

Equally Safe: A consultation on challenging men's demand for prostitution

FAQ

Overview

This is Scotland's first ever national consultation on prostitution and is an opportunity for everyone to give their views on how we challenge men's demand for prostitution. We are also seeking views on how we ensure support for women when they need it, including to exit prostitution.

Responses to the consultation will be analysed and set out in a final report. This report will help inform the future approach to prostitution in Scotland, including the necessary support required for women involved in or seeking to exit prostitution.

Responses to the consultation should be provided by 10 December 2020.

Why are the Scottish Government consulting on prostitution in Scotland?

The Scottish Government are committed to ending violence against women and girls and has developed a plan to help achieve this. This plan is called 'Equally Safe'.

Equally Safe sets out that commercial exploitation, which includes prostitution, is a form of violence against women and girls exists as a result of how women are viewed by society.

The consultation is an opportunity to discuss our future approach to prostitution against the background of how women and girls should be treated in an equal society. We are seeking views on how we can best tackle this form of violence, reduce the harm it causes and best support women and girls.

What does the Scottish Government mean by lived experience?

This FAQ often discusses "lived experience". The Scottish Government wants to hear from women with direct experience, either current or past, of prostitution – the buying or selling of sex. We are aware that the terminology used can mean different things to different women and whilst some women may identify with certain terminology, we know that others will not.

It is open to all to share views, whether you are currently involved in prostitution and have no plans to leave, are looking for help to exit or you have already exited. All views are valued, whatever your background or experiences.

Does the Scottish Government want to ban prostitution?

It is already a crime in Scotland to publically solicit or loiter for the purposes of purchasing sex. This consultation does not propose changes to the law, though respondents can voice their support or opposition to this in their responses.

The consultation does not commit to any particular course of action and asks broad questions on challenging men's demand for purchasing sex and on how we can

reduce harms for women involved in prostitution and ensure women are supported, including to exit.

What does the consultation ask?

In the consultation paper, 'prostitution' means the buying and selling of sex.

In the consultation we ask questions around the COVID-19 pandemic, options to challenge men's demand for prostitution, how support services are working across the country and about how the education system can raise awareness and promote positive attitudes among young people in relation to consent and healthy relationships.

These questions will help us to further understand prostitution in Scotland and inform decisions on our approach to prostitution in Scotland.

We want to ensure all voices are included in the consultation, and we are encouraging women with lived experience of prostitution to respond.

What is the deadline for sharing my views?

The consultation closes on 10 December 2020, however if you want to share your direct experience and are aware that you may complete the consultation shortly after this date, we can accept a late response.

Please email vawgconsultations@gov.scot if you intend to provide a response after the consultation closing date.

What is not included in the consultation?

The consultation focuses on men paying for sex with women. It does not look at other kinds of sexual behaviour such as lap-dancing and pornography.

However, any findings from the consultation will help to inform our approaches to prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation wherever they exist.

Why do you need to hear from women with direct experience?

We want to ensure our policies work for those involved in prostitution. Through capturing the voices of those with direct experience we can design future policies which fully support and protect women and girls.

How can I respond to the consultation?

Please give us your answers to this consultation online at:

<https://consult.gov.scot/violence-against-women-team/equallysafe-reduce-harms-associated-prostitution>

If you are unable to respond using 'Citizen Space', please send your views and comments either by email to vawgconsultations@gov.scot

or by posting a paper copy to:

Violence against Women and Girls and Barnahus Justice Unit
Scottish Government
GWR St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

However you respond, please complete the [Respondent Information Form](#). This will ensure that we treat your response appropriately.

Why do you need me to complete the Respondent Information Form?

The information you provide on the Respondent Information Form lets us know how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are happy for your response to be made public.

Can I provide answers anonymously and how will my personal information be stored?

Yes, you can complete the consultation anonymously and can request for your response to be published but not your name. If you ask for your answers to be kept private, we will not publish them.

Your personal information will be stored securely by the Scottish government for 3 months after the publication of the analysis report (due to be published Spring 2021). Personal information will then be deleted after this date.

Once the consultation closes, how will the Scottish Government continue to engage with women involved in prostitution?

We will continue to work with support organisations and those with lived experience to inform policy decisions after the consultation closes. We are committed to ensuring we make decisions which reduce harm and provide the right support for those involved in prostitution.

Can I update or withdraw my answers once I have submitted the form?

Yes, you can request to update or withdraw your answers once you have submitted.

Please contact vawgconsultations@gov.scot if you wish to amend or withdraw your responses.

When will the consultation report be available?

Responses will be analysed, with a full written report available in Spring 2021. This report will explain the main issues identified across responses.

Will my answers change the Scottish Government's approach to prostitution?

The consultation marks an important first step in the national discussion around our future approach to prostitution within the context of how women and girls should be treated in an equal society.

All responses received to the consultation will be considered carefully and will be used to inform policy and establish how we improve the lives of women involved in or seeking to exit prostitution in Scotland.

Where can I find out more information about the Scottish Government's Equally Safe – Scotland's Strategy for tackling violence against women and girls?

Equally Safe - Scotland's strategy for tackling violence against women and girls - promotes a shared understanding of the causes, risks and scale of violence against women and girls, including prostitution. It also seeks to understand what causes this violence, and how we can ensure the safety of all women, children and young people.

You can find the strategy here:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/equally-safe-consultation-challenging-mens-demand-prostitution-working-reduce-harms-associated-prostitution-helping-women-exit>

Where can I find support?

Support organisations and peer-led networks provide financial, wellbeing and safety support at any time of the year.

Information on key services and support across Scotland can be found at:

<https://www.encompassnetwork.info/national-services.html>