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'I See, You Don't See' : women involved in sex work publish book

Innovative photography project delivers insight into hidden world of exploitation

Monday 27th July 2009 - A new book '*I See, You Don't See*' has been published which gives an insight into the grim reality of women involved in sex work.

An innovative scheme, set up to help women who had been sexually exploited or involved in sex work in Newcastle, was the catalyst for a photography project which in turn led to the creation of the book.

Laura Seebohm, Manager of Women's Services at Tyneside Cyrenians, explains:

"Newcastle is unusual in that there is no visible 'on-street' sex market and so women lead hidden lives. Back in 2006 a group of women we were helping set up a weekly drop-in for others who shared similar experiences. They chose to call the group 'GAP' which stands for 'Girls Are Proud'.

"Fundamentally we work to develop confidence and self esteem within this group. We decided a creative project such as photography was perfect."

During autumn 2008 the GAP women began work with Magali Pettier, a French born photographer. They received tuition from Magali, learning about the technical aspects of taking and developing photographs.

The group then decided to develop their project so as to raise awareness of their experiences. Their idea was to take pictures of the City from their unique perspective. The images of places, buildings and scenes, though familiar to residents of Newcastle, would capture the hidden meaning and lives of sex workers, hence the title '*I See, You Don't See*'.

Magali Pettier explains:

"As the project progressed, powerful imagery was produced which was then combined with tape recordings by the women themselves. The results were extraordinary and poignant. We first exhibited at Artworks Gallery in Newcastle during November 2008 and then at the Josephine Butler College, Durham University. It was only natural that we should then compile the book.

"We very much hope many people will take the opportunity to read it; it is both moving and shockingly informative."

The book was available to buy however due to its popularity this limited edition run has now sold out.

Women from the group are now working on a new project with a Theatre Company. Their motivation is to continue to take up creative opportunities and use them as an effective and powerful catalyst for change.

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