

English Collective of Prostitutes The "Girls' Union"



We are women who work or have worked in different areas of the sex industry – both on the streets and indoors. Since 1975, we have been campaigning for decriminalisation and safety of sex workers.

We fight against being treated like criminals. We've helped women and other sex workers win against charges of soliciting, closure orders, ASBOs, brothel-keeping & controlling – the last two most often used against women who are there to ensure safety. And we fight for housing, higher benefits and wages so that any of us can leave prostitution if and when we want.

We won the first ever rape prosecution taken by women in England and Wales after the authorities refused to prosecute, putting a serial rapist who targeted sex workers, behind bars. In 1982 we occupied a London Church for 12 days to protest police illegality and racism against street workers.

After the murder of five women in Ipswich in 2005 we launched the Safety First Coalition – it includes the Royal College of Nursing, Women Against Rape, residents of red-light areas, church people, anti-poverty campaigners, prison reformers, lawyers, sex worker and drugs rehabilitation projects.

We spearheaded the campaign against the Policing and Crime Act which gave police greater powers to arrest us for

soliciting, force us into "rehabilitation", raid our flats, get us evicted, and steal our earnings and property. It also criminalised clients.

Since it became law, raids and prosecutions of women working together have risen – to prevent arrest more women are having to risk their lives by working in isolation and in more dangerous areas. Attacks have increased and fewer sex workers are reporting rape and other violence for fear of being prosecuted. But our campaigning has had a huge impact and more people are supporting our demand for decriminalisation so we can work more safely.

We have also opposed "Welfare Reform" which cuts benefits, housing and other survival resources. Most sex workers are mothers trying to do our best for our children. Mothers' caring contribution should be supported not dismissed.

If you need our support or want to support our work please get in touch. Tell us what is happening where you are and what you are doing. There is plenty we can do together.

You can also help by donating: by cheque or through our website.

What we stand for:

- Decriminalization of sex workers – on the street and in premises – as in New Zealand. The laws land us in jail, divide us from families and friends, make us vulnerable to violence, isolate us – separate is never equal. Criminal records trap us in prostitution.
- *Protection from rape and other violence.*
- An end to police brutality, corruption, racism and other illegality. Prosecute police who break the law.
- *No zones, no licensing, no legalized brothels – they are ghettos and state pimping.*
- Self-determination. Sex workers must decide how we want to work – not the police, local authorities, pimps, madams/managers who profit from our work.
- *An end to racism and other discrimination within the sex industry.*
- Sex workers must have rights like other workers: the right to a pension and to join trade unions. Unions are for workers not for bosses.
- *No criminalization of clients. Consenting sex between adults is not a crime.*
- Free and accessible health services for all: no mandatory health checks or HIV tests.
- *Women's right to organize independently of men, including of male sex workers.*
- Economic alternatives: no one should be forced into sex by poverty. People who want to leave the sex industry (or any industry) should have access to resources.
- *Shelters and economic resources for children/young people so they don't have to beg or go into prostitution to survive. Children must be protected not criminalized.*
- No 'rehabilitation' schemes which punish us or force us into low-paid jobs.
- *An end to extortionate room rents and other profiteering.*
- The right to freedom of movement within and between countries. Stop using anti-trafficking laws to deport sex workers.