The Future of Sex Work in the UK: Working in Partnership to Support Sex Workers and Minimise Harm

A Public Policy Exchange Symposium

Wednesday 19th September 2018
10:15am – 4:30pm

Central London

Public Policy Exchange holds regular interactive seminars which provide an invaluable interface for policy discussion, debate and networking. These special events offer local practitioners, civil servants and other stakeholders not only an insight into current policy thinking, but also the opportunity to feed into future development across all areas of public policy.
Overview

In the UK, there are an estimated 72,800 sex workers (HAC, 2016). The Home Affairs Committee's 2016 report, Prostitution, outlines that current sex work legislation aims to “prevent people leading or forcing others into prostitution and to target those who make a living from the earnings of prostitutes” (HAC, 2016). While there are varying degrees of legality regarding sex work domestically, there are several models of decriminalisation being enacted internationally. The most famous are the Swedish model, which decriminalises those who sell sex but criminalises those who buy it; and the New Zealand model, which decriminalises all sex work.

Despite international change, primary legislation affecting sex workers in the UK is represented by the Policing and Crime Act 2009. England, Wales and Scotland have all legalised sex work, but many of the surrounding aspects remain illegal, such as solicitation or running a brothel. The Home Affairs Committee (HAC) recently published a report outlining recommendations that would drastically change sex work policy, advising a shift to complete decriminalisation (June 2016). A shift towards decriminalisation has been trialed through the Leeds ‘managed-area’ approach in Holbeck, where elements of street sex work have been decriminalised between the hours of 8PM-6AM. In response to the HAC report, the government acknowledged reform was needed, but restrained from supporting a specific model.

Data from the United Kingdom Network of Sex Worker Projects shows that 93% of sex workers believe that current legislation is insufficient for safeguarding sex workers in the UK. Safety is a primary area of concern, with 49% of sex workers being worried about their safety (HAC, 2016). The government has recently stated that any policy reform would likely reduce harm compared to the current system (2016).

This symposium will therefore provide sex workers, safeguarding boards and local authorities with an opportunity to identify and debate priorities for reform and develop strategies for protecting and expanding the rights of sex workers.

Why Attend?

- Review the Home Affairs Committee 2016 report's key findings and recommendations
- Examine the merits and downsfalls of both the Swedish and New Zealand models of sex work decriminalisation
- Discuss the case for criminalisation as a way to reduce demand for sex work
- Analyse options for decriminalisation in the UK, using the Holbeck Managed Area Zone as a case study in a shift towards decriminalisation
- Share ways to support ‘ugly mugs’ projects and other third party reporting systems to promote effective multi-agency partnership in reporting crime
- Assess methods of helping GPs understand the physical and mental health dangers associated with sex work
- Consider intersections of discrimination against BAME and LGBTQ+ sex workers and discuss methods of safeguarding
- Explore ways of improving outreach from sex work support projects in order to support open access of services
- Identify means of supporting people who wish to exit sex work with a holistic means based approach

Who Should Attend?

- Sex Workers
- Sex Workers Rights Activists
- Local Authorities
- Adult Safeguarding Boards
- Women Rights’ Organisations
- Independent Sexual Advisors and ISVAs
- Immigration Teams
- Drugs and Alcohol Services
- Vulnerable Persons Coordinators
- Rape and Sexual Assault Support Centres and Specialists
- Social Workers and Social Services Officers
- Housing Officers
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Police Service
- Serious and Organised Crime Units
- Health Service Professionals
- Sexual Health Practitioners
- Probation Officers
- Mental Health Practitioners
- Victim Support Representatives
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships
- Local Criminal Justice Boards
- Community Safety Teams
- Vulnerable Persons Coordinators
- Police Service
- Serious and Organised Crime Units
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- Sexual Health Practitioners
- Probation Officers
- Mental Health Practitioners
- Victim Support Representatives
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships
- Local Criminal Justice Boards
- Community Safety Teams

Accommodation

Through our partnership with HotelMap, we are able to offer our delegates heavily discounted hotel rates at a wide range of London hotels. To view hotel availability and rates and to book online, visit www.HotelMap.com/MSNUZ/

- Home Affairs Select Committee, 2016

We are very concerned that, despite there being no clear evidence that it reduces demand for prostitution, the current practice of treating soliciting as an offence is having an adverse impact, in terms of preventing sex workers from seeking help to exit prostitution, exposing them to abuse and violence, and damaging other areas of their lives, such as access to health and welfare benefits.

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Forthcoming Events
Improving Regional Public Transport Infrastructure: Driving Innovation, Flexibility and Integration in Local Services
28th June 2018

Achieving Sustainability and Safety in NHS Emergency Care: Creating Alternate Pathways, Managing Patient Flow
3rd July 2018

Denormalising Sexual Violence and Harassment between Children in Schools: Formulating a Coherent Multi-Agency Response
3rd July 2018

Tackling Drug Dependency and Abuse in the UK: Working in Partnership to Reduce Crime, Minimise Harm and Support Rehabilitation
4th July 2018

Safeguarding against Extremism in Schools: Preventing Hate and Protecting Freedoms
4th July 2018

Improving the Lives of People with Learning Disabilities: Combating Inequalities in Health, Education and Employment
5th July 2018

Enhancing the Quality of Bailiff Industry Services: Working in Partnership to Promote Good Practice and Support Vulnerable Groups
5th July 2018

Raising Aspirations for Care Leavers: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence
10th July 2018

The Future for Youth Custody: Realising Meaningful Reform, Supporting Young People and Keeping the Public Safe
11th July 2018

Identifying, Disrupting, and Preventing Food Crime: Working in Partnership to Build the Best Food Future Possible
12th July 2018

Programme

09:30  Registration and Morning Refreshments
10:15  Chair’s Welcome and Introduction
10:30  Morning Panel:
The Legal Framework for Prostitution: Examining the National Outlook and Moving Towards More Effective Legislation

• The National Agenda: Reviewing the Policing and Crime Act 2009 and the 2016 Home Affairs Committee recommendations
• International Strategies for Reducing Harm: Comparing the Swedish and New Zealand models of decriminalisation
• Abolition of the Sex Trade: Discussing harm reduction through criminalising sex work
• Case Study – the ‘Managed-Area’ approach in Holbeck: Examining a shift towards decriminalisation in the UK and its implications for the future of domestic sex work policy
• Ensuring Economic Freedom: Discrepancies between national self-employment rights and sex workers’ rights

11:15  Morning Refreshments
11:30  Open Floor Discussion and Debate with Panel One
12:30  Networking Lunch
13:30  Afternoon Panel:
Safeguarding and Supporting Sex Workers: Identifying Current Safeguarding Issues and Developing Strategies to Protect and Expand the Rights of Sex Workers

• Ugly Mugs and the Police: Supporting anonymous third party crime reporting mechanisms and improving liaison between sex workers, the police and sex work projects
• Supporting Outreach Programs: Sustaining an ongoing relationship between sex workers and support groups to ensure open access to services
• The Role of Health Service Professionals: Training GPs to understand the physical and mental health risks in sex work and promote cooperation
• Race and Sexuality: Understanding the increased discrimination and violence faced by BAME and LGBTQ+ sex workers
• Exiting Sex Work: Discussing tailored methods of support

14:15  Afternoon Refreshments
14:30  Open Floor Discussion and Debate with Panel Two
15:30  Chair’s Summary and Closing Comments
15:40  Networking Reception
16:30  Close

Marketing and Exhibition Opportunities
We offer a range of opportunities to enable your organisation to raise its profile and communicate with key decision makers in the public sector.

For further information please contact us on 020 3137 8630 or email info@publicpolicyexchange.co.uk