

The City of Leeds Partnership Approach to Sex Work

Moya Woolven, CEO - Basis Yorkshire

Jackie Blackburn, SDM – Basis Yorkshire

Debra Wishardt, Outreach & Support worker – Joanna Project

Mark Charlton, Head of Community Safeguarding - Leeds City Council

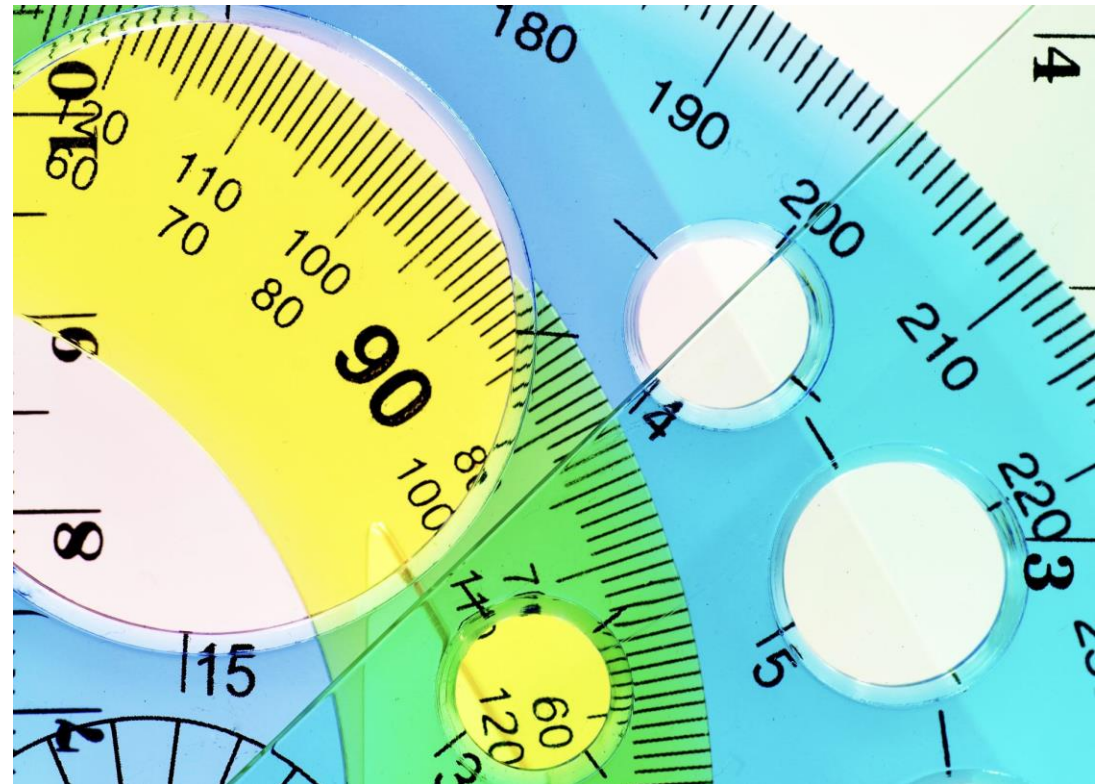
Chief Inspector Jonathan McNiff - West Yorkshire Police

Basis
yorkshire



Historical context

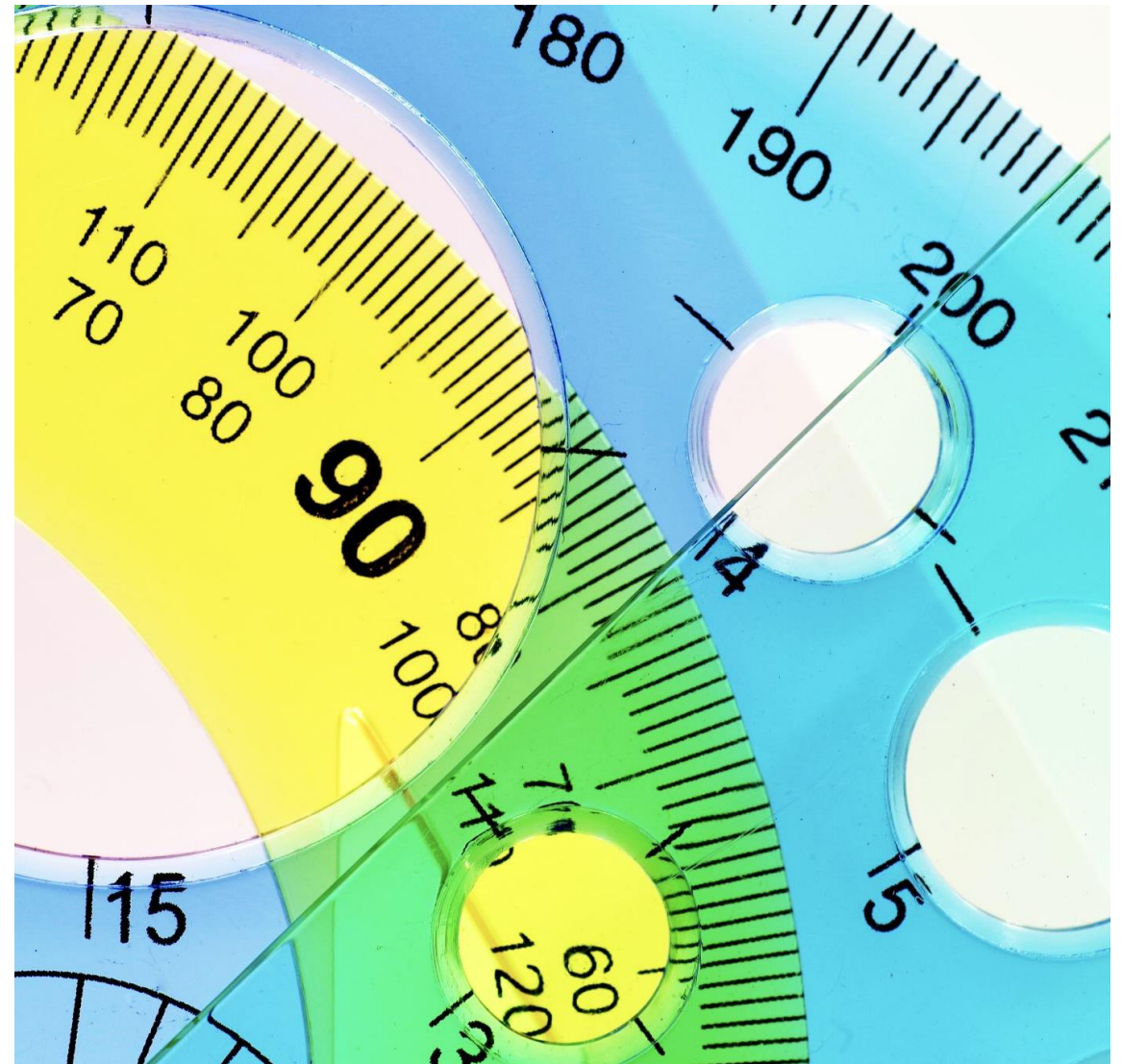
- Variation of enforcement action taken against women and purchasers with ongoing
- 2014: Managed Approach pilot
- 2020: Independent Review
- 2021: Managed Approach cancelled



Current context

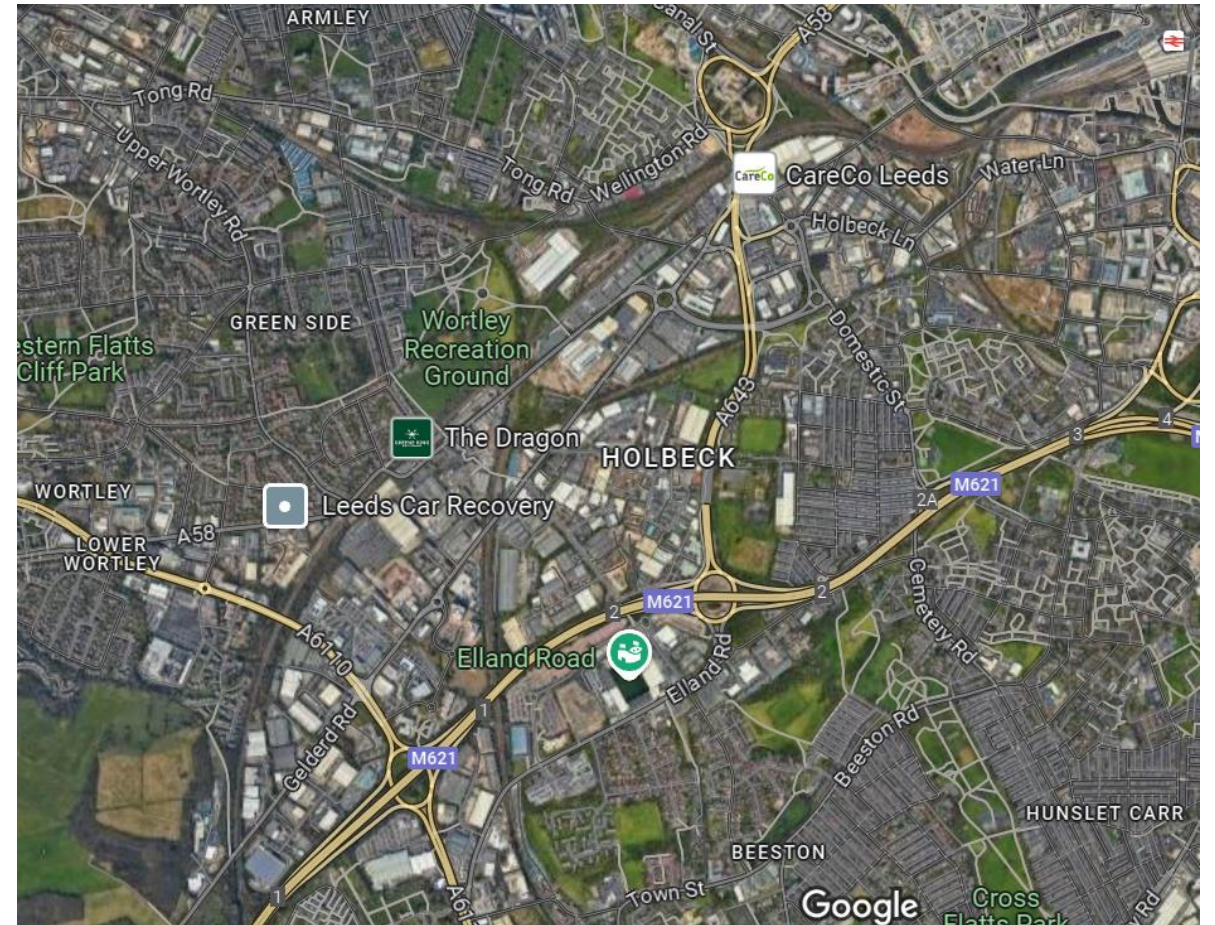
Support by local specialist police team that promotes safeguarding of women over prosecution for soliciting to ensure:

- access to services
- build trust with police to enable prosecution of perpetrators of violence against women
- while balancing wider needs of community



Leeds Sex Work Context

- One area where women predominantly street sex work – an area with significant amount of deprivation – subject to regeneration
- Women who work through agency or independent (some survival sex); limited number of saunas
- Most women live in this and other communities with high levels of deprivation
- High levels of hidden homelessness, poor health and risk of exploitation (drugs, cuckooing, involvement in OCGs) for the most vulnerable group
- Stigma experienced by women across the sex industry in mainstream services unless specialist services involved

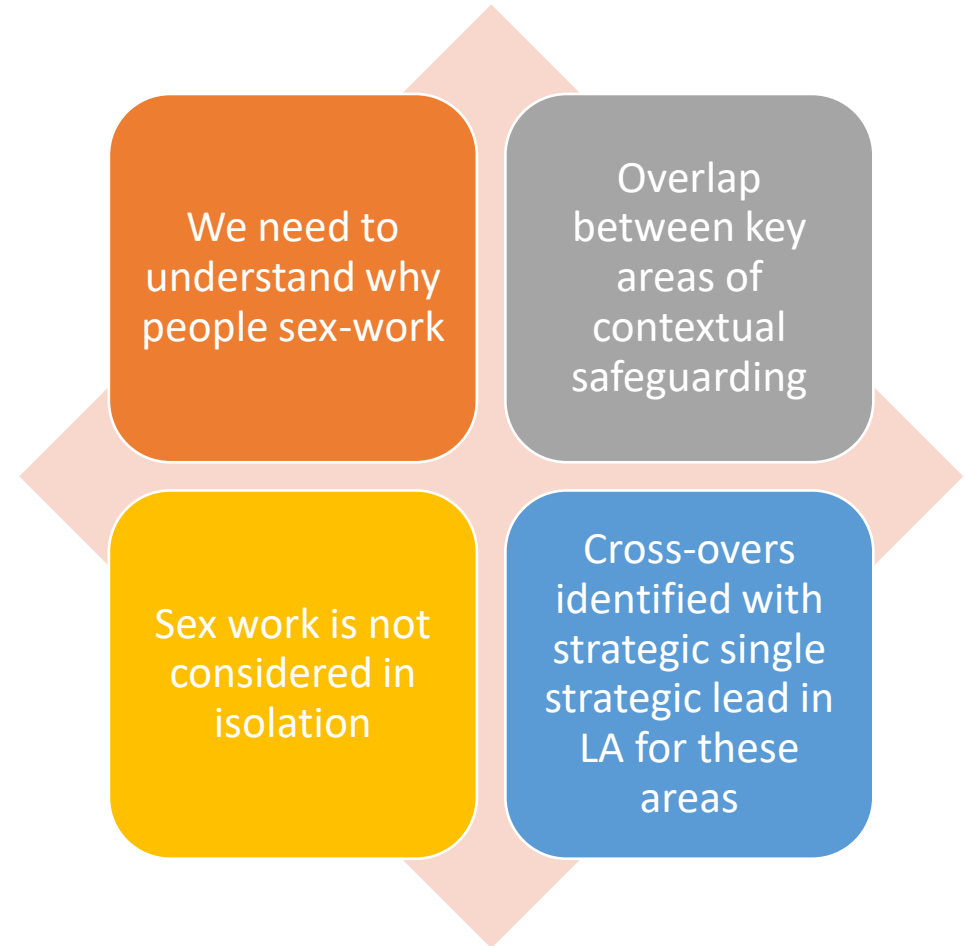


Our Approach

- Multi-agency partnership board
- Strategic overlaps with other key partnership boards to include health impact and housing
- Based on three core priorities
- Agreed a trauma-informed response to those who sex-work
- Focus on the most vulnerable using the Harm Reduction Framework
- Guided by a short plan on a page that is needs led and can be flexible if needed



Strategic Fit



The Leeds Plan

Reducing

- Reducing vulnerability and improving the safety, health, and wellbeing of street sex workers

Targeting

- Targeting those exploiting or causing harm to street sex workers

Building

- Building trust and confidence by supporting local communities, places, and spaces

Street Sex Work			
Core Shared Priorities	Reducing vulnerability and improving the safety, health, and wellbeing of street sex workers	Targeting those exploiting or causing harm to street sex workers	Building trust and confidence by supporting local communities, places, and spaces
Core Additional Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Through the on-street and off-street service provision, develop a mechanism for ensuring sex workers' voices are heard and listened to, informing & influencing change. 2 Take forward a harm reduction approach that incorporates specific first health responses/public health strategies, including the establishment of a Specialist Sex Worker Team (SST) & a STU and development of a Rapid Access to Treatment Service and Rehabilitation pathway. 3 Develop a Priority Group (highest risk) based on the Health Needs Assessment, with an assigned lead professional, embedded in a safeguarding and CR management framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Reinforce the use of civil, criminal regulatory powers, taking timely Police and/or Police based action. 2 Take the learning and application from the Dedicated Policing team and develop 'good practice' with STP Local NPTs and Response Teams. Each NPT to have a named SPOC and participate in ongoing/regular training to be rolled out. 3 Refresh information sharing protocols (Internal & Inter, regional and national), and analytical reporting, to ensure appropriate and timely intelligence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Developing and managing the look and feel of the public realm in collaboration with communities, service providers and businesses. 2 Creating a Community Working Framework to aid consultation, communication & involvement with communities for wider inclusion and growth. 3 Secure opportunities to enhance 'safe spaces' in community facilities, so they are inclusive and reflecting the diversity and needs of different population groups.
Local System Change	Links to wider work through the respective Health, Housing, Safeguarding and Community Safety Boards Links to other Strategic work of Safer Leeds City Council & Links to NPT		
Outcomes/Impact	Links/Case Study/Review Learning, Informing & Action Change	Links/Case Study/Review Learning, Informing & Action Change	Links/Case Study/Review Learning, Informing & Action Change

Working together to support women

Quarterly Silver Meeting: *with key allies from statutory and third sector*

- Assesses the context based on to ensure services are needs led and risk managed considering all stakeholders
- Discussion around significant barriers to improved outcomes for women who sex work, particularly those with higher vulnerabilities

Weekly Tasking meetings: *with key allies from statutory and third sector*

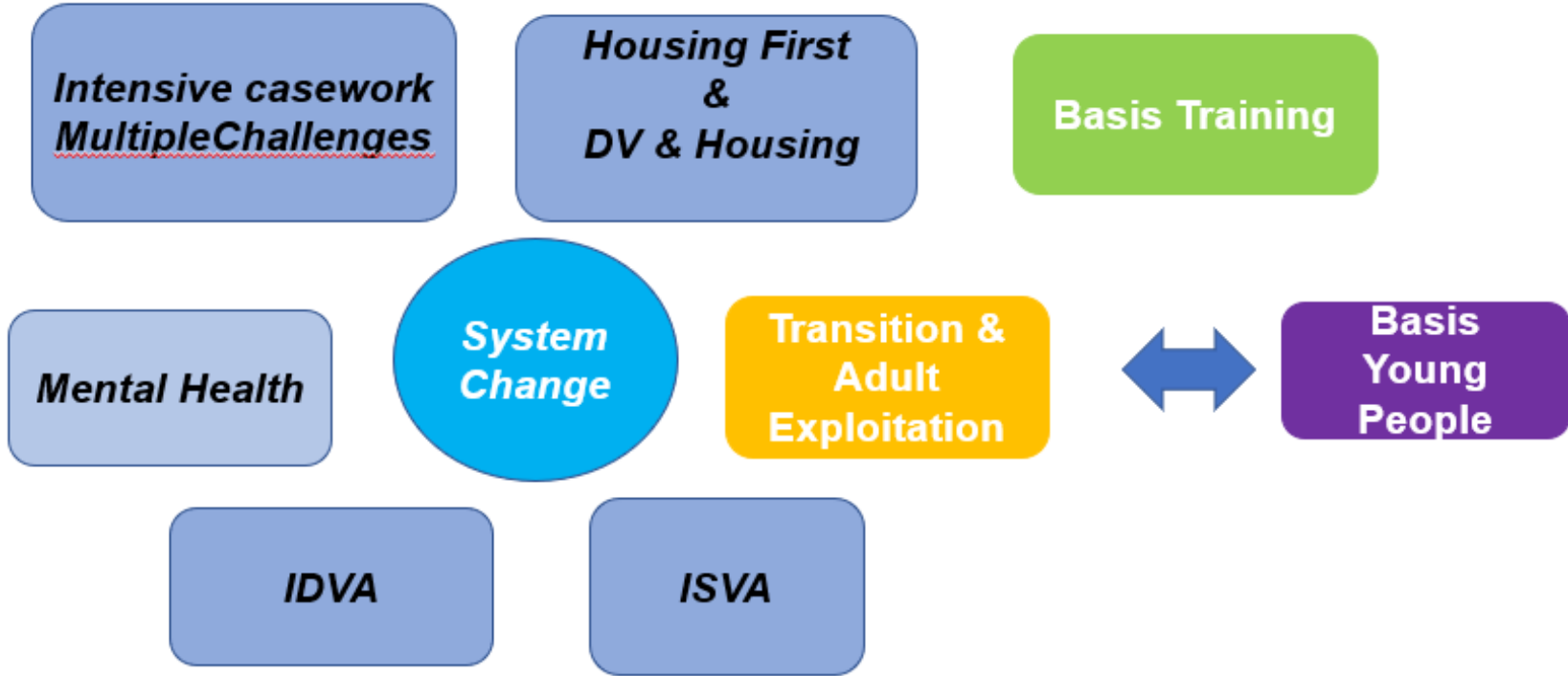
- To share information of those most at risk of harm due to significant health needs or safety concerns
- Update actions to be taken and key risks to be aware of

The Joanna Project

- Joanna Project works with hard to reach women who are trapped by life-controlling addictions and involved in street sex work.
- Through one-to-one support in the community, evening outreach and our daytime Sanctuary, we journey with women, offering ongoing holistic support in order to help them move forward towards safe, whole lives, free from sex working and addiction.



**“They don't
give up on you,
even if you're
having a hard time
they just make you
feel like family.”**



Basis Yorkshire Services



Basis Yorkshire - Adult Community Support

“Basis don’t see sex workers the way society does: they don’t stigmatize, don’t judge”

“ I am here today because of Basis and I have my family back in my life too”

Guiding principles of Policing plan

The work of the Leeds Street Sex Work Board will be guided by the five principles identified by the National Police Chiefs'.

- 1) The sex industry is complex, often stigmatised, and has many evolving typologies. This environment is conducive to the abuse or exploitation of those selling sex.
- 2) Engaging with sex workers to build mutual trust and confidence and encouraging sharing of information to improve safety which does not include making judgements about personal morality.
- 3) Enforcement primarily seeks to tackle exploitation, encouraging the reporting of crimes against sex workers and acting against perpetrators.
- 4) Maximise safety and reduce vulnerability through working in partnership to develop problem-solving approaches that tackle these issues.
- 5) Use an evidence based “what works” approach to enhance awareness of officers and partners dealing with this complex environment and ensure the focus is on vulnerability and safety.

West Yorkshire Police approaches to sex work in Leeds

Key role - Sex Working Liaison Officer

- Plain clothed police officer providing support across Leeds.
- Working closely with Child Vulnerability & Exploitation teams
- Undertaking joint visits with partners.
- Attends drop-in sessions with Joanna Project
- Scheduled drop in sessions at Basis Yorkshire
- Chairing Bronze level weekly meetings with partners
- Point of contact internally and externally
- Reassurance – overcome fears of criminalization. Taking complaints of offending, especially sexual offending seriously
- Discreate, low key approach avoids stigmatizing victims
- Gathering, submitting and sharing intelligence

VCSE partnership with WY Police

- Joint work **to offer support, manage risk and reduce harm** during street-based outreach
- Police support with **reporting crimes** with **trauma- informed** approach based on trusted relationship with women:
 - related to crimes committed while working and other
 - support for other Leeds forces when crimes relate to other areas to ensure appropriate and sensitive response
- Joint **home visits** where significant risk is present
- Basis support for women who are identified in need of support by police during the day (to support **housing** or **health** needs)
- Planned attendance at **drop – in** to introduce the role of SW Liaison Officer



JOANNA
PROJECT



Case Studies

Case Studies Basis

- Close collaboration with policing team based on:
- Trusted relationship between Basis and policing team
- Trusted relationship between police and women



Conclusion: Leeds Approach

- Based on a strong partnership that both challenges and supports each other
- This doesn't work without partnership
- The women who are sex working are our primary focus
- We have a strong trauma-informed approach

