

Reintegration & After Care

By Toos Heemskerk of Scarlet Cord

Reintegration methodology

Motivation

This article will describe the reintegration methodology used by the Scarlet Cord. It is not the reintegration program itself, but a description of how the reintegration methods can be used by the social workers in assisting the one being helped. The purpose of developing a reintegration program was the initiative of the social workers of the Scarlet Cord. More and more often the staff of the Scarlet Cord encountered requests for help from women that wanted to leave prostitution. These women were redirected to other organizations, but in many cases it was not effective. The women ended up on long waiting lists, were only partially helped in their problems or felt they were not understood by the help organizations. For this reason the Scarlet Cord decided to begin its own help program. In November of 2002 the Scarlet Cord employed a social worker as part of the team. In September 2004 the work was expanded to include another social worker.

1. What is the reintegration program

The reintegration program has as its goals:

- to offer social help to those women who want to stop with prostitution.
- provision of an individual case manager for each of the women that want to stop so that other various social help agencies have a specific person to address for each of the individual clients.
- to offer a personal reintegration plan for woman using the help. The plan is customized to the woman's needs and makes provisions for the necessary steps of social reintegration and psychosocial support.

The resocialization process is addressing at least:

- financial situations (registering for social welfare and handling the payment of debts)
- job (registering by work employment agency)
- housing
- education or retraining

The psychosocial counseling focuses among other things

- § individual counseling in relation to identity, emotions, learning to live a different life styles, learning to handle emotions.
- § working through (sexual) trauma's
- § building up a social network

This reintegration program is mainly designed for the women behind the windows which we visit during our street work. However during the last 2 years we have seen that the program can have an even broader use. We use this method to guide women that have not worked behind the window but are part of the loverboy circuit. While working with these women it became apparent that certain aspects of the reintegration program were effective in providing help for them. Whenever a girl is headed toward prostitution, but is in time removed from the circuit, she will also need help in housing, and help with sorting out her financial situation and care in working through the incurred traumas etc.

We also noticed through our social work that a clearer understanding needed to be given to the term prostitution. In general the definition of prostitution is sex in exchange for money. In reality prostitution involves more. It can be sex in exchange for attention, in payment for drugs, in exchange for shelter. Often there is talk of a sliding scale. A girl that is caught in a dependent relationship, sex is first in exchange for attention. After that she will have sex with a friend of her 'partner' in exchange for drugs. In the meantime she needs shelter and in exchange for housing she has sex with an acquaintance of her partner. Her partner / loverboy at this point does not yet have her working behind the window, but even at this level you can call it prostitution.

2. Establishing contact with the clients

33% of the clients come in contact with the social worker of the Scarlet Cord via the street work. Workers from the Scarlet Cord, including the 2 social workers visit the windows to establish contact with the women and if necessary offer help. It is important for the social workers to go by the windows in order to get a feeling for what is happening in the area. In addition these visits help to lower the threshold for women who need help. In actuality the initial social work conversation has already taken

place behind the window during this social outreach activity. At the end of the conversation a follow up talk can be set up that will take place in the office of the Scarlet Cord.

To draw attention to the help offered by the Scarlet Cord, business cards are handed out during the street work with the following text in various languages.

Do you ever ask the question?

- ü what things do I need to sort out now that prostitution is a legal profession?
- ü is my insurance in order?
- ü do I enjoy my work?
- ü what do I do if I want to stop with prostitution?

Contact the Scarlet Cord

What is the Scarlet Cord?

The Scarlet Cord is an independent Christian help organization for prostitutes in the red light district. You can receive help from our social worker when you have questions about practical issues like housing and money. We also provide help when you want to stop with prostitution and need to get things organized or need to talk things through.

How does the Scarlet Cord work?

Since 1987 The Scarlet Cord has had contact with the women in the red light district. Professionals, working together with volunteers, some of whom were formerly working as prostitutes, make up the team of the Scarlet Cord. Our help is for free and we keep it confidential. You can ask more questions personally when we come by for a visit; by telephone; by e-mail; or by dropping by at the Scarlet Cord.

Scarlet Cord
Barndesteeg 25
1012 BV Amsterdam
T 020-6226897
(mon - fri 9:30-4:30 pm)
F 020-3302224
i www.scharlakenkoord.nl
e info@scharlakenkoord.nl

The style of the card is expressly like a business card so that the women can store it unnoticed in their purses.

Each year the Scarlet Cord has between 900-1000 talks with women behind the windows. This can vary from a short conversation of 5 minutes to an hour and a half. These visits are recorded under street work and not contact with social workers. The department of social work registers when there is an intake by telephone or an interview takes place in the office.

3. Basic Questions

When women come to receive counseling from the Scarlet Cord 3 basic questions are asked during the first contact or intake. These questions are important to determine the direction of the help offered.

3.1 Does the women face danger if she decides to stop with prostitution?

When there is danger does the woman call the police herself or may the Scarlet Cord contact the police for help on her behalf. Further, a safe home will be found.

During the street work we visit many women of whom we suspect and know are forced into this work. This can be recognized by their reaction; "I can't talk right now", or because they are immediately called on their mobile and demanded to stop with the conversation or because we stand face to face with the pimp or the one who needs to keep an eye on her. It is an art to let the women know we have their interest at heart without bringing them in danger. If at all possible we try to give the small business card so that they at least have an address of a help organization. When we are concerned we can report this via the anonymous felon report. We also try to build contact by consistently coming back in the hope that the woman will finally dare to talk.

The Scarlet Cord was called by a psychiatric clinic. A victim of a loverboy had been brought there by the police. The women had been badly traumatized and the clinic called to consult with the Scarlet Cord. This woman had worked 1 ½ years in the Red light district. She had seen the workers from the Scarlet Cord walking through the area but never dared to talk with them for fear of retaliation from her loverboy. Even so it had always encouraged her to see the women from the Scarlet Cord. It gave her the feeling that she and her colleagues were still noticed by someone other than the customers and the pimps. In the end this gave her the courage to finally contact the police and say that she wanted out.

In 2004 and 2005 we had consultation with the Amsterdam police in order to develop a good working relationship / cooperation. Eight officers from the department of Social youth and vice squad, as a part of their on the job training, came to visit the Scarlet Cord. Also two agents that work in the district had extensive talks with the workers of the Scarlet Cord. During these conversations work agreements were made. The Scarlet Cord also provides workshops in the police schools of Amsterdam about victims and people trafficking.

3.2 Is the client legal or illegal?

For illegal women it can be considered that these women have arrived in Holland via the women trafficking. They are forced to work and often have false papers. During the street work we try to establish contact with them. By continuously visiting and explaining who we are, we try to build a trust relationship. A plus point is that we have foreign volunteers who formerly worked in prostitution. They know like no other what their situation is like and can speak to them on their own level.

Women often don't dare to take actions to stop until after they have paid off all their debts to the trafficker / pimp / madam. After they have paid their debt they are 'free' to go their own way. They are illegal and have no idea what their options are or aren't here in Holland. Traffickers make them afraid by giving them false information, for example, that they would spend years in prison if they were found out to be illegal.

The Scarlet Cord wants to in any case provide some information. We tell them about the B9 ruling and about the IOM, BLinN and other important organizations.

Also women working with false papers, mainly south American women, we offer, among other things, information about IOM. The Scarlet Cord works with south American volunteers, who can reach these women in Spanish.

4. Intake

4.1 Intake goal

These 2 questions determine the course each client will take.

Of course the client herself indicates what her most important needs are. The goal of the intake is to have the client formulate her areas of need and together with the Scarlet Cord discuss how these needs can be handled. It is good to realize that it is a big step for a client to ask for help. Every social worker in what ever setting can confirm that in general the clients find it difficult and stressful to ask for

help. For prostitutes is this threshold even higher because they are used to working anonymously. Most of the women have a work name. It often feels threatening to women to leave their anonymity.

Women also say that during their work they turn on their imaginary “feeling switch”. In that way they are able to block their feelings and do their work purely technically. During the intake however they are confronted with themselves. This requires extra tact (skill) from the social workers to provide a feeling of safety (a safe environment) so that they dare to share their story and to keep motivated to continue with the counseling.

4.2 Motivation

It is good to consider the reasons why a woman wants to stop with prostitution.

When a woman leaves prostitution because she sees better opportunities, she generally does not ask for help from the Scarlet Cord. She moves on and does not need our help. Unless there are business issues to organize or she asks help to work through certain experiences Reality has shown that for many women it is difficult to stop on their own and they feel ambivalent about whether or not to stop. During the street work we regularly encounter women who declare they are going to stop soon but still continue working.

In an evaluation report of “the lifting of the brothel ban: prostitution 2000-2001” from the scientific research and documentation center WODC it appears that almost half of the prostitutes would stop with their work if they had the chance. In the WODC investigation and the investigation by the Rutgers Nisso group over the social position of the prostitutes, the ambivalent attitude of the prostitute in regard to her profession was mentioned. In comparison to a control group, prostitutes find their work emotionally harder and physically more stressful. It appears that the general work satisfaction of the prostitutes is connected to their autonomy and support, negative experiences with their clients and if they are from Dutch origin.

Difficulties prostitutes have in leaving this profession can come from a variety of reasons. The experience of organizations that have contact with prostitutes (for example social workers and the GGd) is that integration into society is difficult. This is caused particularly by: the decrease in finances caused by stopping with prostitution, the lifestyle and social network within the circle of prostitution, the difficulty of giving up anonymity and talking over their experience in prostitution, root psychological or addiction problems, practical problems in the areas of finances, housing or jurisdictional business, residence status, low education level and a lack of professional work experience.

In short, when a woman stops with prostitution it is not because she has enough prospects, but because emotionally and / or physically she cannot do it any more. “I am sick of it”, “I can’t do it any more”, “I am sick of men”, “This is not what I really wanted” are the motivations most often voiced. Karina Schaapman, councilor in Amsterdam and author of, among others, “Without Mother” describes it as “at a certain moment every prostitute reaches a point of loathing by which they will want to stop with working”.

The social worker together with the client looks at what her motivations are. What is it that makes her want to stop with prostitution? How can the negatively charged motivations like “I can’t do it any more” be transcribed to positive goals? What happens then is that the social worker and client work together to on positive work perspectives. For example: I will stop with prostitution and familiarize myself with other work. I will work through the pain that has built up in me as a result of being raped as a young girl. When the women can’t handle these emotions anymore it is good to put the focus back on the motivation for stopping with prostitution. That is why it is necessary to discuss what it was that caused the women to end up in prostitution. If it is financial problems and these are not yet resolved then the money issue becomes a snare that brings the women back into prostitution. If a girl is brought into

prostitution via a loverboy and she is not emotionally free from him, extra attention is needed for this co-dependant relationship so that she doesn't end up again against her will in prostitution.

Generally methods for assistance place much attention on a client's motivation. For everybody change is often threatening. We are afraid of the unknown and therefore often withdraw. We prefer to stay "hanging" in our old lifestyle. Preferably the pain of the known verses the leap into the unknown. Therefore when a woman still chooses to go on with the change, a lot of motivation is needed. Motivation is the will and the attempt from the client to take an active role in the process of change. Motivation can be brought back to two sources: the extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Individual assistance, E Behrend, p34, 35). Extrinsic motivation is a result of external influences: pressure and punishment, social pressure, the suffering and pain that occur from outside. Intrinsic motivation comes from the inside out: because I want it, because it's for a good purpose. Motivation by external factors alone is not sufficient. It is important that the client **her self** wants to work on the situation. The prerequisite for this is that the woman sees herself as the person who can reach her goal, thus the one to stop the prostitution. There are more factors with prostitution: In Holland prostitution is forbidden for women younger than 18, if she doesn't have the right papers, and / or when a woman is forced into prostitution. So, when women are forced into prostitution against their will it naturally applies that the help and action are needed from outside. Even if a woman is motivated to stop, if traffickers or pimps prevent her from stopping, her own motivation is not enough. Only after she is out of prostitution with help from others and willing to accept help is it important that she maintains her motivation in order to stay out.

During the counseling it is also important to pay attention to the ambivalence the woman feels. For example, asking the question: Do you ever have the desire to return to prostitution? Together with the social worker the client can talk through the yes and no feelings. When the (hidden) indecisive feelings of the women can be brought to the surface and discussed, she can learn how to handle her conflicting desires (Social Casework; H.H. Perlman 193-199).

In actuality we see that clients regularly return to working in prostitution. Sometimes they will have contact with the Scarlet Cord and relate that they worked a few evenings to earn some extra money. We notice that women fall back into prostitution when something has happened in their lives; when something difficult happens etc. Returning back to prostitution is a sort instinctive response; a return to a familiar world.. We discuss this instinctive reaction with the women so they can anticipate it.

Some clients don't turn up for their appointments and we see them in the windows during our street work. Naturally we visit them. Women mainly return because of financial needs or because they miss a certain excitement. At the same time they recognize that they don't do the work as well any more. Once they have decided that they have had enough and want to stop it has an influence on how they present themselves and they receive fewer customers. They also share that they are not so willing to offer extras to their regular customers and as a result lose them as well. Stopping with prostitution becomes in this manner a process of stopping, again returning and finding that the work doesn't work, again stopping and so on. Even so the Scarlet Cord continues to offer help when the client requests it. Some of the clients get a shock when we meet them during the street work and are afraid that we will end their help. We explain that we as social workers are there for them and that it is their own choice and responsibility if they will continue or not in prostitution. At the same time we indicate we expect responsibility from the client in relation to the contact with the social worker. When there is an appointment scheduled, we expect the client to communicate if she can't come or to indicate that she wants to stop the contact with the social worker.

5. Practical help questions

Usually the social work plan starts with practical questions. The practical questions are considered more urgent than the psychological questions. A person needs a roof above their head and money in their wallet before they can have the rest and space to reflect on their feelings.

A practical question that often comes up during the intake is: I want to stop with prostitution but how do I get a permanent job or social payment.

The first thing that is done is to explain about the CWI (Center for work and income). Many women don't know exactly what the CWI does or that they can only register at the CWI in their own place of residence. Sometimes the women don't know in which local administration they are registered. A responsibility of the social worker from the Scarlet Cord is to give instructions about the possibilities and impossibilities that exist for them in the areas of law and rulings and the options available from help organizations.

5.1 Social security benefits

Many clients find it a big step to be registered with the CWI. To get registered for social security benefits the woman loses her anonymity and that is usually difficult for her. Often women struggle with feelings of shame towards the CWI employee (and in relation to herself). If they have worked black they fear that they will face back payments from the tax office. In addition to this is the fear from the CWI employee's reaction to the work they have done.

The Scarlet Cord counsels the woman with practical help of how they can get registered by the CWI. It is also discussed with her if she has barriers in making contact with the CWI and how these can be reduced. We talk the woman through the possible questions that will be asked and how they can answer these. For example: You will be asked how come you are requesting a social payment and how you made an income before. What will you answer? Sometimes we practice with the woman by role playing. The woman takes the role of the CWI employee and the social worker the part of the client asking for the social payments. The roles are then reversed and the woman practices the part of speaking to the CWI employee. In this way the woman can learn to anticipate what to expect in these situations.

As a means of mediation the Scarlet Cord often sends a letter with the client explaining that the woman is in a counseling process with the Scarlet Cord. The social services usually views it as a positive point that the woman is in a counseling process. It is also possible for one of the workers of the Scarlet Cord to join the woman when she applies as a means of support.

Some women want to get another job as quickly as possible. Most of the women are usually so tired and stressed or have other problems that they aren't in a position to begin another job. Thankfully many of the CWI employees have a good grasp of the situation and take that into account. It does happen that the contact with the CWI and the woman is laborious. For example when the CWI doesn't handle the request of eight weeks that was agreed upon.

Another important development was in the spring of 2006. The office of Work and Income (DWI) made work arrangements with the Scarlet Cord. Two workers from the DWI are contact persons for the Scarlet Cord. When a woman does not have a permanent address in Amsterdam, but she stays for example with a girlfriend, she can still receive social benefits. The Scarlet Cord registers the client, explains her situation and goes with her for her first interview at the DWI. Once she is in their circuit she can apply for schooling, help with debts, budgeting and finding a different job.

5.2 Work

In most cases the women don't easily find a new job. Many of the women don't have much education or haven't finished their schooling. Others don't want to divulge that they have worked in prostitution but have to give account for the gap in their CV (curriculum vitae).

Women also find it difficult to earn significantly less. Also if they are in paid employment they lose a certain freedom they had as a prostitute. Foreign prostitutes don't speak good Dutch which is not to their advantage.

A few women work via temp-agencies. The women who will have the most chance of success are those who had jobs before they entered prostitution. We counseled a woman who had worked for a number of years in a clothing store. After she stopped with prostitution she went to several shops to ask if they needed personnel. In this way she found a new job. It is good to establish a network with temp-agencies.

5.3 Daily routine

Even if a woman is not in a position to look for work or to start schooling it is important that they have daily activity / routine. The first thing to establish is a different day and night rhythm. They are used to work in the evenings and night and sleep during the day, so they need to establish a new routine. Women say they have a feeling of falling in a void when they stop working. During the street work we regularly hear women say that they have stopped before but couldn't continue and so returned to work. One girl shared "I was forced to work and reported it. I was glad that I didn't have to work but came home to nothing. I thought I would go crazy sitting at home. The first day was relaxed. The 2nd day I couldn't stand it and was so restless I thought I would climb the walls. After the 3rd day I went back to work. But, now I do it for myself." We will come back to the psychological aspects in a different chapter. This is to say that they need structure. Structure gives a security, you know what you have to do and what and when something is expected of you. It helps the women to get up at a set time and to do something like volunteer work for example. One client got a dog; she had a reason to get up and was required several times a day to go out and let the dog out.

5.4 Housing

Besides another job or temporary social benefits housing is usually a problem. When a woman is in danger, a safe shelter is the first thing that needs to be arranged. In other situations the woman needs to find cheaper housing, if she left the house of her partner / pimp she drifts from one friend to another. Sometimes there is an option of emergency housing. The woman needs to be open for social help for housing. If she doesn't qualify for the emergency housing another housing option needs to be looked into. For this reason the Scarlet Cord has a regular contact person at the housing service who they can call for advice. A big problem is that the Amsterdam housing market is largely a closed market. This means that the social worker and the client continually need to come up with creative solutions.

5.5 Debts

Although women can earn a lot of money, we rarely find any who have savings. In general the money is quickly spent to support families or because the pimp demands most of it or because the woman's spending pattern is based on the amount she earns.

Even when the woman no longer works for the loverboy, she still must pay off the debts and that's why she works "for herself". Solving debts is only possible if a woman has a permanent job. When the woman can't solve the debts the Scarlet Cord works as mediator with the creditors. In general these are time consuming aspects of the social work. The woman is expected to do what she is able to do but the creditors usually ask for contact with the case worker.

5.6 Health Insurance

Some women are not insured or must change their insurance. The Scarlet Cord gives information and counsel in organizing this. There are occasions where women have physical problems and are not insured. In these situations we direct them to the “Kruispost” (a first aid post where there is medical help for the uninsured).

5.7 Education

For clients up to approximately 25 years old, the subject of schooling is necessary. Many clients either haven't finished their schooling or want to study for a profession. Most of them don't know how to go about that. The Scarlet Cord provides information. Usually the best option is to sit together with the client and look up sites on the computer. Some women don't even know what they are good in or what is interesting to them. Their assignment can be to consider different options, to check around, gather information materials and attend open days at school.

It also happens, that due to private situations, some women have very few options to receive schooling even though they are motivated. In these situations the Scarlet Cord assigns “buddies” to provide help. Like a “buddy” who is helping a Nigerian client to learn read and write in English. Another buddy helps the client with her home schooling for social pedagogic work. You can find more information about the “buddy” program in this brochure.

The Scarlet Cord is also counseling clients who are interested in school but rarely attend. This is a focus point during the counseling. When girls are still of the age where they are required to go to school or when they have barely followed any education the Scarlet Cord stimulates them to attend or finish their schooling. Communicating with a mentor or a trusted acquaintance can be helpful.

6. Methods of practical assistance

The Scarlet Cord works with practical questions often patterned after Assignment oriented Case Work, the strategy of this comes from two goals:

- ∇ To help the client lighten the situation in which she is caught
- ∇ To give her a constructive problem solving experience; which will prepare her to accept help in the future and extend her own ability to solve problems. The focus is on the tasks to be done not so much on the emotions. The client receives tasks that she is able to accomplish (Task Oriented Case, work goal oriented method of short term care; William J Reid, Laura Epstein). For example at the end of the intake the client receives a letter containing what she needs to have accomplished before the next appointment with the Scarlet Cord. For instance: go and get registered at the CWI.

During the second appointment when the woman explains how she accomplished the task she can experience a feeling of success and thus more self confidence. In this way the woman works on her practical problems and the Scarlet Cord offers emotional support. As counselors we offer respect, recognition, and encouragement. It is important for her to realize that she is valuable. In this way we build a bond of trust with her and let her see that we are trustworthy whereby she can experience security to share her emotions. Helen Harris Perlman, one of the forerunners of the Social Caseworker, describes the relationship between the client and social worker as follows: “the relationship is a source of hope, a stimulus for the learning process and a support that makes tackling the problem positively possible”.

In establishing a relationship of trust one needs to consider that many prostitutes are skeptical / suspicious due to personal experience and by the double moral standard experienced in their work. Only after the social worker has proved to be real, true to her word, honest, can she earn the trust of

the women. Doing this can be done during the intake by focusing on the main problems that exist. This is worked on first without a lot of other long questions that at this point are not important. In brief: in the beginning of the counseling we work mainly on problem solving and direction. However in offering help this alone is inadequate. That is why a lot of attention is also given to psychological counseling.

7. Psychosocial problems

During the counseling talks it becomes apparent that with many women that there are psychosocial problems. During their work in prostitution they have turned off the thinking switch and suppressed their feelings. Now that they have stopped the work the switch appears to not work anymore and all the repressed feeling vehemently come up. Stopping with work is not a relief but just the beginning of complex problems. This results in the counseling often being intense and lengthy, minimum is a year or longer.

Which problems should be considered?

7.1 Lifestyle and setting

Women are accustomed to a certain lifestyle and setting. Most women earn an above average income and adjust their spending accordingly. They have enough money to buy clothing, pay the rent and live luxuriously. When they receive a lower income it means they need to adjust their life style accordingly but that is not so easy. A girl we encountered during our street work described it as follows. "Every winter I stop with prostitution. I have another job but I earn only a fraction of what I earn here. Every winter I tell myself that I will really stop with prostitution but every summer I start working again. I can do so many fun things with that money. Shortly I am going on vacation, I can go out and I can do what I want. At this moment I enjoy the money but I know for sure I won't work for years in prostitution. But, I know I won't be able to stop on my own and I will need help to stop".

7.2 Identity

Often women have trouble with their identity. Their work in prostitution focused mainly on the outward. A woman was paid for her worth. When women stop with this work they ask themselves who they are and where they derive their own worth. Many find this very confronting.

The counseling of the Scarlet Cord pays a lot of attention to the self esteem and self acceptance. Developing healthy self confidence is important. Only when a woman can accept herself is she in a position to build healthy relationships and function normally in society. How the counseling is formed depends on the help needed, the age and the level of the client. With clients it is often effective to practice. Mirror practice for example: you look in the mirror: what do you see, what do you find attractive on yourself, what don't you like about yourself, what character quality do you find positive, which one not.

Identity is closely connected with how a woman grew up. Did she have confirmation from her parents? Or, was she (severely) wounded during her youth? Contextual counseling is a method used by the Scarlet Cord. The founder of this contextual counseling, Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, focuses on the present functioning of the client but also has an eye on the context of the client; there is a dynamic relationship between the client and her important relationships. Besides that one must consider the influence on the person from the previous generations and its result on the coming generations. The understanding of loyalty, trustworthiness, giving and receiving, recognition, destructive rights, plays an important role.

An example to clarify:

A nineteen year old client was sent to us by her step father. He was worried over her many sexual relationships. Through computer chatting she made appointments with unknown men and it appeared

as if she had no boundaries. It didn't matter who she went to bed with or what they demanded of her. She enjoyed the attention from men and was prepared to anything they asked of her. What at that moment bothered her the most was that her mother condemned her. She didn't think her mother had any right to do that. As a child of eleven the client ran the family of the divorced mother and two younger brothers. She had the whole role of parenthood and received no acknowledgment from her mother for all the care she shouldered. The only way to survive was to disassociate. She pretended that it wasn't her that did all the work at home but a girl with a different name. In her fantasy she had a good relationship with her mother. Her unrestrained behavior towards men whom she hardly knew was reasoned with: "The only thing I know is that I never get anything in return, that's who I am. Maybe it's strange what I am doing but at least I get attention and complements." According to the vision of the contextual social care this girl had the right to receive care from her mother. Because she didn't receive this care and instead had to care for her mother the relationship between her and her mother was out of balance. Her mother had an outstanding debt to pay so to speak which she didn't pay. During the counseling the client came to the conclusion that she actually prostituted herself for attention. For psychological help she also had counseling with the GGZ. In agreement with the GGZ the Scarlet Cord talked with her about relationship and boundaries. Loverboys were also discussed as a means of prevention using some of our books. One book tells the story of a victim of a loverboy written by request of the Scarlet Cord.

7.3 How could it get this far?

Many women look back, often with astonishment that they allowed it to happen. They feel shame about their behavior, anger at the pimps or loverboy, anger at themselves. They project their feelings about themselves onto other people. For example they think that an employee of the CWI will reject them but after talking through it with them they realize that it's really that they are rejecting themselves.

When we talk with clients about what brought them into prostitution it appears that by majority it resulted from having their personal boundaries trampled, over an extended period of time. This can be a result of the women experiencing rejection as a child or that in the family physical or sexual abuse happened. We regularly hear that as teenagers women were raped and yet it was not acknowledged (contextual: that the parents don't acknowledge that something happened to her) and so they become indifferent: "what difference does it make it's already ruined. If men want to misuse my body then they need to pay to do it". It can give the women the feeling of taking revenge or the feeling of power. In the long run prostitution does not work as a remedy for hurt emotions. Working to give insight can help clients. By going back to the moment when they just began to work as a prostitute, to go back to what happened before that. Sometimes women can identify with books written for the Scarlet Cord like *Whom to Trust*; *Hope*; and *Beloved Child*. These insights can be very painful; sorrow, anger, a variety of emotions surface. It is important to give room for them in a safe environment.

7.4 Feelings

In addition women find it difficult to deal with their emotions. In order to do the work they turn off the imaginary switch (disassociation). Now that they have stopped working the women need to discover new ways to handle their emotions. Women relate that since their work in prostitution they have changed, they became hard or aggressive. Reflecting on their feelings during counseling can be very confronting. As social workers we need to deal with these gradually. When a woman allows herself to start feeling again often the flood gates burst open. Not only do the feelings about the time of prostitution come to the surface but also feeling of rejection, misunderstanding, helplessness, sadness etc. from before the prostitution. The Scarlet Cord works with the pain that remains in the women and can block her from functioning. It is comparable in many cases to a mourning process: mourning for what was taken from you, mourning the lack of recognition, mourning for broken dreams. When the mourning is not worked through it often changes into destructive emotions like depression, rage,

jealousy, self destruction. When we recognize the women have these feelings, it is good to find out what the source is.

Often women have experienced trauma. In a number of cases you can talk about post traumatic stress syndrome. Symptoms of a PTSS occur after a traumatic experience and can occur immediately or appear much later. It is a disorder that occurs after experiencing physical and / or emotional damage. The symptoms can begin or increase when someone encounters a situation that resembles the original trauma. There are different symptoms that are typical for someone with PTSS:

- Ø an increase in feelings of stress and anxiety that weren't there before the traumatic incidence.
- Ø reliving the incidence(s)
- Ø avoiding stimulus that can be connected with what happened
- Ø other complaints, like diminished interest in usual activity, less positive emotions come out, a feeling of exclusion, feeling left out, no interest in the future.

With psychotherapy the traumatic experience can be worked through. The purpose of this is to make it possible to talk through the traumatic experience, not just as cold hard facts but with the emotional and physical responses that belong to it, such as pain, fear, and sadness. Only after this, is it possible for it to find a place in the client's life.

What is striking is that clients under treatment by a psychiatrist or a psychotherapist ask in addition for help from the Scarlet Cord. Their reason is that they feel more understood by the social workers from the Scarlet Cord because it specializes in problems surrounding prostitution. When a client has more than one social worker, the social worker from the Scarlet Cord asks the client's permission to contact the other social workers so that it can be a coordinated effort in providing help.

It is discussed with the client how this experience can be given a place so that it doesn't continue to dictate her life. It can be compared to a wound: when a wound is not treated or when a band aid is applied instead of the needed stitches it cannot heal correctly. The wound will then dictate (control, determine) the woman's life. The other option is to treat the wound, to care for and give the needed stitches. The scar will always be visible and under certain circumstances "pull" but it won't control the woman's life.

How a traumatic experience can find a place in a clients life depends on what works with her. Some clients prefer to write it down. They mail it to the social worker and discuss it during the next session. Other clients mostly want to talk and to relate what happened. Still other women write poetry. It is important that they way they do it fits with them. What always takes place during the sessions is: to name the emotions that result from the negative experience, the emotions the woman felt during the experience and now. The emotions most often mentioned are: fear, hopelessness, sadness, anger, shame, feelings of guilt. The women need to learn how to work through what happened. Self respect and strength to resist need to be built up and from this to develop boundaries in new situations

7.5 Psychiatric complaints

Women often have psychiatric complains; for example borderline or disassociation. With psychiatric problems or severe psychosocial problems we work together with the GGZ. Some of these psychiatric problems were present before the woman started in prostitution. Through prostitution some of these problems can become worse or even develop.

7.6 View of men

Many women have a decidedly negative view of men, which hinders them in functioning socially. Many struggle with the fact that some of their customers were married men. If men were so easily willing to

cheat on their wives, who says the client's partner will be trustworthy? Many women also experience violence from their customers. It happened that women under threat had to give up their earned money to the customer.

It is important that during the counseling sessions the women have the chance to share their experiences and further not to generalize their view of men.

A percentage of clients need to learn how to relate to men in normal social circles. That positive attention does not imply sex. Also some need to learn how to trust.

Women often find it hard how to handle sexuality. They find it hard to enjoy it. Husbands find that hard to accept. How can it be that she did it for work but refuses her husband? During counseling it regularly appears that the woman still has not dealt with youth traumas. Rape during the teenage years can have a huge impact and if not adequately supported can distort their view of sexuality. Women relate that they have the feeling that so much is ruined, that taking the step to prostitution is not that big. Sexuality and intimacy / love are completely separate things. Women also say it gives them a good feeling to have "power". Before they were humiliated by sexual abuse, but now they can have a say about it. They decide what and if or not it happens and earn a lot doing it. When a woman enters a love relationship with a man, sexuality turns out to have a different meaning. Not all the women are able to make that switch. Sexuality for them has nothing to do with love, but humiliation and power. Only when the women come to grip with this can they begin to work on it.

7.7 Dependant relationships

Women are in many cases caught in dependant relationships. A victim of a loverboy has a very imbalanced relationship with her partner and appears to be addicted to him. Victims often return to the offender. The Scarlet Cord offers help by working on giving insight. The methods of Robin Norwood are often used which are described in her book "As long as he is happy". Norwood suggests that women that grow up in an atmosphere of neglect, violence, alcoholism etc. grow accustomed to this kind of stress. Only after women become aware of this instinctive response and realize how destructive it is can they begin to work on it. They need to work through the pain of the past and the present and learn how to develop relationships in a different manner. This is a long and painful process for women. A number of clients were very happy when they read this book. It gave them a sense of recognition, finally they could get more insight into their own behavior. It also worked preventative by teaching them how to develop new relationships.

7.8 Pregnancy and abortions

The subject of pregnancy often comes up during the counseling. Sometimes the women are pregnant and they struggle with whether or not to continue the pregnancy. With these clients a so-called choice talk is held, where the meaning of the pregnancy is discussed. What are the implications when she completes the pregnancy and the child is born, and what the consequences are when the woman chooses for the abortion. The clients are also directed to the VBOK (Organization for the protection of the unborn child) which is specialized in pregnant women and those who have undergone an abortion. Continuing with the pregnancy has a huge impact on the client. It appears when a woman chooses to continue with the pregnancy and wants to go to a crisis home that there are various complications, particularly when the woman uses hard drugs or alcohol.

Undergoing an abortion can also have a huge impact on the woman. This is often chosen because the woman sees no perspective in raising a child. At the same time though she mourns because she didn't let the child be born.

8. Buddies

As social workers we notice regularly that clients become isolated. Also the clients have questions that don't fall under the role of the social worker. For example help with studies. For this reason the buddy project was started. A buddy is a volunteer that is connected with a client who has a need. The purpose and tasks of the buddy are clearly established for the client and the buddy at the start of the contact. The buddy does not take over the role of the social worker but is an added support. Buddies are also provided after the counseling from the Scarlet Cord is completed. This is how the Scarlet Cord directed a victim of a loverboy. The Scarlet Cord provided direction in the practical matters and support in the psychosocial areas. But it remained difficult to increase her social network, particularly because she was stuck at home with a baby. After the counseling was completed she was connected with a buddy who also had a small child. Together they went out with their children and via the buddy the client's social network was expanded. Another buddy taught a client to read and write in English. The buddies are screened and receive training before they begin.

9. Parents

In the preceding chapters it has been mentioned that the social network for the client is very important. Parents play an important role in this area. For girls that want to stop with prostitution it is important that there is an open door for them at their parents home. This offers them extra motivation and perspective. The fact that their parents still love them provides a basis to choose to make changes in their life. This demands a lot from the parents. It is usually an enormous shock when the parents learn that their daughter is involved with a loverboy or when they realize that their daughter has earned so much money through prostitution. For this reason the Scarlet Cord also offers help for the parents. Some parents make contact via the web sight www.bewareofloverboys.nl. Parents are also directed to the Scarlet Cord by other social help organizations. Once their daughter is eighteen years old, the parents can't do much legally. Being of age she can basically decide what she does. She must also be the one to file a complaint against a loverboy. In such situations the parents ask help to be able to share their story or express all their feelings of frustration, anger, fear and sorrow.

In the spring of 2005 the Scarlet Cord set up a discussion group for parents of loverboy victims. Due to small participation this group didn't continue. However in September of 2005 a support group for mothers of loverboy victims started. This time it was only mothers that were invited due to the fact that mothers, more often than fathers, indicate the need to have a sharing group. This group specifically for women also provided more security.

10. Pastoral counseling

The Scarlet Cord is a Christian organization. The Christian identity of our organization determines our view of people and our view of prostitution. Our work means that we see each client as valuable and created by God. We translate our vision in standing with the women without judging.

We are honest about our identity and tell the women that we are a Christian organization. Some of the women have a Christian background and find it nice to have a Christian social worker. They have the freedom to speak about their life's questions and their view of God. Some of the women find much support in their faith during the dealing with their traumas. By request of the Scarlet Cord a student of Christian Service and Pastoral Work from the Christian College of Ede wrote a pastoral handbook in which the themes that are pertinent to the counseling are addressed. For example what does the Bible say about self acceptance, shame, sadness, forgiveness etc. Other women are curious, because they are facing their own identity. They are open for something that gives some sense of purpose to life. They ask who God is and what the Bible says. Still other women want the help but absolutely do not want to talk about the Christian faith. Naturally the Scarlet Cord respects that. We offer help according to the code of Social work to every woman that asks; regardless of their faith. Reality shows that

women that have no Christian background or adhere to another belief, like Islam, still experience satisfying help from the Scarlet Cord.

11. Finishing the help

Once the woman has chosen to stop with prostitution she is faced with many emotions and practical problems. As already expressed the prospects for the future are not always so bright. So there is a lot of hard work involved in to move life in a different direction. The world of prostitution is whimsical and unpredictable. One moment the women will work in Amsterdam the next in The Hague. Pimps have a lot of influence on the women. Sometimes there are a lot of customers and sometimes they earn very little. When a woman has worked in such an irregular world it is realistic to expect these irregular patterns to still have an influence on their life style. For example to take on a boyfriend whom they hardly know, to forget appointments or turn up at a different time. This requires flexibility from the social worker but also clarity on what can or cannot happen with the counseling. In chapter 4.2 it was said that prostitutes that had stopped with work still often return. This is also an example of the irregular pattern: stopping, then again working for a few evenings which also doesn't work, so then stopping again.

The question comes up: when is the social help finished? Completion is determined when the requests for help are satisfactorily resolved by both the client and the social worker. The request for help can be described: I want to stop with prostitution, find other work and restore contact with my parents. A woman can do a course or an internship. She doesn't work anymore in prostitution. She has tried with help from the Scarlet Cord to rectify the relationship with her divorced parents but her mother is not willing to be restored. Her father does. A restored relationship with her mother is not possible and the Scarlet Cord has the responsibility to support her in working through those issues and helping her to cope with that in everyday life. When she can do that and she indicates she doesn't have anymore needs the contact can be closed

The average assistance easily covers a year. It would be interesting to do a study on their well being 5 years after finishing with the social work. It would be difficult to trace these women because their addresses are regularly changed as are their mobile telephone numbers. Also because the social work of the Scarlet Cord is only in 2002 established it is not yet possible to conduct such an investigation.

Sometimes a woman doesn't show up for her appointment and it is impossible for the Scarlet Cord to make contact. Her mobile number doesn't work anymore nor does she respond to the letters from the Scarlet Cord. In such cases the social work is not completed. Sometimes after a half year they will resume contact. She was suddenly moved to a different country or she worked for a half in a different city. The social work is then resumed.

Sometimes it happened that, for whatever reason, the woman was not ready for help. It also happens that the woman is never heard from again. This is disturbing and gives the social worker a feeling that things are left unfinished. Still we can know in any case that we have supplied her with tools. We have provided her with information about practical issues and we gave attention to her emotions. We can only hope that in the future she will use these tools to change her life.

Post script

This is the first description of the methods used by the Scarlet Cord after its two and a half years of social work. In actuality we see that these methods continually expand and develop. When we notice that there is a specific need for help, like the request for a parents support group, the Scarlet Cord tries as soon a possible to develop something for it.

Literature

Als hij maar gelukkig is. Vrouwen die te veel in de liefde investeren. Robin Norwood, 1985
(*As long as he is happy. Women who invest too much in love.*)

Balans in beweging, Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy en zijn visie op individuele- en gezinstherapie. E. v.d. Eerenbeemt, A. van Heusden, 1983
(*Balance in Movement, Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy and his vision of the individual and family therapy*)

De relatie, Kern van de hulpverlening. J.J. Perlman, 1982
(*The relationship, the center of social help*)

Individuele Hulpverlening. E. Behrend, 1984
(*Social help for the individual*)

Social Casework, de methodiek van het individueel maatschappelijk werk. H.H. Perlman, 1982
(*Social Casework, the method of individual social work*)

Taakgericht Casework, doeleinden en methoden van de Korte behandeling. W.J. Reid, L. Epstein, 1972
(*Task oriented case work, goal focused and methods of the Short treatment*)

Institutions

This is a list of some of the institutions that are mentioned throughout this document. As the Scarlet Cord works with different local institutions, we try to explain what these do. You might have similar organizations in your city / country that you can contact.

CWI Centrum voor Werk en Inkomen (*Centre for Work and Income*)

The public employment service, CWI-Centre for Work and Income, plays an important role on the Dutch labour market. They assist people with finding a job, give advice and information and other help. Through an extensive network of partner sites and (temporary) employment agencies, most vacancies registered with these partners are also registered in CWI's online job database.

GGD Gemeentelijke Gezondheids dienst (*Public Health Service*)

The Public Health Service of Amsterdam (GGD Amsterdam) covers a wide field of public health activities. The GGD is dedicated to secure the health and well-being of e.g. drug addicts, homeless people and prostitutes.

IOM Internationale Organisatie voor Migratie (*International Organization for Migration*)

The organization addresses a variety of migration issues in The Netherlands including the transportation of people to and from The Netherlands, (re)integration, combating human trafficking, labor migration, migration and development, and migration and health.

VBOK Vereniging tot Bescherming van het Ongeboren Kind (*Association for the Protection of the Unborn Child*)

VBOK offers counseling in cases of an unwanted pregnancy and of pregnancy loss and realizes educational programs at schools, being convinced that father, mother and child should thereby be equally involved.