

Response to: Prostitution Law Reform Bill

December 2015

The Scottish Coalition Against Sexual Exploitation (SCASE) :

Ø works to raise awareness of the harm caused to women through prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation, including stripping, lap dancing, pornography, sex tourism, mail order brides, and trafficking for the purposes of prostitution.

Ø campaigns for legislative change necessary to: reduce the harm caused through prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation; remove current gender inequality in the law; challenge the behaviour of men who buy sex.

SCASE is made up of individuals who share these aims with over 1400 members. Our members come from not just Scotland but across the world and we currently have over half our members from Scotland. They cover all age ranges with the majority of our members falling in the 18 – 54 age bracket. Currently 70% of our members are self identified female and 26.8% self identified male. 3.2% preferred not to say. Members include those who have worked within support and counselling services, education, health and education. We also have a number of members who are survivors of the sex industry.

We have consulted with members and this response is based on a collective sharing of views and opinions. We have also linked with networks of survivors of the sex industry to help shape and inform this response.

We support the intention of this Bill to make those involved in selling sex safer.

We know that women's organisations in Scotland have been promoting and battling for women's Human Rights for many years – including those involved in prostitution. We will continue to do so with a view to ending the demand for sexual exploitation.

We share a clear anti-prostitution stance and do not judge or criticise women involved. SCASE does not deny that some women choose to become involved in prostitution but they represent a minority of the women and girls involved in Scotland. Any legislative approach must be based on the needs and experiences of many women for whom the element of choice is greatly reduced. It is important that we also hear their voices and experiences of women who are survivors of prostitution, not just those who have the largest media and online presence

SCASE supports the proposal that those who have been sexually exploited are fully *decriminalised*, and we would lobby for expanding support services to offer specialist interventions to people exit for the long term in a safe way. This has to take account of trauma and multiple layers of violence they have experienced to overcome the damage caused by it. This should include drug and alcohol treatment for high numbers of those involved. They need access to opportunities including training, education and employment.

We acknowledge that other factors promote prostitution such as different economic policies; globalization; an organized sex industry; financial and political crisis's; female poverty preyed on by recruiters, traffickers, and pimps; stereotypes; and women's inequality all contribute to the rise in global sexual exploitation. These factors, too, are highly gendered. Male demand drives this profitable exploitation so pimps, recruiters, and traffickers seek out a supply of women.

“Male demand is a primary factor in the expansion of the sex industry worldwide and sustains commercial sexual exploitation, and that the buyer has largely escaped examination, analysis, censure, and penalty for his actions”

(Prostitution on Demand: Legalizing the Buyers as Sexual Consumers

Violence Against Women, Vol. 10, No. 10, 1156-1186 (2004) J Raymond

We do not support the proposal to remove legislative barriers around punting and pimping. We would call for a new criminal offence to engage in a paid-for sexual activity in any setting or location. SCASE believes that the focus must be on the demand – the men who assume the right to purchase others for prostitution, commodifying and marketing their bodies. No one has the right to exploit, nor profit from the exploitation of, another person regardless of any form of exchange of money, goods or services.

We believe robust legislation along with comprehensive public education and well resourced support and exiting services would help create a contemporary, democratic society in Scotland where women and girls can live lives free of all forms of male violence. This would be the progressive and courageous move recognising that prostitution, like all forms of violence against women, constitutes a barrier to gender equality and so any legislative approach should seek to remove such a barrier. Gender equality will be unattainable so long as men buy, sell and exploit women and children by prostituting them and is a significant social problem, which is harmful not only to the individual prostituted person but also to society at large.