

Joint submission to the Liberal Democrats “Sex Work” policy consultation

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This is a joint submission from the following groups that work for women’s rights and development, and/or to resist the objectification of women and girls, and male violence against women and children. Information about the groups follows the responses to the questions.

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Question 1: Do you agree with a policy grounded in the harm reduction and gender equality approach? If not, what approach do you think we should take?

Of course we agree that the policy should be grounded in the reduction of harm and the promotion of gender equality. However, we do not agree with the preceding points about what is the best way to achieve this and what it means in practice. For example, although we agree that prostituted persons should be decriminalised, we do not agree that pimps, traffickers, brothel keepers and others who profit from other people’s prostitution should be decriminalised; nor do we agree that prostitution buyers – who are the ultimate driving force behind the sex trade – should be decriminalised.

The explanation of our disagreement is substantial and is broken down into a number of sections. Please bear with us.

Terminology

We reject the terms “sex work” and “sex worker” because they are euphemisms that obscure and sanitise the reality of prostitution and confuse the narrative.

The term “sex work” is used to cover a range of activities from lap dancing and phone line work, to the intimate contact, penetration and exchange of body fluids that are core to prostitution. Although related, there are significant differences between these activities and therefore they need to be considered separately.

Those who style themselves “sex workers” may not have experienced prostitution as we know it. They may have dabbled in phone line or dominatrix work; they may be pimps and brothel keepers. Invariably these are the voices that dominate the debates, and even [determine policies](#),¹ and not the vulnerable and marginalised women and girls who make up the majority of those in prostitution.

In this submission we refer to prostitution buyers as men because the vast majority are male (more than 99.9%). We refer mostly to those being prostituted as women and girls, because the majority are female (about 85% of those prostituted [in Europe](#)² are women and girls). This is to emphasise the gendered nature of the prostitution system and for linguistic simplicity. We do not mean to suggest that prostitution is any less devastating for boys, men and transgendered people.

Human rights

The protection of human dignity is a cornerstone of the international human rights system. That system recognises prostitution as a violation of human rights and specifically prohibits the “exploitation of the prostitution of others:”

- The [1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others](#)³ states that “prostitution and the accompanying evil of the traffic in persons for the purpose of prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and endanger the welfare of the individual, the family and the community.” This therefore defines prostitution as **incompatible** with the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)⁴ 1948 which asserts the right of all human beings to dignity.
- Article 6 of the [1949 Convention and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#)⁵ (CEDAW) explicitly prohibits the exploitation of the prostitution of others:

“States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.”

In addition, General Recommendation 19 comments on Articles 2, 5 and 10, spelling out that pornography and prostitution are a result of the ingrained sexist attitudes and values that lead to women's lower social, political and economic status, and actual and threatened physical and sexual violence; and that pornography and prostitution contribute to those sexist attitudes and values.

- The [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children](#)⁶ (Palermo Protocol) makes clear that the essential feature of sex trafficking is [third-party involvement](#)⁷ in the prostitution of another and that consent is irrelevant if the person is under 18 or any of the following means have been used:

“threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation”

In addition Article 9 of the Palermo Protocol places an obligation on ratifying States to address the poverty, inequality and lack of equal opportunities that make women and children vulnerable to sex trafficking **and** to address the demand for prostitution that drives sex trafficking.

These international human rights treaties make it clear that prostitution is itself a violation of the human rights of the person being prostituted, and of all women to equality with men. Moreover they prohibit the exploitation of the prostitution of another person, which means they prohibit pimping, procuring and brothel keeping – key aspects of the sex trade.

Therefore any policy that normalises or trivialises prostitution (for example, by calling it “sex work”) or that decriminalises pimping, procuring and/or brothel keeping would be in breach of these important human rights treaties. The UK has ratified both CEDAW and the Palermo Protocol and therefore has a binding legal obligation to comply with them.

Safety and well-being

Prostitution involves a series of male strangers penetrating the woman's vagina, anus and/or mouth, often with violent and prolonged thrusting. This can lead to infection with HIV and other STIs and injuries to orifices and internal organs, which can cause sterility, problems in pregnancy, and long-term ill-health.

Moreover prostitution often has a profound negative impact on mental health. In order to endure the undesired groping and sexual penetration by multiple strangers on a daily basis, many women describe needing to “split off” from their conscious selves and/or take alcohol or drugs in order to endure it. This can lead to addictions and long term psychological difficulties.

Evidence supports the harms of prostitution both to the person being prostituted and to the wider society. For example:

- A [meta study conducted by UCL](#)⁸ found that “violence is a prominent feature in the lives of sex workers in almost all sex work settings”; “a single year of engagement in sex work is likely to have the same impact on mental health as an entire life of experiences prior to involvement in sex work”; and “Social exclusion is the leading cause of entrance into sex work and **exclusion is often deepened** as a result of engaging in sex work.”
- One study in the US found that prostituted individuals face a murder rate 18 times higher than non-prostituted persons and a study in Canada found that their mortality rate was **40 times** higher than the national average.⁹ We document some more recent statistics about murders of prostituted women in a selection of European countries on [our website](#).¹⁰
- A [UN multi-country study](#)¹¹ found that men perpetrating rape of non-partners and/or violence against intimate partners are associated with prostitution buying. Studies of [prostitution buyers](#)¹² have found they are more likely to commit rape and other aggressive sexual acts. In addition, the contempt they have for women is borne out by [survivor testimony](#)¹³ and [research on punter forums](#).¹⁴

Since **prostitution itself causes harm**, positioning “voluntary” or “consensual” prostitution as fundamentally different from forced prostitution is misguided.

Any policy that legitimises or normalises prostitution inevitably leads to its increase, and therefore causes more women and girls to be drawn into and harmed within it, more male violence against women and girls (MVAWG), and deeper gender inequality.

Freedom

The Liberal Democrats have roots in the social democratic movement, which has a central tenet that freedom is not possible without equality. In other words, social inequality is a barrier to freedom and true freedom resides in the community, not simply the individual.¹⁵ For example, the community restricts driving speed according to the type of road and locality so others have the freedom to move around in safety.

We do not believe that it is possible to understand prostitution without looking at the social, economic and political inequality between men and women, adults and youth, rich and poor, white people and people of colour, and at the role that prostitution has in **maintaining** these systematic inequalities.

Prostitution cannot be understood as “consensual sexual activity”. For sexual activity to be considered consensual, it must be desired by both parties. In prostitution, the man pays precisely because the woman does not desire it. So what he is buying is the use of her body for sexual purposes. In other words, he **rents** the use of her body and the pretence that she is enjoying it. This confirms his manhood and confirms her second-class status.

Just as the freedom of the majority to move around in safety supersedes the individual “freedom” to drive fast and dangerously, so the freedom of women and girls to not be subjected to sexual violence and harassment and to not be prostituted supersedes the

“freedom” of men to engage in prostitution and sexual violence and harassment. This is recognised in international human rights law.

Nordic Model

We believe that the [Nordic Model approach](#)¹⁶ to prostitution is the only human rights-based and equality model. Also known as the Sex Buyer Law, it decriminalises all those who are prostituted, provides support services to help them exit, and makes buying prostitution a criminal offence, in order to reduce the demand that drives sex trafficking. The aim is to change behaviour and set new social norms.

Question 2: Should sex work be taxed?

No. When the state taxes prostitution, it acts as a pimp – in breach of binding international treaties, such as CEDAW and the Palermo Protocol.

Furthermore there is a real danger that the state will become dependent on prostitution tax revenues, which means it will have a vested interest in maintaining the prostitution system.

Question 3: Do we have a duty to reduce stigma? Can we?

Prostitution is not the commodification of a woman’s labour as in other forms of work, but of her body and her self. This reduces her status (and by extension all women’s status) to that of an object that can be bought and sold. This is the root of the stigma associated with prostitution: it is intrinsic to its very nature. We believe that it is therefore not possible to eradicate stigma without eradicating prostitution itself.

Question 4: Should banks and financial institutions be allowed to discriminate against sex workers by refusing to allow them to open accounts or by charging higher fees than for other workers?

Not to individuals for personal banking services. However, we believe that banks and other commercial institutions must be able to refuse to serve businesses, partnerships and other concerns that are involved directly or indirectly with prostitution, pornography, lap dancing and other aspects of the sex industry – because these contradict international human rights law and contribute to inequality between the sexes.

Question 5: Can the state do anything to help sex workers who aren’t at risk of breaking the law eg chatline workers

While chatline work is likely to be less damaging to the individual than prostitution as such, we are not convinced that it is not damaging to society.

We therefore believe that efforts should be focused on measures to discourage sex chat lines and address the reasons that women and young people in particular are drawn into these

arenas. This includes ensuring that women and girls have equal opportunities for decent work and that adequate financial support is available to all, mothers and young people in particular.

Question 6: Should crimes against sex workers as sex workers be treated as hate crimes?

We believe that violence and other crimes against prostituted persons are part of the continuum of male violence against women and children, even when the prostituted person is male or transgendered – because, we would argue they are being treated as women. We see male violence against women and children as a key mechanism that maintains male supremacy and female subordination and that it has its roots in misogyny and the objectification of women and girls. We believe that there is a strong argument to categorise all misogynistic male violence as hate crimes, including when it is directed at a prostituted person.

Question 7: Should sex workers be able to access the same employment rights as other workers?

This question assumes that prostitution is work like any other, when it is not. There are many reasons why prostitution cannot be considered regular employment. As mentioned in our response to Question 1, prostitution can never be safe or come close to reaching the minimum level of health and safety. Furthermore recognising prostitution as employment requires pimps, procurers and brothel keepers to be legitimised as employers, which would put the UK in breach of our binding obligations under CEDAW and the Palermo Protocol.

[Research](#)¹⁷ from countries that have legalised/decriminalised the sex trade suggests that it does **not** stop trafficking or the involvement of organised criminals and may even exacerbate their involvement – in part because the sector as a whole receives less attention from the police. A 2008 National Police Service in the Netherlands indicated that 50-90 percent of prostituted women in three cities were “working against their will”.¹⁸

Women in prostitution, unlike other employees, endure sexual assault and verbal harassment and are at continual risk of violence at the hands of both pimps and buyers. This is intrinsic to prostitution and contradicts all employment law. Considering prostitution to be regular employment could potentially have grave consequences for general employment practices and protections.

For example, currently employees are protected from sexual harassment and sexual assault. What would happen to these protections if prostitution were legitimised as regular employment given that sexual assault and verbal harassment are intrinsic aspects of prostitution? Could it lead to bosses demanding blowjobs from their young female workers? Would it lead to Job Centres forcing women to take “jobs” in brothels or lose benefits? Would that not meet the Palermo Protocol definition of coercion and taking advantage of her vulnerability and so make the state into a trafficker? For more about similar implications, see [Why Sex Work Isn't Work](#).¹⁹

Our answer to this question is therefore No – because prostitution is not, and can never be, regular employment. We want everyone, including those currently in prostitution, to have opportunities for decent work (see Question 18 for the international definition of decent work).

Question 8: Are there reasons to not allow sex workers to work together?

The global prostitution industry is one of the most profitable on the planet. The ILO estimates that a woman in prostitution in Europe can generate a [profit of \\$34,800 a year](#)²⁰ for her pimp/trafficker. Pimps and traffickers are forever seeking loopholes they can exploit in their search for profits. Any loosening of the brothel-keeping legislation that currently bans more than one woman operating from the same premises, is likely to be exploited by pimps and traffickers, unless there are rigorous mechanisms in place to stop this.

In addition, any loosening of the legislation is likely to have a legitimising effect and lead to an increase in prostitution, which will lead to more women and children being damaged within it and further brutalisation of society generally.

Furthermore, a loosening of the legislation is likely to lead to more brothels being set up in residential neighbourhoods, with communities having no way to stop them, even if the proliferation of visiting punters has a clear negative impact on the community.

We therefore believe that efforts should be focused on reducing prostitution and the reasons that women and young people in particular are drawn into it. This includes ensuring that women and girls have equal opportunities for decent work and that adequate financial support is available to all, mothers and young people in particular.

We do not believe that prostitution is a humane solution to women's poverty.

Question 9: Do you think sex workers should be consulted before laws are drafted that are aimed at sex workers?

This question illustrates the problems with the term “sex worker”. It is well documented that many people who style themselves as “sex workers” have not experienced prostitution as such, and some are pimps and brothel keepers. For example, Melissa Farley [identified 12 high-profile people](#)²¹ who publicly identify as “sex workers,” promote decriminalized pimping and are associated with “sex worker” unions, collectives or advocacy groups, who have in fact have sold others in prostitution directly or indirectly. Clearly such people have a conflict of interests. This undermines the value of evidence from online surveys and similar where people self-identify as “sex workers”.

Furthermore many women in prostitution reject the term “sex worker” because they do not see prostitution as work. Therefore they are unlikely to respond to surveys that address them as such.

Another problem is that pimps and traffickers control the most marginalised women in prostitution, which reduces their ability to speak frankly. Many have faced beatings for attempting to speak in the past or have heard of others who have suffered this.

In addition, the vested interests who promote the full decriminalisation of the sex trade frequently mislead the debate by conflating the decriminalisation of prostituted persons with the decriminalisation of the entire sex trade, and presenting the Nordic Model as a form of criminalisation. Those who are prostituted are as likely as anyone else to be confused by this.

Of course, those in prostitution should be consulted. However, for all the reasons described above, there are many difficulties to be addressed. Perhaps therefore the most important voices are those in the [growing movement](#)²² of women who have survived prostitution and have managed to leave it and build a life outside where they are no longer dependent for an income on pleasing punters or the sex trade and its vested interests.

We also need to consider that prostitution affects everyone, not just those involved in it. As we have demonstrated above, the system of prostitution perpetuates the archaic practice of female sexual submission for male entertainment, a mentality that the vast majority of modern women have vehemently rejected. Therefore, all women have a right to be consulted before prostitution is state-sanctioned and sexual inequality creeps back into our laws.

When considering prostitution legislation, women need to consider many factors, including: whether they would want to be coerced into prostitution by Job Centres during periods of unemployment; whether they would want their daughters to spend their lives in a brothel; how prostitution affects both their intimate relationships and their working relationships with male colleagues, and so on.

The state has never based major decisions on the future of controversial industries (e.g. fracking, nuclear weapons) on the views of the people working in them. That someone enjoys their job in fracking is irrelevant to the decision whether we as a society want it. Of course, those who lose their income because an industry is closed down must be given help to exit, retrain, etc. The Nordic Model approach to prostitution, which we advocate, specifically includes this provision.

Question 10: If so, how can the consultation with sex workers be improved?

For all the reasons given above, we believe that online surveys are of limited value in providing a clear picture of the views of the majority of those in prostitution. We believe that in-depth structured interviews conducted in a safe location with trained researchers would provide a more realistic view of the reality of life of those in prostitution and their opinions. We recommend the [Farley et al. study](#)²³ of 854 prostituted persons in nine countries be used as a model for this type of research.

Question 11: What role (if any) do you think the state should play in regulating pornography that is made by consenting adults?

This question assumes that the main issue in pornography is whether the actors have consented.

In our answer to Question 16, we explain why we do not believe that prostitution can be considered “consensual sex.” For similar reasons, we do not believe that pornography can be considered “consensual sex.” In addition, [there is evidence](#)²⁴ that many young women appearing in porn have in fact been coerced or tricked into it, making any apparent “consent” meaningless. This is a very serious problem.

However, the issues with pornography go beyond whether the actors consented. According to [Culture Reframed](#),²⁵ research shows that [88% of scenes](#)²⁶ in top rented and downloaded porn **feature violence against women**. This conditions viewers to see violence against women as sexually arousing, and to consider it normal and that women and girls somehow deserve it or even “ask for it.” This inevitably leads to them seeing women and girls as second class, as not quite fully human. This therefore affects men’s relationships with all women, and women’s internalised self image.

That it is difficult for many people to find the level of violence against women in mainstream porn problematical is evidence of porn’s success in moulding our world view.

Culture Reframed states that on average, boys start watching online porn by age 11, which is a year before [they start puberty](#)²⁷ on average in the UK.

So children are being exposed to porn, the majority of which is composed of graphic depictions of sexualised violence against women. Exposing children to this material is a form of child abuse. It is also a form of grooming that teaches that violence is a normal part of sex. It is having a profound effect on our young people. For example:

- A large European study (quoted in [The Telegraph](#)²⁸) found that 4 in 10 girls between the ages of 13 and 17 in England say they have been coerced into sex acts.
- A recent [report](#)²⁹ by the Women and Equalities Committee exposed the shocking scale of sexual harassment and sexual violence in English schools.

We believe that these alarming developments are connected with the availability of porn to children and young people and the general pornification of our culture.

Moreover there is a [growing body of evidence](#)³⁰ that demonstrates that the use of porn is reducing many men’s ability to enjoy sexual intimacy with a real life partner. Porn is now cited as a cause of relationship breakdown in approximately [one half of all divorce cases in the US](#).³¹

This is unprecedented in the history of the human race and it has serious implications for sex equality and the fabric of society. We do not believe it is unreasonable to consider it an

emergency situation. Of course the state must take a role in addressing it, including considering ways of regulating the availability of such material.

Question 12: Should there be limits placed on the sexual behaviour of consenting pornography actors when this does not result in permanent harm?

The UK has laws that prohibit material that incites racial, ethnic and religious hatred. We believe that pornography that portrays sexual, physical or verbal violence against females or that is demeaning to females should be banned because it incites sexual and gender-based hatred and violence.

Furthermore, we believe that the test should not be limited to whether the actors suffered permanent harm but whether people acting it out at home are **likely** to suffer physical or mental harm.

Ann Olivarius, a lawyer experienced in cases concerning the porn industry, is [quoted as saying](#):³²

“Some of the most traumatised people I have met are prostituted (often trafficked) women whose customers have insisted – sometimes forcefully and always believing consent is something they can buy – on replicating acts from porn films.”

The Telegraph article mentioned above reported that GPs say 15-year old girls are presenting with anal incontinence after submitting to boys’ demands for anal sex, which they see depicted in porn films and try to emulate. The girls are commonly too insecure and too young to know how to refuse.

Question 13: Do you support a ‘porn filter’ – a filter on websites accessed from the UK that would require users to enter a credit card number to prove they are aged over 18 before being able to access pornography?

Yes, in principle and assuming that thorough checks and balances are in place – so that it could not be used to block access to other material, including material that is critical of porn and prostitution.

Question 14: How can the internet be made safer for those for whom pornography is not intended?

We do not have the technical expertise to make detailed suggestions on this point. However, given the harm that pornography causes, we believe that measures such as fines and other criminal sanctions should be considered for those responsible for presenting online pornographic content to children or adults who have not requested it.

Question 15: Does the current system do more harm than good?

We believe the current legislation which is contradictory and enforced differently in different police areas is harmful. We are particularly concerned about:

- Prostituted individuals being targeted and given convictions and ASBOs and equivalents. It is clear that this approach causes great harm to those individuals and makes it hard for them to escape prostitution.
- The general lack of enforcement of laws against pimping, brothel keeping and prostitution buying from someone who has been coerced or forced.
- The lack of well-funded nationwide holistic services for prostituted persons that include support with exiting.

Furthermore we believe that the system in which unfettered neoliberal capitalism objectifies women and children and turns them into commodities to be bought and sold is doing great harm.

Question 16: Is it possible to give consent to sexual activity when money is involved?

Before we can answer this question, we need to consider what the punter is buying in prostitution. He is buying the use of her body sexually and the pretence that she is consenting and enjoying it. That is, he is buying the **pretence** of a consensual sexual encounter while the reality is very different.

He has all the power and she has none. We see this in punters' [own words](#).³³

'I could have literally been shagging the pillow and got more response....I'm paying for this and expect a decent service ... I can only assume she hates what she does.'

'She is oblivious to the fact that you are paying to do (within reason and agreed limits, of course) what you want, not what she wants you to do.'

This dynamic where he has all the power and she has to do what he says closely mirrors the dynamic of child abuse, where the abuser has complete power and the child has none and must comply with and please the abuser. That the child might comply to the point that from the outside it looks consensual does not alter the fact that within the extremely unbalanced power dynamic, the free and informed choice that is required for true consent is impossible.

It is therefore damaging for society to consider prostitution consensual sex. Like most porn, prostitution teaches men that this structurally unequal relationship is what normal sex should be and that they are entitled to sexual gratification at any cost and she isn't. Prostitution makes the dynamics of child abuse into normal sex. Prostitution feeds the punter's sense of entitlement and the sense that she has no rights. This affects his relationship with all the other women he encounters. Prostitution removes the social inhibitions to sexual harassment.

That [child abuse](#)³⁴ and the sexual [harassment of girls](#)³⁵ and [young women](#)³⁶ are at epidemic levels does not surprise us, given the mainstreaming and glamorisation of pornography, prostitution and the sex industry in general.

Question 17: Do you support the decriminalisation of sex work?

If this means the decriminalisation of all aspects of the prostitution industry, including buyers, pimps, procurers and brothel keepers, the answer is **no**. It would be against the UK's binding obligations under international human rights treaties (in particular CEDAW and the Palermo Protocol) and lead to an increase in sex trafficking to fulfil the increased demand for prostitution that would inevitably follow.

Question 18: Should we seek to prevent people from entering sex work?

Yes, because, as we have documented above, prostitution is dangerous for those in it and damaging to society and is the anathema of equality between the sexes. Furthermore prostitution does not meet the UN [definition of decent work](#):³⁷

“Decent work is the core mandate of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The ILO defines decent work as productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. Decent work involves opportunities for productive work, delivers a fair income, guarantees equal opportunities and equal treatment for all, provides security in the workplace and protection for workers and their families, offers better prospects for personal development and social inclusion, and gives people the freedom to express their concerns, to organize and to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

Decent work has been included in major human rights declarations, UN resolutions and outcome documents from major conferences including Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the World Summit for Social Development (1995) and in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015).”

We should focus efforts on ensuring that women and girls have equal opportunities for decent work and that adequate financial support is available to all, and mothers and young people in particular. We also need to improve sex and relationship education in schools and teach children about the realities of prostitution and how damaging it is to both individuals and society.

Question 19: What more can the state do to reach out to vulnerable people who may not be aware of the support available to them?

The support that is available to women and girls in prostitution in England and Wales is poor and much of it is limited to sexual health services. We believe that ring fenced funding should be made available for a nationwide network of high quality holistic services for those

in prostitution and that these services should include support to exit prostitution and build a new life outside. Services should include housing, legal and benefit advice, access to alternative incomes, trauma-informed care, addiction services, education and training, and emotional support.

Question 20: Should the state do more itself to help vulnerable people involved in sex work? Or should it fund more arms-length organisations?

The priority is that funding is ring-fenced and long term, so that expertise can be nurtured and developed, whether this is within the public sector or independent NGOs. We strongly believe that services should not be provided by for-profit organisations.

Question 21: Should selling sex be legal?

We support the Nordic Model approach, which decriminalises all those who are prostituted, provides support services to help them exit, and makes buying people for sex a criminal offence, in order to reduce the demand that drives sex trafficking.

The evidence suggests that the majority of women and children enter prostitution as a result of childhood abuse, poverty and misfortune, grooming, coercion, and/or betrayal, rather than as a [free choice between a number of viable options](#).³⁸ And the evidence is clear that prostitution is [inherently violent](#)³⁹ and damages those in it, and that [getting out](#)⁴⁰ of it is much harder than getting into it. And a criminal record makes getting out even harder.

Our answer to this question is therefore, Yes. We call for the repeal of all the laws that target those who are prostituted and the clearing of their criminal records of any previous convictions for offences related to their own prostitution.

Question 22: Should buying sex be legal?

No.

The prostitution buyers drive the prostitution industry. Pimps and traffickers lure and trap women and children in prostitution because such easy money can be made. Without the prostitution buyers, this would stop. It's as simple as that.

We therefore believe that prostitution buying should become illegal with the primary aim of changing men's behaviour and ending the demand for prostitution that drives sex trafficking and the whole industry.

Question 23: Should management of sex work be legal?

No.

Prostitution is damaging to the individuals in it and to society in general and it increases inequality between the sexes. To profit from such exploitation is abhorrent. Making the

“management” of prostitution legal would be in direct conflict with binding obligations under international human rights treaties (in particular CEDAW and the Palermo Protocol).

Question 24: Is it important to classify crimes such as human trafficking as being for a sexual purpose rather than, for instance, forced labour?

Yes. We note that the internationally agreed definition of human trafficking in the Palermo Protocol itself makes this distinction.

While all human trafficking is abhorrent, the harms of human trafficking for the purposes of the exploitation of the person’s prostitution are of a different nature and cause a different level of damage to the individual and society than when the purpose is forced labour.

Question 25: Is it important to maintain sexual health services separate from General Practitioners?

Yes.

Question 26: Is medical confidentiality currently adequate for sex workers? Will moves towards centralisation of health records have an effect on its adequacy?

We have general concerns about the privacy of medical records for everyone, and particularly for victims of male violence, including those in prostitution.

Question 27: Who should fund the provision of sex worker-focused services?

Ultimately the state should fund services for people in prostitution, including holistic services to help people exit prostitution and build a new life outside. Fines paid by prostitution buyers and assets confiscated from pimps, brothel keepers and traffickers should be put to this use.

Question 28: Should we seek to quash past convictions for sex work?

We should only quash past convictions that relate to a person’s own prostitution, such as prosecutions for the offence of loitering or soliciting for the purpose of prostitution.

Question 29: Should the quashing of past convictions extend to all areas of sex work law, or just solicitation?

The quashing of convictions should not extend to all areas of prostitution law but should only extend as far as convictions for a person’s own prostitution. It should not extend to offences related to pimping, procuring, brothel keeping or trafficking, not least because these are prohibited under international human rights treaties that the UK has ratified, in particular CEDAW and the Palermo Protocol.

Nor should it extend to offences related to sex buying, kerb crawling or soliciting for the purpose of obtaining sexual services, because these offences make public spaces [threatening and hostile](#)⁴¹ for women and children.

Question 30: What should be done about assets seized under existing laws for those with sex work convictions?

Assets seized under laws against pimping, brothel keeping, trafficking and similar should be used to fund services and reparations for those in prostitution and victims of sex trafficking.

About the groups making this submission



Nordic Model Now!

A grass-roots group campaigning for the abolition of prostitution and the adoption of the Nordic Model approach to prostitution in the UK. The group is made up of women from a variety of backgrounds and includes survivors of prostitution and child sexual exploitation, academics, journalists and teachers.

<http://nordicmodelnow.org/> | [@nordicmodelnow](#)



European Network of Migrant Women

The largest umbrella organisation of migrant-led women's non-governmental organisations within the European Union, working to promote migrant women's rights, the concerns, needs and interests of migrant women in the European Union. Membership extends to organisations in 20 EU member states.

<http://www.migrantwomennetwork.org/>



White Ribbon Campaign (UK)

Men challenging and speaking out about male violence against women and girls.

www.whiteribboncampaign.co.uk | [@menantiviolence](#)



London Feminist Network

A women-only group that works with other groups to increase women's resistance to male violence against women in all its forms including pornography and prostitution. We also organise our own campaigns such the London Reclaim The Night march against rape and male violence.

<http://londonfeministnetwork.org.uk/> | [@LDNfeminist](#)



NOT BUYING IT!

A UK-based group that challenges the objectification of women in the media and general culture.

www.notbuyingit.org.uk | [@not_buyingit](#)



Chelt Fems

A feminist campaign group. We exist to challenge the gender-based discrimination experienced by women and girls and are proud to support the Nordic Model.

<http://www.cheltfems.org.uk/> | [@chelt_fems](#)



End Online Misogyny

A campaign to highlight the widespread and violent nature of online violence against women and girls.

<http://www.endmisogyny.org/> | [@misogyny_online](#)



Campaign against Sex Robots

A non-profit group against the development of robotic technologies shaped by inequalities and objectification of women and children.

<http://campaignagainstsexrobots.org/> | [@RobotCampaign](#)



Yes Matters

Campaign and workshops to tackle lack of knowledge around consent, the effects of sexual objectification and the damage of gender stereotypes.

<http://www.yes-matters.co.uk/> | [@YesMattersUK](#)



Zero Option

Campaigning to make Sheffield strip club free.

<http://zerooptionblog.wordpress.com/> | [@ZeroOption4Shef](https://twitter.com/ZeroOption4Shef)



JURIES

A campaign to introduce mandatory juror briefings on rape myths and realities in all rape, sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse trials.

<http://juriesunderstandingsv.wordpress.com/> | [@UnderstandingSV](https://twitter.com/UnderstandingSV)



Object

Working for better representation of women and girls in the media, and against sex object culture.

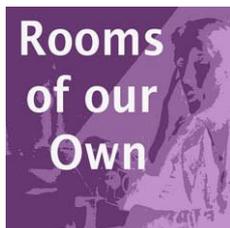
<http://objectupdate.tumblr.com/> | [@ObjectUpdate](https://twitter.com/ObjectUpdate)



Anti-Porn London

Feminists campaigning against pornography.

<http://antipornfeminists.wordpress.com/>



Rooms of Our Own

Seeks to provide safe, affordable and accessible space for women's organisations.

roomso4own.wordpress.com | [@roomso4own](https://twitter.com/roomso4own)



Scary Little Girls

An artist-led theatre company that promotes the artistic work of women in all aspects of theatrical story-telling.

<http://www.scarylittlegirls.co.uk> | [@ScaryLittleGs](https://twitter.com/ScaryLittleGs)

TAR

Truth About Rape

Truth About Rape aims to challenge myths about rape, and bring the truth and realities of rape back onto the public agenda. TAR opposes all forms of violence against women.

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/3916998221/>



A CALL TO MEN UK

A CALL TO MEN UK seeks to actively engage boys and men in ending male violence against women and girls and creating a more respectful, safer society for all in the process.

<http://acalltomenuk.org.uk/> | [@ACallToMenUK](https://www.instagram.com/ACallToMenUK)



Million Women Rise

A movement of women united by outrage at the daily, hourly, minute-by-minute individual and institutionalised male violence enacted against women worldwide, who campaign to end it and for female emancipation and liberty.

<http://www.millionwomenrise.com/> | [@MillionWomen](https://www.instagram.com/MillionWomen)



Older Feminist Network

The Older Feminist Network (OFN) was formed in 1982 as an initiative from Spare Rib magazine's collective and has met regularly ever since.

<http://www.olderfeminist.org.uk/>

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