

The Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill – Evidence Submission – Eaves.

1. Eaves is a London-based charity established in 1977 that provides high quality housing and support to vulnerable women. We also carry out research, advocacy and campaigning to prevent all forms of violence against women.

1.1 At Eaves, we put the needs of women first. We are determined to give a voice to the most excluded women in society and provide direct, innovative services to support and empower women to help themselves.

1.2 Specialist services we provide include the London Exiting Action Project which supports women to exit prostitution, the Poppy Project, which provides support, advocacy and accommodation to women who have been trafficked, and the Amina project, a unique peer mentoring service for women who have experienced sexual violence.

2. We applaud the inclusion in the Bill of Clause 6, which criminalises paying another person for sexual services.

3. We also applaud the fact that the person from whom sexual services are being bought will not be criminalised for participating in this transaction. Our recent report, *Breaking Down The Barriers* (Bindel, J., Brown., L., Easton, H., Matthews, R. and Reynolds, L., 2012), identified criminalisation as one of the key barriers preventing women from exiting prostitution.) However, we feel that this should be made more explicit in the Bill, and that Clause 8 should be extended to apply to those who have been paid for sexual services, as well as victims of trafficking.

4. Criminalising the demand for prostitution is an important step in tackling human trafficking for sexual exploitation, in reducing the number of women involved in prostitution, and thereby the harm caused to women in prostitution, and in making a statement that women should have the right not to be bought for sex when made vulnerable, whether this vulnerability is caused by economic need or other difficulties.

4.1 In Sweden and in Europe, police have noted that the Swedish criminalisation of the purchase of sex has made Sweden an undesirable destination for traffickers, as it is too laborious for them to successfully exploit women in prostitution there without risking detection.¹

4.2 Criminalisation of buyers has been shown in Sweden to have decreased the size of the on-street sex industry by half, prevented the growth of the off-street sex industry (compared to in neighbouring countries which did not criminalise demand, where this area has massively increased).²

4.3 Women involved in prostitution (both indoor and on-street) experience high levels of violence, including sexual violence. Our study, *Breaking Down the Barriers*, found that 71% of the women interviewed had experienced violence (physical, mental or emotional) from male buyers of sex. 50% of the women we interviewed also had experienced coercion to enter or to remain in prostitution. Conversely, a recent study from Norway has shown that serious violence against women involved in prostitution has decreased in the years since demand was criminalised.³

¹ Evaluation of the ban on purchase of sexual services
<http://www.government.se/sb/d/13358/a/149231>

² Ibid

³ New research shows violence decreases under Nordic model
<http://feministcurrent.com/7038/new-research-shows-violence-decreases-under-nordic-model-why-the-radio-silence/>

4.4 The Swedish criminalisation of the purchase of sex has had a strong normative effect, resulting in the number of male sex buyers being reduced almost by half⁴. Research we conducted on male sex buyers in the UK in our report Men Who Buy Sex (Farley Bindel & Golding, 2009) also shows that in the UK the criminalisation of the purchase of sex would be a strong deterrent to buyers. (84% said they would be deterred by the prospect of prison time, and 80% by the prospect of a fine.)

5. However, it is of great concern to us that while excellent provision is made under this bill for the support of victims of trafficking, there is no mention of provision for, or obligation to provide, services to support women who are engaged in selling sex, in order to help them exit from prostitution.

6. Women attempting or wishing to exit from prostitution are faced with multiple barriers – many of which are or derive from the factors which pushed them towards prostitution in the first place. Our recent report, Breaking Down the Barriers identifies the key barriers women wishing to exit prostitution face.

6.1 These barriers were: problematic drug use (83% of women interviewed), housing problems (77%), poor physical and mental health (79%), experiences of violence as children leading to feelings of worthlessness (72%), criminalisation (49% prostitution related offences, 67% non-prostitution related), money – debts (52%) and disposable income that is hard to give up, coercion from others (50%), lack of qualifications or training (39%), early age of entry (32% before 18) leading to difficulty accessing services, and in imagining a different life.

6.2 Our study identified that specialised exiting programs can be a cost-effective and surprisingly quick way to help women to exit prostitution. Accordingly women should, regardless of legislative approach, be offered exiting services (whose funding should be protected by law) tailored to their own personal needs and circumstances, and coordinated between different services, to help them overcome the barriers they face to exiting.

7. We also feel that the resources for investigation outlined in Clause 7 should also apply to the investigation of cases where a person has paid for sex, as these cases have been found to be crucial for police in countries where the purchase of sex is criminalised, for the investigation of trafficking operations.

8. Women involved in prostitution experience many of the same vulnerabilities as women who are trafficked, and many of their experiences intersect with women who are trafficked, as our report, Breaking Down the Barriers, has shown. Accordingly they require many of the same services and protections both in general and when proceeding through the criminal justice system as a witness. Therefore we believe that Clauses 9, 10, 11 and 13 should be extended to include women who have been paid for sexual services as well as people who have been trafficked.

⁴ “A decrease in the number of sex buyers. According to a research report in 2008 from the Nordic Gender Institute, the number of sex buyers in Sweden has declined since the introduction of the sex purchase law. A poll was taken to determine whether the law had influenced individual patterns of behavior. The results, compared with those of a similar poll taken in 1996, revealed the following: the number of male sex buyers had decreased from 13.6 percent to 7.9 percent. Each poll questioned 2,500 individuals between 18 and 74 years of age.” Targeting the Sex Buyer (Kajsa Claude and the Swedish Institute, 2010) <http://www.si.se/upload/Human%20Trafficking/Targeting%20the%20sex%20buyer.pdf>