

Sex for sale

Discussion

1. Match the words on the left with the definitions on the right:

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| 1. a prostitute | a. someone paid to go out socially with other people |
| 2. a pimp | b. a house where men pay to have sex with prostitutes |
| 3. a red-light district | c. a person who agrees to have sex in return for money |
| 4. a brothel | d. part of a town where there are many prostitutes |
| 5. a kerb-crawler | e. a man who controls prostitutes and lives off their earnings |
| 6. an escort | f. a man who drives slowly along a road looking for a sexual liaison |

Is prostitution a problem where you live? Is there a red-light district in your town?

Read the information in the box and discuss the questions in pairs or small groups:

At present, in Britain, a woman who sells sex on her own in a single property is not breaking the law. However, it is illegal for a prostitute to work, or to ask for work, in a public place. If two or more women sell sex in a single property, it is technically a brothel, which is illegal.

- What is the law in your country?
- Do you think it is too strict, too lenient or about right? Why?
- How would you feel if you found out that a close friend or a member of your family was working as a prostitute?

Should we legalise brothels?

Read the two articles to see if these statements are correct:

1. The police officer would like to have stricter laws on prostitution.
2. The local councillor would like to relax the laws on prostitution.

"It's ridiculous to try and eliminate a practice which has been going on since the beginning of civilisation. There always has been, and always will be, a demand for prostitutes. You can't stop it by making it illegal. The problems we have are because prostitution is not regulated. The women involved are at risk of both physical and emotional abuse from the pimps who 'employ' them. Their working conditions are often poor and there are considerable health risks. Legalising it would give women more control over their lives – their health, their safety and their finances. From the police point of view, it would also mean less obvious prostitution on the streets and a reduction in related crime such as drug dealing. The current laws are completely impractical. It's time they were changed."

Helen Maddocks, senior police officer

"This is not a practical issue at all, it's a moral one and I'm dead against any change in the law. In fact, I think the laws should be tougher. I agree we should be concerned about the health and safety of the women, but the plain fact is, sex for money is wrong. Sex should not be for sale. The laws we have are not just for stating what is allowed and not allowed, but also to show us what is good and what is bad. Legalising prostitution creates the impression that it is a good thing. It's a sign of great moral weakness in our society. Prostitution may be the 'oldest profession', but that doesn't mean it should be encouraged to continue."

Janet Boyce, local government councillor

Spend two minutes thinking about these questions, then discuss them with a partner:

1. Which argument is closer to your own opinion? Underline the statements you agree with.
2. Are you surprised at the police officer's attitude? Why? / Why not?
3. Do you agree that prostitution is a 'sign of great moral weakness in our society'?