

Prostitution

1. In April 2010, the legislation in relation to prostitution, namely The Street Offences Act 1959, was amended to incorporate the word 'persistent'. The impact of this was that a person had to be caught committing the offence on two or more occasions in a period of three months before they could be arrested for the offence. Previously the person had to be caught on two or more occasions in a period of twelve months.

Under the old legislation, once a person had been caught on two or more occasions and convicted by a court, they were termed a 'common prostitute' and could be arrested each time they were caught committing the offence.

The new legislation has done away with the term 'common prostitute' so, if a person is not found committing the offence within a three month period after being convicted at court, they cannot be arrested and will start from the cautioning procedure again.

2. Procedure

Prostitutes

- 2.1 When a person is found to be loitering or soliciting in a street or public place for the purposes of prostitution, on the first occasion they will be issued with a written caution. If they are found on a second occasion they will be issued with a second caution. On a third occasion they will be arrested and placed before a court. Officers issuing cautions and performing arrests must be double crewed for corroboration purposes. Paper records in relation to cautions are held in the DLU office at Stockton and information in relation to how many cautions a person has been given are recorded on the Iris system.

- 2.2 Under the new legislation, when a person is charged to court, the prosecution file should contain an Engagement and Support Order Referral form, requesting that the person be placed on an order so that they can receive support as an alternative penalty to a fine. This will require the person involved in prostitution to attend three meetings with a named supervisor who will help the individual address the reasons for their involvement in prostitution with the aim of helping them find a route out of prostitution. Should the person breach the order then it is the responsibility of the support agency to notify the courts and a warrant will be issued and the person dealt with in the normal way.

- 2.3 In Stockton, the role of support is provided by A Way Out and the police have regular contact with support workers. At the present time, DLU officers will share information regarding persons that have been cautioned in order that support can be given prior to any possible future attendance at court, if they commit further offences.

Information sharing in this way tends to be one way and little information is received back from A Way Out.

3. Kerb Crawlers

- 3.1 We have a zero tolerance approach to kerb crawlers and anyone found to be in a street or public place to solicit another for the purpose of obtaining their sexual services as a prostitute (S51A Sexual Offences Act 2003) will be arrested.
- 3.2 They will be interviewed and bailed in order to ascertain their suitability to attend a Kerb Crawler Rehabilitation Scheme (KCRS). If they are deemed suitable, then on answering bail, they will be given a conditional caution, conditional on the fact that they successfully complete the course.
This is a scheme provided by Barnardo's in Middlesbrough at a cost of approx £200. This is a voluntary scheme but should the person decline then they will be charged to court in the usual way and the average fine is £400.
- 3.3 Records of all those involved in kerb crawling, or associating with prostitutes, are recorded on Iris by the DLU.

4. The situation in Stockton

- 4.1 Historically the area that was frequented by prostitutes was the Bon Lea Trading Estate. However, since the widening of the A66 bridge across the River Tees, which meant the slip road to Bon Lea was closed, the area of Yarm Road leading into Stockton from the A66 appears to have become more popular with prostitutes.
- 4.2 In the financial year from April 10 to March 11 there have been 157 incidents recorded as prostitution related (AS 8) on the Intergraph system. There have been 243 incidents that involve the word prostitute or prostitution. (This includes the AS 8's).
- 4.3 Some of the incidents that have been recorded as AS 8 do not relate to prostitutes working on the street and may be other things, such as domestic related, and similarly some of the total incidents may involve prostitutes working but not coded as AS 8.
- 4.4 For the purposes of looking at the situation I will concentrate on the AS 8 coded incidents.
- 4.5 Of the 157 incidents, 48 have been generated by the police, 28 from CCTV and 81 from members of the public. In the six months prior to October 2010, there were only 47 incidents recorded, of which 10 were from police or CCTV. About this time, complaints were received from residents about a rise in girls on the street and a multi-agency meeting was organised to address the problem. Extra patrols, direction of CCTV, and encouragement of residents to report led to a large increase in reported incidents particularly during October and November. In October there were 34 incidents (15 from police/CCTV) and in November 22 incidents (19 from police/CCTV). The majority of incidents recorded after this to the end of March were generated by police/CCTV.
In January, a further meeting was held with residents and they were happy that the situation had improved.
- 4.6 Analysis of the 81 reported incidents by members of the public during the year reveals that 37 of these calls were made by two individuals active in the 'WECA' Residents Association and a further five by members of their extended families.

- 4.8 Both persons have been visited previously by DLU officers and encouraged to keep diaries and report to DLU and this will be re-iterated by Neighbourhood officers.
- 4.9 In relation to the number of girls that are found to be 'working' when patrols are being conducted, officers have found about five or six regular girls, who have received cautions and been arrested, and there are about five or six others that have received cautions at one time or another.
It should also be noted that most of the girls live in and around the Yarm Road / Yarm Lane area so will be seen on the streets at regular periods. This does not mean that every time they are seen on the street that they are 'looking for business'.
- 4.10 It is more difficult to find actual kerb crawlers but police and CCTV have worked together to warn a few individuals that have been seen on CCTV and DLU officers are satisfied that the person may have been involved in soliciting a prostitute. Phone calls and visits to individuals have been undertaken as there is not enough evidence to prosecute.
A few that have been caught with prostitutes have been arrested and directed towards the KCRS scheme.

5. Current and future plans

- 5.1 The DLU and ward support officers are currently engaged in patrolling the Yarm Road area and have patrols planned for the next three months. This will target kerb crawlers and the active working girls. Girls will be cautioned and arrested on the 3rd occasion which will then start a mandatory referral into services.
- 5.2 On 14th April police held a meeting with Jeff Evans from probation and Emma Champley from the DAAT and agreed to share information on sex workers known to their respective organisations. This would lead to agreeing a number of say 10 - 12 active girls known to all or most organisations and put in place an integrated offender management type programme which will treat the girls as victims and support them to change their ways. A second meeting took place on 21st April with additional agencies represented and 12 prostitutes were identified to use on the IOM style programme. Additional meetings are being planned to continue with this work and monitor its effectiveness.
The programme will have a drugs treatment service, probation officer, links to harbour and sexual health services, housing, social care and it is hoped a peer mentor can be identified to work with the girls.
Prostitution patrols are continuing and it is reported to be very quiet.

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