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Submitted to Equally Safe: A consultation on challenging men's demand for prostitution, working to reduce the harms associated with prostitution and helping women to exit

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Ministerial Foreword

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Scotland's Current Approach to Prostitution

1 Do you agree or disagree that the Scottish Government's approach to tackling prostitution, as outlined in this section, is sufficient to prevent violence against women and girls?

Please explain your answer.:

2 What are your observations as to the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on women involved in prostitution in Scotland?

Please explain your answer.:

Chapter 3: International Approaches to Prostitution

3 Which of the policy approaches (or aspects of these) outlined in Table 3.1 do you believe is most effective in preventing violence against women and girls?

Please explain your answer.:

Chapter 4: Challenging Men's Demand for Prostitution

4 What measures would help to shift the attitudes of men relating to the purchase of sex? Do you have any examples of good practice either in a domestic or an international context?

Please explain your answer.:

Research quoted in the consultation document found that 'men's age in relation to their first involvement with women involved in prostitution was 14 to 49 years old and that 37% had first bought sex between the ages of 18 and 20 years old.'

The research also discovered that '52% of men interviewed had purchased sex before the age of 21, and 74% by 25 years old' which suggests that 'if a man had not purchased sex by 25 years old, then he would be less likely to do so in the future.'

Clearly there is merit in further exploring what it is that drives men to engage in the purchase of sex through prostitution, especially at an early age.

Two reports are worthy of consideration. The first is Challenging Men's Demand for Prostitution in Scotland (A Research Report Based on Interviews with 110 Men Who Bought Women in Prostitution Jan Macleod, Melissa Farley, Lynn Anderson, and Jacqueline Golding Published by Women's Support Project, 2008) ('Scottish Report') and the second is Comparing Sex Buyers with Men Who Don't Buy Sex "You can have a good time with the servitude" vs. "You're supporting a system of degradation" (Melissa Farley, Emily Schuckman, Jacqueline M. Golding, Kristen Houser, Laura Jarrett, Peter Qualliotine, Michele Decker Psychologists for Social Responsibility Annual Conference Boston, Massachusetts July 15, 2011 Research by Prostitution Research & Education Research Supported by Hunt Alternatives Fund) ('US Report').

These reports discovered that sex buyers shared certain attitudes, life experiences, and behavioural tendencies that distinguish them from their non-buying peers in socially and statistically significant ways. According to the US Report: 'Sex buyers engaged in significantly more criminal activity than non-sex buyers. They were far more likely than non-sex buyers to commit felonies, misdemeanors, crimes related to violence against women, substance abuse-related crimes, assaults, crimes with weapons, and crimes against authority. All of the crimes known to be associated with violence against women were reported by sex buyers; none were reported by non-sex buyers.'

The list of shared characteristics of sex-buyers suggests that those people are most likely to come from deprived or poor households/areas where such behaviours are common. Reducing poverty, especially through the creation of employment opportunities, is one step which may help tackle the demand for prostitution.

Those interviewed in the study for the Scottish Report spoke about intense pressure from other men to use prostitutes, with some rather disturbingly describing the use of prostitutes as a "rite of passage" for young men and a "common experience" for young men on their 16th or 18th birthday.

The role of pornography in men's demand for prostitution should not be underestimated and it is surprising that this is not referred to in the consultation document. The Scottish Report noted 'a statistically significant association between [men inclined to] pornography use and the frequency of their use of women in prostitution.'

The Scottish study compared men who were high frequency users of prostitutes (once a month or more) to those who were low frequency users (once or

twice, ever) with respect to their use of print, video, and Internet pornography. Those who were most frequent users of pornography were also the most frequent users of women in prostitution.

The report notes that one interpretation of this finding is that more frequent use of pornography 'supports and stimulates men in their use of women in prostitution. It is also possible that men who are infrequent pornography users may be less likely to use women in prostitution.'

Monto and McRee (2005) compared the pornography use of 1672 U.S. men who had been arrested for soliciting women in prostitution with samples of U.S. men who had not used women in prostitution. Men who had used women in prostitution were far more likely than those who had not to use pornography on a regular basis. In a statistically significant linear relationship, Monto and McRee found that men who were repeat users of women in prostitution were more likely than first time users of prostituted women to use pornography, and that first time users of women in prostitution were more likely than non-punters to have used pornography.

The following comments from men interviewed in the Scottish Report highlight the link between pornography and prostitution:

"...But it is more exciting to see it visually. And I found out [from pornography] hey, you can do that in real life. And the people that I wanted to it with didn't want to do it with me, so I started going to prostitutes" (sex buyer).

"It's [pornography is] giving you a false sense of closeness to a person that you're never going to meet. And that person that you're going to look at has no initial desire for you. So you should have no initial desire for that. They're there just to create a fantasy that you'll never be able to reach"(non-sex buyer).

According to the report, sex buyers significantly more often imitated sex acts that they had seen in pornography. Fifty-two percent of sex buyers and 29% of non-sex buyers imitated pornography with their sex partners. It also reports that 'sometimes the sex buyers directly incorporated pornography into their use of women in prostitution. Some preferred viewing pornography during a session with a prostituted woman, with one sex buyer saying that he wanted the prostitution session to be "like in a porn movie."

It would be prudent to explore the link between pornography and demand for prostitution in light of this evidence.

Pornography objectifies the human person, the vast majority of whom are women. It does grave injury to the dignity of its participants (actors, vendors, the public), since each one becomes a base of pleasure and illicit profit for others (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2354).

Civil authorities should prevent the production and distribution of pornographic materials as part of a wider approach to the commendable pursuit of changing attitudes to the purchase of sex. At the very least pornographic material should be out of the reach of children and young people, especially online where it is widespread and easier to access.

5 Taking into account the above, how can the education system help to raise awareness and promote positive attitudes and behaviors amongst young people in relation to consent and healthy relationships?

Please explain your answer.:

In Catholic education all learning about sexuality, sexual behaviour and relationships is framed within the broader context of "Relationships and Moral Education", taking into account the curriculum areas of both Religious Education in Catholic Schools, Health and Wellbeing and Social Sciences.

Our starting point is rooted in Catholic anthropology and the Christian understanding that we are each made in the image and likeness of God, deserving of dignity and respect. This immediately sets a context for understanding "why" prostitution is wrong, i.e. it is an offense to the dignity of another human being and to God.

While the current RSHP.scot website does consider prostitution in terms of law and social attitudes it tends to look at the issue as a wider societal one and not as a personal issue. Many (hopefully most) young men will not look to buy sex directly from a person, and hopefully most young women will not find themselves in the situation where they are being exploited to sell it. However, because they are not involved in the "traditional" routes of prostitution they therefore disassociate themselves from other forms of prostitution where "sex" is for sale, for example pornography, organised sex parties and orgies etc. Furthermore, they do not link the buying and selling of drugs to prostitution and money laundering and see themselves as innocent in the exploitation of these women because, again, they don't see themselves as buying sex or being part of that world.

In order for young people to reflect upon the issues associated with prostitution and exploitation that impacts on them, their friends and families, we would suggest that the matter has to be explored as part of wider planned learning on such things as self-esteem and positive, life giving, nurturing relationships and therefore reference is made beyond RSHP to all aspects of Health and Wellbeing, Religious Education etc.

Chapter 5: Supporting Women to Exit Prostitution

6 How can the different needs of women involved in prostitution (in terms of their health and wellbeing) be better recognised in the provision of mainstream support?

Please explain your answer.:

7 In your opinion, drawing on any international or domestic examples, what programmes or initiatives best supports women to safely exit prostitution?

Please explain your answer.:

As highlighted in the consultation document the needs of women seeking to exit prostitution can be complex and varied. The main reasons cited in the consultation document as barriers to women exiting prostitution are 'financial reasons, lack of choice, with poverty being the main driver'. Further, 'the lack of alternatives with a similar perceived earning potential as prostitution can make the cycle for women particularly difficult to break'.

It is of paramount importance that society offers opportunities allowing people to exit prostitution. The government may not be able to create jobs for everyone, but it can support the process and is duty bound to sustain business activities by creating conditions which will ensure job opportunities by stimulating those activities where they are lacking.

Politicians must, therefore, work to structure society in a way that everyone has the opportunity to contribute their own talents and efforts, which will require laying the foundations for the creation of new opportunities for people involved in prostitution. Women exiting prostitution will need the tools to support themselves and their families.

There is also the need for a holistic approach to address the complex needs of people involved in prostitution. This must be done sensitively and with the utmost respect for the privacy of individuals.

8 Support services are primarily focussed within four of Scotland's main cities – Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow – how can the needs of women throughout Scotland who are engaged in prostitution be met, noting that prostitution is not solely an urban issue?

Please explain your answer.:

9 If there are any further comments you would like to make, which have not been addressed in the questions above, please use the space below to provide more detail.

Please explain your answer.:

The Catholic understanding of the human person is that we are each made in the image and likeness of God. And from this it follows that we are each deserving of dignity and respect. This is an important starting point and sets the context for understanding why prostitution is wrong.

Treating sex like a commodity devalues the dignity of the human person. Prostitution does injury to the dignity of the person who engages in it, reducing the person to an instrument of sexual pleasure. Prostitution usually involves women, but also men, children and adolescents (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2355) and puts vulnerable people at serious risk of harm and abuse, including exposing them to trafficking.

The Church believes that, while it is wrong to engage in prostitution, the culpability of the offence can be attenuated by many of the circumstances prostitutes find themselves in, such as destitution, blackmail, or social pressure.

As the evidence suggests, women often find themselves in these desperate circumstances. This is something that must be recognised and the necessary support and compassion given.

Pope Francis has said that 'a person can never be put on sale' and that 'any form of prostitution is a reduction to slavery'. He said that it is an 'illness that a woman must be exploited as if she were merchandise to be used and then discarded.'

Efforts to both allow women a safe exit from prostitution and to challenge men's demand for it are to be welcomed as an important step in protecting vulnerable people from violence.

About you

What is your name?

Name:

Anthony Horan

What is your email address?

Email:

ahoran@rcpolitics.org

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

Catholic Parliamentary Office of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

Publish response with name

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

I confirm that I have read the privacy policy and consent to the data I provide being used as set out in the policy.

I consent