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Company No: SC357649
Scottish Charity No: SC040464



SCSN hosts
Neighbourhood Watch Scotland SCIO
Scottish Charity No: SC036510

07 December 2020

Dear Ms Ash Denham MSP,

Thank you for the opportunity to complete the consultation on Equally Safe: A consultation on challenging men's demand for prostitution, working to reduce the harms associated with prostitution and helping women to exit.

The Scottish Community Safety Network is the national forum for officers who are responsible for the strategic development of community safety at both local and national level, in the private, public and voluntary sector. We are the strategic voice for community safety in Scotland and through working collaboratively with our members and partner agencies, we champion community safety and influence the shaping and development of national policy and local delivery. In 2019 we became an umbrella organisation for community safety, also hosting [Neighbourhood Watch Scotland](#) and [Home Safety Scotland](#). You can find out more about us at our website <https://www.safercommunitiesscotland.org>

As we do not work directly with women affected by these issues, or undertake research in this area, we have chosen not to complete the consultation in full but rather provide a letter of support with some notes. We hope this is sufficient for your purposes.

As an organisation, we wholeheartedly support the intention to reduce men's demand for prostitution and agree it will help to reduce the harms associated prostitution and women to exit sex work. It is also firmly in line with the Equally Safe ambitions and the general policy landscape and is an important component of tackling gender inequality and violence against women, to which we are committed.

Although we are not in a position to offer opinion on the most effective international policy approach to tackling the demand for prostitution, we recognise research has shown that criminalising the act of purchasing sex in other countries has resulted in a continued but decreased demand. While we are broadly supportive of such approaches, we strongly caution that this course of action alone would not combat the issue and must be considered alongside:

1. Considerable efforts to alleviate poverty (the main reason given as a barrier to exiting prostitution cited in the 2017 Scottish Government Research and Justice Analytical Services 2020 VAWG Report), and other factors (for example, previous trauma, housing issues, human trafficking and substance use) as well as investment

and development of support services for women, which would be critical in ensuring women can exit sex work and are not driven into working further underground and at further risk of harm.

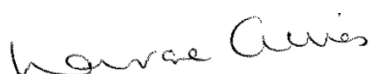
2. Continued prioritisation of prevention through the Equally Safe programme in tackling gender inequality and violence against women, particularly regarding education for young men around healthy relationships and gender stereotypes and especially in light of the current pandemic which has further entrenched existing gender inequality and highlighted an alarming increase in domestic violence.
3. Inclusion of the voices and lived experience of women who sell or exchange sex, in terms of mitigating and combating the potential ramifications of any new legislation, such as financial insecurity, stigma, fear of criminalisation and increased risk of harm.
4. Acknowledgment of the effect criminalising the act of purchasing sex will have with regards to drawing more people into the justice system and working with a broad range of partners to mitigate this with a co-ordinated policy response.

We think studying other countries' experiences of making these legislative changes offer important learning for Scotland if the Scottish Government embarks on the proposed changes.

In relation to education, we strongly support continued work to shift cultural attitudes of men in relation to the purchasing of sex including raising awareness around issues of consent, healthy relationships and recognising and challenging behaviours and attitudes which perpetuate violence and abuse against women.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this consultation and think this work makes an important contribution to making women and girls in Scotland equally safe. Please contact us through any of the above methods if we can offer any more information.

Yours sincerely,



Lorraine Gillies
Chief Officer