

Paying the Price

*A Response to the Home Office
Consultation Paper on Prostitution*

by the Maranatha Community

November 2004

I. Introduction

This Document

This document has been prepared in response to a Consultation paper on Prostitution published by the Home Office in July 2004.

‘PAYING THE PRICE’

Prostitution Review
Home Office
50 Queen Annes Gate
London
SW1H 9AT

Contact details: prostitutionreview@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

The Home Office Consultation Co-Ordinator, Performance and Delivery Unit is P. I. O. Smith.
Contact details: pio.smith31@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

The Maranatha Community

The Maranatha Community is a Christian movement with many thousands of members throughout the country active in all the main churches. Its membership includes a substantial number of people involved in the health and caring professions and in a wide range of voluntary work. Since its formation 23 years ago, it has been deeply involved in work amongst children and young people, people with drug and alcohol problems, the disabled and disadvantaged, the homeless and those caught up in prostitution. It has taken the initiative in a broad range of social projects directly contributing to the enrichment of community life, and it also has extensive international experience. The Trust is a registered charity number 327627.

The Maranatha Community
102 Irlam Road, Flixton, Manchester M41 6JT Tel: 0161 748 4858 Fax: 0161 747 9192
Email: office@maranathacommunity.freeserve.co.uk
www.maranathacommunity.org.uk
The Leader of the Community is Mr. Dennis Wrigley.

2. Prostitutes: People with Problems

- 2.1 Prostitutes are primarily people in need.
- 2.2 Many come from families which have disintegrated.
- 2.3 Many have enormous drink and drug problems.
- 2.4 Most have been in care and also have a poor educational background.
- 2.5 Many have been subject to childhood abuse and also assault in later years.
- 2.6 Most are unhappy and would wish to leave prostitution.
- 2.7 Many are lonely and often have no one to turn to.

3. Prostitution: The Social Situation

- 3.1 Prostitution is both the **cause** and the **product** of human misery.
- 3.2 It blights individual lives, degrades relationships, and destroys families and communities.
- 3.3 It is invariably associated with criminal activity, violence, alcoholism and drug addiction.
- 3.4 The presence of organised prostitution can rapidly erode the fabric of a community and accelerate neighbourhood decay.
- 3.5 The numbers involved in prostitution have undoubtedly substantially increased in the United Kingdom in recent years.

4. Contributory Factors

- 4.1 The principal factors leading to people being involved in prostitution are the dysfunctional home situation and the collapse of the marriage-based family.
- 4.2 There is a direct relationship between the growth of pornography and the growth of prostitution. The unleashing of pornographic material on Internet, television and through local newsagents, which has been allowed to take place in recent years, has encouraged the growth of prostitution.
- 4.3 The presentation by the media of sexual relations outside marriage as being normal and acceptable has undoubtedly had a formative influence on social attitudes. The promotion of the sex act has separated it from responsible human behaviour with the encouragement of short-term as opposed to long-term relationships.
- 4.4 The drift of children into prostitution has been made easier by the influence of a society, which under intense commercial pressures, has become highly sexualised. Many children are being introduced to sexual practices in so-called 'sex education' classes, which have broken down traditional patterns of modesty and respect. The education given has often been totally counter-productive. In addition to this, the provision of contraceptives to young children by adults in 'clinics' is increasingly being seen as a form of child abuse, positively encouraging sexual activity. Far from dealing with problems of sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancy, Government policies have directly contributed to these problems. The situation in the United Kingdom is worse than any other country in Western Europe.
- 4.5 Just as there are direct links between pornography and prostitution, so there are direct links between adult pornography and child pornography. A high proportion of those found guilty of offences against children and women are, in fact, pornography addicts, and vast amounts of pornography are often found in their homes.
- 4.6 The explosion of the advertising of prostitution in special and general interest magazines, and even newspapers, has clearly contributed to the growth of prostitution.

- 4.7 Perhaps the biggest single factor in the expansion of prostitution, has been the growth of the so-called massage parlours. These are widely advertised in local newspapers, and are in fact, fronts for prostitution. Local editors are clearly aware of this but continue to profit from their advertisements.
- 4.8 It is not helpful for prostitutes to be termed 'sex workers' because this tends to present their activities as socially acceptable.
- 4.9 Where public bodies have sought to control prostitution by establishing defined zones, they have invariably met with severe opposition from local residents and have also placed themselves in a position of being responsible for the exploitation of vulnerable and needy people.

5. Responses to Questions (See Annex F of consultation document)

- 5.1 It is not felt that schools have any specific role in raising awareness of prostitution, but it is strongly held that young people should be taught that the sex act cannot be separated from responsible, loving and permanent relationships. It is believed that not enough is being done to warn children of the extreme dangers of STI's, with or without contraceptive devices and of the long-term emotional implications of promiscuity.
- 5.2 It should be made far clearer to those who use prostitutes that a high proportion of working prostitutes are carrying sexually transmitted diseases.
- 5.3 In view of widespread under-age sexual activity far greater attention should be given to explaining the legal and clinical implications of this and also to put pressure on the police to take far more punitive measures against those known to be engaged in under-age sex. The number of prosecutions for this offence bears no relation to the extent to which the law is being broken.
- 5.4 The control of prostitutes by pimps inevitably involves territorial disputes between gangs and frequently the use of weapons. Urgent steps need to be taken to prevent the kind of control of local neighbourhoods by gangs, which has become familiar in recent years in Northern Ireland.
- 5.5 Many children are at great risk by virtue of living in close proximity to working prostitutes, particularly those who have come from overseas and are already insecure.
- 5.6 In many schools children at risk are readily observable by teachers and there needs to be a preventative strategy whereby early warnings can be given to Social Services by school staff.
- 5.7 Parents of children and teenagers with drug dependency problems should be informed of the immediate dangers of a drift into stealing, burglary, robbery and prostitution. Many of them are totally unaware of the seriousness of the situation in their children.

- 5.8 One of the most effective ways of identifying the needs of children wandering on the streets is for the police to operate late-night street pick-ups of young children, recording the attitudes of their parents on returning them to their homes and taking the appropriate action.
- 5.9 Warnings can be delivered to vulnerable at-risk teenagers by members of their local community or ethnic group.
- 5.10 It is vital that all children, whether at immediate risk or not, should have a telephone point of contact to which they can turn in emergency.
- 5.11 Under no circumstances should children and young people who are known to be engaged in prostitution be given help which appears to legitimise their activities. Too often in the past, children have been led into sexual activity under the guise of 'sexual health'.
- 5.12 Where families have tolerated children and young people participating in prostitution, arrangements should be made for special residential rehabilitation courses for the children and for counselling for the parents.
- 5.13 There are numerous voluntary initiatives being taken to help those who are endeavouring to come out of prostitution and the best invariably involve the use of 'adoptive families'.
- 5.14 Prostitutes and those who use them need to be given far more dramatic warnings about the inevitable consequences of their lifestyle.
- 5.15 The links between sex and drug markets will only be dealt with on the basis of a total rejection of 'harm reduction' policies which have now proved to be a failure, and the adoption of the aim of a drug free society. Since the reclassification of cannabis it has increasingly been recognised as a gateway drug and there is a desperate need for children to be told the truth about this substance.
- 5.16 There is currently insufficient housing available for those who come out of care, as well as those who are wishing to escape from prostitution. There is an urgent need for initiatives such as the Caleb Project to be launched nationally and on a self-help basis.

- 5.17 There is clearly a substantial difference between the needs of those engaged in prostitution in major city centres and those in small towns. City centre problems largely hinge on those who have left their homes and often have few local connections. These need to be returned to their homes or locality where this is appropriate. The rehabilitation of prostitutes in smaller towns, usually involves moving them elsewhere to break damaging connections.
- 5.18 Those who give evidence against pimps need to have more adequate witness protection.
- 5.19 There needs to be far closer co-ordination between the statutory bodies and voluntary agencies, including the churches.
- 5.20 There is a need for criminal law to be applied consistently throughout the country.
- 5.21 Greater help should be sought from those living in the neighbourhood of prostitution activity to express and formally register their concern.
- 5.22 Witnesses should be carefully prepared for what many of them is the trauma of giving evidence.
- 5.23 Massage parlours that are clearly involved in prostitution should be permanently closed down and their proprietors prevented from engaging in such activities in the future.
- 5.24 Neighbourhood meetings should be arranged to openly consider local prostitution problems.
- 5.25 ASBO's should be served on those who are involved in persistent street walking and curb crawling.
- 5.26 A pre-condition of all sentencing should be an obligatory involvement in an agreed rehabilitation course.
- 5.27 Because of the serious breakdown of countless urban communities, with the associated apathy and sense of powerlessness, maximum and high-profile public support should be given to all local partnership initiatives.

- 5.28 There should be no hesitation in applying criminal law in relation to all children facing actual or potential abuse through prostitution.
- 5.29 The highly organised trafficking of people can only be tackled on an international basis. However, channels of communication need to be opened to ensure that the police are informed about what is happening at a local level.
- 5.30 There is much evidence of the way in which young women, who legitimately wish to move from Eastern European countries, have been grossly misled and put under duress. All those entering this country from abroad should be given a helpline telephone number.
- 5.31 Pimps are invariably involved in other areas of serious crime and therefore, greater efforts should be made to identify them through their prostitution connections.
- 5.32 Under no circumstances should response to street-based prostitution be any acceptance of its existence. To give it legitimacy would inevitably destroy neighbourhoods.
- 5.33 Evidence in most countries clearly points to the designation of 'managed areas' as being totally unacceptable to local residents and businesses, and fundamentally degenerative in nature. There is considerable evidence of very widespread opposition to the establishment of 'managed areas' in Britain. The imposition of such areas would, of course, be intolerable.
- 5.34 The operation of prostitution in private premises is inherently hazardous. The personal and social problems would be enhanced if brothels were to be legalised.
- 5.35 Licensing and registration schemes in other countries have failed to safeguard public health and done nothing to prevent the growth of an illegal sex industry.

6. Conclusion

6.1 The problem of prostitution will not be dealt with unless society is prepared to attend to the root causes. These are **the breakdown of the marriage-based family and the widespread dissemination of pornographic material.**

6.2 The assault upon the marriage-based family in recent years has been severe and to some extent orchestrated. There is a substantial amount of evidence to show that children of ‘co-habiting partners’ are considerably disadvantaged in comparison with the children of ‘married couples’. Successive Governments have totally failed to use the educational system to encourage the marriage-based family and have even sometimes presented it as one of a number of equally acceptable options.

Children and young people have been actively encouraged to be promiscuous and many sex education classes are being shown to have a highly damaging affect on the way in which children and young people perceive adult relationships. Unless society deals with this, we may see a continuing growth in the scourge of prostitution.

6.3 The libertarian argument in favour of allowing widespread pornography hinges on a fear of imposed authoritarian legislation. This fear prevents them from recognising that today we are putting the rights of adults, including criminals, to have immediate access to corrupting material before the rights of children and young people to be protected from it.

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