

# English Collective of Prostitutes The "Girls' Union"



We are a self-help group of sex workers working both on the streets and indoors.

Since 1975, we have been campaigning for decriminalisation and safety.

We fight against being treated like criminals. We've helped sex workers of all genders [win against charges](#) of soliciting, brothel-keeping & controlling – the last two often used against women who are working together for safety.

We campaign against austerity cuts and for housing and other survival resources so that any of us can leave prostitution if and when we want.

In 1982 we occupied a London church for 12 days to protest police illegality and racism against street workers.

In 1995 we won the first ever [private prosecution](#) for rape in England and Wales after the authorities refused to prosecute - putting a serial rapist behind bars.

In 2006, after the murder of five women in Ipswich, we launched the Safety First Coalition – it includes the Royal College of Nursing, Women Against Rape, church and prison reform groups, anti-poverty campaigners, lawyers, residents in red-light areas, sex worker and drugs projects.

Other campaigns include: preventing the [closure of flats](#) where sex workers were in relative safety, defending women [against unjust ASBOs](#), and pressing for implementation of the parliamentary Home Affairs Committee report which recommended the [decriminalisation](#) of sex workers on the street and in premises.

[Arrests, raids and prosecutions](#) of sex workers have risen. 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 to [decriminalise sex work for safety's sake](#).

Our ['Know Your Rights'](#) sheet and other information is available on our website. Please get in touch if you need advice or support

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## What we stand for:

- Decriminalisation 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 legalised 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 criminalisation 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 organise 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.