Written evidence submitted by Kate Wright

Sex work is my career

I came to be a sex worker – an escort, three weeks before Christmas 21 years ago. I was a 22-year-old woman with financial problems and worked full time in an office and waitressed during the evenings. I still couldn’t make the ends meet and my finances had taken a battering from the cost of paying for home care for an elderly relative who died shortly after I started sex work. If had not come into prostitution I would have lost my mortgaged home.

I was fortunate to work for a local Home Counties escort agency run by a man who over the course of ten years became one of my best friends. He wasn’t a ‘pimp’ and he never beat any one up, bullied or threatened. He was a businessman who took an agency fee and looked out for the girls who earned his money. I also worked for agencies and in houses in London and all over Thames valley. Men operated many of these establishments and I never once found any of them violent, threatening or allowing drugs or illegal immigrants or underage workers in their houses.

I learned the trade by working with other escort girls and by listening to guidelines the agent taught me. This gave me a sense of belonging and an awareness of how to operate to keep myself and others safe. Starting work can be frightening and to begin with young women or men need help, support and guidance.

Now, many years on, I work independently from my own home and many girls contact me asking for advice on how to operate legally and safely in a cost effective way. It’s difficult to advise girls who have families and therefore they cannot operate from their home. To work ‘indoors’ is costly and difficult, passing credit checks for rental places can be hard and deposits large, and all must be borne by one person only. Imagine if girls could work in pairs or three’s they’d be safe and able to pay the rent and bills and have a living wage. Prostitutes need places to work, which are safe and the best environment to do this is with other sex workers in so called ‘brothels’.
Many girls are afraid of working in ‘houses’ because they know they’re not legal if there’s more than one girl working there.

I work as a prostitute through choice and it’s always been my choice to do so. I object to laws, which might be introduced impeding my right to have sex for money. My client base is varied; it’s not the ‘dirty mac brigade’ but a range of businessmen many who have become great friends over the years. Moreover, I also see a multitude of clients with disabilities, men with severe physical impairments – some who are virtually unable to move at all and some have never had the opportunity to experience sex. I see some men with facial disfigurements, congenital or progressive illnesses such as strokes, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis and other conditions which wield them trapped in their home, isolated from opportunities where they would meet potential sexual partners. I also see men with mental illnesses who are often socially isolated and lonely. It seems to me that the law would like them punished for wanting a basic human right to sexual relationships with experienced women who can offer a combination of understanding, compassion and excitement. If paying for sex became unlawful it would further marginalise sex workers and disabled people, the latter of which makes up a majority minority, (5.8 million working age adults, 5.3 million over 65 years).¹ The growth of the Internet has connected clients and sex workers with specific sites for people with disabilities to contact escorts.²

Prostitution has not had an impact on my health. I do not offer any unprotected services to my clients. I go to GU medicine for regular checks and the service is always very good. I request that they never contact my GP because I don’t want it on my medical records that I am sex worker as I believe it could negatively affect applications for life insurance.

² TLC (online) http://www.tlc-trust.org.uk/page51.html (Accessed, 04.10.15)
I don’t tell my friends and family about my double life because of the social stigma which is compounded by the constant threat of a change in the law which would make things much worse for me.

I come from a working class background and my parents would never have afforded the cost of a university education. I have completed a BA honours degree and a Master of Arts degree whilst working as a prostitute. I have applied to do a PhD and maybe one day I will work in different field but I cannot do so without qualifications and for now I am happy to continue working in the sex trade. I would never have chosen further education without funding through prostitution.

I have met many students over the years that work as escorts to pay for their studies. Prostitution is essential to female and male students from poorer backgrounds because of the steady withdrawal of government grants. Many students are terrified at the thought of graduating with debts the size of mortgages and every woman, and man should have the right to choose prostitution to further themselves in this world.

Prostitution has been a constant source of income and stability in my life – it’s been my career. Furthermore, I’ve watched ‘battered wives’ use prostitution to get to safety from abusive partners, to pay debt and live a fulfilling life. Prostitution is not doom and gloom, neither for me or the people I’ve met. It’s been fun, laughter, and opportunities to meet people you would never meet or just to brighten someone’s day. It offers the chance to visit places you would otherwise never have the opportunity to go to, and to experience a part of yourself you never knew existed.

Consenting adults should have the right to choose to work as prostitutes and to pay for sex equally. Please don’t take this away from our community but please support us and make our lives safer.