

Many people only work a few hours a week: try to use some of the rest of the time expanding your options, e.g. education or finding other sources of income.

Exiting sex work

Once you've started sex work, some people find it hard to leave, even if they're desperate to do so. There are not many jobs where you can earn as much per hour, or have as much free time, as a successful escort.

There is also the question of explaining any gaps in your CV. If you're also doing a course or another part-time job, this is easier, but you may still get questions. If you decide to invent a cover story (like you were looking after someone, or researching a book, or travelling, or...) keep it simple and consistent.

Burnout

Some people don't want to exit completely, but are fed up with the work, or certain aspects of it. Many say that having time out, finding a way to express your feelings, analysing your options, and concentrating on what you enjoy helps, even if that means making less money.

Agendas

It's a sign of how sex work is seen by society that it is much easier to get funding for projects that only seek to help workers stop working than for projects - like SW5 - which works with people who want to stay in as well.

This does mean that there are several 'exiting' projects around the country. Some come with particular agendas (e.g. a religious one) and it's a good idea to know if that's the case with any you're considering using.

SW5 is part of the Terrence Higgins Trust.

Terrence Higgins Trust is a registered charity, number 288527.

A company limited by guarantee, registered in England.

Registered Company number 1778149.

The legal information in this leaflet may apply to England & Wales only - contact SCOT-PEP for advice about Scotland. It is believed to be correct but it is not legal Advice. For that, you need to speak to a solicitor or some other qualified person.

Copyright © SW5 2004-07. Last updated: 17th April 2007

SW5, 11 Eardley Crescent, London SW5 9JS ☎ 020 7370 0406

This guide has been adapted from our website:
www.sw5.info - look for the sex worker section

Other useful contact addresses

St Mary's Hospital in Paddington, West London, has two specialist health clinics, one each for male and female sex workers:

Working Men Project **Praed Street Project**

☎ 020 7886 1524

☎ 020 7886 1549

www.wmplondon.org.uk

Jefferiss Wing, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street,
Paddington, London W2

Diamond Clinic

A service for male and transgender sex workers, it is part of the West London Centre for Sexual Health.

Charing Cross Hospital, Fulham Palace Road,
London W6 8RF ☎ 020 8846 1579 (ask for the health advisors)
www.chelwest.nhs.uk/services/hivgum/west_london_center.htm

CLASH (Central London Action on Street Health)

Part of the HIV prevention team of Camden & Islington Health Promotion, CLASH works with sex workers in Central London as well as on the gay scene.

11 Warwick Street, London W1B 5NA ☎ 020 7734 1794

IUSW - International Union of Sex Workers

A group of sex work activists who hold monthly open meetings and other campaigning & networking events.

www.iusw.org

GMB

A trades union that offers protection and services to people from all areas of the sex industry through the affiliated IUSW branch

www.gmb.org.uk

Barnardos Young Mens Project

Works with young men under 18 selling sex

3 Morocco Street, London SE1 3HB ☎ 020 7378 8797

SCOT-PEP

The leading sex work charity in Scotland.

70 Newhaven Rd, Edinburgh EH6 5QG ☎ 0131 622 7550

www.scot-pep.org.uk

Escort safety website

www.saafe.info



working with male & transgender sex workers

Is Sex Work For You?

- a brief guide -

Escorts and the law

Escorts and money

Maids and the law

Working alone

Working for an agency

Working in a brothel

Is sex work for you?

Performing in porn

April 2007

Prostitution and most other forms of sex work are legal in the UK. But that doesn't mean everyone is suited for it. For some, the realisation that it's not for them comes before they've started; for others, it's after.

Things to think about

Over 18?

If you're not, it's illegal to pay you for sex and any employer will be taking a *huge* risk. It's not illegal for you to sell sex, but if the police find out, you may end up involved with social services or find your family and friends are investigated for 'controlling' you.

Why are you considering it?

- **'Easy' money** - while the hourly rate can sound good, how many hours will you be working? Not everyone makes hundreds a week, never mind thousands. If you need money for a specific reason (like the costs of college, or an operation or a drug habit, or buying whatever's in fashion to 'fit in') work out how much you need
- **Because you can** - perhaps someone's offered or given you money for sex and you'd like more people to do so. Or perhaps you think you're already giving it away - so why not charge? Or maybe you're feeling lonely or isolated and think having people pay you will give you a boost. But society in general and clients in particular have very different expectations when there's money involved. While being paid can add a thrill, it can become tempting to do things you'd rather not
- **Transformation** - some sex workers have much more glamorous work personas than their real life ones, but for others it's the other way round
- **Survival** - somewhere to stay/something to eat
- **Have no choice** - if someone is forcing you, contact the police or a sex work project for help and advice. Projects can help with more options

Whatever the reason, the more desperate you are, the more uncomfortable you can feel about the work and the greater chance you will be exploited.

Identity

'Prostitute' and other words for sex workers have lots

of meanings for different people. How would you feel about you and others applying them to you?

As part of separating work and private life, most sex workers chose to have a new 'working name', and where appropriate, different work clothes, work music and work decor.

Don't forget that you're more than 'just' a sex worker., and keep an identity based on your background, interests and experience too.

Stereotypes

'Sex work' covers a wide variety of things: prostitution - having 'sex' with clients; pro-BDSM - having sado-masochistic scenes with clients; dancing; stripping; porn; phone sex - 'talking dirty' with clients etc.

For some of these, it doesn't matter what you look like, or how old you are. For others, it does. While there are escorts who successfully challenge conventional views of attractiveness, they can still find it hard to get clients.

Even with prostitution, services vary. Some kiss, or have oral sex without a condom, for example, while others don't. A few women and more men don't get fucked by clients, but most women and many men do.

Sex work is not always for money - some people have sex in exchange for somewhere to stay or for clothes, drugs or other stuff from a 'sugar daddy'.

Somewhere to work

Some sex work can be done at home, over the phone or on the internet. Some people escort from home, while others use the street (despite it being illegal, leading to hassles from the police and other risks) or meet clients in bars/clubs/cruising spaces, or rent somewhere just for work, or visit the client instead.

If you work for someone, they may want you to work at a particular place (e.g. a club, film set or brothel).

Clients come in all shapes and sizes...

... and you might not normally choose to be sexual with them. For example, the large majority of clients for sex workers are male. If you're a straight man or a lesbian, you may have problems finding female clients and end up having sex with men anyway.

You shouldn't have to have sex with anyone you don't want to, but bad employers' rules or desperation

can mean you end up doing so. If you've agreed to do something you regretted later, think about how to avoid doing it again.

Clients want a variety of things - if you're unsure what you're being asked to do (or the risks of doing it), make sure you find out before saying 'yes'.

Not all clients are nice

There are people who think it's ok to attack sex workers. Fortunately, the police don't agree. But you can see where the attitude comes from when you read a story that starts "A woman and two prostitutes were murdered..." as if they weren't fully human too.

Just as you can help protect yourself against sexually transmitted diseases by having safer sex, you can help avoid other trouble by following safer working tips, but neither can give a 100% guarantee.

If you think you're in a dangerous situation, get out immediately. Trust your gut instincts.

Even when you don't have any physical contact with abusive clients, eg phone work, they can still harm you. Some phonelines expect you to keep the client on the line no matter how disturbing you find their fantasies.

Other relationships

Partners may or may not be supportive of the work. It can bring up jealousies and resentments, as well as boundary issues.

Many sex workers find it important to have someone supportive they can talk to about the work with, be it someone at a specialist project or a friend or partner.

Thinking about the future

Few people expect to be doing sex work until they collect their (private) pension. So think very carefully before allowing any pictures of you to be published, whether it's your face on an ad, or you performing in porn. Once they're out there, you lose all control over who sees them... including future employers/partners.

There's always a temptation for spending to match (or exceed!) income. Try to resist this, and save money for tax bills, periods of illness or exiting the work. Some people put one fee in every few aside, while others use sex work to pay for an operation or build up a deposit for a house or to start another business.