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9 Gentrification and the criminalization of sex work

Exploring the sanitization of sex work in Kings Cross with the use of ASBOs and CBOs

Lucy Neville and Erin Sanders-McDonagh

Introduction

Introduced in 1998 as part of the Crime and Disorder Act, anti-social behaviour orders [ASBOs] have been used in various locations around the UK to police street-based sex work [SBSW]. This chapter will argue that ASBOs were used regularly in a particular area of north London as part of a targeted policing strategy that focused on the removal of SBSW from key areas in Camden, and were specifically and intentionally utilised in order to remove street-based sex workers (SBSW-ers) from the Kings Cross area. We argue that ASBOs and other punitive measures have been used as a way of sanitising the area, removing ‘undesirable’ Others that might impinge on the aestheticized areas of consumption that regeneration seeks to create. Drawing on empirical data collected during 2010–12, we argue that SBSW-ers in this area experienced a range of negative impacts because of this policing strategy, putting their health and safety at risk. Against a local backdrop of reduced funding (from 2008 onwards) to support women’s services in the third and public sectors, a lack of appropriate drug and mental health services, cuts to housing provision and reduced social work and social care services, this chapter will provide an overview of the ways in which service providers, key stakeholders, and sex workers have been negatively impacted by the use of these punitive measures. We argue that despite suggestions from local government that ASBOs simply seek to assist and support sex workers, these approaches do little to reduce SBSW or help women working in prostitution.

Methodology

This paper draws on ethnographic research conducted over 10 months from 2011–12 with a third sector organisation based in London. The organisation works mainly with young people, but there is a sub-section within the organisation that works specifically with female street-based sex workers. The organisation offers sex-working women a variety of services, engaging them through their twice-weekly drop-in sessions, or their thrice-weekly outreach walks. The drop-in and outreach sessions are normally co-delivered with other local organisations which deal with the same client group, but may have a different focus (e.g. drug-specific projects or homelessness projects etc.). Most of their client base have or have

had serious drug addiction issues (heroin and/or crack cocaine), most have been homeless and/or are living in unstable accommodation, many have been in prison, and many have mental health issues. Some of the women access services through both the drop-in and outreach, while others only use one or the other. The aim of the organisation is to support and help women who have high level needs, and are often living chaotic and dangerous lives. They offer a harm-reduction approach to working with sex workers, and work towards stabilising them as much as possible.

To gain a full and varied impression of the complex processes involved in engaging with clients during outreach work, we employed several different methodologies, including mobile interviews, GIS mapping, and formal semi-structured interviews with outreach staff, outreach managers, outreach clients and those working in related services (e.g. local councils and other third sector organisations). Of relevance to this discussion is the use of mobile and semi-structured interviews with staff, workers from related services, and sex working women. The mobile interviews we conducted were semi-structured, using both prepared and ad hoc questions, and involved the use of GIS mapping to plot routes taken and places of specific outreach-related salience. Carpiano (2009) suggests that mobile interviews are most useful when they are used in conjunction with other methods, so in addition to these interviews we also conducted semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with the same staff we went on outreach walks with ($n = 8$), as well as workers from related sectors ($n = 6$) and sex working women at the drop in ($n = 10$). We have anonymised the names and identifying details of all participants.

History of anti-social behaviour orders

Under the Crime and Disorder Act of 1998, Anti-Social Behaviour Orders [ASBOs] were introduced and widely used by police and local authorities across England as a way of managing activities that were not criminalised, but were seen as harmful or detrimental for local communities. Police and local authorities can apply for an ASBO in court for anyone over the age of 10, where a person has acted ‘in a manner which caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress’ (Home Office 2004).

ASBOs remain in place for at least two years, although they can be reviewed if ‘behaviour improves’ (www.gov.uk/asbo). The penalties for not obeying the conditions of the behaviour order (called breaking or breaching an ASBO) vary by age. For young offenders (between 10–16), breaching an ASBO may result in a fine, a community sentence, or possibly a detention and training order that can last up to 24 months. Adult offenders may face fines of up to £5000 or a 5-year prison sentence (or both). Hewitt (2007: 358) reports that around 55% of breaches are punished by imprisonment, and notes that one of the most controversial features of the ASBO system is that it can lead to a person being sent to prison for breaching an ASBO imposed for a non-criminal act: ‘a person may be sent down, in other words, not because what s/he did was a criminal offence, but because s/he did it twice’. It is often the case that the punishment imposed for breaching an ASBO is therefore ‘far greater than the one the act would have received in its own right’ (Hewitt 2007: 357).

In 2014, The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act greatly expanded law enforcement powers in addressing anti-social behaviour. The Act introduced the Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) which replaces the Anti-Social Behaviour Order on conviction. While the Act has been heralded by some as ‘the death of the ASBO’, it is important to note that conviction-based ASBOs essentially continue unchanged in the form of CBOs, which carry similar consequences. This legislation leaves ASBOs as a civil order intact – in the form of Injunctions – and allows for a CBO to be applied on ‘order of conviction’, meaning that once someone has been convicted of a crime, the prosecutor can request an application for a CBO. Historically, ASBOs were considered ‘necessary’ from a legal perspective if the court takes the view that ‘the offence for which the defendant has been convicted is so serious and anti-social that it tends *in itself* to show that an order is necessary’ (CPS 2017a, italics added). CBOs rely on essentially the same rhetoric, but, in the words of the CPS, ‘the ‘necessity’ test becomes a ‘helpfulness’ test’ – CBOs are thus aimed at “helping” offenders to desist from engaging in anti-social behaviour (CPS 2017b). As with ASBOs, a court may also look for a pattern of anti-social behaviour and for this purpose, evidence of the facts behind previous convictions and failed interventions (such as a failure to comply with an anti-social behaviour contract) may be probative. Prosecutors may also seek to rely on anti-social behaviour which did not result in prosecutions or convictions. The CBO moves beyond the ASBO inasmuch as the court may impose requirements as well as prohibitions (CPS 2017b). Kingston and Thomas (2015: 1) therefore argue that CBOs introduce ‘new powers which are believed to be more wide reaching than earlier laws which tried to take on the problem of anti-social behaviour’.

Controversy has dogged ASBOs/CBOs since their inception, partly because the government definition of what constitutes anti-social behaviour is quite broad. A 2006 report from the Home Office lists the following activities as ‘anti-social’:

harassment of residents or passers-by; verbal abuse; criminal damage; vandalism; noise nuisance; writing graffiti; engaging in threatening behaviour in large groups; racial abuse; smoking or drinking alcohol while under age; substance misuse; joyriding; begging; prostitution; kerb-crawling; throwing missiles; assault; and vehicle vandalism.

(Home Office 2006: 8)

Such a broad definition means that not only are certain *activities* considered anti-social, so too are the people who carry them out, making anti-social behaviour an ontological condition. For those who have been given ASBOs, being present in certain locations or spending time with ‘people who are known as trouble-makers’ (www.gov.uk/asbo) can become criminalised activities. In addition, the 2003 guide to ASBOs from the Home Office lists the undermining of economic regeneration as a potential anti-social behaviour (Home Office 2003: 6, 16, 47, 64).

ASBOs and street-based sex work

ASBOs have been widely used across England and Wales as a way of controlling sex work. It could be argued that, *prima facie*, policy developments in the

area of sex work and anti-social behaviour appear to be positive. In 2011, for example, the Coalition Government released the *Effective Practice in Responding to Prostitution* (Home Office 2011) guidance, which emphasised holistic, harm-reduction approaches towards SBSW and advocated for punitive measures like ASBOs/CBOs to be used only as a last resort. However, in practice it is not clear that this guidance has been implemented – at least not unilaterally and equally across various local districts. While there is no national data available on ASBOs, research from Young et al. (2006) provides data from 2002–06 on ASBO applications in the Kings Cross area and found that while 17 women had been issued orders for prostitution, only three ASBOs had been given to kerb crawlers, despite kerb crawling being specifically mentioned as a key ‘anti-social’ activity in Home Office Guidance.

Kingston and Thomas (2015: 3) point out that the new 2014 Act allows for local powers to respond to ‘local concerns’, which is likely to increase the incoherent approach that individual councils and police force areas have taken to manage prostitution and street-based sex work, and may increase the already punitive approaches that exist across England and Wales. Just as the use of ASBOs became commonplace nationally as a way of responding to SBSW, it is likely that many boroughs will continue to use CBOs to manage sex work in their jurisdictions. Instead of promoting the holistic, harm-prevention approaches favoured in the 2011 Home Office report, this tends to create a situation where criminal justice agencies are awarded contracts to deliver highly conditional ‘support’ for street-based sex workers, firmly dependent on their withdrawal from SBSW (Sagar 2010). Kingston and Thomas (2015: 12) express concern that this new localised control will simply allow ‘forces and officers to take a more punitive approach’, and in some instances, respond ‘more punitively towards sex workers than their clients’.

It should be noted that there is one notable exception to local government management of SBSW in the UK: instead of penalising either workers or clients, Leeds has pioneered a ‘Managed Area’ approach. Under this scheme SBSW-ers are allowed to operate in a designated area of streets during certain hours without fear of arrest or police harassment (Sanders and Sehmbi 2015). A review of the scheme by Safer Leeds concluded that it had been a tentative success, despite proving unpopular with a minority of residents and local businesses. Sanders and Sehmbi (2015) found that the scheme had improved relationships between SBSW-ers and the police, increased levels of Ugly Mug reporting, increased SBSW-ers take up of social and health care interventions, and reduced the number of complaints made by residents with regards to ‘nuisance’.

Regeneration and sex work in Kings Cross

The Kings Cross area of London has a long history of prostitution and particular associations with street-based sex work. Located in the London Borough of Camden and in the heart of an area of regeneration, Kings Cross has seen ASBOs being widely used, ostensibly to target drug dealing and visible drug-use, but several reports suggest that sex workers in the area have also been disproportionately targeted (Greater London Authority 2005; Young et al. 2006).

There are clear links to be made between the use of ASBOs/CBOs in Kings Cross, and gentrification and development. Since ‘Operation Zero Tolerance’ in 1997, there has been a concerted effort to remove both homeless people and street-based sex workers from the area, and this has dovetailed with greater investment in the surrounding locale (Deckha 2003; Hubbard 2004; Holgersen and Haarstad 2009). The Kings Cross Partnership (KXP), funded by the Government Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) was initiated during this period to develop and regenerate the area. Operation Welwyn, jointly funded by the Camden Community Safety Team and the KXP, was established with the remit to ‘confront drug and vice crime within the King’s Cross area . . . to target specific criminal and anti-social activity and disorder in the ward’ (Young et al. 2006: 28).

From 2003, the rate of regeneration in Kings Cross considerably accelerated, most notably since the building of the new Eurostar station. According to London and Continental Railways (LCR), the Kings Cross Eurostar development is the biggest ever single construction project in Britain, and more than £9 billion has been invested in the areas adjacent to the new stations (Holgersen and Haarstad 2009). It should be noted that instead of ‘normal’ subsidies in return for building the railway, LCR received fixed assets, including land areas along the route with the right to develop these for profit. Holgersen and Haarstad (2009: 359) draw on Lefebvrian’s (1973) conceptualisations of the social and political construction of space to argue that in the case of regeneration in Kings Cross, it is important to make a distinction between ‘urban space as exchange value and urban space as use value’, noting there is a ‘difference between groups that appropriate space for the purpose of accumulating capital and groups that appropriate space as a place to live and work’. They report that while there were a number of consultation exercises carried out with the local community about development plans for Kings Cross, these meetings were largely didactic events where planners told local residents about proposed changes and listened to concerns, but essentially ignored the voices of the residents and community stakeholders – there was little meaningful dialogue, and little intention from the planners to make changes in line with concerns raised by the residents (Deckha 2003). Holgersen and Haarstad (2009: 365) argue that ‘the structure of the public consultation [in Kings Cross] appears to delimit participatory influence’.

Processes of urban regeneration often redevelop previously ‘undesirable’ areas to make them safe and clean for white, middle-class populations, a process which is abundantly clear in Kings Cross. Marginal groups like SBSW-ers have no place in the sanitised city – the genteel, well-lit, aesthetically pleasing spaces of Kings Cross have been redesigned for the well-heeled, urban, cosmopolitan traveller. This is a public space with ambiance and class – in St Pancras station itself you could buy a £300 evening dress from Whistles, a £150 tailored shirt at Pink, or a £100 candle from Jo Malone. If you wanted to venture outside, you could walk up the cobblestoned pedestrian pathway to Granary Square where you might bump into art and fashion students from the elite Central St Martins College, have an £18 cocktail while sitting on the terrace of a wine bar, before heading for dinner at the Grain Store where you can pay £20 for a polenta salad. It appears that the area around Kings Cross has been created for affluent, international consumers in

mind – arguably developers do not want glossy, sanitised spaces ‘polluted’ with street homeless, drug dealers or sex workers. As Hubbard argues:

the fact that public space is designed to meet the wants and desires of affluent consumers while systematically excluding those adjudged unsuitable or threatening. . . [means] sex workers are apparently seen as dangerous threats that need to be eliminated from the sight of the affluent . . . reducing the visibility of sex work in the central city is an obvious way that policy-makers can send out a message that it is ripe for reinvestment.

(2004: 1697–1698)

The ASBO (and now the CBO) has proved to be a powerful tool in the service of ‘cleaning up’ Kings Cross. Writing in 2006, Young et al. argue that ‘ASBOs were introduced as a key feature of the crime and anti-social behavior control effort in the ward. At the time of publication, 218 ASBOs were granted in Camden, greater than any other London borough’ (2006: 4). They suggest that urban regeneration was a key driver in the removal of sex workers, beggars and rough sleepers from Kings Cross, and the considerable resources that were put forward from KXP and Camden to ‘clean up’ the area were clearly related to regeneration efforts. However, Young et al. (2006) observe that while sex work in Kings Cross was noticeably reduced, there was compelling evidence that sex workers either moved location, or sold sex at times that were less likely to be patrolled or monitored. The authors also note what they term tactical displacement:

tactical displacement occurs when the same offence is committed but in a different way . . . a number of people mentioned that policing initiatives and urban regeneration had driven criminal activity “underground”. Sex and drugs, once sold on the street, had not disappeared but continued in hostels, crack houses and in private premises.

(Young et al. 2006: 69)

In line with arguments from Sanders (2009) and Kingston and Thomas (2015), Young et al. (2006) argue that sex workers in Kings Cross who were identified as ‘persistent offenders’ by police and community safety teams were given the opportunity to engage with services that would ostensibly make them ‘good citizens’ and remove them from the street. Those that refused to engage with the services offered were then issued with an ASBO as a punitive response to their refusal to meet the required prescriptive standards of coercion set out by the authorities. Young et al. (2006: 81) suggest that prison sentences of 9–12 months were not uncommon for sex workers who entered an exclusion zone ‘reaking the ‘good behaviour clause’ by soliciting.

Despite clear concerns expressed by their own commissioned research (c.f. Young et al. 2006), a 2005 report from the Greater London Authority and our research with sex workers in the Kings Cross Area from 2010–11 suggest that punitive policing measures, including the use of ASBOs, were still being used for the management of SBSW.

Experiences of sex workers in Kings Cross

In this section, we provide data from our research to argue that despite clear concerns expressed about the use of ASBOs for female sex workers, Camden continued to employ punitive measures for women working in and around Kings Cross. Our interviews and observations suggest that there was a distinct awareness among outreach workers, related service providers, council workers and street-based sex working women that Camden had taken, and continues to take, an extremely hard-line approach towards policing ‘antisocial’ behaviour and the use of ASBOs. Outreach workers and related service providers generally viewed this with negativity, noting that it did little to help their vulnerable clients and often increased their levels of risk and potential to experience harm. As one service provider noted,

I think obviously every borough would like not to have any problems – no street drinking, no drug use, no sex working as well. Islington is quite flexible, quite – I think – more understanding than the other boroughs. It’s pretty good; I like this attitude more than with ASBOs and everything, you have to work *with* clients and not just say “you can’t be doing it”.

(Gloria, Service Provider).

One of the support workers described how the team previously had issues working with Camden street services because ‘they were very much ASBO-orientated, enforcement-orientated’ and the focus on ‘bringing [sex working women] back to the police . . . we found it quite difficult to work with’. She noted that

the [Camden Street Services] workers are really nice, but they had a lot of grief from their managers: ‘Where’s my stats? Where’s my this?’ – I think they were under pressure a lot to give people ASBOs and when we were working with them we were finding it quite difficult to talk to some clients, [as the worry was that Camden Street Services] would talk to the police’

(Amy, outreach worker)

Another worker in the sector discussed how she and her colleagues minimise their association with the Street Services Team – ‘the ASBO lot’ as she described them – and ‘don’t normally tell [clients that it] is the same organisation as us, because women get very funny about that sort of stuff’ (Kelly, service provider). It led to situations where street-working women were reluctant to engage with the outreach teams because ‘the women still think that police is police – [they’re like:] “we are sex working, they are not going to listen to us”’ (Julia, outreach worker). As Kelly puts it:

Well, [saying you’re associated with Camden Street Services is] not the best way to start off with someone [sex-working], because as far as they’re concerned it’s [one] organisation, [and] if you work for the same people that’s what they know – they’re like ‘I’ve got an ASBO from that area and now you

want me to tell you about my drug use!’ It’s a different section, so what we try and do is to work with them to try and stop these things from happening. . . . We try and feed in what positive stuff the women are doing, rather than them saying, ‘I saw them on the streets sex working on the [. . .], dah-da-dah, and we’re going to ASBO them’, we can say, ‘actually, this week, I saw her three times and we sat down and talked about this, this, this and this happened that might be different contributing factors.’

(Kelly, service provider)

There was also a high level concern exhibited by service workers in the sector about the effects of displacement.

“I think because, let’s say Camden are more ‘enforcement’ side of things, giving out ASBOs and things like that, so obviously [women previously working in] those areas tend to move a little bit, let’s say they cross into Islington or other areas because they’re not comfortable in Camden. . . . I guess with Camden and Islington they know they get loads of hassle in Camden so they tend to come this side. . . . But now sex workers, they are, like, hiding it a bit more because of the police, and it’s not safe as well. . . . On [. . .] Road, even a few months ago there were a few girls working there, they were sat down and I was like, ‘Oh, you don’t work here anymore?’ And they were like, ‘No we don’t because we can’t be visible like that now’ – because the police are patrolling the area quite a lot.”

(Gloria, Service Provider)

The Council took a more pragmatic approach, with one worker noting that it is difficult to balance the following of ‘safeguarding procedures, you know, in terms of feeding appropriate information to the police, [while] . . . at the same time guaranteeing and reassuring the local street community that [you] can work with them effectively’ (Chuma, Council Worker), but concluded that ‘ultimately our aim of this unit is to reduce ASB – I mean, that is the ultimately aim, is to reduce ASB, so. . . [we] effectively. . . [have to be] able to deliver that as well as provide effective harm reduction’. Concerns here were very much focused on the effect that street-based sex working might have on the local community.

The sex working women we spoke with who were (or had been) engaged in street-based sex work also expressed concerns about the Borough’s use of ASBOs. Brenda discussed how ‘the police were trying to ASBO me from Kings Cross, not from Kings Cross, just the red-light district part’ and voiced her fears over what would happen to her in court (as she had breached her order) and how she would deal with the fallout, particularly if there were financial repercussions. Many women we spoke with were well aware of the irony of a situation where they were fined by the courts for breaching an ASBO related to sex working, yet had no way to pay the fines except by returning to sex work.

I went to court last year and I was told if I appeared out on the street again, I would go to prison, so that’s really scared me. . . . It [street-based sex work]

has got worse, 'cause now they're slinging ASBOs on girls, and that's gotten worse as it's going along . . . they know we've gotta come out, they know if we go to court they know we've gotta come back out on the street and earn that money to pay it [the £80 fine]. And the court just slams it on you and they think you can pay that money immediately, unless you plead with the judge and say you can't pay that straight away, you have to plead to get that cut in half so you can pay it each week.

(Helen, sex worker)

There was also concern that the process of using ASBOs to displace street-based sex workers was making sex workers less safe. Donna described how 'when it got to the end of me working [in Kings Cross], yeah [I did feel unsafe]. It was getting violent, and as I said everybody was getting nicked every night [for soliciting] and things like that, so it got pretty bad' (Donna, sex worker). Helen discussed how the use of ASBOs deterred sex workers from working together for safety, and even from talking to each other to share local information about dangerous punters and general safety.

I been keeping myself to myself 'cause you're better off that way, 'cause if you mix with the other girls, you're liable to get that little bit of friction [from the police]. And if they're taking drugs or anything like that it reflects on you. I know one girl out there but I don't talk to her anymore, because every time I've spoke to her, every time she stopped and spoke to me I kept getting shit from the police. . . . So it was better to back off when I did, I didn't want to be nasty to her, but I just said to her, "Don't come near me, you're gonna get me in trouble".

(Helen, sex worker)

It is interesting to note that we spoke to street-based sex workers before the Leeds managed area pilot, but the Leeds model was already something that some of the sex workers suggested as a viable alternative to the use of ASBOs and the absolute prohibition of street-based sex work.

If they [the police] weren't such a nuisance at times, left us alone, let us get on with what we got to do, it wouldn't be so bad. But they're a bloody nuisance half the time, because as soon as a punter sees them, he won't come near, they won't come near us. . . . They won't legalize it [sex work] and that's why we're getting so much hassle. If they legalized it we wouldn't get that hassle. We wouldn't get that hassle. Give us a block to work on, we would be out of their sight, they put us on a block and we weren't supposed to go out in the street, if we worked on that block, we'd have no problems. We'd have no problems. . . . We would feel safer. If it was [on] camera and videoed we'd feel safer there than what we would be out on the street, a lot safer because then they would know what's happened, if somebody got attacked, they'd know exactly where it's happened, on that spot, and I'm all for that because it should be either legalized or [they should] give us somewhere where we

can go and we know we're safe, but out on the street we're not safe because you get these nutters who are out there and you don't know if they're going to turn on you. You know? I'm not being nasty to them, but you do, you get them and sometimes girls get injured or get killed.

(Helen, sex worker)

Discussion

While some of the research done on ASBOs and punitive measures in Camden showed that sex work did decrease in the area over time (London Borough of Camden 2015; Young et al. 2006), it is clear that many sex workers, including SBSWs who have high level needs and long histories working in and around Kings Cross, continued to work, but altered their working patterns or moved to unfamiliar places to avoid detection.

To a certain extent, this was seen by the Council as a success, and as Young et al. (2006: 41) note: 'While enforcers recognized that the ASBO was punitive and entailed restrictions on the liberties of the population they were targeting, this was considered an acceptable cost for the gains received by the community as a whole'. It could, perhaps, be argued that the removal of street-based sex workers from certain areas might be seen to 'benefit' a community, but this of course assumes that sex workers themselves are not part of the community. A 1994 MORI survey carried out with Camden residents highlights concerns about crime – specifically noting concerns about burglary and violent crime – but does not mention sex work specifically. Despite this, one of the six strategic objectives implemented by Camden to 'tackle crime and improve community safety' includes a referral scheme for sex workers and clearly indicates that sex work should be understood here as 'anti-social behaviour' (Mutale and Edwards 2003). We would argue that despite Camden's narrative that constructs sex work as an issue of community concern (without any specific data that highlights prostitution as a key issue), there is evidence that not all communities consider sex work to be 'anti-social'. Indeed, even in areas where SBSW is seen as an issue for the community, many community-based approaches have adopted non-punitive measures that seek to control sex work, instead seeking to work with sex workers and their clients to better support them, while at the same time reducing the local 'anti-social' impact of prostitution. In some cases creating dedicated specific areas as a space for SBSW-ers, for example, is an approach that has enjoyed some degree of success (Brown and Moore 2014; Kingston and Thomas 2015; Sanders and Sehmbi 2015). Indeed, recent research has argued that in some communities, sex workers are not seen as 'anti-social', or as a threat to local law and order, but are embraced and supported (Cooper 2016; Kingston 2013; Pitcher et al. 2006).

Few, if any, sex workers benefitted from the introduction of ASBOs in Camden, and cases where women are coerced into stopping SBSW via the threat of punishment if they continue to sell sex has the potential to create more harm. Many academics have argued that ASBOs do little to stop women working, particularly when they are working to support a drug habit (Hester and Westmarland 2004; Sanders 2005). Instead, and as our evidence suggests, the existence of an ASBO simply forces sex workers to move out of areas where they are used to working

and familiar with local geography and people, leaving them to face the additional dangers that come from working in unknown or unfamiliar places (Hubbard 2004; Hubbard and Sanders 2003; Kingston and Thomas 2015; Sanders-McDonagh and Neville 2012). Not only does working in unfamiliar spaces leave street-based sex workers more vulnerable to violent assault (Kinnell 2013), it also can lead to them becoming more distrustful of the police and less likely to report sexual and physical attacks (Sanders 2005). There have also been documented cases of sex workers receiving conditions attached to ASBOs which prohibit them from carrying condoms and ban them from areas where drug treatment clinics are located (Sanders 2009). The concern here is that women who need the most support will become disenfranchised from specialist services (Pitcher et al. 2006).

Young et al. (2006: 82) suggest that for some women who receive ASBOs, the presence of the order may push them towards engaging in more serious criminal activities: 'For example, one drug-using sex worker prohibited from entering particular areas, from publicly consuming controlled drugs, and soliciting or performing any sex act in public . . . was arrested and convicted for soliciting in the exclusion zone, and . . . for shoplifting, and then for street robbery'. In this situation, it seems clear that displacement may not only propel women into working in unfamiliar places, but to committing more serious offences to obtain money, once the avenue of SBSW has been cut off from them. Sanders (2009) has therefore argued that the use of ASBOs focusing on changing women's behaviours to push them to exit sex work ignores the well-being of sex-working women.

One particular problem relates to the failure of the Home Office to break down statistics at local levels – this makes it difficult to ascertain how many ASBOs are being used against sex workers in different geographic regions. A 2005 report on street-based sex work in London from the Greater London Authority [GLA] expressed particular concern about the use of ASBOs with sex workers in certain London Boroughs, including Camden (GLA 2005). In evidence provided by Camden Council themselves, the GLA report found that Camden had issued 15 behaviour orders to sex workers between 2000–05. While Camden insisted that these ASBOs that had been issued to sex workers were for substance misuse or drug related offences, the GLA expressed concerns about the implications of such an approach:

If there is, in fact, a tendency to use ASBOs on prostitutes, this is only tackling one side of the prostitution equation. By imposing an ASBO on a woman, she can be prevented from entering a certain area, but because of her need to support her drug dependency, she will be forced to work in another area, usually a neighbouring area. Just like any other person, she will not want to move away from the people she recognises, knows, and trusts. Therefore, there needs to be a different approach to the ASBO question. . . . In the absence of definitive evidence that the use of ASBOs to displace prostitutes is becoming more widespread, we believe that more research and policy development is needed in this area.

(GLA 2005: 10–11)

However, despite concerns from a range of policy makers, service providers and sex workers themselves, the dominant metanarrative in response to SBSW is still one of risk, victimisation and vulnerability. Brown and Sanders (2017: 2) discuss

how these vulnerability narratives ‘merge concern for sex workers’ safety with anxieties about the ‘problem’ of prostitution’. To this extent, they maintain that the dominant discourse around sex work might be considered part of a wider ‘vulnerability – transgression nexus’ (Brown 2014, 2015), where classifications of vulnerability are used to indicate that an individual is at risk, but also ‘to imply that they pose a risk to others and should be surveilled or controlled’ (Brown and Sanders 2017: 2).

In practice then, SWSB-ers seem to have been particularly targeted with ASBOs in a number of police force areas, which has served to entrench them further into the criminal justice system under the guise of ‘protection’. The fact that their ‘antisocial behaviour’ (soliciting) is by its very nature often recidivist, has led to sex workers often bearing the brunt of the full extent of the ASBO’s powers under law (Sagar 2010; Scoular and Carline 2014; Carline and Scoular 2015; Scoular and O’Neill 2007). Sanders (2009: 515, emphasis added) regards the use of ASBOs with sex workers as an example of forced welfarism, with coercion being used to bring about behavioural change ‘that is deemed by the courts to be in the welfare interest of the individual and for the benefit of the *community*’.

We argue that alternative approaches, including managed zones such as those found in Leeds, would allow sex workers to continue to work safely and recognises that sex workers (not to mention their clients) are part of the local community. Managed zones allow women to work in designated streets away from residential housing between the hours of 7 pm until 7 am without being cautioned or arrested for loitering or soliciting. The Leeds area was still policed for the safety of sex workers and all other laws were enforced:

The non-enforcement approach and associated focus on vulnerability represented a move away from responding to sex work as transgression and public nuisance, meaning sex workers, police and support workers could get on with their work less hindered by enforcement-orientated problems. Although evidently a fragile development, this was particularly important in relation to the management of crimes committed against sex workers.

(Brown and Sanders 2017: 8)

Conclusions

It is apparent that the ‘danger’ posed by SBSW, which has the potential to ‘harm’ the community, is largely socially constructed. Sibley (1995) argues that for much of the 20th and 21st centuries, marginalised or deviant groups have been subject to spatial exclusion. Hubbard (2004: 1695) discusses how this geopolitical strategy functions as a way of controlling these groups, and enforcing physical and social boundaries is here a way of removing or excluding those who are seen and labelled as ‘dirty’, ‘disgusting’, or ‘undesirable’. As Sanders (2009: 520) has argued, the street-based sex worker fits into this category, being seen as both ‘anti-social’ and ‘anti-sexual’:

she is labeled as unclean, unwanted and a symbol of decay. This iconic “whore” figure is entirely out of step with the gentrified notions of the modern city living and leisure spaces, and “deviant” groups become an easy target for removal.

As Hubbard (2004: 1699) has argued, the identification of street-based sex workers as a criminal Other ‘appears an extremely effective strategy for displacing sex work from valued city centre sites’. The removal of SBSW-ers from Kings Cross over the past 15 years can be seen as a direct result of discriminatory and draconian urban policies that seek to remove this undesirable population to make way for urban regeneration. As Young et al. (2006: 50) note in their report,

regeneration was less about meaningful attempt to resolve complex needs within the borough and far more about obscuring complex problems. The main thrust of their argument was that the regeneration effort was unequal within the borough and produced a “gated community” that provided a “middleclass haven”.

Issues related to regeneration are not limited to sex workers, but also apply to other parts of the community. While regeneration plans promised to create a more socially and economically vibrant community for everyone, only a select few really benefit from these changes. The average house price in Kings Cross in 2000 was £190,000, while in 2016 the average house price is now £693,000 (Foxtons 2017). Given that only 16% of households in Kings Cross were owner occupied in 2000 (Mutale and Edwards 2003), it seems unlikely that the 75% of households that were renting council or housing association properties would have benefitted from the gentrification of their local area. Equally unsurprising is that the three Camden wards (Kilburn, St Pancras and Somerstown, and Kings Cross) with the highest levels of unemployment in 2000 (Mutale and Edwards 2003) are still the wards with the highest Job Seekers Allowance claimants, and are amongst the most deprived wards in the borough with large ethnic minority populations (Camden Council 2015). While Arup’s (2004) Regeneration Strategy made clear that they hoped to devise projects that would target local people and specific excluded groups ‘to help promote local employment, jobs and enterprise’ (Arup 2004: 57), for most people living in deprivation in Kings Cross and St Pancras, little change has materialised for them. Finally, it is not only cruelly ironic, but deeply depressing, to note that according to the British Transport Police, King’s Cross station was still – despite the huge amount of effort put into tackling crime by penalising some of the most vulnerable members of society – the worst station for crime in 2011, and in 2016 (Seales and Parsons 2011; Sims 2016).

Hubbard (2004) argues that hegemonic urban regeneration policies that privilege entrepreneurial interests and favour capital accumulation ‘enables private capital to move into the vacuum left by the end of managerial, welfare-based urban policy’ (Hubbard 2004: 1697). Furthermore, he suggests that introducing the type of legislation

designed to tackle low-level public disorder (apparently personified in the figure of the street prostitute) signals an intention to tackle crime and urban malaise. Critics suggest that this amounts to a policy of blaming the victim that does nothing to tackle the underlying causes of urban crime and poverty. (Hubbard 2004: 1699)

Despite the evidence that redevelopment and gentrification has clearly not benefitted many King's Cross residents already living in deprivation, and that punitive policing measures including ASBOs have done little to help sex workers, the King's Cross redevelopment website suggests that the project is a story of community success:

The location, the connections, the canal-side setting, the rich and varied heritage, an exciting cultural scene, a thriving business community, and a strong sense of local community. All these things come together at King's Cross to make it unique, exciting and really quite special. Come and see for yourself.

(Kings Cross Business Partnership Limited 2017)

Walking through the council flats in Levita House, a stone's throw away from King's Cross station, you will certainly be introduced to an exciting cultural scene, with the smell of spices coming from the Bengali community that live there, or walking down Churchway lane, where you'll find a small but vibrant Mosque. This is certainly a community with a rich and varied heritage, and a few remaining locally-owned small businesses. Undoubtedly regeneration will extend out and disrupt these streets as well, turning them into more fashionable venues acceptable to the distinguished urban elite. And no doubt the few street-based sex workers who remain in King's Cross will eventually submit to the coercive salvation being offered to them, or move to areas where gentrification has not made it impossible for them to work safely. Many sex workers we spoke with from King's Cross had moved east to places like Hackney in order to work, but the recent increase in austerity approaches that has resulted in the closing of dedicated services for sex workers (as well as for other vulnerable women) has also now left them harassed by police, and vulnerable to dangerous clients (Hemery 2016). While it may be coincidence that Hackney is also undergoing a startling and rapid process of gentrification, we would argue the introduction of ASBOs for SBSW-ers in Kings Cross, and criminalisation tactics used in many other areas, are a direct result of both public authorities and private investors working to sanitise areas seen as 'undesirable' (c.f. Sanders-McDonagh et al. 2016), removing those who do not fit with the middleclass, ultra-clean image that is required for the success of neoliberal regeneration of the city.

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