**Written evidence submitted by Susie Marriott**

*Demand for prostitution, I believe, fuels the exploitation of vulnerable people*

*I wish to urge the Committee to recommend it become a criminal offence to pay for sexual services – that buyers of sex should bear the heaviest weight*

*I long for there to be more provision of services to help those wishing to leave prostitution*

1. Some may say they have made a voluntary decision to engage in prostitution for all sorts of reasons including homelessness, living in care, debt and substance abuse, but very few realise the consequences on their mental health or the violence a large proportion of them will experience from buyers of sexual service (research shows it is one of the most dangerous occupations in the world) And of course sexual exploitation is the most common form of exploitation for people trafficked in the UK.

2. Apparently, a research study with 103 men in London who buy sex found that when asked what would discourage them from buying sex said they would be deterred by “greater criminal penalty” (77%); against those who said they would be deterred by enforced to attend an educational programme (47%) Sweden and Norway have made it a criminal offence to buy sex and have noted a decrease in the level of prostitution, a deterrent effect on men purchasing sex, and a deterrent effect on trafficking.

3. There appears to be widespread support for criminalising the purchase of sex, including many women who have now left prostitution! Northern Ireland and Canada have recently made it an offence, and the European Parliament seem to see it as a way to combat exploitation and improve gender equality.

4. Evidence has shown that a large percentage of women in prostitution would like to exit if they could but they face significant barriers and there are few specialist programmes to help them at present.