

SEXUAL FREEDOM COALITION

RESPONSE

TO THE HOME OFFICE

Consultation Paper on Prostitution

PAYING THE PRICE

25th November 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sexual Freedom Coalition, representing dozens of other groups and tens of thousands of individuals, has worked hard to provide an informed response to the Home Office Paper.

We feel that the Home Office paper paints a false picture of sex workers, suggesting most are victims and/or drug-dependant street workers. It quotes research on such people suggesting it represents all sex workers.

The SFC recommends the decriminalisation of activities connected with prostitution, except underage sex, coercion and abusive behaviour, which should remain criminalised.

All existing laws relating to prostitution should be repealed and replaced by three new laws:

- i) making it illegal to employ underage people for sex work

- ii) dealing with the humane management of sex street work, providing designated areas and preventing people selling sex if they are addicted to drugs and/or pose a health risk
- iii) specifically criminalising the abusive control of sex workers and criminalising coercion of individuals into sex work

With the decriminalisation of sex work, it would no longer attract the criminal element, and can flourish as a respectable enterprise.

The SFC proposes that Safer Sex Centres are set up alongside existing Health Centres to campaign for the use of safer sex and reduce the level of STIs in the UK. The Centres would provide a pleasant, stigma-free environment for testing and treatment, plus help deal with the consequences of the current epidemics.

Safer Sex Centres would also provide support groups for sex workers, clients and people with sexual and emotional problems, such as stress and loneliness. The Centres would be in touch with red light districts and the police, for added safety. A referral system would be provided for clients to reach sex workers, encouraging quality of service. Websites would help promote safer sex and provide a wide range of helpful relevant information.

Legitimate sex work would no longer be the responsibility of the Home Office but that of the Department of Health, with some aspects being the responsibility of the Department of Culture and others by the Department of Trade and Industry.