

WORKING WITH SEX WORKERS AND CRACK ADDICTION

A Lambeth Success Story

An innovative multi-agency approach to helping vulnerable sex-working women in Lambeth

The lead agencies and activity undertaken

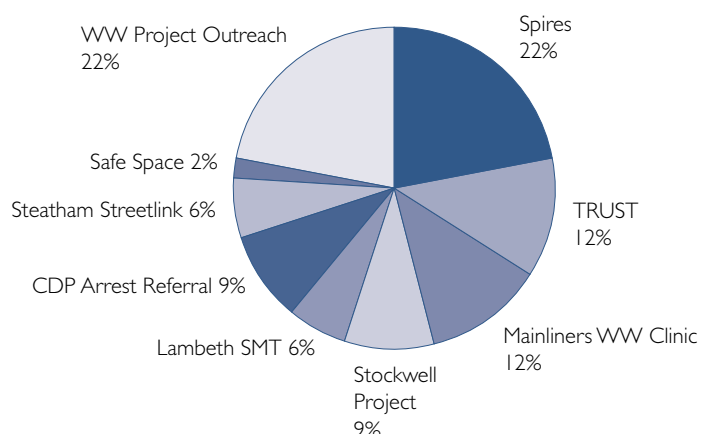
St Mungo's, Lambeth Crime Prevention Trust (LCPT) and the Stockwell Project are working to make contact with and proactively engage homeless crack-using women sex workers, who have been displaced because of crack house closures or who are vulnerably housed. The project began in November 2002.

Specialist floor at the Cedars Road hostel

54 women have been referred to the project for housing in St Mungo's Cedars Road hostel. Most of the agencies with referral rights to the project have submitted referrals for one or more women, with some agencies referring up to 7 women.

Referral sources

LCPT employs the outreach worker responsible for co-ordinating referrals as well as outreach work. The Stockwell Project works with the working women on the streets.



Early signs of significant success

Women have moved on to semi-independent housing, detox, rehab and work placements.

Referrals

- In addition to the 44 women referred into the project, a further 10 women have been contacted via outreach sessions with the LCPT working women's outreach worker. This makes the total number of women 54.
- Of the 54 women, 8 are currently on the waiting list to enter Cedars Road hostel, 28 women have entered the hostel, 16 have moved on and 2 have died.

Three months after the original intake into Cedars Road hostel

- 5 women are still living in the hostel.
- 19 have moved on to second stage housing, 13 of whom live at St Mungo's second stage specialist accommodation.
- 3 have entered treatment, 2 went into detox, 1 of whom stayed over two weeks. The other completed the programme and moved onto a six-month rehabilitation programme where she remains.
- 1 completed six days of a fourteen day stay for stabilisation at the acute assessment unit (AAU) at the Maudsley hospital; another woman is waiting to go into the AAU.
- 2 have started working with local drugs agencies (SMART Project and CDP Arrest Referral Team).
- 3 have been supported with court cases.
- 5 have been in-patients for necessary hospital treatment.
- 1 has become stable enough to apply to start voluntary work.
- 7 have resumed contact with their families.

Cedars Road hostel

Temporarily houses more than 100 former rough sleepers and vulnerable clients. St Mungo's has been running the hostel in Clapham since 1995. There are 40 staff employed to provide a range of one-to-one substance reduction, harm minimisation, resettlement, health and housing support services.

Specialist Second Stage Housing

A second stage housing project run by St Mungo's in Streatham provides a place for women to move on from the Cedars Road hostel and other St Mungo's projects. In addition there is a Working Women's Co-ordinator appointed by St Mungo's. She assists the women in the transition from Cedars Road. Specialist drugs, resettlement and health workers are employed within the project. The women take part in activities designed to help them cope with more independent living and the accommodation is staffed 24 hours a day.

The project is an example of best practice in partnership working.

Primary Partners

Lambeth Crime Prevention Trust
St Mungo's
Stockwell Project

Secondary Partners

Lambeth Substance Misuse Team (SMT)	TRUST
Mainliners	Streatham Streetlink
Spires	CDP Arrest Referral Team
SMART	Safe Space

Treatment Providers

Equinox Brook Drive
Acute Assessment Unit at Maudsley Hospital
Prescribing services at Marina House
Local GPs

Primary and Secondary Partners meet up at the monthly Working Women's Practitioners Meeting and the Prostitution Working Group.

Critical Factors for Success

The partnership between LCPT, St Mungo's and the Stockwell Project has helped to ease the process for the women moving from the streets into treatment and housing.

The joint working with, and support of, all the referring agencies means that the services the women have accessed in Cedars Road hostel address not only their basic needs, such as accessing medical care, but help them to start to make positive changes in their lives. Having a stable place to live is one of the starting points.

The Community Against Drugs (CAD) funding was allocated via the Lambeth Drugs Action Team (DAT) and the Lambeth Substance Misuse Team ring-fenced money for rehab and 'spot purchase' detox beds.

It is important to continue the work

The police estimate that there are around 110 crack-using vulnerable street-working women in Lambeth. It is estimated that during 2003/2004:

- Over 50% will be referred to the joint initiative in Cedars Road hostel
- 20% will be referred to detox/rehab
- 15% will complete detox and rehab
- 20% will access a methadone maintenance script
- 18% will be referred to supported housing
- 7% will move to unknown destinations

The Year Ahead

The aim is to build on the success of the project and continue taking women further away from the streets. Further work will help get more women into treatment, detox and rehab and encourage more joint work with other agencies that can assist this very vulnerable group.

It is important to get more women into treatment, detox and rehab and identify other potential places for vulnerable women to live. We want to build the work of this project into the mainstream provision for crack users in the borough.

Many of the residents are mothers. The service needs to address this issue and look at greater development of joint working between Children and Families Teams and Substance Misuse Teams.

Associated service providers have a high level of confidence in this project. This has provided existing partners with the option of developing more joint work with other agencies who may be able to assist this client group.

Key issues this initiative has highlighted

- The need for more women-only hostels/second stage accommodation for this and other vulnerable female client groups;
- The importance of sufficient and accessible detox and rehabilitation beds;
- The value of effective partnership working that can lead to imaginative programmes addressing the client's needs holistically. This looks at issues in the context of their whole life, not just in relation to one aspect e.g. drugs, housing or ill-health.

South London and Maudsley 
NHS Trust



St Mungo's - Leading London's services for people who are homeless and vulnerable

We are best known for our outreach street work and hostels for rough sleepers. But hostels are just a few of our 60 housing projects and we do much more than simply provide shelter!

Each night over 1000 people sleep in safety under a St Mungo's roof in our high support projects and semi-independent housing or our short stay hostels. Our specialist workers meet a variety of needs, from help with mental health problems to drug abuse to support in setting up in a new home. We run two day centres and also provide London's largest directly delivered activity, training and employment programmes - giving 1500 homeless people a year a chance to improve their lives.

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St Mungo's

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