

SEX IN THE SUBURBS

Home office minister, Fiona Mactaggart has proposed plans to legalise brothels.

At the moment the law allows one prostitute to offer sex from her home.

The controversial plan is to allow two women and a receptionist to legally work together in brothels.

This will then be coupled with a crackdown on those who pay for sex and more help for the 95% of prostitutes experiencing drug addictions

MacTaggart's aim is to protect prostitutes helping them off drugs and our streets.

Kerb Crawling

The naming and shaming of persistent kerb crawlers is also key to her proposal and Mactaggart war cry is:

“Prosecute, punish, publicise”

Mactaggart says her aim is to “lessen demand by ensuring that men who procure sex for money on foot, or in car are prosecuted; at present few are”

According to her plans, kerb crawlers should expect greater punishment for their crimes.

Anyone arrested, for the first time, will be forced into re-education programs at their own expense.

However, there will be no extra money for the police and consequently no increase in police presence.

Education

The new strategy also proposes to reduce the risk of underage prostitution by creating a guide for schools, helping them to spot the early signs of sexual exploitation.

Mactaggart also hopes that such young girls will get help from Barnardos and other children's societies.

For those already in the trade, The Ugly Mugs scheme is to be expanded. This aims to teach sex workers about dangerous and violent clients.

One 16 year old, who was lured into the game, and traded between pimps, recalled how she was forced to go along with the pimp's wishes. Her opinion on her chosen profession is: “When rape is your first sexual experience, you haven't got a lot to complain about later on.”

Prostitutes

These plans are already facing huge opposition, most notably from the prostitutes themselves. Cari Mitchell, of the English Collective of Prostitutes told the BBC that police crackdowns such as this help no one. She claims: “Clients are much more nervous and women don't have time to check them out properly before they get into the car”

So, is MacTaggart actually putting at risk the people she is attempting to help?



Do we want this seedy business on our doorstep?

In response to the plans to legalise these mini-brothels Mitchell's response was plain:

“Legalised brothels by themselves would protect neither safety nor civil rights.”

Mactaggart

When asked what she hoped to achieve by implementing the strategy, she replied “a reduction in all forms of sexual exploitation” and “fewer prostitutes raped and killed.”

In response to worries that this move towards legalising the sex trade may in fact encourage prostitution Mactaggart was emphatic: “Absolutely not. A main emphasis of the strategy is on educating and safeguarding young girls”

Concern

We carried out a questionnaire exploring the views of the community on this issue. The opposition to the idea was overwhelming.

90% of people questioned would not feel comfortable living near one of these “mini brothels”.

A big concern is that it would bring dodgy characters to residential areas. As one of the people we questioned quite rightly said “What would you say to small children when they asked?”

The Home office has admitted that these “mini brothels” may cause a nuisance in the areas where they operate.

However, Downing Street has been reported to claim that neighbours are able to take action against them *if* the prostitutes become nuisance neighbours!

Mactaggart assures us that these small scale operations will avoid disrupting the neighbours. She also claims that our house prices will not suffer as: “Labour's low interest rates have helped house price rates.”

Perhaps it should be suggested that these plans are trialled in Ms Mactaggart's home town?

Taxes

The issue of taxes was also raised. If these brothels were legalised and regulated, would prostitutes have to pay taxes?

Or would we be expected to fuel their “career choice?”

Safety

Another concern is that prostitution is heavily linked with crime and drugs. A worried citizen said “They must be policed and regulated for safety”

Is this at a cost to the law-abiding nation?

Mactaggart's intentions are good. Prostitution is one of the oldest professions we have. It is unlikely to go away.

The question is, do we really believe the best way to tackle this issue is bringing the prostitutes into our suburbs?

Or, is this going to not only decrease safety in our communities but also - by their own admission - do little to help the prostitutes themselves?

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Knocking Shop Next Door - Open All Hours!

The sex trade in your neighbourhood? No thank you, not for me and I am sure I am not alone.

If you look closely at the Home Office's plans they are threatening to put two prostitutes and a 'maid' next door. The aim being to provide a safer environment for the women and to keep kerb-crawlers at bay.

I am unsure that there are enough plus points in Mactaggart's plans and I do not think that by legalizing brothels on our doorsteps that the world will be a safer place.



Mactaggart: Perhaps in her back yard?

The other issue involved of course is the tax payer's money. Will the prostitutes pay up like the rest of us? Or are we going to be left to fund the brothels?

These mini brothels require the prostitutes to register with the police and therefore they lose their much needed anonymity. So, not only are the residents unhappy about these new arrangements - the prostitutes don't like it either.

No one wants to bring up their children next door to one of Mactaggart's glorified 'knocking shops.' How are we supposed to explain such deplorable deeds to our innocent offspring?

I am sure I am not alone when I say 'Not in my backyard!!'