

# Questions

## About you

(Note: Information entered in this “About You” section may be published with your response (unless it is “not for publication”), except where indicated in **bold**.)

1. Are you responding as:

- an individual – in which case go to Q2A
- on behalf of an organisation? – in which case go to Q2B

2A. Which of the following best describes you? (If you are a professional or academic, but not in a subject relevant to the consultation, please choose “Member of the public”.)

- Politician (MSP/MP/Peer/MEP/Councillor)
- Professional with experience in a relevant subject
- Academic with expertise in a relevant subject
- Member of the public

Optional: You may wish to explain briefly what expertise or experience you have that is relevant to the subject-matter of the consultation:

2B. Please select the category which best describes your organisation:

- Public sector body (Scottish/UK Government or agency, local authority, NDPB)
- Commercial organisation (company, business)
- Representative organisation (trade union, professional association)
- Third sector (charitable, campaigning, social enterprise, voluntary, non-profit)
- Other (e.g., clubs, local groups, groups of individuals, etc.)

Optional: You may wish to explain briefly what the organisation does, its experience and expertise in the subject-matter of the consultation, and how the view expressed in the response was arrived at (e.g., whether it is the view of particular officeholders or has been approved by the membership as a whole).

The URC is a family of Christians who meet in local churches across England, Scotland and Wales. The URC has around 42,000 members in about 1,200 congregations with more than 600 ministers. More than 48,400 people worship

in our churches each week, and many more take part in the weekday activities of the churches. The National Synod of Scotland comprises 38 congregations throughout Scotland. The Synod Mission Committee is the way in which the Synod engages with issues of public and civic life. It is a standing committee of the Synod whose membership comprises of representatives from local churches and a number of Synod Office holders and staff. The committee is guided in its work by resolutions of Synod and the General Assembly and the Synod's aspirations which provide a strategic framework for its corporative life.

3. Please choose one of the following:

- I am content for this response to be published and attributed to me or my organisation
- I would like this response to be published anonymously
- I would like this response to be considered, but not published (“not for publication”)

If you have requested anonymity or asked for your response not to be published, please give a reason. **(Note: your reason will not be published.)**

4. Please provide your name or the name of your organisation. **(Note: The name will not be published if you have asked for the response to be anonymous or “not for publication”.)**

The United Reformed Church National Synod of Scotland Mission Committee

Please provide a way in which we can contact you if there are queries regarding your response. Email is preferred but you can also provide a postal address or phone number. **(Note: We will not publish these contact details.)**

### Data protection declaration

- I confirm that I have read and understood the [Privacy Notice](#) to this consultation which explains how my personal data will be used.

If you are under 12 and making a submission, we will need to contact you to ask your parent or guardian to confirm to us that they are happy for you to send us your views.

- Please ONLY place an x in the brackets if you are UNDER 12 years of age.

# YOUR VIEWS ON THE PROPOSAL

## 1. What is your view of introducing a new criminal offence of paying for sexual services? (This is the only mandatory question)

- Fully supportive
- Partially supportive
- Neutral (neither support nor oppose)
- Partially opposed
- Fully opposed
- Don't want to express a view

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

All practices which are promiscuous, exploitative or demeaning in any way are unacceptable forms of behaviour and contradict God's purpose for us all. We believe this applies as much in the area of sexuality as in other human relationships. We believe there is a consistent and recurrent theme in Christian Scripture that requires us to treat people equally, whether or not they are powerful. From our understanding of God's character and will, we believe that there is a Christian imperative to acknowledge the dignity of the powerless as much as the powerful. The exploitation of people as commodities, with its dehumanising effect, is contrary to our principles and completely out of place in any society that aspires to the values of justice and equality. With particular reference to this consultation, we believe that the purchase of sex is a clear example of what is exploitative and what commodifies and dehumanises people.

## 2. What is your view of repealing section 46 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982: the offence of soliciting for the purposes of prostitution in a public place?

- Fully supportive
- Partially supportive
- Neutral (neither support nor oppose)
- Partially opposed
- Fully opposed
- Unsure

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

We consider that the vast majority of people engaged in prostitution who put themselves at risk of being convicted of soliciting do so because of complex reasons which include lived experiences of poverty and addiction. In such circumstances they should be seen as

the victim not the perpetrator of crime. In addition we believe that many engaged in prostitution do not do so from their own free will and are subject to coercive behaviour from 'pimps'. We believe that it should be those who exert this control over those engaged in prostitution who should be prosecuted in addition to those who seek to purchase sex.

**3. What is your view of repealing previous convictions under section 46 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982: the offence of soliciting for the purposes of prostitution in a public place?**

- Fully supportive
- Partially supportive
- Neutral (neither support nor oppose)
- Partially opposed
- Fully opposed
- Unsure

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

We believe that individuals who have been convicted of soliciting should have their convictions repealed. It is difficult to exit prostitution and a criminal record associated with prostitution may make it harder for people to gain access to employment, education or training.

**4. What is your view of giving people in prostitution the legal right to support?**

- Fully supportive
- Partially supportive
- Neutral (neither support nor oppose)
- Partially opposed
- Fully opposed
- Unsure

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

We believe this is an essential element of enabling people to exit prostitution

**5. What is your view of including provisions for exiting services in the bill?**

- Fully supportive
- Partially supportive
- Neutral (neither support nor oppose)
- Partially opposed
- Fully opposed

Unsure

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

We believe this is essential to enable people to exit prostitution. A range of supports will be required which must be person centred and trauma informed. We would hope to see a full range of support available which will include financial support, housing, sexual health services, trauma recovery. the cost of not providing these services is too great. There also needs to be consideration of the personal safety of those exiting prostitution as they could be at risk from clients or controllers.

**6. How should the proposed offence be enforced. Are there any particular techniques which you think should be used or obstacles which might need to be overcome?**

The proposed offence should be enforced through a change of focus by Police Scotland onto the purchasers of sex rather than those who are selling it. The policing approach should be person centred and trauma informed. We think that monitoring of social media accounts and the dark web is significant and think there is a role for working in conjunction with technology companies.

**7. Do you believe that there are any new policing powers that would be necessary or beneficial for enforcing this offence?**

We wonder whether new powers in relation to social media, the web and access to social media accounts is necessary.

**8. Please indicate which of the following forms of support and/or services you think should be provided for people in prostitution and exiting prostitution (place an x into the brackets of as many options as you agree with):**

- Exiting support workers
- Drop in services
- Outreach visits to brothels, saunas and other similar premises
- Specialist medical consultations
- Access to drug and alcohol services
- Access to counselling and psychological treatment services
- Specialist housing schemes for women in crisis
- Support to access education, training or work
- Financial advice, debt support etc
- Other (please give details)

**Please explain the reasons for your response and provide examples of best practice.**

We would wish to affirm the importance of spiritual support for people in prostitution and exiting prostitution. We would point to the recovery church movement which aligns closely with the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous to support people with multiple forms of addiction. We would also highlight the work being carried out in Dundee by the Methodist Church in providing a listening service within the Dundee Women's Hubworking in partnership with Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre.

**9. Please indicate which of the following ways of raising awareness of the new offence you believe to be most effective (choose as many as you agree with):**

- Internet and social media advertising
- TV advertising
- Print media advertising
- Billboards in public places and transport
- Leaflets to households
- Materials to support and exiting services for people involved in prostitution
- Materials targeted at areas where prostitution is known to occur
- Materials to health and mental health services
- Materials to further education sector
- Inclusion in secondary education (Relationship, Sexual Health, Parenting classes)
- Other (please give details)

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

We appreciate budgets are tight and so feel that targeted awareness raising within the categories listed above would be a better use of resources than a blanket approach.

**10. Do you think legislation is required, or are there are other ways in which the Bill's aims could be achieved more effectively?**

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

## **Resource implications**

**11. Taking into account all those likely to be affected (including public sector bodies, businesses and individuals etc), is the proposed Bill**

**likely to lead to:**

- a significant increase in costs
- some increase in costs
- no overall change in costs
- some reduction in costs
- a significant reduction in costs
- do not wish to express a view

**Please indicate where you would expect the impact identified to fall (including public sector bodies, businesses and individuals etc). You may also wish to suggest ways in which the aims of the Bill could be delivered more cost-effectively.**

If the proper support mechanisms to enable people to exit prostitution are put in place we would expect there to be an increase in costs in the short term but that in the longer term there would be a reduction in costs to the health service and criminal justice service. There could be the potential of increased economic activity by those who exit prostitution which may lead to a financial contribution to society through the tax system.

## **Equalities**

**12: Any new law can have an impact on different individuals and groups in society, for example as a result of their age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. What impact could this proposal have on particular people if it became law?**

**Please explain the reasons for your answer and if there are any ways you think the proposal could avoid negative impacts on particular people.**

We believe this law would increase equality and dignity for all as it would see individuals as people in their own right and not commodities which could be sold. It would remove people from criminal activity and from the sphere of influence of those engaged in criminal activity.

## **Sustainability**

**13. Any new law can impact on work to protect and enhance the environment, achieve a sustainable economy, and create a strong, healthy, and just society for future generations. Do you think the proposal could impact in any of these areas?**

We believe that if people are properly supported to move out of

prostitution they have a more sustainable future through possibilities of education and employment. We believe that society as a whole will become more just and healthy if this proposed legislation becomes law.

We have a concern that this legislation may drive prostitution underground so believe that the change proposed in this legislation that it is the purchaser of sex who is prosecuted rather than the seller is particularly important as a mechanism for discouraging the purchase of sex.