

**Motion Name:** Supporting Student Sex Workers

**Proposer:** Saranya Thambirajah (Equality, Liberation & Access Officer)

**Second:** Izzy Russel (Student Living Officer)

**Background:**

1. Sex work refers to escorting, erotic dancing, stripping, pole dancing, pornography, webcams, adult modelling, sugar arrangements, phone sex, and selling sex (on and off the street).
2. In March 2015 the Student Sex Work Project found that 4.8% of just under 7000 student respondents had been involved in sex work in some capacity. Around one in five respondents said that they had at some point considered working in the sex industry. One of the more commonly cited reasons for partaking in sex work was the issue of living expenses, for instance rent – with rent prices in Bristol being particularly high.
3. The issue of sex work intersects with multiple liberation identity issues. For example, due to the poor access to trans-affirming medical care, many trans people will have to pay for surgeries and hormones. A report by (Hester, et al., 2019) et al found that this alongside with workplace exclusion led to trans individuals being overrepresented in sex work. Other liberation specific issues include the slashing of disability benefits.
4. The most positive aspects of working in the industry were ‘good money’ and ‘flexible working hours’, with sexual pleasure third at 46.4%.
5. The most negative aspect of working in the industry was identified as secrecy, with unpredictable earnings and unpleasant customers coming second and third. Fear of violence came fourth with 36% saying it was the most negative aspect.
6. The Student Sex Worker Project found that universities do not include sex work in any of their policies and staff are unaware and unsure about available support and what aspects of sex work are legal and illegal. The majority of university staff would like guidance available online.
7. The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the rise of premium clip sites such as Onlyfans and Manyvids. These platforms continue growing and developing, having a huge impact on the sex work industry and its accessibility.
8. Selling sex is not illegal in the UK, but it is criminalised. Sex work is the exchange of money for labour, like any other job. It is different because it is currently criminalised and stigmatised
9. Organisations such as Decrim Now and the English Collective of Prostitutes are calling for the decriminalisation of sex work. Until then, sex workers may be vulnerable to violence and may be unable to talk about their situation out of fear of criminal repercussions.
10. Online sex workers have been subjected to being the victims of both harassment and revenge porn.

**Purpose:**

1. To ensure that students who are partaking in sex work can access the appropriate support should they need to.
2. To challenge the stigma attached to sex work.
3. To work towards safer material conditions and further protections for student sex workers.

**Actions:**

1. Bristol SU will lobby the University to take an explicit non-exclusionary stance towards students who work in the sex industry, with the University protecting student sex workers from falling victim to stigmatisation and discrimination in much the same way as they are supposed to protect members of liberation groups
2. In line with the NUS recommendations, Bristol SU will clearly signpost online resources such as support services, (especially those regarding sexual/mental health), legal information and staying safe (including staying safe from online harassment).
3. Bristol SU will lobby the University to provide training to wellbeing advisors and other relevant staff on dealing with student disclosures of working in the sex industry. The student Sex worker project recommends that the training should at least cover; the diversity of occupations within the sex industry, the legalities of sex work, stereotyping and stigma, the needs of student sex workers, Antidiscrimination protections and available student support, appropriate protocols in case a student experienced sexual violence and assault. The training should ideally also cover the intersection with liberation specific issues.
4. Bristol SU will seek to identify or facilitate ways for student sex workers at Bristol to engage in peer support.
5. Bristol SU will explore ways to research or gain insight about the experiences of student sex workers at the University to identify how they can be better supported.
6. Bristol SU will work with NUS and its' liberation campaigns to lobby the government and push for the decriminalisation of sex work.