currently working on implementing an action plan to ensure appropriate service delivery for sex workers, which MAP plays an instrumental role in.

MAP, through the Cyrenians, are also involved in responses to national policy consultations on sex work, such as that issued by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), which was submitted in early February. Responses to consultations reflect a coordinated response taking into account the information known by and views of both the operational and strategic steering groups.

MAP has sought to develop relationships with broader sex work networks and working groups, such as the UKNSWP Policy and Practice Group, the UKNSWP Northern Forum Group and the Male Sex Work Group. A key outcome of this has been engaging with the National Ugly Mugs system, and submitting local reports of offences committed against sex workers which are disseminated nationally.

Dissemination

An executive summary of the work of MAP, to date, is currently being produced. The summary will detail: the current evidence-base regarding the nature of local male sex markets, the risks which male sex workers are exposed to and the service needs of male sex workers; the core activities of MAP to date; and the key policy and practice recommendations emerging from the work of MAP. The summary will be disseminated to policy-makers and practitioners operating across a range of policy areas, via a half-day event which will be held in March 2013. It is hoped that the event will provide an opportunity for local, regional and national stakeholders to engage in much needed conversations regarding policy around male sex work.

Conclusion

MAP has made significant progress in its first year of funding towards:

- Developing the evidence based regarding the experiences and needs of male sex workers - full details of this will be made available in a separate report.
- Developing an effective, dedicated service for male sex workers - six service users have been supported to make positive changes in their lives, the findings of outreach further evidence the need for this service and the trusting relationships being developed through outreach suggest that service demand is likely to increase.
- Raising awareness of the needs of male sex workers at the strategic and operational levels across the city – with organisations expressing a commitment to redeveloping services accordingly, and
- Stimulating and facilitating policy change – with the development of a local Prostitution Strategy being a notable development which is likely to have a significant positive impact on male sex workers.

Overall, MAP is a best practice development in the city and should be recognised as such at the local, regional and national level.

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