

Written evidence submitted by Giles Beaumont

My name is Giles Beaumont. I am a single adult man who enjoys sex with other consenting adults. Sometimes I pay them, sometimes they pay me.

The numbered paragraphs of my submission follow the order of the issues you raise (1-7) followed by some additional figures and comments of my own (8-13).

1. Photo: You head your Inquiry notice with a photo of a young girl with bare arms and legs walking along an empty street after dark. Why this image? Is this your view of prostitution? If so, it is an incomplete view.

If you have access to any figures about prostitution you will know that there are far, far fewer sex workers involved in street work than in off-street work. Past studies and reports have often concentrated on street workers as though they were representative of prostitution as a whole while actually admitting that they are only a small part of it. I urge you, don't let this aspect of prostitution, don't let street work dominate your considerations; prostitution is a bigger subject.

Whether criminal sanction in relation to prostitution should continue to fall more heavily on those who sell sex, rather than those who buy it.

2. Burden of criminality: The All Party Parliamentary Group report in March 2014 was called '*Shifting the Burden*' and your terms of reference use the same word in the phrase 'burden of criminality' as though there is an inherent burden of crime being carried like a sack of coal on the shoulders of sex workers, and that it must now be shared with those who are their clients. Please ask yourselves, before you begin your deliberations, what is this crime that you see as a burden? Sex between consenting adults is not a crime!

3. Criminalise or De-criminalise: While prostitution is not itself a crime, the scatter of laws that have grown up around it cause a network of complications and it would do no-one a service if you were to add to them; far better that you should simplify things. Laws to protect people against trafficking, against violence, against exploitation and abuse already exist, and they are necessary. But there are other laws that seriously restrict the lives of people involved in sex work, and this Inquiry is a good opportunity for you to review these laws.

On November 3, last year, the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP) organised a Day of Evidence on the Decriminalisation of Prostitution in your House. The Day was organised at the request of MPs seeking reliable information about prostitution. The ECP's Report on that Day is still in preparation, and I trust that you will be attentive to it when it appears; until then let me record my impressions. An early speaker was Natalie Bennett who presented the Green view that sex workers were entitled to and should be allowed the same rights as everyone else when it comes to working, employment, pensions, and respect. You would think that was unarguable, but it is not the case at present. You could make it so!

I was struck particularly by Pye Jakobsen of the Rose Alliance in Sweden who spoke tellingly of how the evidence and views presented by Swedish sex workers - before the introduction of their 1990s legislation criminalising purchasers - were quite deliberately ignored on the grounds that because they were sex workers they were not competent to have opinions. And by Kate McGrew from Dublin speaking on behalf of the Sex Workers Alliance Ireland who reported that Dublin legislators were freely admitting to her that they supported her views but would not vote for them because it

wasn't politically expedient for them to do so. Such stories made me shudder. Are we to be like that in Britain too? Are you to be like that? I do hope not.

The ECP's day was about decriminalisation, not about 'shifting the burden'. They make good suggestions for changes to the laws that we have, to allow sex workers to live and work as freely and as safely as everyone else. Please listen to them, please listen to what sex workers themselves have to say, and not simply to those agencies that think they know what's best.

2. Demand: A primary recommendation of the 2014 APPG report is to reduce the demand for prostitution by making it a crime to pay for sex, and it is assumed there that the 'demand' is created by those who do the paying. It is nowhere even considered that the 'demand' might be created by the sex workers themselves who advertise their services, and who depend on being paid for their income and to support their livelihood. If someone chooses to be a sex worker - for whatever reason, their advertisement – in whatever form – creates 'demand'.

What the implications are for prostitution-related offences of the Crown Prosecution Service's recognition of prostitution as violence against women.

3. Violence against women: The CPS does **not** say that prostitution is violence against women. What it says is that '*Prostitution is addressed as sexual exploitation within the overall CPS Violence Against Women strategy because of its gendered nature.*' And there follow 17 pages of explanation most of which relate to and refer to occasions of exploitation, violence, abuse including child abuse as all those words are usually understood. But the CPS is concerned with crime and prosecution, and its guidance is based on the cases it has encountered and had to deal with; it takes no account of the legal act of 'sex between consenting adults'; nor does it take account of the fact that there are men and transgender folk who are sex workers as well, and as such it provides a very skewed view of prostitution. Prostitution can be discussed in a chapter headed 'violence against women' but that doesn't make it violence against women, nor does it make that discussion a complete view of prostitution.

[http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/p_to_r/prostitution_and_exploitation_of_prostitution/index.html]

What impact the Modern Slavery Act 2015 has had to date on trafficking for purposes of prostitution, what further action is planned, and how effectively the impact is being measured.

4. Modern Slavery: I'd love to know what effect the Act is having! It's impossible not to raise a questioning eyebrow at the large number of ladies from Eastern Europe entering Britain as prostitutes. I have met a number of them and all I can be sure of is that they are here willingly and of their own free will. Who would not come to work in Britain if you could earn five or ten times as much as you could in your own country? Economic migrants, certainly; but trafficked unwillingly, not so far as I am aware.

Whether further measures are necessary, including legal reforms, to:

5. Assist those involved in prostitution to exit from it

I have spent many thousands of pounds helping ladies with their aspirations; most are no longer sex workers.

6. Increase the extent to which exploiters are held to account

Apart from the Ugly Mugs scheme, which really only pinpoints people who are violent or abusive, how can those of us who are sex buyers and who might have concerns about a sex worker report or express that concern? I don't want to see anyone exploited, nor do I want to see anyone who is being exploited. If I was to be criminalised there would be no chance of my sharing any concerns with authorities.

7. Discourage demand which drives commercial sexual exploitation

Two emotive words, 'demand' and 'exploitation'. There is a lobby group called 'End Demand' whose supporters wish to see buyers of sex criminalised. They have the clever tag line '*End demand for sexual exploitation*' ... a sentiment that's easy to agree with, but what does it really mean? Since coming across this tag line I have taken to asking those whom I have paid for sex if they felt they were being exploited, and while all have answered 'no', the first two really hit the nail on the head. The first lady replied, 'No, not if you pay me' and the second said, 'No, I am exploiting you; didn't you realise?'

If there is 'exploitation' in the real sense of the word, let's stamp it out; there are laws and penalties in existence already.

So much for your 'issues', now some comments of my own:

8. Gender: Much of what is written - take the CPS guidance for example - assumes that prostitutes are women, and pays only lip service to other sexes. On January 24 this year I made a survey of the largest sex work internet site in the UK, *adultwork.com*, and that showed that there were 19,525 people offering themselves as escorts on that day; of these 13,327 were female, 5,297 male and 901 transgender folk. The proportions are: female 68.3%, male 27.1%, transgender 4.6%.

These figures are for escorts, sex workers willing to meet their clients for appointments off-street; street workers are not included. The total figures are, of course, only for those sex workers who use this site, and do not provide totals for all sex workers in the UK.

9. Nationality: A similar search of the Adultwork website shows that of the women escorts who give their nationality 47.3% say they are British, while the figure is 87.7% for the men, and 65.7% for the transgender folk.

10. Figures: These figures suggest that the whole business of prostitution is more complicated than just street work and the problems that that has brought to the fore. There is a lot going on that is not attracting attention; and while that does not necessarily mean that it needs to attract attention, it does suggest that any law set up to control one aspect of the 'business' will not necessarily be suitable for all aspects, and that control of 'crime' and 'harm' where that is evident is a better measure than one that sees 'prostitution' as a whole.

There is a Strathclyde/Leeds University-based research project with the title *Beyond the Gaze* that is at work gathering information about and from prostitutes working off street. It has only just begun to gather evidence and it will be a year or more before it reports, but this project promises to provide the best set of data on off-street prostitution that we have. You should be in touch with this research, the address of their website is www.beyond-the-gaze.com

11. Safety. The ‘safety of the people involved’ is a phrase that crops up pretty often in the paper ‘A Review of Effective Practice in Responding to Prostitution’ issued by the Home Office under the previous Coalition government in 2011, and it’s a phrase repeated to me by my MP Nicola Blackwood in a letter in December last. If safety is a concern, there is no doubt that it is much safer to be working with your friends, with a receptionist or a driver, or in a ‘brothel’ rather than being obliged to work alone, or on the street. If two people work together, that is a ‘brothel’. There are ‘brothels’ everywhere, and if I know that, the police must also know it. I suspect that they take a realistic attitude in most cases and only intervene when they receive complaints. That is my experience where I live. But living and working illegally is not living in safety, and if a sex worker is threatened or abused by a client they are unlikely to seek help from the police. Given that there are ‘brothels’ everywhere, it would be better for such establishments to be approved and licensed than for them to continue in uncertainty and out-of-control.

Reports in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* suggest that the police in Leeds seem to have taken the view that such safe establishments should be closed, and they have set up a ‘safe area’ in the city where sex workers can work on the streets but only at night between the hours of 7pm and 7am. How safe is that? Only one girl has been murdered so far!

[<http://www.punternet.com/forum/index.php?/topic/40526-a-ground-breaking-%E2%80%9Cmanaged-area%E2%80%9D-for-street-prostitution-in-leeds-has-been-made-permanent-after-a-12-month-pilot/>]

12. Immoral earnings. ‘Living off immoral earnings’ ... how dreadful is that? It seems to be the spectre that hangs over this business. If I was a hairdresser I could have a secure job and the owner of the salon would be making money out of me and living off my work; if I worked on the checkout at Sainsburys I could have a secure job and the Sainsburys would be making money out of me and living off my work; but if I work in a brothel I have no security and my ‘employer’ and my ‘landlord’ can be prosecuted for living off immoral earnings. That is not simply unjust, it’s ridiculous! If people are being exploited, there is a law to deal with it; but allowing people who work legally to pay their rent and their expenses, and to exist safely should be their unquestioned right. That is an area of the law that you need to put right!

13. Do you know the sex workers you represent? Prostitution evokes many emotions, many opinions. You will come to this Inquiry with preconceived ideas. That is inevitable. And it is inevitable that you will receive persuasive documents from all sorts of people, individuals like me, agencies and pressure groups, and even previous Home Office reports, all urging you to their point of view. But before you make up your own mind you should speak to those you represent, the sex workers in your own constituency? Do you know any of them? You should meet some and hear what they have to say. I bet they will be worth talking to.

Giles Beaumont
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