

[Name of MP]
House of Commons,
London, SW1A 0AA

Date:

Dear [Name of MP]

I am writing as a constituent to express my deep concern about the prevalence of prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation in our area and to ask if you can encourage local agencies to do more to support those involved and to crack down on the drivers.

These days, prostitution is usually portrayed as in-person sexual activity between consenting adults that happens to involve an exchange of money or other benefits. However, the reality is usually far from this. Almost all sex buyers are men and they pay precisely because they don't want to have to think about the other person and their needs. They pay to get their own way, and often to act out practices they've seen in porn that their regular partners won't put up with. And most women are there because they have no real choice in the matter. They may be under the control of a third party, they may be desperate for money, or they may have been seduced by the culture, which presents it as an easy and empowering option. These situations preclude any real notion of consent as it is defined in law: 'a person consents if he agrees **by choice**, and has the **freedom** and capacity to make that choice' (my emphasis).

Emily, a survivor of prostitution, explains it like this:

*"I was sold a complete lie. It's not easy money. To the buyer, you are nothing more than an object for their consumption, not an actual human being with emotions. You are expected to just put up with whatever they want to do and say to you. The exchange of money makes them feel entitled to treat you however they like, with no regard for your feelings or consent."*¹

It goes without saying that being forced or obliged by circumstances to endure multiple such sexual encounters on a daily basis is profoundly damaging both physically and mentally.

Over the last couple of decades, there has been a change in the way prostitution is arranged. It is now mostly negotiated online. 'Adult services' websites have led to a huge expansion in the sex trade, not least because they have made it so easy for third parties (i.e. pimps) to advertise women to huge numbers of potential customers.²

The idea that these websites provide viable screening options and hence safety for the women is an illusion. While the women being advertised are generally required to provide photo ID, sex buyers are not and many sites do not even require sex buyers to log in to see the ads – meaning that there is no screening whatsoever. A quick search will confirm this and also that it is taking place in every town and city in the UK.

The Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner [recently collected data](#) from 12 such websites that had 63,000 listings.³ 59% of the adverts had three or more indicators of trafficking and exploitation, and 39% had four or more indicators.

The [eye-watering profits](#) that third parties can make⁴ (around £20,000 per woman per month) mean that all women and girls, but especially those who are marginalised in any way, are now potential raw material for the most heinous get rich quick criminal schemes.

I am worried at the apparent public and governmental indifference to the suffering of those caught up in this maelstrom, the coercion, violence and human trafficking involved, and the official reluctance to hold the third parties to account and take serious measures to deter men from paying to sexually use and abuse women. It is this money from ordinary men that drives the whole system. If this wasn't accepted behaviour, the pimps and traffickers would soon be out of a job.

There is considerable variation in how police forces and local councils respond to this worrying situation. I want to know what our local police force's approach is. Can you ask the chief constable whether enforcing the legislation against third parties controlling and profiting from women's prostitution is a policing priority and if not, why not, given the considerable harms to large numbers of individual women and the community? Also, what is their approach to street prostitution? Do they target the women selling sex or the much higher numbers of sex buyers, who are invariably men? Experience [in Ipswich](#)⁵ has shown that using number plate recognition cameras can facilitate the enforcement of the kerb crawling legislation and hence deter buyers and change their behaviour. Have they considered investing in public information campaigns explaining to men that paying for sex is unacceptable and could put them on the wrong side of the law?

I am also worried about how little support there is for the women involved. Multiple research studies show that most of these women are desperate to get out of the industry but are essentially trapped. Few local authorities and health service trusts seem to think they should fund services to support these women and help them exit the industry. Such services can really make a difference. Do you know about this provision in our area? Will you ask the leaders of the council and our NHS trust what their approach is to commissioning services in relation to prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation? And what about prevention campaigns to support girls and young women and inform them of the risks and dangers that the prostitution and sexual exploitation industries pose?

Yours sincerely

Signed:

Name:

Address:

¹ <https://nordicmodelnow.org/testimonial/emily/>

² https://43b7aa2e-6040-4325-8d69-b57333b95a64.usrfiles.com/ugd/43b7aa_2aa3793584184082877ba83216ca7912.pdf

³ <https://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/reports-resources/strategic-initiatives-research-projects/sexual-exploitation-through-adult-services-websites/>

⁴ <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking-expanding-uk-market>

⁵ <https://nordicmodelnow.org/2017/11/14/how-a-nordic-model-approach-to-tackling-prostitution-was-implemented-in-ipswich/>