

Oppose clauses NC2 and NC3 of the Crime and Policing Bill 2025

18th June 2025

There are an [estimated 72,800](#) sex workers in the UK, with at least 2471 based in Wales. Sex work is identified in all 22 local authority areas of Wales and is most concentrated in Cardiff, Newport and Swansea. Nationally, the majority of sex workers are women (85-90%), most of whom are mothers working to support families.

Prostitution is [not itself an offence](#) in England and Wales, but sex workers are prosecuted for related offences such as soliciting, brothel keeping or living off immoral earnings.

The English Collective of Prostitutes have shown that sex work is increasing because poverty is increasing. In Wales, almost a quarter of people are living in poverty with women disproportionately affected. Wales now has the worst child poverty rate of all the UK nations, with 31% of children living below the poverty line. But rather than focusing on and addressing the social and economic conditions that push people into sex work, UK politicians are proposing [changes](#) to the law that would harm sex workers.

Proposed amendments to the crime and policing bill increase the criminalisation of sex work. Among the proposed changes is an [amendment](#) to repeal the offence of “loitering or soliciting for the purposes of prostitution”. This has long been called for by sex workers. But it appears to be a concession that masks a series of further amendments that would function to collectively harm sex workers.

Clause NC2 targets so-called third parties. Its broad definition means anyone who associates with a sex worker could be prosecuted for commercial sexual exploitation. This clause would also criminalise advertising sites which sex workers depend on to work independently and in greater safety.

Clause NC3 criminalises clients by making it illegal to pay for or provide any benefit in exchange for sexual services. Its backers argue that this would reduce demand. But there is evidence from countries that have implemented this model – often called the [“Nordic model”](#) – that suggests otherwise.

[Research](#) shows that criminalisation pushes sex work further underground, making it harder for workers to stay safe. When clients fear detection, sex workers lose time to screen for risk, are pushed into isolated environments and are [less likely](#) to report violence. This increases their proximity to harm.

Continued efforts to further criminalise sex workers will cause considerable harm. Sexual exploitation is [already a crime](#). Further criminalising and reframing all sex work as exploitation does nothing to tackle poverty, [inadequate welfare provision](#), or restrictive [immigration policies](#). These are the types of factors that often [keep people](#) in sex work.

In 2019, a House of Commons committee found that mothers were being driven into [“survival sex”](#) by the two-child cap on universal credit, leaving them struggling to support their families.

The charity Child Poverty Action Group last year [reported](#) that most of the 440,000 families affected by the cap were living in poverty. Numerous sex worker campaign groups argue that abolishing the cap would lift families out of financial precarity, enabling sex workers to refuse clients or leave the industry if they wished.

Some of the politicians proposing amendments to the crime and policing bill – including Diana Johnson, and Welsh MPs Carolyn Harris and Tonia Antoniazzi – have opposed measures that would provide genuine economic support to those most at risk. When given the chance to vote to abolish the two-child cap on universal credit in July 2024, they [chose not to](#).

On the very same day, they spoke in parliament about the need to [“protect women and girls”](#). But rather than lifting them out of poverty, the same politicians choose instead to continually push for the further criminalisation of sex work.

We are calling for the provision of greater resources directly to economically-marginalised communities and the full decriminalisation of sex work. Full decriminalisation would enable sex workers to work collectively for safety without fear of prosecution and is an important step for harm-reduction.

In [New Zealand](#), where sex work was decriminalised in 2003, there has been [no rise](#) in prostitution or trafficking. But workers have greater power to report violence and exit the industry if they choose.

In [Belgium](#), decriminalisation has gone further. Sex workers now have labour rights, including pensions, maternity leave and the right to refuse clients.

If UK politicians are serious about promoting the rights and wellbeing of sex workers, they should address poverty, social inequality and restrictive immigration laws. Sex workers need rights and policies that reflect their lives to reduce their proximity to harm, not further criminalisation.