



Equally safe **Equally seen** **Equally supported**

A manifesto for a fair future
for women in the 'sex industry'

Scottish Parliament
Elections 2026



**WOMEN'S
SUPPORT
PROJECT**

The 2026 Scottish General Election is a unique opportunity for political parties to commit to improving the lives of women involved in selling or exchanging sex, a group that remains one of the most marginalised sectors in our society.

We are calling for bold and concrete actions to address the challenges faced by women with this experience. Addressing these issues is an urgent matter. We are not only seeing current economic and social inequalities push more women into selling sex, but misogynistic and violent attitudes toward women are on the rise – attitudes which are also fuelled and normalised by the sex industry.

We are asking political parties to commit to:

1. End the criminalisation of women who sell sex and clear any prostitution-related criminal records

Women in Scotland should not be criminalised for selling sex, and those who have been criminalised must have their previous convictions quashed so they can access equal opportunities. We are asking to:

- Repeal Section 46 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 and review Section 11 of the Criminal Law (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 1995 so that women are no longer criminalised for selling sex in public places or for selling sex with another woman at the same time.
- Support the quashing of previous prostitution-related criminal convictions from women's criminal records.

2. Use existing prostitution legislation to protect women and tackle exploiters

Scotland must update and properly implement legislation that targets those who exploit women through the purchase of sex. We are asking to:

- Update the Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Act 2007 to also make it a criminal offense for men to buy sex in indoor settings, including lap dancing clubs, massage parlours and saunas.
- Expand Section 7 of the Criminal Law (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 1995 to also criminalise managers, pimps and third parties who profit from the procurement of women for prostitution.

3. Provide dedicated exiting services for women who decide to leave the sex industry

Most women involved in selling sex will leave the sex industry at some point. Yet, Scotland does not currently offer dedicated exiting support services for women involved in selling sex. A supported process has more chances of helping women sustain their exiting. We are asking to:

- Invest on exiting services specifically funded to provide specialist and innovative support for women who are considering or have left the sex industry. This support should be open to women in all settings of the sex industry (street prostitution, saunas, brothels, online, etc) and tailored to their specific needs.

4. Invest in robust support for women involved in selling sex

There needs to be serious investment in comprehensive support services to be made available across Scotland for women involved in selling or exchanging sex. Available support is patchy, inconsistent and underfunded. We are asking for:

- Robust, consistent and sustainable funding for services specialising in supporting those affected by commercial sexual exploitation across Scotland.
- Investment in prevention work including public campaigns to increase understanding of commercial sexual exploitation and change men's attitudes around the sex industry.
- Dedicated investment to make sure CSE-related support services are available to women across Scotland.
- Inclusion of CSE within the Scottish Government's Equalities portfolio of work, alongside all other forms of GBV and in line with Equally Safe.

Our election asks explained...



1. End the criminalisation of women who sell sex and clear any prostitution-related criminal records

Currently women can be criminalised for selling sex in public spaces (soliciting) or for selling sex with two or more women at the same time (brothel-keeping). This is an outdated approach that contradicts the Scottish Government's current position that prostitution is a form of commercial sexual exploitation and therefore a form of violence against women ([Equally Safe strategy](#)).

Despite the fact that the [Lord Advocate introduced guidance in 2012](#) instructing enforcement of criminal justice to focus on criminalising sex buyers rather than women selling sex, this guidance is not applied consistently across Scotland. Women remain at risk of being criminalised for engaging in selling sex, without any consideration for the multiple disadvantages and circumstances surrounding their involvement.

Criminalisation adds to the stigma and discrimination women who sell sex already experience. It creates a criminal record that they cannot remove from their history and which will impact future opportunities. [Women have shared with us](#) the long-standing impact that being criminalised for prostitution-related offenses can have on their lives: not only can it trap women in a cycle of discrimination and exclusion, but it may inadvertently 'out' them to potential employers or education settings that require disclosing criminal convictions.

"It is essential that women are no longer criminalised for what amounts to exploitation, abuse and violence. It is essential to also stop women from the continual revolving door of the criminal justice system which results in overwhelming barriers to exiting and rebuilding their lives."

– woman with lived experience of selling sex

WHAT WE ARE ASKING

- Repeal Section 46 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 and review Section 11 of the Criminal Law (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 1995 so that women are no longer criminalised for selling sex in public places or for selling sex with another woman at the same time.
- Support the quashing of previous prostitution-related criminal convictions from women's criminal records.

2. Use existing prostitution legislation to protect women and tackle exploiters

Scotland currently has legislation targeting those who exploit women through the purchase of sex in certain settings. However, this legislation is incomplete and not routinely implemented.

On the one hand, the Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Act 2007 targets those who solicit women for sex in public places. Yet, a very small number of men have been convicted of these crimes since the law was first introduced (less than 50 crimes have been recorded annually in the past four years, according to recent crime stats). We are asking for proper implementation of this law and for it to be extended to cover more than just public places – men who buy sex in indoor settings such as saunas, brothels, lap dancing clubs and massage parlours must be accountable too and should be included in this law.

"Go after the ones, mainly men, that treating us women like scraps."

– woman with lived experience of selling sex

On the other hand, the Criminal Law (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 1995 criminalises the procurement of women for the purposes of prostitution. This is a law that still needs to see robust implementation, as until now there has only been 1 criminal conviction related to procurement. Moreover, we are calling for this law to be reviewed and expanded to also criminalise managers, pimps and those who profit from exploitation, so they too can be held accountable.

WHAT WE ARE ASKING

- Update the Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Act 2007 to make it a criminal offense for men to buy sex in indoor settings, including but not limited to lap dancing clubs, massage parlours and saunas.
- Expand Section 7 of the Criminal Law (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 1995 to also criminalise managers, pimps and third parties who profit from the procurement of women into the sex industry.

3. Provide dedicated exiting services for women who decide to leave the sex industry

Most women involved in selling sex will leave the sex industry at some point. Yet, currently there are no dedicated exiting support services available to women in Scotland. It's key to mention that not all women have control over their exiting process – some are forced to stop due to personal circumstances or due to pimps, controllers and other people in their lives.

Research has pointed out that leaving the sex industry is often not a clear-cut process. A recent study in Ireland revealed that many women struggle with loneliness, feeling unsafe, trauma and being unable to build a 'normal life'. In Scotland a recent study found that, as part of the process of exiting the sex industry and healing from their experiences, women need to be able to reconfigure their sense of identity. In both cases, it was highlighted that a supported process has more chances of helping women sustain their exiting and move on from their experiences.

"[We need] support for women that want to exit the industry! ... there needs to be specialised support available."

– woman with lived experience of selling sex

WHAT WE ARE ASKING

- Invest on exiting services specifically funded to provide specialist and innovative support for women who are considering or have left the sex industry. This support should be open to women in all settings of the sex industry (street prostitution, saunas, brothels, online, etc) and tailored to their specific needs.

4. Invest in robust support for women involved in selling sex

We are calling for serious investment to ensure women involved in selling sex are properly supported and their human rights are respected as equals within our society. Comprehensive support should be available throughout Scotland. However, research commissioned by the Scottish Government in 2022 found that there are “substantial gaps in provision of in-person support for people who sell or exchange sex.” And where there is remote support available, it is “only for those who [meet] strict eligibility criteria.” There are 16 specialist services available in the country, some of them staffed by only one or two individuals and in some cases on a part-time basis.

If we look at the numbers, it is clear investment in services supporting women involved in selling sex has been minimal compared to other forms of gender-based violence (GBV), comprising just 3.2% (£700K) out of the £21.6 million budget available to tackle GBV through the Delivering Equally Safe fund. This low investment in specialist commercial sexual exploitation support reflects the marginalisation that women with this experience often face within society, where their needs are regularly side-lined or dismissed. At the same time, we are seeing an increased risk of women in Scotland becoming involved in selling sex due to a combination of factors like the cost of living crisis, men targeting women who are struggling to afford basics, and increased access to the sex industry through online platforms like OnlyFans and other adult sites.

"Make sure we can get the support we need."

– woman with lived experience of selling sex

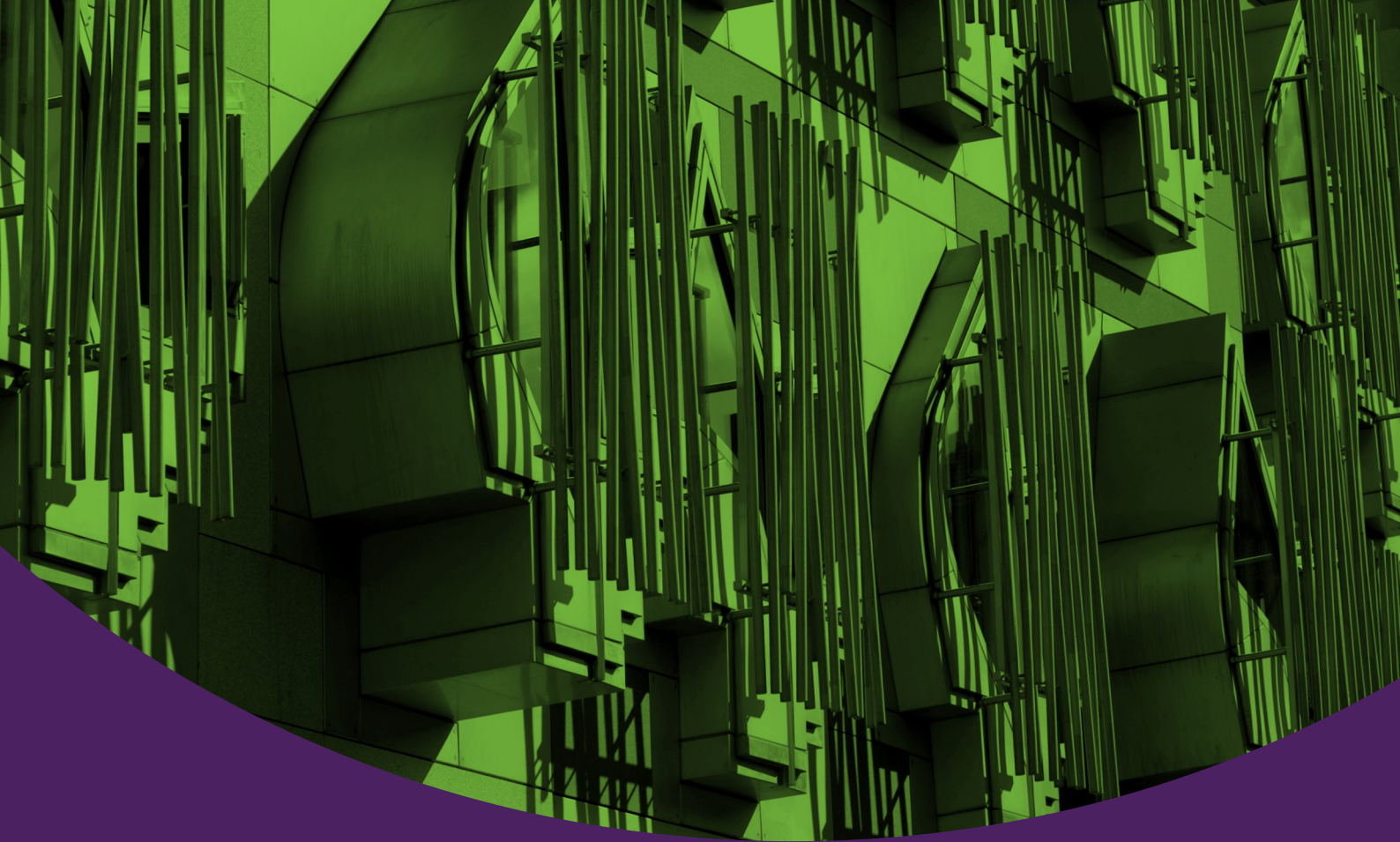
"Look at what brings women into prostitution as part of the solution."

– frontline worker supporting women who sell sex

Finally, in line with the focus on primary prevention, resources also need to be allocated for preventative work to eradicate men's demand for prostitution and ensure women do not feel that selling sex is their only alternative. As part of this, the Scottish Government must include CSE within its Equalities portfolio of work, alongside all other forms of GBV. It's current placement within Justice is misaligned and has created barriers to advancing the human rights of women with experience of the sex industry.

WHAT WE ARE ASKING

- Robust, consistent and sustainable funding for services specialising in supporting those affected by commercial sexual exploitation in Scotland.
- Investment in prevention work including public campaigns to increase awareness of commercial sexual exploitation and change men's attitudes around the sex industry.
- Dedicated investment to make sure CSE-related support services are available to women in all parts of Scotland.
- Inclusion of CSE within the Scottish Government's Equalities portfolio of work, alongside all other forms of GBV and in line with Equally Safe.



If you would like to discuss this
manifesto, please get in touch with us:
enquiries@womenssupportproject.org.uk



**WOMEN'S
SUPPORT
PROJECT**

womenssupportproject.org.uk

Women's Support Project, Room 427, 4th Floor, Baltic Chambers, 50 Wellington Street, Glasgow G2 6HJ

The Women's Support Project is a limited company, registered in Scotland, registration number SC323918 and a Scottish charity SC021846