

them. They pose a danger to sex workers and to other women.

**Example:** Lorraine Morris was prosecuted after reporting an attack while her attackers were left free to attack again.

**Stop profiteering by the state - fines and confiscation orders are an incentive to policing consenting sex.** Proceeds of Crime (POCA) legislation is used to seize savings and assets (eg: a house, car, jewellery) from people convicted of prostitution offences. The burden of proof is reversed so the person has to prove the money did not come from criminal activity. Debts under POCA are the only ones which can't be cancelled by a prison term.

**Example:** A woman convicted of brothel-keeping for working as a maid for five months was charged £10,000, she had to use the money saved for the gravestone of her baby daughter who died while the case was going on.

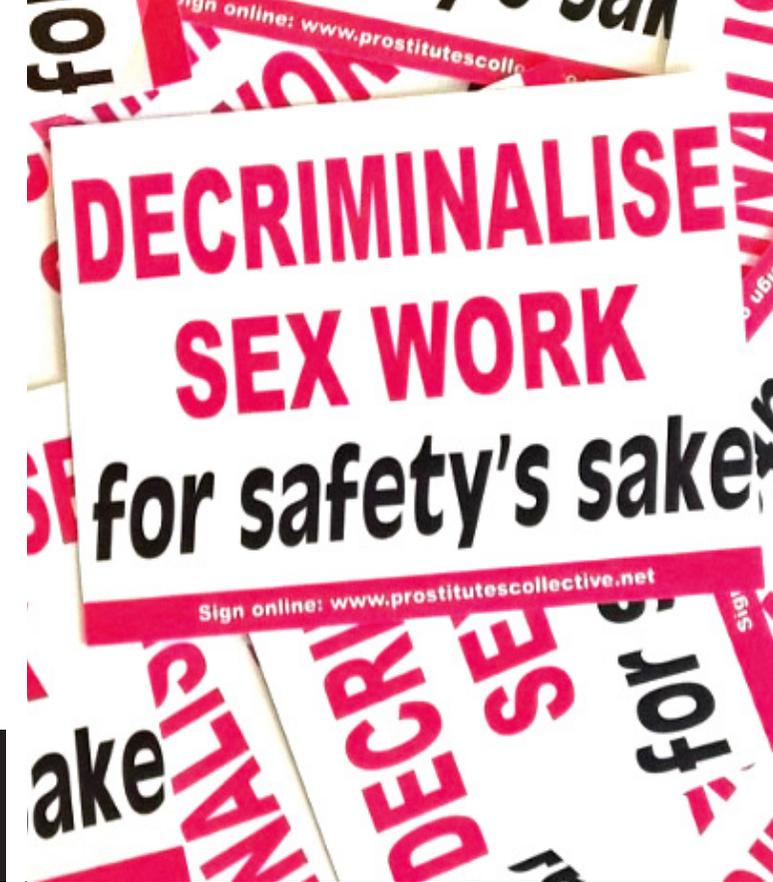
**Free up police time - rape, murder, trafficking and racist attacks urgently need tackling.** At least 60 sex workers were murdered between 1998 and 2008. While the vast majority of murder cases are solved, in one third of murders of sex workers the killer is never found. Women Against Rape highlights the appalling 6.7% conviction rate for reported rape and the shortage of officers committed to investigating rape. Yet a brothel raid can on average engage 25 police officers and hundreds of officers are employed for months at a time on street crackdowns.

**Example:** 250 police officers raided premises in central London last year at a cost of £20,000 (not including the cost of the prior 18-month investigation and 10 subsequent court cases).

*New Zealand successfully decriminalised prostitution in 2003. A government review has shown positive results: no rise in prostitution; women able to report violence without fear of arrest, attacks cleared up more quickly; sex workers more able to leave prostitution as convictions are cleared from their records; drug users treated as patients not criminals. We want a similar law here.*

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**WHY DECRIM?**

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**Increase safety - sex workers could work together in a supportive environment.** Police crackdowns break up safety networks. Street workers are forced into isolated areas and are at greater risk of attack. Brothel-keeping law makes it illegal for two or more sex workers to work together. Decriminalisation promotes safety because sex workers can collectively assert their rights to better working conditions. Claims that violence, particularly trafficking, can be reduced by criminalising clients are disproven by a 2014 Vancouver study which found that “criminalisation and policing strategies that target clients...profoundly impacted the safety strategies sex workers employed.”

**Example:** A sex worker was murdered in Ilford on the 28 October 2013 in the wake of a policing operation which resulted in over 200 prostitute cautions being issued to women in the area over the last year, and many arrests for loitering and soliciting. Police raids involving 200 officers in Soho in early December 2013, resulted in sex workers being dragged handcuffed in their underwear onto the streets in front of the media and evicted from the relative safety of their flats.

**Enhance health - sex workers could access services without discrimination.** Aggressive policing and the stigma attached with sex work makes it harder for sex workers to negotiate condom use with clients and access health services. Possession of condoms is still used as evidence of prostitution.

**Example:** The Royal College of Nursing has consistently voted by over 90% of its membership in favour of decriminalisation on the grounds of health and safety. Following decriminalisation in New Zealand, sex workers have demanded that employers provide better health and safety rights at work.

**Protect immigrant sex workers - vulnerable victims of raids and exploitation** Police raids are often justified in the name of saving victims of trafficking. But while immigrant sex workers face arrest and deportation, genuine victims rarely get help.

**Example:** Police raids on sex workers flats in Mayfair in 2012 saw immigrant women’s flats closed whilst other people just got a warning. Legal Action for Women’s complaint to the police documented how Romanian and Thai women suffered racist bullying and abuse and were threatened with deportation.

**Help end the hypocritical stigma attached to sex work - it brings violence and discrimination**

Criminal laws against sex work intrude into people’s sex lives and are a form of state control over women’s bodies. Consenting sex should not be a crime. Gay sex was decriminalised in England in the 1960’s, why not consenting sex where money is exchanged. Distinctions between sex work and other forms of labour are often moralistic. Virginia Woolf condemned the “brain prostitution” practised by academics and others. Many people feel that poverty is the immorality that makes prostitution the most viable choice for so many people.

**Example:** The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Prostitution and the Global Sex Trade which recently recommended the criminalisation of clients, chose as its secretariat the notoriously homophobic Christian charity, CARE. A recent opinion poll found that over half the population of the UK is opposed to the criminalisation of prostitution.

**Recognise sex workers’ contribution - most sex workers are mothers supporting families and communities.** Seventy percent of sex workers in the UK are mothers, mostly single mothers, supporting families in the face of rising unemployment, benefit cuts and sanctions, lowering wages, homelessness and debt.

**Example:** “My daughter has a disability and when I was ill social services paid someone £1000 a week to care for my child - the work I do for free. A percentage of what they pay a stranger would make life so much easier and I wouldn’t have to go into prostitution. But because I am a mother I’m not entitled and because I care I did go on the street”.

**End criminal records - they bar access to other jobs preventing sex workers from getting out.**

Prostitute cautions and convictions remain on someone’s record until they are 100 years old and show up with a standard CRB check.

**Example:** “As the mother of a disabled child, I know a lot about caring. But I couldn’t apply for a caring job because I had convictions for loitering and soliciting.” Under the 2004 New Zealand Prostitution Reform Act sex workers had their criminal records “wiped clean”

**Reduce police corruption - enable sex workers to report wrongdoings.**

Police wield enormous power over sex workers because of the threat of arrest and exposure. When police bully, steal, extort, and demand free sexual services from sex workers they often enjoy impunity for their crimes. Charges of loitering and soliciting, Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) and Closure Orders can be brought on the uncorroborated word of a single police officer.

**Example:** Sex workers in New Zealand report that since they have the backing of the law they can turn to the police and courts for help without fear of prosecution.

**Stop rapists - sex workers could report violence without fear of arrest.**

Fear of arrest, and for immigrant sex workers, fear of deportation, are the biggest obstacles to reporting rape and other violence. Violent men take advantage of the legal vulnerability of sex workers and deliberately target