An evaluation of the Safer Streets Pilot Project 2013–14

This report has been kindly funded by The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Greater Manchester
About the Author

Dr Michael Atkins. PhD.

Prior to his doctoral training Michael, trained as a Social worker at the University of Hull. He also undertook Masters degrees in Visual Anthropology and Anthropological research before beginning a PhD in Social Anthropology with visual media in 2009.

His thesis focused on the public sex between men in Manchester, specifically on the commercial and non-commercial sexual activity that occurs along the Rochdale canal. This research involved over two years of anthropological fieldwork and incorporated photographs and drawings, in particular graphic novella as forms of ethnography which are suited to revealing the uncertainty and complex internal realities that the men he worked with described.

Dr Atkins was selected by the Safer Streets agencies as a reviewer because of the way his of his research interests directly intersected with the work of the Safer Streets pilot project and also because of his extensive experience of outreach and ethnography in Manchester’s gay village area. Although independent of all of the organisations’ involved in the Safer Streets pilot project at the time of this report and whilst undertaking his PhD field research, between 2007-2010 he played an integral part in developing the outreach and applied arts activity of the Blue Room Project – a pre-cursor to The Men’s Room.

This report will draw upon his knowledge of sex work, the vulnerability of males and the routes that the Safer Streets workers walk to better evaluate and reveal the impact of the project.
About the Agencies

Survivors Manchester

Founded in 2009 by Duncan Craig following his own personal journey as a sexual abuse survivor, Survivors Manchester is the only organisation in Greater Manchester specifically supporting boys and men who have experienced sexual abuse, rape or sexual exploitation at any point in their lives.

The organisation provides a three-tiered approach to healing, through the provision of online self-help; email and telephone support; individual and group face-to-face support; and specialist counselling and psychotherapy services. This approach offers boys and men in Greater Manchester the opportunity to access support at a level that is suitable for them and the freedom to move between services as their healing journey progresses and different needs are to be met.

For more information, go to www.survivorsmanchester.org.uk

The Men’s Room

The Men’s Room is an arts-based support and engagement agency that aims to work creatively with men and offer them opportunities to be involved in high-quality artistic projects along side providing support for issues that they may have in their lives. The organisation runs two creative sessions weekly, The Red Room and The Blue Room, with both sessions having input from an artistic and social care angle.

The Men’s Room offers support through Drop in and Outreach services in addition to One to One advice and advocacy. It also provides training in working creatively with young men.

For more information, go to www.mroom.co.uk

Mancunian Way

Mancunian Way is an award winning charity set up in 2011 by Nick Buckley, in response to the Summer Riots. The organisation works across Greater Manchester to reduce anti social behaviour (ASB) and offending through prevention and early intervention.

All of its work is face-to-face, either in venues or on the streets, as it is a foundation belief of Mancunian Way that “it is impossible to reduce ASB or stop someone from offending if you are sat behind a desk reading Government policies, sending endless emails and holding meetings that lead nowhere”.

The organisation believes action is needed immediately, something society should demand immediately.

For more information, go to www.mancunianway.org.uk
Executive Summary

Dr Michael Atkins. PhD.

This report evaluates the work of the Safer Streets Pilot Project (SSPP), a multi-agency outreach project in Manchester city centre. The outreach team walked a specific route around a section of the city centre that intersected with Manchester’s Gay village, the Rochdale canal and Piccadilly Gardens. This area as proved particularly problematic for police over the last five decades for the prevalence of prostitution, gang crime, offences of public decency, mugging and child sexual exploitation.

The project engaged primarily with men who were involved in sex work or were at risk of sexual exploitation of a variety of ages, although the majority were aged between 21-26. This was often the age when many men began to find it more difficult to earn money around the canal. This was also often the time when they began to require more formal support with housing, benefit stabilisation and help to reduce their problematic substance use.

Although the majority of young men were white British, there were a substantial number of men from other European countries. Currently the project did not have the resources to engage effectively with some of these men, which raises questions over the specific support needs they may have had in relation to trafficking and immigration. Sexual identity also proved to be a sticky terrain. Although most of the men the project engaged with were involved in sex with other men, over half identified as heterosexual making an open exploration of sexual health concerns difficult.

The Safer Streets Pilot Project consisted of a twice-weekly multi-agency outreach service between 1 August 2013 and 31 March 2014.

During this pilot period:

- 134 hours of outreach delivered by Safer Streets team
- 67 individual outreach excursions were completed
- 60 individual young men selling sex or at risk of sexual exploitation were directly engaged with

Sex selling and being at risk of being sexually exploited intermingled with a variety of other issues for the men involved – housing difficulties, low educational attainment and employment opportunities, substance misuse and the maladaptive legacy of childhood sexual abuse. They were immersed in ecology of different needs that no service was or is equipped tackle alone.

The multi-agency approach pioneered by SSPP allowed teams to provide several different routes of support and offer referral to a much wider range of services. The way outreach engendered productive relationships of trust with people who made use of these areas of the city proved particularly useful for creating in roads both to engendering positive change and providing intel on difficult to track individuals and hidden criminal activity. This approach was particularly suited to both stabilising the lives of the men they worked with and also tackling concerns of child sexual exploitation in the city centre.
1. Safer Streets Project (Pilot)

The Safer Streets Pilot was a seven-month outreach project, co-designed/co-produced by Survivors Manchester, The Men’s Room and Mancunian Way. Its primary aim is to address concerns of community safety along an identified route in the City Centre of Manchester. It was conducted between 1 August 2013 – 31 March 2014.

This evaluation of the Safer Streets Pilot Project was commissioned collectively by the agencies with funds kindly provided by Greater Manchester Police and Crime Commissioner Tony Lloyd; with a view to exploring the projects long-term sustainability and possible expansion.

The evaluation involved undertaking face to face interviews with key members of staff from each agency; participant observation on a number of outreach sessions with Safer Streets staff; and a complete review and analysis of the project’s policies, procedures and engagement statistics.

The evaluation also presented a vital opportunity to report on what the learning of multiple intermixing needs and concerns of the people the agencies work with, working alongside together in collaboration with other agencies to meet the needs of the client group.

A particular underpinning of the Safer Streets project was the hypothesis that a multi-agency approach could be particularly successful for accessing and intervening in a context specific ‘ecology’ of diverse and often concealed needs. Although this work has been focused on engaging with and safeguarding young men at risk of sexual exploitation, alongside interrupting child sexual exploitation, the multi-agency team were better placed to tackle and be more aware of other issues that were reactive in service users lives. This model of a collaborative co-ordination of outreach services has the potential to be expanded using different agencies and community stakeholders across other areas of the city.

The wider vision of the Safer Streets project is as a strategic alliance of resources and knowledge, involving many different agencies, that developed unique outreach routes responding to the needs of different communities. These working coalitions would adhere to a set of shared working practices and objectives to tackle the variety of unique issues that effect community safety in different localities.

The evaluation therefore should be seen to have three key elements:

i. As an evaluation of the outreach and interagency practices of the Safer Streets pilot project, highlighting advantages and potential areas for growth;

ii. As a piece of qualitative research in its own right that seeks to show how concerns of community safety, rather than involving distinct single issues as is normally the focus of outreach worker, involves multiple intermingling flows of activities that an interagency approach is particularly suited to tackle;

iii. A presentation of the collaborative working and sharing of information used by the Safer Streets project as a model that might be used to develop similar outreach ‘routes’ in other areas of the city.

1.1 Project History

The Safer Streets project is the product of the enduring working relationship between Survivors Manchester and The Men’s Room, alongside the development of a new partnership with Mancunian Way formed in August 2013. However the awareness of the need to tailor more adaptive and open outreach in the locality goes back to 2008/2009. At the time, Survivors Manchester founder, Duncan Craig was also the founder Director of Health and Social Care for the Blue Room, a developmental pre-cursor to The Men’s Room.

Duncan involved the Blue Room in a UK-wide research project with Soho Boys (London), Open Road (Glasgow) and THT (Brighton) that aimed to explore and understand the specific needs of male sex workers in their respective locations.

One of the key results of this study was the recognition of the diverse ways males sold sex and thus how this diversity creates different support needs. It also highlighted the need to explore their lives in more context specific ways. The young men who engaged in arts based activities at the Blue Room contributed to the research and were identified as mainly selling sex on the streets in specific areas of the City Centre. Unlike the more professional ‘escorts’ that the research project had engaged with, many of the Blue Room clients had issues with housing, benefit
stabilisation, poor mental health, alcohol and substance misuse. The study also examined the exchanges of intimacy, money goods and services males engaged and was referred to as ‘business’ or ‘doing business’ (For the purposes of this report the same language will be used and the same issues will be looked at). The mens’ involvement in doing business intersected with a number of other complex need, occurrences and relationships in their lives. They required more than a singular service designed to address the issue of sex work and Blue Room workers engaged with a variety of issues and associated services.

Duncan formally left the Men’s Room in 2009 to concentrate on the development of Survivors Manchester and undertake a Masters degree, but very much continued in a consultancy and supervisory capacity and worked with Hayley Speed as she took over the responsibility for the strategic direction of the organisation as it went through its own workforce changes that further developed the supportive aspect of their work.

Survivors Manchester and The Men’s Room grew respectively. The prevalence of histories of childhood sexual abuse among men ‘doing business’ had led to a close working relationship of the two agencies. However, as Hayley Speed of The Men’s Room remembers, outreach by The Men’s Room in 2009–2013 had tailed off due to shifts in their management structure and service delivery. In 2011 Survivors Manchester moved to a new office space within the North West Victim Care Unit (part of Victim Support) located in Manchester’s gay village area. In late 2012/early 2013 Duncan and the Survivors Manchester team were becoming concerned about the increasing number of young men and boys they noted on the street near their office entrance. In response to this, the two agencies set out to work together to engage new potential service users identified of being at risk of sexual exploitation.

The Safer Streets project was intended as a revitalisation and extension of the existing outreach service. By utilising the knowledge and resources of both organisations this revitalisation would provide a better, more durable and responsive outreach service that would support the young men who were engaged in selling sex and were vulnerable to sexual exploitation on the streets and towpaths near the Manchester Gay village and Piccadilly Train Station. Their experiences of working with this client group had also revealed a need for a greater access to other services and also highlighted the needs of other “at risk” individuals that fell outside of either agencies remit. The presence in these areas of underage girls and young women; those using substances and alcohol; and the inter-meshing of their service users lives with other criminal activity were of particular concern. In seeking to resolve this, Mancunian Way – an agency specialising in community safety, community engagement and crime and disorder, were approached to participate in the partnership.

The three organisation strategic leads, Duncan Craig, Hayley Speed and Nick Buckley assembled a comprehensive service level agreement focusing on safeguarding procedures for children and vulnerable adults; walking routes for the outreach work and practices and procedures for their shared work. At that time the three organisations had obtained no funding for the pilot, but recognised the potential the project had for meeting their unique funding requirements. The three agencies proposed that each agency absorbed their own staffing costs to contribute to the project and The Safer Streets Pilot Project was effectively born.

Then in late 2013, following a series of unsuccessful small grant applications, Greater Manchester Police and Crime Commissioner, Tony Lloyd, kindly accepted a Business Case presented by Duncan on behalf of the project and granted £3,996 to purchase suitable outreach clothing and equipment; fund the administration and analysis of data collection; and produce an independent evaluation report.

### 1.2 Service Delivery

The Safer Streets project consisted of a twice-weekly multi-agency outreach service between 1 August 2013 and 31 March 2014.

During this pilot period:

- 67 individual outreach excursions were completed;
- 134 hours of outreach were delivered by the Safer Streets team;
- 60 individual young men selling sex or at risk of sexual exploitation were directly engaged with;
- The team were able to address a number of issues for these men, such as homelessness, substance misuse, gambling addiction, sexual health, mental health issues, rape and personal safety etc.

Each outreach session involved walking a defined route for approximately 2 hours. The team would engage with people whom they met along this
route focusing in particular on those that they felt would require the services the parent agencies offered (see agency descriptions on page 3).

In addition to these engagements the Safer Streets teams distributed “safe packs” containing condoms, lubricant and project literature with the intention of getting personal safety information to those most on the peripherals of engagement. They also recorded observations of suspicious behaviour, reported child sexual exploitation concerns to the authorities and documented changes in the local environment that would effect the lives of those they were seeking to engage.

The pilot proved an invaluable resource for the Police and safeguarding authorities in protecting three children within the area.

1.3 Theory of Change for Safer Streets Project

A theory of change diagram is used to show the intended pathway of an intervention from needs to activities to outcomes to impact.

It reduces the complex and inter-meshed process a charity is engaged in to a simple flow diagram that outlines the key aspects of the work they do and the change it aims to make.

As highlighted below, Safer Streets interventions are not easily described by a straight-forward process of cause and effect. Outreach involved contact with an entire environment full of community safety issues that result in any number of different kinds of interactions and interventions. This was even the case for the targeted service user group.
1.4 Client Group

The rapidly changing environment in which such outreach is often conducted created limitations in the kind of assessment and biographical data collection that would be obtained in more traditional settings. However, the outreach teams were encouraged to keep extensive logs of client contact in order to allow the project co-ordinators to monitor the men they engaged with. The following section presents a quantitative data overview of the client group the Safer Streets project engaged with. These statistics show the young men that made up the majority of their engagements.

Of those clients who revealed their age or their age was known to the respective agencies, 6% were aged under 18; 60% aged 18 – 25 (the category normally associated with young person services); and 34% aged 26+. A huge 14% of those individual’s whose age was known were 30 years old.

This is a remarkable difference from the 2009 research study when the vast majority of individuals were aged 18 – 24 and there was no street based contact or engagement with any individual over the age of 26. The outreach workers had assumed that most men by 30 had moved away from doing business, either due to their diminished appeal to those willing to pay for sex as they aged or the conflicts presented to other relationships – particularly with girlfriends, the birth of children, or even an involvement in more gainful criminal activity. This raises interesting questions in regards the impact of the economic downturn since 2008.

It is difficult to say whether this is a recent trend among men involved in business or due to the engagement with a new group of service users by the organisations involved.

The majority of individuals the Safer Street’s outreach team engaged with identified as White British. 15% identified as non-white (Black British, Mixed Race, Asian, Asian/British, South American) and 13% identified as White European (Polish, Hungarian, Romanian and Russian). Although still in the minority this is a dramatic difference from the 2009 study where over 95% of individuals identified as White British. In line with the observations of workers this suggests the environment walked by Safer Streets is being used more frequently than before by men from outside of the UK. This reflects the prevalence of concerns around female migrant and trafficked sex workers in recent British policy.

Duncan Craig, describes how certain demographic or ‘types’ have begun to emerge as being visibly present in these areas which has been of a surprise to him as someone coming back to work this route after an absence of three years:

“one of the biggest surprises to me has been the amount of young Eastern European men, and girls, that are using certain areas of our Safer Streets route. Quite a number of years ago, I wrote a paper for a drug service about the concern over migrant and trafficked female sex workers that had begun to access the needle exchange. I had undertaken some data analysis and the regularity of visits by these women was really worrying. I feel that worry now with these groups of young men and women that are hanging around. I’m not saying that they are being trafficked, but what I AM saying is that I worry about the potential for them to be groomed, manipulated or coerced, or god forbid, violently forced, into engaging
in activities they didn’t truly consent to. I mean like recently, we’ve seen about 25 different young people regularly in this area…its not good at all and a real concern”

Analysing the data to understand the sexual orientation of those the Safer Streets team engaged with, well over half, 67%, identify as heterosexual (n=34).

A further 25% identified as gay or bisexual and of the overall engagement group, 18% either did not know their sexuality or the individual chose to not reveal it. Most of those the data categorises as ‘unknown’ are believed to identify as heterosexual, according to third party peers. However it is difficult to reduce men’s sexuality to a singular clearly defined sense of sexual identity. In reality the men’s sense of sexual identity was far more fluid, shifting and responding to the flow of relationships around them than the purposes of asserting whether they were gay straight or bisexual. It is unsurprising given the sensitivity and potential stigma that same sex sexual activity can have, particularly among the white working classes.

This evidence is of great importance as the assumption of many professionals and authorities of those males engaging in sex work in the areas identified by Safer Streets is that they are gay/bisexual. There needs to be greater recognition of the fluid ways that men negotiate sexual identities and the difficulties they may have in disclosing certain sexual activity, so individuals can be signposted to services that meet their needs and relevant health and wellbeing interventions can be made. Publicly admitting to being involved in sex work has undesirable social and legal implications and what’s more, the way that exchanges of money, intimacy, goods and services that were often part of the everyday activities of the area, made such distinctions difficult to articulate prior to contact with the project. Even when willing disclose an involvement in sex with men for money lads doing business would often claim that they were never involved in penetrative anal sex. To do so in some way suggested to them that they were primarily ‘gay’ which may have a negative symbolic impact on the way they were able to assert their masculinity among their peers. Concealing such activity held particular risks as it meant that workers may not offer appropriate sexual health advice and referrals.

1.5 Community Safety Concerns

Due to the pilot project history with Survivors Manchester and The Men’s Room, the Safer Streets project primarily engaged with ‘young men selling sex’. The data reveals that the project engages with men of a variety of ages, although the majority were aged between 21-26. This was often the age when many men began to find it more difficult to earn money around the canal. This was often the time when they began to require more formal support with housing, benefit stabilisation and help to reduce their problematic substance use. Although the majority of young men were white British, there were a substantial number of men from other European countries. Currently the project did not have the resources to engage effectively with some of these men, which raises questions over the specific support needs they may have had in relation to trafficking and immigration.
Sexual identity also proved to be a sticky terrain. Although most of the men the project engaged with were involved in sex with other men, over half identified as heterosexual making an open exploration of sexual health concerns difficult. Despite this core group it was difficult to define the Safer Streets service user group as a distinct group or community. The pilot project was open to working with anyone that it felt was at risk in the City Centre.

The openness of the term ‘community safety’ allowed the project a greater scope of engagement that was particularly useful in accessing otherwise hidden high-risk activities of these young men and allowed an openness to engage with other “at risk” individuals that intersected with their lives. For example: the distribution and provision of condoms in particular secluded areas may also be beneficial to the sexual health of, and reduction in the risk of HIV for, men engaging in public sex in the same places. The canal area is historically a well-known “cruising ground”, Safer Streets is the only project providing condoms to men engaging in both the commercial and non-commercial sexual activities that occur there, although it is worth noting that in the Canal Street venues, The Lesbian and Gay Foundation have a long and important history of providing free-at-point-of-collection safer sex packs, known as Gay Men Safer Sex Packs containing 2 condoms and 2 sachets of lubricant and a info card detailing how to correctly use condoms.

The lives of these men also intersected with other vulnerable members of the community that were present on the city streets. Young girls would often be around the village and nearby the canal. Nearby locations like Piccadilly Gardens were hotspots for low level drug dealing and the sexual exploitation of young women and other child sexual exploitation concerns during the daytime.

Mancunian Way has a particular interest in expanding the work that the Safer Streets project has been involved in to include issues of community safety for women in the city centre. However, due to the working practices that the project was piloted on, this has not been workable beyond the collection of observations and sharing of intelligence with the police.

1.6 An Ecology of Needs

As already mentioned in the prior section, the Safer Streets project engaged with men who had many different intermixing needs. Beyond their involvement in sex work many were known to local police for their involvement in other criminal activity. The graph below shows the number of individuals involved in the criminal justice system (Probation, License or Tag) at the point of engagement.

From the data extrapolated, 63% of individuals the Safer Streets team engaged with were currently involved within the criminal justice system with the majority having a Manchester, Salford or Tameside Probation Officer. The data does not capture the level of involvement nor does it capture data pertaining to any past involvement or custodial sentences served.

At point of contact engagement, 65% of those that Safer Streets talked to or were already known to the respective agencies stated having no drug or substance misuse issue. It is worth noting that a proportion of these individuals disclosed regularly binge drinking and regular use of skunk and other cannabis to “help be chilled”.

At the point of engagement, 58% of individuals discussed mental health issues with or are known by the Safer Streets parent agencies, have mental health issues. Only a small number
of these individuals were in regular contact with a mental health professional and only a handful were either taking medication or were medicine compliant. Issues range from depression and anxiety, to long and enduring complex mental health disorders such as bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia or psychosis.

Nearly all of those individuals engaged with were regularly socially isolated, had little or no support networks and had a paused emotional intelligence/development. Whilst this may not constitute a ‘mental health issue’, the impact on individuals wellbeing through social isolation can be debilitating and cause the individual to behave in a manner that is not conducive to their personal safety or adherent to social/community rules.

For these men, an involvement in sex work was mediated by their housing situation, drug and alcohol use and the emotional legacies of childhood sexual, physical and emotional abuse. The complex mixing of these issues in the lives of the men and women involved in sex work has been highlighted by a number of UK studies. Cusick and Hickman (2005), in an interview study of 125 sex workers (33 males) conducted for the home office, argue that drug use and sex work particularly mutually reinforce each other (2005:369). Cusick and Berney’s identification of this ‘trapping’ force (2005) critiques the 2004 Home Office Report Paying the Price, which implied that sex work fueled ‘problematic drug use’.

Cusick and Bearney contend that entering and remaining in sex work involves many factors including: ‘parental promiscuity; family conflict; disrupted family lives; deprived socio-economic background; social class; parents who were poor models of behaviour; parents who deprived their children of affection; childhood experience of parental abuse or neglect; approval or tolerance of sex work in the immediate social milieu; distancing from family influence and disapproval; early sexuality; unstable personal biographies; poor work histories; problems at school; membership of young offender peer groups; unemployment; and lack of vocational skills’.

This particular population in Manchester is in the main, made up of individuals that have been through the criminal justice and care systems and more often than not, had experienced early life trauma – the majority of which is either sexual and/or physical abuse. Researchers also believe that a significantly high proportion of sex workers will have experienced sexual assault and rape whilst ‘doing business’, something that National Ugly Mugs aims to reduce through their scheme. But this largely hidden issue has a long lasting and devastating impact. A majority of those that have experienced childhood sexual abuse remained silent and developed maladaptive and unhealthy coping mechanisms and experiencing further significant trauma, similar to the original incident(s) increases the likelihood of these individuals suffering complex PTSD and other mental health issues that will go undiagnosed.
Those engaged in sex work or actively engaging in areas where ‘business’ takes place are deemed to be on the edge of, and therefore some of the most vulnerable individuals of society. The emotional implications of sex work for female workers are well documented by researchers. Brewis explores the pressure between women’s personal and professional identities due to the commodification of aspects of their sexuality. Teela Sanders similarly writes of women’s need to create psychological, social and practical barriers that allow them to emotionally manage their involvement in sex work.

In my own work with men doing business, these tensions were compounded by a need to maintain a front of masculinity and navigate the practical concerns of day to day survival. A clear separation between the sex of business and their personal lives was beset by the lack of clear articulation of their senses of sexual identity and enmeshing of exchanges of money, intimacy goods and services in their everyday lives.

Hannington et al’s work calls for an increased recognition of the multiple issues involved for those wishing to exit sex work and for an increase in partnerships and working and having on-site specialists to deal with different needs such as poor mental and psychological health; low level numeracy and literacy; dyslexia; behavioural issues; and physical health.

‘Business’ and the issues that arose from involvement were immersed in an entire ecology of needs that were part of the environment that they occupied. Much contemporary research that used the notion of sex work as a distinct exchange of money for intimacy failed to consider the complexity of the ways that such exchanges were conducted and their consequences lived.

The effect of interventions that target one specific behaviour, issue or group, is that other recurring issues in a service users life often disrupt any stability gained. Workers often describe the frustration of being able to sort housing only to find that placement deteriorated due to substance misuse or the inverse that a reduction plan may be in operation only to be abandoned due to the stress of being evicted from home.

Although the initial focus of the pilot stage of Safer Streets project was to ensure that young people were safe from sexual exploitation, it also sought to explore the possibility of a more holistic approach to outreach that developed working practices that responded to a specific environment in the city rather than setting out to tackle a single issue that occurred there.

By working together the Safer Streets project team were able to take advantage of one another’s knowledge and skill sets to effectively deliver the range of signposting and direct support service. They were easily able to access specialist knowledge of local housing policies, drug services, benefit stabilisation and sexual health services.

Different agencies often operate within different networks of relationships that are able to fast track clients and provide more expedient support. The identification of multiple needs also contributed to the prioritising of these men. Rather than being assessed on one presenting issue, the team was able to assist the men in articulating the multiple complex support needs they possessed and thus highlighted the need for more immediate and potent intervention. In addition to this they were also able to provide emotional support.
2. Outreach Practices and Processes

Sex selling and being at risk of being sexually exploited intermingled with a variety of other issues for the men involved such as housing difficulties, low educational attainment and employment opportunities, substance misuse and the maladaptive legacy of childhood sexual abuse. They were immersed in ecology of different needs that no single service was or is equipped to tackle alone.

Outreach services are useful for being able to access and form productive relationships with hard to reach vulnerable people. These relationships are able to both encourage positive change and provide intelligence that would be useful in reducing child sexual exploitation and improving community safety. Imperative to these outreach relationships was a consistent, regular and recognisable presence in the area; a reflexive knowledge of the locality, the client group and the issues they face; and the ability to make use of boundaryed, and genuine everyday rapport with a diverse range of people.

The Safer Streets project is distinguished from other outreach services by its inter-agency approach, and the way it was led by the community safety concerns of a specific environment rather than an identified client group.

2.1 Inter-Agency Working

Each outreach session is staffed by a mix of workforce from at least two of the agencies. This model is designed to increase the experience base and enable the team to engage with a diversity of different people on a number of different issues. Outreach involved a critical readiness to deal with a number of issues. It was for this reason that the multi-agency approach of the Safer Streets project was considered particularly appropriate.

During interviews, the management team identified several advantages to this interagency approach:

- Each staff group possessed a different area of expertise and local knowledge. Some were particularly proficient at addressing issues around drugs or working with groups, others on approaching more isolated individuals. For example the nature of the work of Mancunian Way outreach often meant that staff were particularly good at working with groups of teenage men. The Men’s Room staff members were used to approaching discussions of ‘business’, as were Survivors Manchester staff who were also proficient in engagement around the issue of rape and sexual exploitation. Prior to engagement, this also meant the team had a greater ability to recognise different issues and hidden safeguarding occurrences in the city. By simultaneously tackling these issues along multiple intervention trajectories, workers have a better chance of achieving a more long-term stability in these men’s lives.

- Gender differences also proved a big advantage, allowing the people they met a choice of whom they wished to engage with.

- Working together allowed team members to share skills and local knowledge informally in a collegial manner.

- On a wider structural level, partnership between the agencies has allowed the agencies to make use of each others’ connections with other organisations, particularly the local council and the police. This benefits existing relationships and also ways of working.

- Having three different agencies staffing outreach made it easier to ensure service delivery as it increased the workforce ten-fold.

- The model exploits other existing resources and allows collective funding bids, preventing duplication of service delivery by different agencies.

- Working with other agencies also has a collective bargaining power with other agencies and authorities, e.g. Police.

- There is a wider integrated knowledge and intelligence base from which to draw through both staff experience and casework.

There were also specific benefits for service users to this approach:

- The use of a multi-agency team provides more immediate access to relevant services.

- The model is particularly suited to working with people with multiple complex needs.

- Service users benefit from an expansive network of connections possessed by the multiple agencies involved.

- Consistency of services offers a regular support mechanism during chaotic periods and options of assistance in seeking more lasting changes in problematic aspects of their lives.
2.2 Environment Led Outreach

The Safer Streets project route crosses six different sections on the A1 division of Greater Manchester Police divisional area map.

One particular section of the route, located near the main thoroughfare for Piccadilly Train Station, has been identified as one of the most problematic and high risk, particularly to those identified as being vulnerable.

This particular area has been historically well known as an area for public sex between men who have sex with men, male and female sex workers, and gay and bisexual men.

In an interview with the Manchester Evening News (21 January 2014), Inspector Phil Spurgeon stated that there was a long recognition by Greater Manchester Police that this particular area was a “well-established public sex environment” and authorities were working “closely with outreach projects in the area, and wider GMP operations such as Operation Protect, which looks at sexual exploitation.” There was also a recognition by the authorities that they needed to be “sensitive to the needs of any vulnerable people involved”.

In the same time period that the pilot Safer Streets project was running (1st August 2013 and 31st March 2014), 6 deaths were investigated by Greater Manchester Police in a main part of the route – the Rochdale canal area of Piccadilly.

According to the UK Crime Map\textsuperscript{12}, crimes happening on the A1 division, in this particular in this period were reported and recorded as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Crime Type</th>
<th>No. of Incidents</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 2013</td>
<td>Anti-social behaviour</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other theft</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Violence and sexual offences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2013</td>
<td>Anti-social behaviour</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theft from the person</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vehicle crime</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Violence and sexual offences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2013</td>
<td>Anti-social behaviour</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other theft</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Robbery</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vehicle crime</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Violence and sexual offences</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 2013</td>
<td>Anti-social behaviour</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criminal damage and arson</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2013</td>
<td>Other theft</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2014</td>
<td>Criminal damage</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Order</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Theft from the person</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vehicle crime</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Violence and sexual offences</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2014</td>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theft from the person</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Violence and sexual offences</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 7 crimes of Violence and sexual offences were recorded in a 7 month period, what is essentially a small 3 street radius.
Rather than the zoning used by police, the Safer Streets project has co-ordinated outreach around a route. Walking is a central part of the outreach work the project undertakes. It is by walking out to encounter people that outreach workers are able to do their work.

Hall and Smith in their research with a multi-disciplinary outreach team in central Cardiff highlight how outreach is primarily a practice of sensory walking which involves a sharing of clients’ spatial relationship with the urban environment. They describe how the walking of particular routes that allow them to catch up with their client base is a central part of their practice, effectively where they go is the work that they do. An outreach worker’s knowledge of their beat often involves highly specific knowledge of times, places, people and the ways they move around. This kind of relationship to the city emerges and changes through the repeated outings, observations and everyday contact with clients.

The routes walked by the Safer Streets project workers are not arbitrary, nor are they the most direct routes to known problem spots. The route has been determined and influenced by knowledge gained over a number of years from observing and engaging with young people in the city. The role of walking and following the senses has also been noted as important in both research on sex work and also cruising between men.

In many ways the Safer Streets project workers emulate the walking routes of the people they are attempting to engage, crossing police boundaries in the same way as they do.

“For the Safer Streets project, this was balanced by the need to maintain staff safety and provide a consistent service that potential service users would be able to keep track of. Workers were required to stick to the designated outreach route. Deviation from the route needed to be checked out and risk assessed by Senior Management.”

Duncan Craig of Survivors Manchester explains:

“It’s all about the route, the reason for the route and the regularity was primarily to ensure health and safety, so the police will know where we are if anything happens. However it is also so people know where we will be at particular times, so they find us out if they need us, if they’ve just missed us most of the regular people will know we’ll be round again before the end of the night.”

The route was developed from a combination of over three years of the outreach set by Duncan when working for The Blue Room; followed by a continuation with The Men’s Room and intel Survivors Manchester gains from close working relationships with the Police, service users and other organisations. Particular concerns for drug use and child sexual exploitation also inform the route. They are routes built upon an intimate understanding of these concerns in the city centre, and the known movements of the people that Safer Streets wish to engage with. The times of outreach, have also been tailored to fit in with these rhythms of movement.
Hayley Speed, Director of The Men’s Room said:

“Different things happen on different days, for example the lads say that Monday is ‘straight night’, it tends to be busy for them because straight men who have spent the entire weekend with their families use it as a chance to come out. I remember working girls used to also say that Monday was busy. Maybe there’s something lonely about Mondays?”

Duncan explains that this is a balancing act, between going out when people are around and respectfully allowing them to avoid the service:

“I’ve learned over the years that it is not always best to go out at times you know are going to be the busiest. The lads don’t want to talk to us and you end up alienating yourself because you’re getting in the way. Being a good outreach worker involves knowing when to back off but then when you need to intervene, for example because of safeguarding concerns”

However all of the project team agreed that the route also included open areas slightly off the track visible to the outreach team and presented an opportunity for engagement.

Nick Buckley, CEO of Mancunian Way mentioned the importance of occurrences in visual range for outreach work:

“anywhere that is visible from the planned route is part of the route”

This reveals how the routes that outreach workers walk are flexible and particularly responsive to sensory occurrences in the same way that the movements of their client group change over time. The following section will describe walking this route, the exchange of stories and knowledge that this involved and how this contributes to the always changing intimate understanding of the urban environment that outreach workers possess. In acknowledgement of the important role of the sensory environment in both outreach and the client group safer streets engages it also incorporates photographs and drawings by the author.

2.3 Walking the Route – An Ethno-graphic Experience

The route begins at the Survivors Manchester office, in the centre of one of the village’s back streets. This street and particularly the first bar we pass as we turn left, has a local reputation for some as a place where ‘lads doing business’ hang out. These lads are often walking a route that circles between key points like this. It is not unusual for the team to encounter a known face as they leave the office door or to see someone standing on the nearby corner regardless of the weather conditions.

Due to the discreet ways that these men engage in sex work as part of their everyday lives, there is little formal information about how long the area has been known as somewhere that such exchanges occur.

Although the advent of internet cruising and the changes in respect of the gay village as a nationally known tourist attraction have reduced the number of young men that use the street, there are always men still working there, and every year sees new boys discover the possibilities and pitfalls of doing business. There have been projects engaging with male sex workers operating in the area since approx. 2001.

The team walks to almost the end of the street and turns down a short alley backing onto the New Union Hotel, which claims to be one of the oldest pubs on Canal Street and proudly boasts...
its historical reputation with the police as a house of ill repute on its website. The village has an affluence of back streets, a physical characteristic that perhaps contributed to its longer term reputation as a place of cruising between men, female prostitutes and other ‘criminal’ activity. Before the 90s, the village was a much darker place with old gas lamps and broken cobbled streets. It was the perfect location for both sex workers and clandestine meetings between men seeking sex with other men. Prior to the legalization of homosexuality in 1969, gay men and women shared this space with other criminal communities and gangs.

As we step out onto the main street of the village today, the bar’s proudly display neon lights and posters that declare an open association with the gay community. The pot holed cobbled streets are gone, as are some of the “seedier” venues. The sound of dance music spills out from open doors and in the summer month’s smokers and drinkers at tables line the pavement. The area began to emerge as an open gay village during the late 80s and early 90s, partially in response to the aggressive policing strategies of then Manchester Police Chief James Anderton. Anderton was noted for his views on homosexuals, sex workers and drug users as “swimming in a cesspit of their own creation”. Venues across the city were often raided and closed, which led “queer” people to seek out locations of increased concentration and solidarity. The cluster of bars near Canal Street grew and more open glass fronted venues like Manto offered a futuristic vision of open acceptance and came to adorn the entire street. The TV Series Queer As Folk followed lives of a group gay men and brought the area into a national and international spotlight, an energy that was capitalised by the city through gay tourism campaigns and later the Manchester Pride festival, which went from a locally organised community ‘bring and buy’ sale that raised money for local HIV charities to the biggest summer event in Manchester’s calendar. It was at Pride 2013 that the Safer Streets project pilot stage was launched.

The promotion of the area as a nighttime hot-spot by venues and Marketing Manchester has led to an increase in its mainstream appeal. At the weekend, gay and straight identifying revellers flock to the village. Hen parties and even stag dos have been noted by some venues as ‘a problem’. By others they are welcome for the trade they bring through the doors. Since the 2008 economic crash, the village has fallen on harder times. A number of the main street units, including Manto remain empty and even the pride festival has seen a reduction in numbers and the amount being generated for community organisations. Noise complaints and reports of anti-social behaviour, drug dealing and violent crime have changed the perception of the village from the jewel in Manchester’s cosmopolitan crown, to embarrassingly something of a problem crime spot for police and the local council. In many ways the area has become a victim of it’s own success.

Moving through the village the team share stories of their past and recent experiences of the village, along with the rumours they have heard. They discuss people to watch out for, descriptions of missing children and the news of the streets regular inhabitants. With each new and known face they encounter they gather more information about ‘what’s going on’ and how everyone is doing.

At the top of the village, the outreach team step onto a descending path that leads to a subterranean section of the towpath. They tie a few small envelopes containing condoms, lubricant and personal safety information to a railing, using ribbon that has the agencies contact telephone number on before proceeding at street level which is, due to the health and safety concerns regarding the narrowness of the path bellow, the limitations of visibility and the closeness of the water. The locks along this
part of the canal are popular with men cruising for sex. There have been a number of reported ‘accidental’ deaths linked to cruising over the last decade and since the pilot stage of the Safer Streets project began, there have been six reported fatalities and two serious assaults, including a stabbing. At the other side of the tunnel there is a car park. The benches along the towpath have become popular for a number of groups to congregate. There are several out of sight locations used simultaneously and at different times of the day by cruising men, street drinkers, teenagers looking for a quiet place to smoke cannabis, harder drug users, and members of the emerging transient migrant communities. This mix has been a particular concern with regards to sexual exploitation.

Perhaps the biggest addition to the route originally walked by the Blue Room is the inclusion of Manchester’s public bus terminus at Piccadilly Gardens. At night younger men congregate in groups to sell drugs. Many of the working lads have reported tensions and difficulties with “gardens boys”, who would sometimes attempt to “tax” or steal from lads and men who were doing “business”. However the gardens were also added to the route because of concerns of the overt sexual exploitation of young girls and increasingly covert exploitation of boys who are often seen with the gangs of young men.

Perhaps a key characteristic between all of these activities is the way that they are hidden from plain sight, sometimes literally but other times in the everyday activities of the city. As one outreach worker explained to me:

“I like to sit here a while and watch. It’s only by sitting around and really questioning what people are doing that you see what is going on here”.
2.4 Being There

A key proponent of successful outreach work identified by the entire management team was the role of simply being there. This gives them an understanding of the lives of those they encounter. This shared recognition of the city and what occurs here can engender trust by allowing people to discuss sensitive events without explicitly articulating or breaking the confidence of others. The Safer Streets project enables agencies to be in city in a way that provides a unique access to information but in a way that is critically different to regulatory forces like the Police. As Hall and Smith assert: Outreach workers sift through “gossip, allegations and unsubstantiated reports.”16, what’s more, they have a contextual understanding of their service users lives to be able to discern what information requires immediate action.

The Men’s Room’s Hayley Speed felt that this required both ‘effort and boundaried care’ to the men. All of the management team identified the importance of everyday conversation and a flexible style of engagement with service users when on outreach. As Nick Buckley of Mancunian way remarked: “there is no one way of doing outreach, you have to find a way that works with the people you meet.”

However as Hayley Speed points out during our interview, this relationship is bounded by policies, internal regulations and safeguarding practices. She elaborates that there is always a productive tension between policies and the development of natural relationships with people. It involves an engendering of familiarity through consistency, presence and the use of everyday ways of communicating as well as being clear of the purpose of the outreach teams presence. This may involve different approaches but is always built upon an adaptive genuineness and consistent presence that allows outreach teams to work as part of the environments that they operate.

The management team was also very conscious of how this rapport could build up over time and that they themselves were also being observed by the people they meet. Duncan Craig remarks:

“He continues and describes the regularity of outreach makes it part of the urban environment. By being present, outreach affects explanation of the service in every new contact they make. The team makes productive use of this familiarity by-proxy and accepts that engagement with certain people in the city can be a slow moving process.

Getting this right has been a particularly key issue for the team as their work often involves the discussion of sensitive issues like public sex, sex work, sexual exploitation and drug use. It is the way that outreach is able to engage in this everyday chat and being there that enables them to access a side of the city that would otherwise remain hidden and often police are unaware of. Often, other more visible concerns, such as drugs and violence attain primary attention from agencies and police.

On speaking about the best way to approach sensitive issues with clients’, Duncan Craig highlights the importance of openness:

“I think the best way is to treat nothing like it is a secret. By focusing on the area and all the stuff that is known to go on there, public sex, sex work, sexual assault and drug use, you can start conversations based on the need for people to stay safe. You can put it all together. Don’t treat anything like it’s a secret. I think it’s important to stick to positive modeling, sticking to the support we can provide.”

It is this position that enables the project team to have such a positive impact in monitoring otherwise hidden issues of community safety, particularly in the interruption of potential child sexual exploitation that occurs in these spaces. This level of trust and the ongoing presence of outreach workers in these places makes them particularly well placed for interrupting occurrences of child sexual exploitation – Chapter 4 details a description of a particularly successful example of this. It shows how the gleaning of information from the people they meet and the slow gathering and piecing together of information can have a real impact on issues of community safety, and particularly the vital safeguarding of children.
3. Evaluating Impact

“What people don’t see is all of the different associated costs to society of someone continuing offending or being pushed into offending by an instability in their home life or their benefits.”
– Nick Buckley, Mancunian Way

As the proposed theory of change for the Safer Streets project shows determining its value is complex and hard to measure using solely the statistics of engagement. The client group it targets have multiple mixed needs and are likely to be caught in repetitive flows of crime, poor housing sex work and addiction. Taking re-offending for example it may be impossible to isolate the specific interventions that assist individuals on their journey to desistance. The same may be said of moving away from the interwoven patterns of alcohol, drug use and sex work.

A critical factor in achieving lasting change for people like those the Safer Streets project works with are their own internal ‘narratives of change’. Services like the Safer Streets project encourage the growth of these narratives through consistent and non-time limited practical support in the environments where people most need it. Change is not always achievable through a single intervention or action by the outreach team. It requires the development of long-term trust based, boundaried working relationships that encourage service users to be active agents in ensuring their own and others sense of community safety. The following sections will seek to show some examples of the immediate and more long-term impacts of the project beyond their operational statistics.

3.1 Value for Money

On a surface level, for effectively, what is a small expenditure cost, the Safer Streets project engaged with a relatively small number of individuals. However;

• The people whom they engage with often have multiple and complex support needs.
• Progress is often not measured in successful resolution of these issues but rather in maintaining stability and preventing situations getting worse.

Any determination of the services value needs to take into account the impact of achieving even small movements forward on a journey to change for such individuals.

The interagency collaboration also saved on cost. Based on the physical expenditure available to the Safer Streets project, courtesy of the Greater Manchester Police and Crime Commissioner, for the time defined in this pilot period would equate to a cost per head of engagement being £66.60, or £59.64 per outreach session.

On a full cost recovery model, the true cost per outreach session would be approx. £120 per outreach session (incl. workforce, equipment, insurance) and therefore saving authorities £60.36 per session or £4,044.12 throughout the lifetime of the pilot.

3.2 Safeguarding Case Study

The safeguarding of children in the city and the interruption of child sexual exploitation is one of the key issues that connect the work of all three agencies involved in the pilot Safer Streets project.

This concern was confirmed from the very outset of the project over the Manchester Pride 2013 festival. The team encountered two boys near the canal. They estimated both as being under 13, however the boys reported themselves as 15 and 12. Both seemed aware and unfazed by the sexual activity that occurred in the area. Despite being urged to leave for their own safety the boys remained, leading the team to request the assistance of police.

When officers failed to arrive on the scene, the team decided to seek assistance from security working on the edge of the Pride compound who would be able to radio officers directly. When this proved unsuccessful they dialed 999. The call handler who responded at control asked if they were calling about “the two rent boys” and informed the team that they had already been made aware of their concerns. The boys had left the area by the time the police arrived on scene. The Safer Streets project team made appropriate safeguarding
referrals and circulated descriptions of the young men. They also made a formal complaint about the control officers use of inappropriate and inaccurate terminology when describing their children.

It wasn’t until early October when a different combination of the team, led by Duncan on this particular evening, saw a young boy sat on a bench near the canal, that this information became relevant again. At first the boy didn’t want to engage with the team but due to their relationships with other men present they were told his name and that he was only 13 years old.

While chatting to other service users the team witnessed the boy being approached by two older men, one in his 40’s, another in his mid 20’s. Given the information they had just received the outreach team considered it a high priority to interrupt this interaction.

The boy insisted he was waiting for a taxi and when it was explained the concerns for his safety in the area, he promptly stormed away across the car park. He was quickly followed by the man in his mid 20’s and both walked together, looking back to see if they were being pursued. Unable to follow off the route, the procedures of the Safer Streets project safeguarding were followed and the police were called. However once again the police did not respond immediately.

Shortly after the man in his mid 20’s returned and introduced himself as a Youth Worker from a project in the nearby town of Wigan. Unzipping his coat he revealed a uniform and identity pass that backed up this claim. He told the team that he knew the younger man from the project and claimed that he was 17 and that the boy had now returned home.

Not entirely convinced by this account the team once again made use of trust they had built with other men in the area. Several others confirmed the boys age as 13 and questioned the legitimacy of the mans claims to being a youth worker. Although this information was conjecture, they had identified two safeguarding concerns that required immediate action by police; first a 13 year old boy at risk of child sexual exploitation and second a man who appeared to be pretending to be a youth worker in order to deter and confuse outreach workers.

However little action was deemed possible by police and child protection teams in Manchester and Wigan leading the Safer Streets project management to undertake their own enquiries. The slow police response time when called on outreach had also hindered more direct action being taken when the young man was sighted around the canal.

At this time, the Protect Team in Manchester had insisted that if the boy was from Wigan he was out of their jurisdiction and therefore they could not investigate, despite concerns for his safety occurring in the Manchester area.

Wigan Child Protection Services believed there was insufficient information to locate the boy, despite being informed by the Safer Streets project management of two boys of a similar age and name in the records of the Wigan Youth Project.

The frustration felt by the Safer Streets management caused two of the management team to undertake even further investigation. Upon contacting the voluntary sector Wigan Youth provision that the man claimed to work for, he was finally identified as a former volunteer who had been dismissed due to concerns over his conduct. The boy was also potentially identified and photographs of both were subsequently circulated to the Safer Streets team and police. It was at this point that the Safer Streets management reviewed earlier reports of younger boys near the canal in August 2013. They were potentially now dealing with a young teenager who had been regularly at risk of sexual exploitation for almost 4 months, without being detected by police or child protection services.

The case was taken simultaneously to Manchester’s Prostitution Forum by the Men’s Room Director – an interagency meeting between police, charities and the local council – and also to a specialist strategic threat assessment police force meeting concerned with rape and sexual offences, by the CEO of Survivors Manchester. The level of evidence that the Safer Streets team had assembled prompted immediate action by the police representatives present. Within 24 hours the boy had been identified and emergency action was put in place. The police increased patrols and circulated photographs of both the young man and the man pretending to be his youth worker.

We can see that there was no one critical point of information, but a build up of seemingly unrelated intelligence put together by the Safer Streets team through their ongoing engagement with a number of different people in the city centre. This involved the serious consideration and assessment of rumour and gossip; reviewing
of historical case notes and active pursuit of action. The Safer Streets team session notes are usually very extensive for this reason, noting where people are seen, even if not engaged. Without this level of recording it would have been impossible to piece this case together in a way that was significant enough to finally be taken seriously by police and child protection service. The unique inter-agency approach, and way of gathering intelligence used by the Safer Streets project, had been critically important in engaging and gathering intelligence about concerns for the boy and ensuring the collective power to insist on action by relevant statutory agencies. The engendering of trust through persistent open engagement allows a relationship to develop with people encountered that is quite unlike that which is possible by police and community support officers.

A critical part of how the Safer Streets project is able to address these issues is their actual and perceived distance from the police. Duncan Craig explained his idea of why the police are often not told information because of how many they symbolically represent oppression and power. The team has been conscious to ensure that their brand and colour scheme would not be confused with that of the police. Instead of a high-vis yellow, their branded jackets are navy blue with large white letters spelling “Safer Streets” on the back. Volunteers are also casually dressed. It was important to be recognisable, but also to be recognisable as independent. As Hayley Speed of The Men’s Room argued:

“People know that you are not going to arrest them or anything, they know that you won’t report everything that you hear. Yet they also know that they can come to you to report things without getting in trouble... you’re kind of like a trusted filter for information”

People can share information with outreach workers knowing that certain things will not be shared, due to the clarity at which outreach workers explain simple confidentiality policies. It is a sharing of power and responsibility, which is a luxury that police cannot often afford to give. This sharing of power provides access to allow them to observe more and it is this observation and intelligent reporting of occurrences that makes outreach so useful to the police in areas of serious concern. They are not locked out in the same way as police are.

In addition to demonstrating how such grass roots relationships can interrupt potential child sexual exploitation, the case also highlighted the need for greater consideration of the value of community outreach to the Police and other statutory agencies. Since this case, named contacts and response plans have been put in place to prevent such failings occurring again. It demonstrated how by working together, police and voluntary sector organisations could alleviate each other’s resource constraints and assist one another in accessing different intelligence and actioning appropriate responses together.

This presents a number of specific advantages for police:

- Access to intelligence data regarding all manner of community safety issues but particularly, child sexual exploitation concerns.
- Pathway to early intervention and interruption of child sexual exploitation.
- Knowledge base to draw upon when developing policing strategies and addressing specific local policing concerns.
- Despite being important policing priorities, forces often have little access to reliable intel regarding child sexual exploitation and other issues of community safety. Partnership working with the Safer Streets project has proven useful in this area.

The Government’s 2013 guidance, “Working Together”20, outlines inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and came into effect on 15 April 2013, replacing Working Together to Safeguard Children21; The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families22; and Statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11 of the Children Act 200423.

The guidance emphasises that effective safeguarding systems are those where the needs of the child are paramount and put first; professionals are alert to their needs and risk of potential harm; and appropriate information is shared in a timely way. It clearly states that:
“effective sharing of information between professionals and local agencies is essential for effective identification, assessment and service provision”

Section 4.41 of the supplementary guidance to “Working Together” states:

“It is important that the police work closely with partner agencies to develop a coordinated response to any concerns about child sexual exploitation, and to ensure that the response is in the best interests of the child whose welfare and safety should be paramount.”

...and 4.42 states that:

“partner agencies need to involve the police as early as possible to ensure that no information is lost that may be critical to a prosecution case, and so that a disruption plan can be put in place”

Historically, the sharing of information between the Police and authorities has been a one-way system, with the voluntary and community sector feeling under intense pressure to be a provider of intelligence and not a consumer. This system has resulted in failures to effectively safeguard individuals as the ‘missing jigsaw piece’ was not available.

What is obvious from this case study is that the free flow of information and intelligence needs to be a two-way process and be inclusive to ensure that a true multi-agency approach to tackling sexual exploitation is adhered to and young people will be truly safeguarded.
4. Recommendations

This pilot stage raised several points that required further areas of research and funding for development and thus, the following are the author’s recommendations to the Safer Streets project agencies and key stakeholders, including authorities and commissioners.

Definitions of Community Safety

There is some ambiguity between agencies’ staff about the focus of the outreach. For most on the ground the outreach has a clear objective of engaging with men involved in exchanges of intimacy for money good or services. However, at a structural level, the focus is more broadly defined as ‘community safety’. It is unsurprising that the village outreach has remained orientated towards engaging with these men and child sexual exploitation concerns, however, teams need to be made aware of how this activity fits into a broader remit of community safety. There needs to be a shift away from single issues to a broader ideology when thinking of and explaining the nature of service to people they engage with.

Inter-Agency Inconsistencies

This fits into a broader need to manage the different territories, desires, procedures and funding stipulations of each organisation involved in the safer streets. The Safer Streets project already went to great lengths to ensure their inter-agency approach adhered to shared safeguarding and data sharing policies. However, the practicalities of co-ordinating outreach, sharing information and communicating with one another within the partnership has sometimes proven a challenge.

Hayley Speed identified that this difference in emphasis was largely to do with the differing funding priorities of each agency involved. As during this pilot phase, each agency had to source their own finances they had to work towards the goals each had been funded for. For The Men’s Room, this focus is the lad’s “doing business”. Fortunately both Mancunian Way and Survivors Manchester remits’ also included this group.

There were concerns by each agency over the consistency of outreach, particularly around engagement and the explanation of the nature of service. The number of different staff also has detrimental impact on the critical relationships developed with service users. As outlined in the above safeguarding case study, it also impacted up the speed of reaction in certain situations. This highlights the need for a greater co-ordination of information sharing and analysis. It also suggests that greater resources are required in order to develop a shared training programme for volunteers.

This programme would be co-ordinated by the participating management team and would allow each agency to share their particular expertise between different volunteer pools. In doing so they share their awareness of the issues they are used to tackling in the. This would lead naturally to an engagement with wider range issues of community safety issues affecting the city centre.

More permanent independent funding for the Safer Streets project in its own right would make an expansion of this focus much easier.

All three agencies firmly agree that the benefits of working together and the outcomes they have achieved in a relatively small amount of time far outweigh these difficulties. It has also been discussed that many of these difficulties could be resolved simply by obtaining funding for some kinds of shared admin post. It was felt by Duncan Craig that a role between the agencies, even with just a few designated hours a week, would resolve many of these difficulties.

Working with Others

Although the project demonstrates best practice of inter-agency production, a potential area for expansion is the project’s engagement with local businesses on their rounds. This of course is already a work in progress with significant contact being made at a structural level with organisations such as the police, the Lesbian & Gay Foundation and the Village Business Association. However, there needs to be more work done to build connections and overcome barriers with the many licenced venues, shops, taxi companies and take away businesses in the area. At the time of writing, this was already being explored with door management companies. Making connections like this will improve the reach of the service, make them better known locally and strengthen their intelligence gathering capacity to address safeguarding concerns.
Working with the Local Authority

Although the project has come a long way in gaining formal recognition of police and child protection services, they could be better valued and consulted by the Local Authority. The Safer Streets project offers an alternative to regulation or modification of problematic areas in order to improve community safety as it has widely been argued by researchers and practitioners worldwide that conventional approaches to reducing problematic activity actually ends up putting the most vulnerable in more risks.

Outreach teams knowledge of the city centre might be better used to maximize the impact of city council strategies aimed at making streets safer.

Dealing with Change

One of the key characteristics of the movements of the people the Safer Streets project engage is that their routes of movements react to changes in the local area, on with the rhythms of the time of day and the season25.

Sensitive and illegal activities are often highly mobile and adaptive to forms of regulation and intervention. The service would benefit from a formalised regular process of review for the outreach route. This review would allow a forum in which alterations and additions to the route can be discussed, along with changes in timings and team dynamics. This should also be considered around big city events, like the Pride festival when the flows of people through he city are drastically increased.

Such a meeting would also be useful to discuss changes in the area and the people being engaged with. It would be an opportunity for the focus of the outreach to be re-aligned within the broader context of community safety. Once again such co-ordinated management will likely only be possible when independent funding is sought for this co-produced project.

A Model of Outreach Practice

The model of interagency working and information sharing used by Safer Streets project also has the potential to become a standardised model for co-ordinating outreach in the city centre.

Rather than imagining an expansion of their own routes, the Safer Streets management also envision working with other organisations to develop tailored inter-agency outreach that might accommodate the unique needs of different areas in the city centre and beyond.

There are many parts of the city, different routes that might be explored and where the lessons learned through the approach and development of the Safer Streets project, might facilitate the creation of other effective multi-agency outreach routes. The lessons learned from this project could inform a framework of working practices; training and information sharing that would connect a number of outreach routes and the organisations that run them, operating under a connective umbrella of a “Manchester Outreach Alliance”.

During the life-span of the Safer Streets project, there has already been considerable public and professional interest shown in such a plan, particularly the recognition afforded the potential of a “Manchester Street Angel” project, spearheaded by one man in response to the death of several young people in Manchester city centre.

There is already considerable groundwork done in this area with key organisations, churches and charities already running outreach services that could be harnessed by a central communications and resource hub. For instance, The Lesbian and Gay Foundation’s own Village Angels have become a key and important semi-outreach project along Canal Street and Bloom Street and would be ideal partners to dovetail the Safer Streets project outreach.
Next Steps

The Safer Streets project currently sits at the edge of what it possibly could become.

On one level, this is about the limits of what the current team could do, with their current focus on safeguarding concerns in the city centre zones they cover. Survivors Manchester and The Men’s Room have a particular interest in expanding their work to encompass sauna outreach to address consent/exploitation and ‘doing business’ respectively, etc and to consider the wider contexts of BME and migrant communities using the canal area.

The following are possibilities for future funding applications by the Safer Streets project:

- Sauna sexual health and child sexual exploitation outreach programme.
- Specific funding for translation of working materials into a number of other languages in order to promote greater engagement with migrant sex worker communities, particularly street based male sex workers.
- An administrative post shared between the agencies to manage interagency communication.
- Further trials of other routes, building on services already operating issue based outreach in the city.
- Co-ordination of centralised shared intelligence bank for different outreach services, the police, licensing, housing and drugs services.
- Formalised shared training of volunteers.
- Formalised process of route evaluation and information sharing for outreach team.

There is no denying that the pilot phase of the Safer Streets project has been a huge success, not only for the identification and action of a serious safeguarding case, but the relationships that have been strengthened with the young men. The young men the outreach team have engaged with have resulted in some individual achievements including one young man entering the Prince’s Trust; the reporting of three sexual offences committed against the individuals the Safer Streets project engaged with, and the positive relationships.

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Footnotes

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