

Bristol: a fair and equal city that does not tolerate violence against women and girls

This document provides a detailed overview of the policy and legal framework and the evidence base in support of Bristol City Council Licensing Committee's draft policy that no SEV licenses should ordinarily be granted within any of the localities within the local authority area.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Safe and Equal Bristol is an umbrella group of Bristol-based stakeholders and professionals in the field of gender equality and sexual & gender-based violence (SGBV).
- Safe and Equal Bristol recommends a nil cap sexual entertainment venue policy across all localities in Bristol.
- Specialists in SGBV in Bristol and specialist women's equality groups have given their emphatic support to this policy recommendation as have many other stakeholders.
- It is recognised by experts that SEVs are sexist, promote harmful attitudes to women that are the bedrock for SGBV, and obstruct progress towards equality between women and men. Their equality impact, which is negative, cannot be mitigated.
- Bristol's own strategy against gendered violence contains an objective to reduce opportunities for negative perceptions of women which are perpetuated and promoted by SEVs.
- A number of authorities have now successfully taken a 'nil cap' approach, as legislation was designed to permit them to do.
- There is no evidence that regulation of SEVs contributes to the safety of performers, but there is evidence that performers are unsafe even in highly regulated environments.
- There is no evidence that a nil cap or licence refusal results in SEV activity going 'underground' or that unregulated activity would increase in response. On the contrary, research suggests that supply, not demand, dictates whether customers engage in SEV activity. SEVs invest in marketing sexual entertainment to drive up demand and they cross-promote other related activities. It follows that sexual entertainment activity and the harms associated with it will decrease when the city brings in a nil cap. Unregulated activity is not a reaction to SEV policy but a loophole in the legislation.
- This report provides significant evidence that it would be perverse to have due regard to the Council's positive duties under the Equality Act 2010 yet decide that anything more than a zero-cap SEV licence policy would be suitable.

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WHY BRISTOL SHOULD ADOPT A NIL CAP POLICY

We strongly support the adoption of the nil cap policy for Bristol which will assist the city in meeting many of its obligations and objectives in law and in policy, for the promotion of equality and against violence and discrimination.

Safe and Equal Bristol is a group of Bristolian gender equality professionals and campaigners, violence against women prevention experts and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

BACKGROUND: THE POLICY

The decision was taken in 2011 by the administration's then Licensing Committee to introduce a 'cap' of three SEVs under the new powers to regulate such venues in the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 introduced by s27 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009.

In the intervening ten years modern evidence-led policy approaches have emphasised the importance of addressing the attitudes and harmful social norms that underpin both gender inequality and men's violence against women and girls. The epidemic of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) has gained increasing prominence as a social crisis and political concern. Equality legislation, specifically the Equality Act 2010 and its duties, are key to city policy. Public Health has become the responsibility of the Local Authority. The city of Bristol has affirmed its commitment to the core value of Equality.

In 2016 the City Council confirmed its plans to review the 2011 SEV policy. A working group of Committee members and officers was drawn up with a timeline of reviewing and revising the policy by January 2017, and completing a consultation on the final policy by summer 2017. Only two members of that original working group remain Councillors, and only one now remains on the Licensing Committee. After a series of delays a consultation on the policy was undertaken in 2018. In February 2019 a decision was taken to put out a 'status quo' draft policy, which was challenged, as was the Equality Impact Assessment. After a series of delays a consultation summary was drafted in October 2020. On International Women's Day (8th March) 2021 the Committee met to consider the draft policy and agreed to put out a draft nil cap policy for review. After a series of delays and another local election the proposed nil cap policy was put out for consultation in October 2021. After this consultation the Committee will meet to ratify or reject the nil cap proposal.

HARM

This report provides detailed research and policy analysis to support the proposed nil cap position and begins by focussing on harm.

WHO DOES NOT CONSIDER SEVS TO BE HARMFUL?

1.
 - SEV owners
 - Sex industry lobby groups and activists
 - Some current performers in SEVs
 - Some clients of SEVs
 - Some members of the public, including some respondents to consultations who were told (untruthfully) that "A zero cap means deregulation"

WHO HAS MADE REPRESENTATIONS THAT THEY CONSIDER SEVS TO BE HARMFUL?

2.

- **Safe and Equal Bristol** – authors of this report
- **University of Bristol Centre for Gender and Violence Research** - internationally renowned centre for the analysis of violence against women and girls
- **University of Bristol Professor of Primary Care** and Chair of the 2016 NICE clinical guidelines for Domestic Violence and Abuse (UK) and the 2013 WHO Intimate Partner Violence guidelines (global)
- **Bristol Women's Voice** – the representative voice for women in Bristol aiming to make women's equality in Bristol a reality, with over 2000 individual members and numerous organisational members
- **Bristol Women's Commission** – the high level strategic Mayoral Commission tasked with ensuring Bristol meets its commitment to gender equality as a signatory to the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, to which Bristol is a signatory
- **Bristol Women's Forum**, the predecessor organisation to Bristol Women's Voice
- **Bristol Feminist Network**
- **Fawcett Society Bristol Local Group** which advised local authorities on gender equality from 2000-2021 and whose members have now joined forces with Bristol Women's Voice
- The national **Women's Equality Party** – who adopted a motion in 2018 calling on all Local Authorities to adopt a nil cap on SEVs
- **A number of the city's agencies for tackling sexual and gender based violence** including those working with the more than 80% of women in the city who never report sexual assault and gendered violence to the police, as well as working with those who do
- **A number of the city's political and criminal justice stakeholders**
- **Expert witnesses** in equality law and policy, and prevention of cultures of male violence, at Parliamentary select committee evidence sessions in 2018 and in 2021
- **St Stephens Church**, the parish in which Bristol's SEVs are located
- **Citizens of Sheffield** who were successful in two separate Judicial Review applications against Sheffield City Council for their failure to meet their obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty regarding the impact of SEVs on gender equality
- **White Ribbon UK** – Bristol was awarded White Ribbon City status in 2013, pledging never to commit, condone or remain silent about men's violence against women in all its forms. White Ribbon UK are against the licensing of SEVs and require member cities to work towards zero SEV status (a nil cap). Bristol also committed in 2015 to be a Zero Tolerance City, taking a zero tolerance approach to gender-based violence and abuse.

3. In November 2011 on the same day the Licensing Committee were meeting in City Hall (then the Council House) to consider for the first time whether to implement a cap on SEVs, Bristol City Hall hosted an international conference on violence against women attended by hundreds of delegates from 21 countries, and including representatives of agencies including police, support organisations and universities. Delegates, all specialists in violence against women, voted – overwhelmingly – to ask the city to hear their recommendation that “***The appropriate number of lap dancing clubs in any area where women and men are valued equally and where gendered violence is not tolerated is zero***”. However, officers informed the Licensing Committee sitting that afternoon that they must not hear this representation from the conference as it had not been submitted 24 hours in advance. All but one member of the Licensing Committee as constituted at that time had also declined to attend the evidence seminar conducted by the University of Bristol in the run-up to their decision. As the nil cap policy finally progresses towards adoption, almost a decade later, this report summarises the policy position.

4. “Case-specific” evidence, i.e. harm to individual women that can be linked directly in a linear way to SEVs, is **not the main policy argument in support of a nil cap policy, although it is relevant**. Direct violence somehow ‘triggered’ by the immediate SEV environment and specific to it is how some people try to represent the argument about harm – that neglects the bigger picture. Public submissions to the Licensing Committee from workers in the industry and supporters of the industry have very frequently set up the [strawman](#) argument that opponents of SEVs claim “SEVs cause sexual assaults in the city centre”, in order to undermine this position. **This is not the basis for the city’s policy**. There is no reliable data collection on direct violence caused by the immediate SEV environment: almost none of the sexual harassment that women experience is ever reported to the authorities; and it is rare for women to report sexual assault or violence to the authorities, as the police have made clear¹. Nevertheless despite any formal data collection assessing sexual harassment and violence in, and in the vicinity of SEVs, there is evidence that women working in SEVs - and women encountering men who have been using SEVs - come to direct harm. This is summarised in a further section [below](#) (and see also [Appendix 1](#)).
5. The widespread harm from SEVs comes from their perpetuation of sexism and violence against women. However, we note that sexism and violence against women are not ‘caused’ by physical environments. They are caused by people. People are sexist and violent when harmful attitudes to women and sexist social norms that are encouraged in some environments such as SEVs and by some practices are allowed to thrive and are treated as normal, as set out in further sections of this report. By way of example, when smoking was no longer permitted inside bars and clubs, policy makers did not expect evidence linking the mortality of smokers to specific premises where they had smoked. They wanted to drive down the **social acceptability** of smoking,² to **protect public health** and the **rights** of non-smokers.³
6. A policy decision for a cap on SEVs is different from the day-to-day work of licensing sub-committees who meet to determine the specific case of a particular application made by a particular operator. A policy decision for a nil cap on SEVs rests on the question of whether Bristol wants to be a city free from sexual entertainment venues.
7. While gender-violence experts are very clear that SEVs are profoundly harmful, as evidenced in this report, in fact there is no requirement for any decision makers to ‘prove’ or rely on ‘harmfulness’ in taking a decision that according to the legislation rests on ‘appropriateness’.⁴ SEVs are inappropriate for any city that values gender equality. They profit from, and promote, harmful sexist attitudes that the council is duty bound to address under the [Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life](#).

¹ And see also the report of the inspectorate: HMICFRS (2021). Interim report: Inspection into how Effectively the Police engage with Women and Girls. <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/interim-report-inspection-into-how-effectively-police-engage-with-women-and-girls.pdf>

² See e.g. Alamar & Glantz (2006) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1522108/>

³ Government White Paper (2004) “Choosing Health”.

https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20130107105354/http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/@ps/documents/digitalasset/dh_133489.pdf

⁴ Kolvin, P. (2010). Sex Licensing. Para 5.44, p.68

EVIDENCE THAT SEVS REDUCE EQUALITY AND PROVIDE A CONDUCTIVE CONTEXT FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN – CONSIDERATIONS THAT ARE IMPORTANT UNDER THE EQUALITY ACT AND IN POLICY-MAKING

BACKGROUND: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS AND HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE

8. Research issued by the Office for National Statistics in 2021 revealed there to be 852,000 adult victims of sexual assault in the UK every year of whom 672,000 are women.⁵ Public Health research published in the Lancet following interviews with 8,869 women in the UK revealed that 19% (one in five) had experienced attempted sex against their will and 9.8% (one in ten) had experienced completed sex against their will (rape).⁶
9. Data from Bristol's 2019/20 JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) profile of sexual violence and harassment⁷ shows that the rate of (reported) sexual offences in Bristol is significantly higher than in England as a whole. It notes that the prevalence of sexual assault is likely to be far greater than the number of recorded offences. It notes that 30.4% of people feel that sexual harassment is an issue in Bristol. Extrapolating from the ONS data, over 4500 women in Bristol aged 16-59 have been victims of sexual assault in the last year with only one in five offences being reported to police. The report notes police data from 2018-19 showing that reported sexual offences against women and girls are twice as high in the Central area (where both SEVs are located) as in any other area of Bristol, and over ten times higher than some areas, reflecting the city centre area as an unwelcoming and unsafe public space for women.
10. Bristol's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for women in 2017 identified sexual exploitation, abuse and violence as significant factors behind women's poor health outcomes, identifying a significant rise in domestic abuse over the previous 2 years and a 28% increase of reported sexual offences in one year. The interconnected nature of women's mental health and gender violence were identified as "undoubtedly priorities for Bristol".⁸
11. Research by the Young Women's Trust in 2019⁹ found that young women aged 16-30 are the age group of women most likely to experience sexism, with the impact on their mental health even greater than upon older women. They experience higher rates of sexism than other ages at school/work, on public transport, in taxis, and outside on the street, with 82 percent of those who had experienced sexism having faced street harassment. Young women who had experienced sexism (including attacks or threats) were five times more likely to experience depression than those that hadn't, and even four years later they still reported greater psychological distress.
12. A recent report by Plan International UK¹⁰ sets out the blighting effect of sexual harassment of girls and young women, which is rooted in men's attitudes of entitlement to women's bodies. The report says,

⁵ ONS (2021). Sexual offences prevalence and victim characteristics, England and Wales. Release data: 18 March 2021.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/sexualoffencesprevalenceandvictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales>

⁶ Macdowall et al. (2013), The Lancet, 392/9907, 1845-1855. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(13\)62300-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(13)62300-4)

⁷ Bristol: Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Health and Wellbeing Profile 2019/20: Sexual violence and harassment. August 2020. <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/4059596/JSNA+2019+-+Sexual+Violence+and+Harassment.pdf/355c390b-46d7-8c48-7004-1276388a4a4f>

⁸ Bristol: Women's Health 2017 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Chapter [https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/1655362/JSNA+Chapter+Women's+Health+\(V14\)/](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/1655362/JSNA+Chapter+Women's+Health+(V14)/)

⁹ Young Women's Trust (2019). Impact of Sexism on Young Women's Mental Health. https://www.youngwomenstrust.org/assets/0001/2669/Impact_of_sexism_on_young_women_s_mental_health.pdf

¹⁰ Plan International UK (2020) The State of Girls' Rights in the UK 2020. <https://plan-uk.org/file/plan-uk-state-of-girls-rights-report-2020pdf/download?token=42bpRbf8>

“Our research found that amongst girls aged 14 to 21, 66% have experienced unwanted sexual attention or harassment in a public place”, concluding “Girls do not feel safe in public and they do not feel their local areas are designed for them. They are dealing with relentless street harassment and changing their behaviour to avoid being targeted.”

13. The abduction and killing of Sarah Everard along with the killing of other women such as Nicole Smallman, Bibaa Henry and Sabina Nessa has led to a public outpouring of pain, anger and trauma from women and girls across the UK. 180,000 individual responses were sent in to the Home Office’s call for evidence on tackling violence against women and girls. In 2021 Ofsted published a shocking report into sexual abuse in schools and colleges,¹¹ commissioned following the accounts that came to light through the “Everyone’s Invited” social media platform.¹² Schools, colleges and universities in Bristol were among those named. The Government published research into the impact of pornography on VAW,¹³ the incidence of sexual harassment in the UK,¹⁴ and the importance of gender norms among men and boys.¹⁵ The Government pledged to do more to prevent violence and abuse against women and girls, which is a cause and consequence of gender inequality.

BACKGROUND: GENDER INEQUALITY IN BRISTOL

14. There are more than 220,000 women and girls who live in the City of Bristol, whose welfare is the Council’s concern, who on average earn a fifth less than men because they are female, who are chronically underrepresented in decision making structures because they are female, and of whom 1 in 4 will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime by a man.
15. The women and girls of Bristol have **no chance of being social equals with men and boys** while our city gives the green light to **institutionalised sexism** which is the core business of SEVs.
16. SEVs promote harmful attitudes to women and run counter to promoting equality between women and men. They reproduce and promote the existing **financial and social inequality** between women and men in our society, and they reproduce and promote the prevailing cultural assumption that **women’s bodies are objects** to which **men are entitled** to have access. (Holding pole dancing lessons for women or engaging occasional male strippers, as some SEVs will, does nothing to alter this: see [References](#) and [Appendix 2](#)).
17. Representations have regularly been made to the Licensing Committee by supporters of SEVs attempting to characterise objections to SEVs as “**moral objections**” and therefore out of scope. They are mistaken, both in that:
- Local Authorities are entitled to make decisions based on “local sensibilities” which may well be based precisely on a moral stance¹⁶ such as that held by members of religious communities for example.

¹¹ Ofsted (2021). Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges. London, HM Government, 10 June.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges>

¹² <https://www.everyonesinvited.uk/>

¹³ GEO (2020). The relationship between pornography use and harmful sexual attitudes and behaviours.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952526/The_Relationship_between_Pornography_use_and_Harmful_Sexual_Attitudes_and_Behaviours-literature_review.pdf

¹⁴ GEO (2021). 2020 Sexual Harassment Survey.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1002873/2021-07-12_Sexual_Harassment_Report_FINAL.pdf

¹⁵ GEO (2019). Changing Gender Norms: Engaging with Men and Boys.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952527/Changing_Gender_Norms-Engaging_with_Men_and_Boys.pdf

¹⁶ See Kolvin, P. (2010) Sex Licensing. Paras 5.45-5.48

- In 2017, Sheffield City Council were found to be in breach of the Equality Act 2010 in their approach to SEV licensing. As the High Court Judge in that case made clear, the Licensing Authority “*wrongly ignored objections based on the potential impact on gender equality, treating them as moral objections and irrelevant*” when they were not.¹⁷

CONSULTING WITH THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND THE ROLE OF CONSULTATION IN POLICY-MAKING

18. It is inevitable that there are those living and working in the city who are happy with the status quo of inequality between men and women; and with the reproduction and promotion of this inequality taking place when SEVs go about their business. Others may not know about the links between sexual objectification, sexism and violence against women. Still others may not know that full nudity with “exposure of the pubic area, genitals or anus and ...nipples” is the nature of the sexual entertainment provided in private dances with the purpose of sexual stimulation. Citizens Panel data from 2020 showed that the subject of SEVs is one on which many citizens – around a quarter to a third - do not feel willing or able or interested to express a view when consulted.¹⁸ Of those expressing views, there is a predictable, notable and strong gender divide when it comes to SEVs. **The majority of Citizens Panel respondents – male and female - disagreed** that SEVs “complement Bristol’s entertainment offer”, with almost **twice as many women (55% of all women surveyed)** than men (29% of the men) holding that view. Unsurprisingly, twice as many men (36%) as women (18%) agreed that SEVs “complement Bristol’s entertainment offer”.¹⁹
19. Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), the Council has legal obligations to have due regard to the need to **eliminate discrimination and harassment of women**, and to **advance equality of opportunity for women** as well as to **foster good relations between men and women**. The Council has to engage with these aims when developing its new SEV policy and has taken advice from gender equality bodies, representative women’s groups, violence prevention specialists and support services.
20. This report and the evidence presented in it is intended to assist the Council in fulfilling its duties under the PSED.

JOINING UP THE DOTS: RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE

21. Why do all these specialist agencies whose agenda is to promote gender equality and end violence against women identify SEVs as harmful? Why do they want to see a nil cap on SEVs?
22. In the largest ever multinational study of male violence against women published in 2013 by the United Nations,²⁰ the most common motivation of men who have admitted to rape is the **belief that they are entitled to sex**, even without the female partner’s consent. This study interviewed 10,000 men and 1 in 4 had raped their wife, their partner or another woman. That is not an insignificant minority of men. Entitlement, which is the stock in trade of lap dancing clubs, is the main motivation given by men who rape. 70-80 percent of men who had raped reported that they believed they had the **right to sex**. The second most frequently reported motivation was related

¹⁷ <https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/licensing/399-licensing-news/34572-council-admits-failure-to-comply-with-equality-duty-over-spear-mint-rhino-licence>

¹⁸ BCC Licensing Service Consultation Survey Responses and Results 12 November 2020 – Citizens Panel data <https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/g8754/Public%20reports%20pack%2008th-Mar-2021%2009.00%20Licensing%20Committee.pdf?T=10> p39 (p213 in bundle)

¹⁹ Ibid. (p40 / p214 in bundle)

²⁰ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2013/9/half-of-men-report-using-violence-and-a-quarter-perpetrate-rape-according-to-un-survey>

to **entertainment-seeking** – interpreting forced sexual access to women’s bodies as fun or as something to alleviate boredom. The most commonly identified attitudinal risk factor for men’s sexual and domestic violence and coercion against women globally stems from gender inequality - a belief in the dominance of men, and their needs or wishes and bodies, over women (see also, e.g., Flood & Pease, 2009; Ricardo et al., 2011; Fulu et al., 2013). The UN gives seven clear policy recommendations from this and other research, of which three²¹ are directly related to Bristol City Council’s powers and which are relevant to its stance on SEVs:

- **Change social norms** related to the acceptability of violence and the subordination of women
- **Promote non-violent masculinities** oriented towards equality and respect
- **Promote healthy sexuality** for men and address male sexual entitlement.



23. In a study for the Journal of Sex Research,²² **more than half** the men interviewed said they were motivated to visit strip clubs to get away from what they saw as the rules for behaviour that constrained them - that is, **treating women equally** - for example when interacting with female colleagues at work. That is not an insignificant minority of men. One participant said of visiting a club:

*“You can go in there and shop for a **piece of meat**, quote unquote, so to speak. I mean, you want to see a **girl** run around naked, have her come over, pay her to do a dance or two or three and walk away and not even ask her name. Total distancing.”*

Another customer said,

*“With all of this sexual harassment stuff going around these days, **men need somewhere to go where they can act like they want**”²³*

A post to a forum about a Sheffield SEV:

“Fine females, like being in a butchers with prime rump on display”²⁴

An anthropologist specialising in analysing lapdancing wrote in a policy guide for the US market:

*“A man can feel **manly and dominant** when he pays for a dance, without having to try to relate to a woman and risk failure”²⁵*

²¹ p98, p99

²² Frank (2003)

²³ Frank (2005)

²⁴ <http://www.sheffieldforum.co.uk/showthread.php?t=1283563&highlight=spearmint+rhino&page=2>

²⁵ Hanna (2005) p124

24. Performers have shared with researchers how they play roles in order to meet the expectations or desires of customers, and by doing this the harmful gender norms and stereotypes held by those customers are reinforced. Simpson & Smith (2020) describe how these *“are acted out by dancers to manipulate the emotions of customers allowing them to believe they are in a position of superiority, intellectual and otherwise”*.²⁶
25. Research into men’s reasons for buying sex suggest that through the purchase of sexual encounters *“men obtain confirmation that women exist for the purpose of pleasing men”*.²⁷ Men emphasised their pleasure in **asserting their dominance** and control over women. Participants said:
- “It’s a power thing really – being able to get a woman to give you sexual services by handing over money”.*
“You are the boss and get what you want”
“Women are becoming more domineering in the workplace and I think a lot of guys like to have power over women.”
26. The review of what works to prevent VAWG for the UK Government set out the strong association between the rape of women and transactional sex, which is *“not merely expressing sex seeking”*, but rather a concept of *“masculinity that emphasise[s] proven heterosexual performance and dominance over women”*.²⁸
27. The review on VAWG prevention for the UK Government in 2014²⁹ also reported that **sexist** men or men who were more inclined to show **controlling behaviour** were 42% and 74% more likely, respectively, to abuse their partners. The same review explains:
- “There is strong evidence that the gender climate within a society impacts on the likelihood of non-partner sexual violence perpetration and that a very large part of the problem of rape needs to be fundamentally understood as a performance of men’s sexual entitlement over women.”*
28. A recent study (Bareket & Shnabel, 2020) found that men who want to dominate women, but are required to work for female bosses, react by sexually objectifying women in an attempt to reinforce the sexist gender hierarchy that they prefer. Yet SEVs advertise themselves as suitable venues for **office parties and corporate entertaining**³⁰. The **normalisation** of SEVs into the fabric of Bristol’s city life is demonstrated by their integration into Bristol’s independent night-time industry-led “Nightwatch” scheme, presenting them as suitable venues to hold meetings to which council workers and police officers are invited as part of their paid work, and then criticised for not attending.³¹ A workplace culture supportive of visits to SEVs is a sexist culture, as the findings of the Employment Tribunal case in *Furlong v BMC Software Ltd* (2016) has shown. The Tribunal found that:
- “The use of lap dancing clubs by colleagues, and the company’s conduct in acquiescing to that conduct, amounted to sexual harassment”*.³²
- In October 2021 a female restaurant worker in Middlesex was awarded a substantial payout by a Tribunal³³ after her manager had told her to take her clothes off and perform a strip show for him. The Tribunal ruled that this was sexual harassment as well as harassment related to sex.³⁴ The

²⁶ p486

²⁷ Farley et al. (2011) p370

²⁸ Heise & Fulu (2014), p20-21

²⁹ Heise & Fulu (2014), p10)

³⁰ E.g., see [here](#) and [here](#)

³¹ “Pathetic” council boycotted key meeting on drink spiking because it was held at lap-dancing club – Bristol Live, 29 October 2021 <https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/pathetic-council-boycotted-key-meeting-6133919>

³² *Furlong v BMC Software Limited* (ET/2701283/09) <https://www.redmans.co.uk/furlong-v-bmc-software-limited-discussions-regarding-lapdances-and-prostitutes-constituted-discrimination/>

³³ <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/woman-wins-23000-after-fast-25275991.amp>

³⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/616e9db28fa8f52982a86132/Mrs_A_Khan_other_v_AY_Trading_Ltd_others_3332155-2018_judgment_and_written_reasons_final_2021_05_28.pdf

authors of the U.N. large scale study on violence against women concluded that their research findings supported “*existing theories on how **underlying gender inequalities and power imbalance between women and men are the foundational causes of violence against women.***” (p.12).

29. Meanwhile women’s right to be present in public spaces without experiencing sexual harassment and violence, or the fear of it, is significantly compromised. A study in which over 5,000 women in the UK were interviewed³⁵ found that, in the past year alone:

- 2% (one in fifty) had been the victim of sexual violence
- 5% (one in twenty) had been the victim of sexual harassment
- 64% avoided places or situations for fear of being physically or sexually assaulted and 12% avoided leaving home on their own
- 40% avoided going to certain streets, or going to certain areas for fear of being assaulted.

30. In a large study conducted recently in England with over a thousand young men aged 18-30, over 25% (one in four) endorsed the opinion that “a real man” should have as many sexual partners as he can, and would never say no to sex.³⁶ Meanwhile, 55% (more than half) said that **this is what society as a whole communicates to them**. The young men who identified with these and other expressions of so-called “Man Box” masculinity were more likely to be depressed and to take part in risky behaviours. **54% of these young men reported having perpetrated sexual harassment against a woman or girl in the last month**, compared with 9% of young men or boys who did not identify with the harmful “Man Box” stereotypes of masculinity. Research also shows that power (dominance) and sex are interconnected in the minds of those who are the most likely to sexually harass.³⁷ SEVs reinforce the connection between power and sex.

31. The sale of sexual entertainment in SEVs reinforces the idea, widespread in sexist cultures, that **sex is something that men can obtain from women** in exchange for ‘something else’. In other words, women are not required or even expected to engage in mutual sexual desire. In SEVs, customers obtain access to a direct, personal performance of sex when they want it, by paying money (exercising their economic power). When men harass, assault or rape women absent a financial transaction they are exercising their physical and social power. Data from numerous studies are clear: it is **the most vulnerable women** who are most often selected and targeted by perpetrators of SGBV. For example, women in insecure employment are subjected to more than twice as much workplace sexual harassment as women in secure employment,³⁸ or interns or trainees.³⁹ Women in insecure employment are more than three times as likely to be subjected to threats or inducements ‘in exchange’ for sex than women whose jobs are less precarious.⁴⁰ Women in low-income households are 3.5 times more likely to be subjected to domestic abuse than those in higher-income households.⁴¹ The risk of victimisation for many forms of SGBV is higher for those who are socially marginalised whether through their sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity or migrant status.⁴² The implication of these findings is that men’s entitlement, supported

³⁵ FRA (2014)

³⁶ Heilman, Barker & Harrison (2017)

³⁷ Maass, Cadinu & Galdi (2013)

³⁸ BBC/ComRes poll (2017) http://comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/BBC-sexual-harassment_FINAL_v3.pdf

³⁹ GEO (2021) 2020 Workplace Sexual Harassment Survey https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1002873/2021-07-12_Sexual_Harassment_Report_FINAL.pdf

⁴⁰ BBC/ComRes (ibid.)

⁴¹ Walby, S., & Allen, J. (2004). Domestic Violence, Sexual Abuse and Stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey. Home Office Research Study 276 <http://nomsintranet.org.uk/roh/official-documents/HomeOfficeResearchStudy276.pdf> p75

⁴² Home Office (2021) Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005630/Tackling_Violence_Against_Women_and_Girls_Strategy-July_2021-FINAL.pdf p24-25

and cultivated in SEVs, is then likely to be exercised in their social, home and working lives disproportionately against poorer women, who are already one of the most disadvantaged groups of women, as well as otherwise marginalised women. Care for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable women does not look like giving men access to SEVs.

32. **Young people.** The sexual violence that children are experiencing from their peers has never been of more concern and is an urgent priority for educationalists and policy makers. In 2021 Ofsted published a report after they found that 79% of schoolgirls had experienced sexual assault from boys in their school; 80% had experienced unwanted or inappropriate sexual comments and 64% had experienced unwanted sexual touching.⁴³ Research from Girlguiding in 2021⁴⁴ found that 96% of 17 and 18 year old young women feel unsafe when out on their own, and 78% of this age group have experienced intimidation by groups of boys. 53% said that harassment stopped them from feeling free to go where they want. Research with adolescents in the UK found that the **sexual objectification of girls** (thinking of them as objects for sexual gratification) was confirmed to be a **significant predictor** of 12-16 year old boys' **self reported violence and aggression towards girls**.⁴⁵ Boys and girls in Bristol are currently growing up in a society where sexual objectification of females is normalised in SEVs on the city's high streets. In October 2021 the University of Bristol Student Union published a survey of almost 900 current students.⁴⁶ Almost half had experienced sexual harassment since beginning their studies at the University and 29% had experienced sexual assault. Respondents remarked how **normalised** these behaviours were as well as the negative impact upon their academic and social lives, mental wellbeing and increased 'safety work' to protect themselves. Negative impacts included anxiety, depression, eating disorders and PTSD as well as experiencing anger, shame, isolation, self-blame, problems with intimacy and disruption to studies.

"I realise now how normalized my experience was. At first I didn't even realise it was sexual harassment because of how normalized it is in society. I felt as though my experience was nothing serious and never really came to terms with it until now"

"Most mental effects for me came from not realising it was sexual harassment until about a year later- I think about incidents more because I didn't deal with them at the time because I didn't realise what had happened"

"I have been diagnosed with PTSD, depression and anxiety symptoms as a result of my experiences with men. I dealt with my trauma through substance and alcohol abuse, which greatly affected my university experience and attendance in classes"

33. There are additional concerns regarding the "Back to School" and "Student" promotions run by SEVs which are a common theme. Young women and female students are the most frequently victimised members of the population for sexual assaults and attempts including rape. For example, in 2018-20 **3.2% of women** were victims of sexual assault in the last year compared with **12.9%** of women aged 16-19 and **10.7%** of women students.⁴⁷ Research on alcohol-involved

⁴³ Ofsted (2021). Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools and Colleges:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges#what-did-we-find-out-about-the-scale-and-nature-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools>

⁴⁴ Girlguiding (2021). Research Briefing: It Happens All the Time. Girls' and Young Women's Experiences of Sexual Harassment. https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/globalassets/docs-and-resources/research-and-campaigns/girlguiding-research-briefing_girls-experiences-of-sexual-harassment_june2021.pdf

⁴⁵ Vasquez et al. (2017)

⁴⁶ Bristol SU (2021). No Means No! Research on Consent Culture and Sexual Violence at the University of Bristol. https://nusdigital.s3.amazonaws.com/document/documents/80121/Bristol_SU_No_means_no_report_1_Final_Report_2021.pdf

⁴⁷ ONS (2021). Sexual Offences Prevalence and Victim Characteristics, England and Wales Year Ending March 2020, Table 5.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/sexualoffencesprevalenceandvictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales> See also Appendix Tables 4.09, Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2012/13 and Table 2.7 of ONS Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales, 2009-2012.

sexual assault among young people concluded that evaluating women’s bodies may “*set the stage for violence in college men*” and recommends including a focus on **reducing objectification to reduce assault**.⁴⁸ Increased risk for sexual violence perpetration is linked in adolescents and young adults to alcohol use, a preference for impersonal sex, and association with peers who are hyper masculine alongside weak policies regarding sexual violence and gender equality, and societal norms that support male superiority and entitlement.⁴⁹ A submission to the Women and Equalities Select Committee in 2018 by Plan International UK described how ninety per cent of British women report their first experience of street harassment before the age of 17.⁵⁰ In their research with girls, Plan UK found that girls they spoke to reported being harassed by boys and men of all ages, and that girls in uniform appeared to be a particular target, with girls describing feeling fetishised by older men. In 2015 the officer responsible for safeguarding at Bristol City Council wrote to the Licensing Committee regarding a Bristol SEV’s “schoolgirl” promotions⁵¹ which were subsequently specifically proscribed by the Council.⁵² In previous years a Bristol SEV had to be asked to stop targeting recruitment advertising campaigns at female students.⁵³ In previous years Bristol SEVs have advertised to male students as customers.⁵⁴ **Most men who buy sex first started buying sex before they were 21 years old and many speak of intense pressure to do so from other men.**⁵⁵ Research with 554 male UK university students published in 2021 found that 11.4% of them reported having committed at least one sexually aggressive act in the past 24 months (significantly higher than non-university males in the community) and that their sexual aggression was accurately predicted by: their hostility toward women – “*a pronounced obedience to traditional gender role beliefs for men*”; and their **atypical sexual fantasies, including ‘impersonal’ sex**.⁵⁶ “*Sex purchasing often starts in early adulthood and becomes more entrenched over time*”.⁵⁷

34. A psychological research study published in 2014 – which used male students as its study population - concluded that the frequently documented association between heavy drinking and sexual violence is mediated by the extent to which men engage in sexually objectifying women. In other words, “***alcohol use intensifies the objectification of women in a manner that increases sexual violence risk***”.⁵⁸ SEVs provide alcohol and encourage sexual objectification. The consumption of alcohol in SEVs was identified in the 2019 Home Office research as increasing the potential for assault against performers.⁵⁹
35. Sexual objectification is not equivalent to sexiness, or sexuality, or sexual enjoyment or sex-positivity – sexual objectification is restrictive. It is a barrier to the development and enjoyment of authentic mutually satisfying sexual relationships where women and men are equally valued and in charge of their own diverse, unique and diverse sexualities. In the night-time economy as elsewhere, “*Femininities that conform to men’s desire for titillation, ego-stroking, and sexual receptivity are likely to proliferate at the expense of others*”.⁶⁰ A recent research study into unwanted attention in the night-time economy in the UK concluded that cultures of “*performative*

⁴⁸ Gervais et al. (2014) (p.11)

⁴⁹ Edwards & Banyard (2018)

⁵⁰ <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/women-and-equalities-committee/sexual-harassment-of-women-and-girls-in-public-places/written/79639.pdf>

⁵¹ [Schoolgirls 1](#); [schoolgirls 2](#); [schoolgirls 3](#); [schoolgirls 4](#)

⁵² See papers for Urban Tiger SEV hearing, 7 April 2015, Appendices H, I and J

https://www.bristol.gov.uk/committee/2015/re/re004/0407_5.pdf

⁵³ [Female Student recruitment](#)

⁵⁴ [Male student recruitment 1](#); [Male student recruitment 2](#)

⁵⁵ Farley et al. (2011) and see also the section below on [sex buying](#)

⁵⁶ Hales & Gannon (2021)

⁵⁷ OSCE (2021). Discouraging the Demand that Fosters Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/f/489388_0.pdf (p75)

⁵⁸ Gervais et al. (2014)

⁵⁹ Hester et al. (2019)

⁶⁰ Gunby et al. (2020)

masculinity” and the objectification of women such as promoted by SEVs “**undoubtedly reproduce structures of gender inequality**”.⁶¹

36. Women’s mental health and positive emotions are negatively impacted by being sexually objectified and by witnessing the sexual objectification of others. **Whether or not they choose** to be in sexually objectifying environments, women’s exposure to sexually objectifying events or environments “*is thought to directly cause distress and increase women’s vulnerability to eating disorders, sexual dysfunction, anxiety and depression*”– a recent study also found “*strong evidence that exposure to objectifying events in daily life primes a state of self-objectification, making women more conscious of how their body appears to others...just as breathing second-hand smoke is unhealthy for nonsmokers, we found that objectifying events need not be experienced first-hand to induce the potentially harmful process of self-objectification. Witnessing sexual objectification of other women also reliably predicted ... increases in state self-objectification*”⁶² which in turn was related to lower positive emotions in everyday life.

37. The sexual objectification of women, as encouraged by and practised in SEVs, **reinforces gender inequality** as has been demonstrated in numerous studies and reviews.⁶³

38. When men are encouraged to hand over money to buy sexual gratification from women who would not choose to do these acts if they were not being paid, this dehumanises women and promotes the ‘**sexist view of sex**’ uncovered in the YouGov survey for the End Violence Against Women in August 2019.⁶⁴

39. **Sexual objectification and sexual violence are consistently associated with each other.**⁶⁵ As a review for the Government Equalities Office reported in 2020, there is substantial evidence across all methodologies of an association between viewing women as sex objects and harmful sexual attitudes and behaviours towards women.⁶⁶ Sexual objectification dehumanises women.⁶⁷ Men who objectify women are also likely to sexually victimise women.⁶⁸ Men who have viewed women being sexually objectified are more likely to believe that a woman’s protests in a date rape case were not ‘really’ protests; to believe that the rape victim “got what she wanted” and were twice as likely to say they would also act in the same way as the perpetrator in a date-rape.⁶⁹

“After having internalized the messages of male sexual privilege and female dehumanization, it should be easier for men to envision imposing themselves sexually on women and reacting punitively to women who frustrate their sexual goals.” (Wright & Tokunaga, 2016).

40. A recent study has found that objectification of the other sex is associated with “**severe psychological aggression and physical assault perpetration**” in males, but not in females.⁷⁰

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Koval et al. (2019) and see also e.g. Carr & Szymanski (2011)

⁶³ See for example the Home Office Sexualisation Review (Papadopoulos, 2010); Fredrickson & Roberts (1997); Heflick & Goldenberg (2009); Heilman & Stopeck (1985); Nicolson (1996); Rudman & Borgida (1995). See also the section ([below](#)) on modern policy approaches – evidence-led legal and policy directives acknowledge this link.

⁶⁴ <https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/our-major-new-survey-reveals-sexist-views-on-sex>

⁶⁵ Gervais et al. (2014)

⁶⁶ GEO (2020). The Relationship Between Pornography Use and Harmful Sexual Behaviours: Literature Review. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952526/The_Relationship_between_Pornography_use_and_Harmful_Sexual_Attitudes_and_Behaviours-literature_review.pdf

⁶⁷ Loughnan et al. (2010) Vaes et al. (2011) and see [Appendix 2](#)

⁶⁸ Rudman & Mescher (2012)

⁶⁹ Milburn et al. (2000)

⁷⁰ Johnson et al. (2018)

This demonstrates that males and females react differently to objectification of the other sex, supported by a quantity of research into objectification, summarised here:

*“Because of the asymmetrical power relations between the genders, men’s sexual objectification does not have a derogating effect, as opposed to women—whose sexual objectification activates their traditional role as sex objects ... and reminds them of their (inferior) place in the gender hierarchy. Moreover, men’s sexuality is associated with dominance and pride ... as opposed to women’s sexuality—which is associated with submission”.*⁷¹

[Appendix 2](#) contains an extract from a scientific paper demonstrating from experimental studies that **sexualised men are perceived (by both men and women) as people**, whereas **sexualised women are perceived as objects**.⁷² Sexual objectification of men is not equivalent to sexual objectification of women and is not associated with the same harms.

41. **Sex Buying.** Attitude research in the UK has found that those who find it acceptable for men to pay for sex also tend to find public sexual harassment more acceptable. The acceptability of all forms of public sexual harassment is generally higher, and in some cases, considerably higher, for the groups of people who consider that paying for sex (whether legal or illegal) is acceptable.⁷³ Male domestic violence offenders using the sex industry including strip clubs use more forms of aggressive violence and more controlling behaviours than those who do not use the sex industry.⁷⁴ College-aged men using the sex industry report significantly more sexually coercive behaviours.⁷⁵ **Men who are sex buyers are significantly more likely (15%) than non-sex buyers (2%) to report that they would force a woman to have sex, or rape a woman, if they could get away with it.** They also report having engaged in three times more sexually aggressive behaviour than men who were not sex buyers.⁷⁶ Men who have ever paid for sex are more likely to perpetrate rape than men who have not paid for sex - from five samples of 1,000 men each, across five countries (Chile, Croatia, India, Mexico and Rwanda) - while research with over a thousand men in the USA who have paid for sex with women found they are more likely to have raped a woman than men who have never paid for sex with women.⁷⁷ Men classed as “misogynistic” because of their self-reported hostility and violence towards women (sexual assault and domestic abuse) and their endorsement of rigidly traditional notions of masculinity were “*far more likely*” than members of any other group (including ‘sex-focused’ men) to have paid for sexual services including stripping, peepshows and lapdances. The authors of the study explain that interventions to broaden what people think of as healthy masculinity involve de-coupling ideas about “appropriate masculinity” from expectations of dominance over women.⁷⁸ **This is what the introduction of a nil cap in Bristol will contribute to.** See also the evidence in a [further section](#) regarding men paying for sex in SEVs and in the section on [supply and demand](#).
42. After being exposed to images that sexually objectify women, men are significantly more accepting of sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, rape myths, and sex role stereotypes – all of which act to reinforce gender inequality.⁷⁹ Importantly, this increased acceptance of harmful attitudes is not confined to particular women but generalises to **women as a group**.

⁷¹ Bareket & Shnabel (2020) (p30; further references supplied in original text)

⁷² Bernard et al. (2012)

⁷³ YouGov research for the House of Commons Women and Equalities Select Committee (2018). https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/701/70112.htm#_idTextAnchor124

⁷⁴ Simmons et al. (2008)

⁷⁵ Schmidt (2003) cited in Farley et al. (2011)

⁷⁶ Farley et al. (2017)

⁷⁷ Heilan, Herbert & Paul-Gera (2014) and Monto & McRee (2005) cited in Farley & Golding (2019).

⁷⁸ Casey et al. (2016).

⁷⁹ See the review of the American Psychological Association (2007) and see also for example Allen, D’Alessio & Brezgel (1995); Lanis and Covell (1995); Zillman & Weaver (1989).

43. But what about the men? Recent research, a high-quality meta-analysis of 78 research samples involving 19,453 participants endorsed by the professional body the American Psychological Association, found that conformity to specific masculine norms of self-reliance, power over women, and – notably - playboy behaviour were “*unfavorably, robustly, and consistently*” related to **negative mental health-related outcomes for men**.⁸⁰ Men’s sexual objectification of women predicts their experience of heightened anxiety as well as hostility, dissatisfaction with their bodies and reduced satisfaction with their romantic relationships.⁸¹

REGULATION, DEREGULATION AND EXEMPTION

44. Misunderstandings, or misinterpretations, of regulation and deregulation continue to circulate. During the pre-consultation period for the Bristol policy review, a flyer was created and distributed by Placemaking Bristol⁸² displaying logos for NiteWatch Bristol and Good Night Out among others, calling for support in the form of responses to the pre-consultation by “*supporting the continued regulation of sexual entertainment venues in Bristol*”. The flyer has in large red capital lettering the message that “*A zero cap means deregulation*”. This statement is not true. It is one that has been frequently repeated, including by some Councillors, and it is important that this misperception should be addressed and dismissed. The pre-consultation period 2021 has seen the same claims being made,⁸³ as has the consultation period.⁸⁴
45. Current policy does what it can to protect the interests of performers. It is important to note that there is no evidence at all that the activity currently licensed in SEVs (i.e. not prostitution, but nude sexual performance) would “go underground” if councils did not renew or award licences to SEVs, or that ‘occasional’ (unlicensed) performances would increase in number as though there were an inevitable fixed market for paying women to strip. There is no evidence from the local authorities who have implemented a nil cap, of an increase in demand for unregulated activity. The UK study undertaken in 2011 (Sanders & Hardy, 2011) found that the industry was fuelled by the supply of performers, not by a demand for performances. Therefore a business that recruits⁸⁵ and trains performers and advertises their services, is **fuelling demand**.
46. Bristol SEVs invest in marketing sexual entertainment in order to create and drive up demand. The creation and fuelling of that demand that is driven by their marketing and advertising, would cease without SEVs in the city.
47. The act of giving a licence to allow SEVs to host multiple performances to take place 365 days of the year facilitates the trajectory of more recruitment, more supply and more demand. A nil cap would result in reduced demand.
48. A recent international review for the Scottish Government finds that restrictive legislation (action to prevent men’s access to the sex trade) leads to **decreased demand** as well as a **reduction in trafficking** for sexual exploitation.⁸⁶ In June 2021 the Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) released the findings of a multi-year analysis of data from over 50 nations and national governments recommending prevention activities to **discourage men from buying sex**

⁸⁰ Wong et al. (2017)

⁸¹ Bareket and Shnabel (2020) .

⁸² <http://www.placemakingbristol.co.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/SAVE-SEV-BRISTOL.jpg>

⁸³ E.g. [post](#) by Save Bristol Nightlife on Facebook 1st March 2021 commenting under “**We are not amused – attacking the night time family is not a good move**”

⁸⁴ E.g. [post](#) by Central Chambers on Facebook and [post](#) by Urban Tiger on Facebook

⁸⁵ Recruitment [advertisement](#) September 2021

⁸⁶ Malloch et al. (2017)

as well as education targeting young men.⁸⁷ The decrease in demand which occurs when policy action is taken is not disputed, even by those who at the same time advocate for full decriminalisation of the sex trade.

49. Further research supports the success of policy approaches that reduce demand for the trade in sex by acting on supply:

“Levels of demand for the trade vary between countries, over time and according to the cultural and legal context. Here in the UK, the number of men who pay for sex doubled during the 1990’s, with the rate increasing from one in 20 men to nearly one in 10 men. If demand can grow, it can also shrink. And that is exactly what countries like Sweden and Norway have shown through their adoption of the Sex Buyer Law. An investigation of the law by the Swedish government found that street prostitution in Sweden halved during the period 1999-2008 and there is no evidence these women were simply displaced to indoor prostitution or prostitution advertised online. The number of men paying for sex in Sweden also declined. A survey in 1996 found 13.6% of men reported buying sex, while a similar survey in 2008 found this figure had dropped to 7.9%. Research conducted by the Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit at London Metropolitan University with 137 men who paid women for sex found, “the accounts of men who had paid for sex overseas confirm that legality contributes to normalisation, which in turn increases the likelihood of paying for sex.”⁸⁸

In the context of SEVs, a local authority policy that permits the licensing of SEVs contributes to **normalisation** in the same way.

50. It is very important that the myth of a legitimate 'demand' by men in Bristol for sexual services from women in Bristol is addressed. *“Sexual activity is a sign of a real man”, “Real men have strong sexual appetites and need sex all the time”* and *“Men are entitled to sex”* are prevalent **social norms that contribute towards violence against women**.⁸⁹ These norms are supported rather than challenged by the licensing of SEVs which also reinforces the social norm that men should be privileged over women. Recent research upholds the presentation of men’s ‘sexual motivation’ for taking part in activities that objectify women as **a disguise for the desire to dominate women** and confirms that it provides men with **“a socially acceptable means to reassert dominance”**.⁹⁰ The idea that there should be a sexual supply-market of women and their bodies to cater for men is an idea that plays directly into the myth of male entitlement to sex, which is a core cause of violence against women. The social norm that emphasises men's interest in sex is not something that should translate to an 'entertainment offer'. A Bristol women’s organisation recently⁹¹ received correspondence from a longstanding Member of the previous Licensing Committee suggesting that considerations of equality must be “balanced” against considerations of men’s demand. This is not an appropriate action for a member of the Licensing Committee to take. This assertion by the Councillor implied that the aim behind licensing a small number of SEVs was not, in fact, primarily concerned with safeguarding but with men’s entitlements. This is despite “safeguarding” being the aim that was stated in the consultation text.
51. The Licensing Act recognises (some say misguidedly) that some premises, for example pubs, might not have a core business model that revolves around sexual entertainment but could potentially from time to time wish to facilitate an event including sexual entertainment - for example, the once more common “strippergram” performance arranged as entertainment during birthday or stag parties. While the prevalence of this form of performance may have declined

⁸⁷ See OSCE (2021) Discouraging the Demand that Fosters Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation. https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/f/489388_0.pdf

⁸⁸ From the website of End Demand: <http://enddemand.uk/about/frequently-asked-questions/>.

⁸⁹ See The Equality Institute (2017). Piecing together the evidence on social norms and violence against women. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5656cae6e4b00f188f3228ee/t/59e6d1fe9f8dceb811b67f50/1508299266604/Social+Norms+Booklet+Final.pdf>

⁹⁰ See Bareket & Shnabel (2020)

⁹¹ 5th February 2019

significantly since the Act was amended, politicians were lobbied at the time of the amendment to provide the “exemption” detailed below.

52. The so-called frequency exemption “enables relevant entertainment to be provided on [a maximum of] 11 occasions within any period of 12 months provided that each occasion lasts no longer than 24 hours and no such occasion begins less than a month from the end of the last.”⁹² The entertainment can only be provided for a maximum of 100 people. It is not subject to the pool of conditions imposed by the local authority on licensed SEVs. **The frequency exemption applies whether or not there are also licensed SEVs.** If, under a nil cap, two venues in Bristol decided to host stripping by using the exemption where they had not done so before there would be less than 3% of the current volume of activity. It would take 66 venues in Bristol to host stripping 11 times, every year, to come anywhere near the volume of current activity. **The frequency exemption does not justify not adopting a nil cap policy.**
53. The Government “*was not convinced*”⁹³ that the presence of the frequency exemption in legislation would lead to unregulated, poorly managed premises running events in contrast to events run by regulated, licensed premises. But it was made clear and is written into legislation⁹⁴ that **the frequency exemption may be restrictively amended or repealed altogether by order**, and this is the route for any interested actor (women’s rights campaigners, concerned councillors, licensing officers) to take if they agree with the views, expressed by women’s rights campaign groups at the time that the legislation was drafted, that even if a premises runs fewer than 12 events a year it should be required to adhere to rigorous conditions to protect the rights and safety of performers. Of course, any venue seeking to put on relevant entertainment should consider itself obliged to ensure the protection and safety of performers and the expectation that this should be the case can be very clearly signalled by a responsible licensing authority. Some licensed premises in Bristol have a statement within their alcohol licence that they will not host sexual entertainment⁹⁵ and we welcome a move towards more venues taking a similar stance.
54. Unregulated entertainment (relevant entertainment that is not subject to policy conditions) can be hosted by any unlicensed premises, without notifying the Licensing Authority, so long as it takes place as infrequently as described above. This is the case **whether or not** there are licensed SEVs in a local authority. This point was questioned by Committee Members in March 2021 and officers confirmed the position: “*Officers confirmed that licensed venues are able to hold 11 events per year and this cannot be restricted under the Authority’s policy*”.⁹⁶ **It makes no difference whether or not there is a cap on SEVs in a local authority.** Any evidence that the spirit of the frequency exemption was being broken – for example by any venue or group of venues putting on relevant entertainment with any degree of regularity or at a scale approaching the volume of relevant entertainment occurring on any given day in a licensed SEV, would be material worth adducing to Parliament in support of amendment or repeal of the frequency exemption. But from all that is known about supply and demand in the sex trade, **a nil cap will achieve the aim of vastly reducing the availability of relevant entertainment, and will send a message about the social undesirability of the activity, both of which will reduce demand.** There will be less sexual objectification of women and there will be no tacit approval of such activity by the local authority, which is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty.
55. In 2011 there were five SEVs in Bristol. A cap was introduced that reduced the number to three - and there are currently two clubs in operation, both run by the same operator in the City Centre, since the closure of the Jack of Diamonds club in Old Market in 2017 for multiple licence

⁹² Kolvin, P. (2010). Sex Licensing. Para 3.20, p.19

⁹³ Kolvin (ibid.) Para 3.21, p.19

⁹⁴ Sch 3 para 2A(4) and para 2A(8) LGMPA

⁹⁵ Officer statement in Committee hearing on 8th March 2021

⁹⁶ Minutes 8th March 2021

<https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/s60755/Draft%20Minutes%208th%20March%202021.pdf>

breaches. A member of the Committee had argued in 2011⁹⁷ that a nil policy in that West Street/Old Market locality was “not sustainable and verged on gesture politics”, yet there has now been no SEV in the locality for 4 years. On reducing the number from 4 to 2 in the City Centre area, a member of the Committee expressed concern that this reduction “might drive the provision underground” – this did not happen. The argument that there is some fixed ‘demand’ for this type of sex buying, which must be met by well-run highly regulated licensed operators able to run 365 days of the year to fill a vacuum that would otherwise be met by more dangerous unregulated activity taking place, is comprehensively refuted in Bristol itself. The city’s own experience is of **moving from five to two venues with no evidence at all of an upsurge** in more dangerous, unregulated SEV-style activity involving lap-dancers or strippers, or indeed of recorded crimes associated with any such imagined activity. Bristol’s Licensing Committee have confirmed this in response to written questions, stating “*There is no evidence of unregulated venues within the city of a similar nature to the current venues*”.⁹⁸ The fact that **supply feeds demand** – and not the other way around – is evidenced already in Bristol.

56. Further and conclusive evidence from Bristol itself, that supply feeds demand - and supply of *regulated* entertainment feeds supply of *unregulated* entertainment - is demonstrated beyond any question via materials published by “Bristol Stag and Hen”. This is a company run by Carrie Hale who also runs the two SEVs that have remained in the city. This company has made use of its contact list of performers, offering to provide “*topless waitresses*” to purchasers not only in the “*highly regulated*” premises themselves but also elsewhere.⁹⁹ Legal advice makes it absolutely clear that topless waitressing is “relevant entertainment” in the scope of the Act.¹⁰⁰ Before the pandemic, the company also offered to hire out naked women as “*body platters*” for customers to eat food from and offered to send a “*sexy lady*” out with stag groups on bar crawls, while handcuffed to the stag.¹⁰¹ The company is also offering strippergrams¹⁰² under the tagline “**No stag night is complete without the obligatory stripper right lads?**” and offers to send chaperoned strippers to “*a private venue/event*” and to stag group locations “*somewhere that doesn’t have any strip or lap dancing clubs*” as the “*perfect alternative*” to SEV-based entertainment, explaining,

“We have a whole host of experienced performers ready to entertain your stag group. We work exclusively with renowned gentlemen’s clubs to ensure we have the best performers for your event. If you require stunning and experienced performers that you would normally see working in the cities best gentlemen’s clubs then you have come to the right place.”

The ‘standard’ performance goes beyond what is permissible in SEVs, explaining that there will be a fully nude show which:

“will include the stag/birthday boy getting a live lap dance in front of all the lads for maximum embarrassment. Our experienced performers will also make sure they suitably humiliate him for you making him drink a dirty shot, some whipping, have some body hair waxed, ice down the pants and also make him participate in the show by making him crawl round on all fours like a dog and making him bark for maximum entertainment for the rest of the group”.

57. Social media for Bristol’s SEVs also shows that they contribute further to the normalisation of sexism and sexual objectification, beyond their own licensed premises. Despite the ending of the

⁹⁷ Minutes of Meeting held on 23 November 2011

https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/Data/Licensing%20Committee/201201191000/Agenda/1123_mins.pdf

⁹⁸ Bristol Licensing Committee meeting 8th March 2021 response to Q3: page 8. Based on a benchmarking exercise with Core Cities and a request for evidence put to the national policy forum by officers

[https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/b27405/PF%20Pack%2008th-Mar-](https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/b27405/PF%20Pack%2008th-Mar-2021%2009.00%20Licensing%20Committee.pdf?T=9)

[2021%2009.00%20Licensing%20Committee.pdf?T=9](https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/b27405/PF%20Pack%2008th-Mar-2021%2009.00%20Licensing%20Committee.pdf?T=9)

⁹⁹ <https://www.bristolstagandhen.co.uk/topless-waitresses/> accessed 12-6-21 [screenshot](#)

¹⁰⁰ See Kolvin, P. (2010). Sex Licensing Para 3.8 page 16

¹⁰¹ [Screenshot](#) April 2021

¹⁰² <https://www.bristolstagandhen.co.uk/strippergrams/> accessed 12-6-21 [screenshot](#)

sexist practice of using “walk-on girls” in darts world championships and “grid girls” in Formula One,¹⁰³ at a local level Bristol SEVs are advertising and providing “ring girls, darts walk-on girls and grid girls”¹⁰⁴ to local sports promoters.

58. Social media for Bristol’s SEVs also cross-promotes the private accounts (e.g. Instagram) of workers, compromising their safety.¹⁰⁵ Workers also cross-promote the SEVs. This is a business model. Any person may take less than a minute and a small number of clicks to identify names, private social media accounts and accounts selling sex and private stripping through the SEVs’ posts. This is unsafe for performers in addition to illustrating clearly how Bristol’s SEVs feed the wider, unregulated trade.

59. While it continues to be important that – as long as SEVs are licensed - the licence conditions are as stringent as possible for the protection and safety of the women who work as performers, there is **no evidence that a licensed highly regulated SEV does in fact make performers safer than they would be in less regulated environments**. Deshotels and Forsyth (2008) found that the stricter a club’s rules, the more dancers would benefit from breaking them. Decker et al. (2017) were surprised by their research findings that no differences in recent violent experiences of performers emerged based on the ‘club risk environment scale’, which measured the micro- and meso- environments including the policy environment, within individual SEVs. In fact the policy environment (the stance of the management and their adherence to good practice) was the least related factor to performers’ experience of violence in SEVs. A performer, responding to the recent Home Office research study (Hester et al., 2019) said that the combination of financial need and the legal and regulatory environment were a “perfect cocktail of conditions” for **undermining safety**:

“... ‘it can often become a free-for-all race-to-the-bottom of transgressive behaviours – rules and boundaries may become flouted if dancers are in need of cash”.

60. As Bristol City Council has made clear, in considering its statutory obligations towards performers working in venues that are licensed by the Local Authority: *“If the venue is removed then any potential risk to the performer within that venue is also removed”*.¹⁰⁶

61. The police have not published data on violence against performers; however an internet search for reports of violence against performers and a review of the material collated by the campaign organisation *Not Buying It*¹⁰⁷ across the UK reveals that in every recorded case we found of violence against a performer, it occurred while she was working in a licensed SEV that was required to adhere to a pool of conditions. Although the concerns of this report are not just with violence within SEVs but with violence and sexism in wider society, nevertheless we have found no reports of violence against performers working under the frequency exemption.

62. Similarly there is no evidence for the entirely unsupported claim (Colosi, 2013) that the closure of lap-dancing clubs would “result in the unemployment of women”. The performers are self-employed, and they are free to work for multiple clients, not only in SEVs. Working in the sex trade is not the only work available to women. In fact Bristol’s rates of employment for women are

¹⁰³ February 2018, reported in London Evening Standard <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/leading-women-in-sport-hail-decision-to-scrap-formula-one-grid-girls-a3755166.html>

¹⁰⁴ Facebook [post](#), October 2021

¹⁰⁵ Screenshots available but not shared for the protection of women’s identities

¹⁰⁶ Bristol Licensing Committee meeting 8th March 2021 response to Q3: page 8.

<https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/b27405/PF%20Pack%2008th-Mar-2021%2009.00%20Licensing%20Committee.pdf?T=9>

¹⁰⁷ <https://notbuyingit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/documents/Strip-Sleaze-Recent.pdf> - note the club “Eroticats” referred to as totally unregulated in the document did in fact have an SEV licence.

buoyant in normal non-pandemic times and exceed the national average by some distance.¹⁰⁸ Submissions made by performers themselves to SEV licensing hearings have attested to their varied qualifications and work experience. It should not need saying that **there is no such person as a woman who is only suited to work in the sex trade and no other occupation.**

63. We are absolutely committed to making Bristol a city that offers women quality employment, with decent pay, flexible working, affordable childcare and good conditions of service such as maternity leave and sick pay. The suggestion that these are best found in an SEV is a disingenuous diversion and the Committee has already been advised by its Legal Advisor at its meeting on 8th March 2021 that **“as far as employment is concerned that’s not a consideration for you when deciding whether or not a locality is an appropriate place to have a sexual entertainment venue”**.¹⁰⁹ As far as equality obligations are concerned, the fact that customers are disproportionately male and performers almost exclusively female is a demonstration of gender inequality and not a reason to perpetuate this. We welcome any initiatives to support good quality employment for ALL women across Bristol. SEVs are not the answer to increasing women’s access to the employment market or better employment prospects and terms.

MODERN POLICY APPROACHES TO PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

“Violence against women and girls is rooted in gender-based discrimination, social norms that accept violence, and gender stereotypes that continue cycles of violence... prevention — addressing the structural causes, as well as the risk and protective factors, associated with violence — is pivotal to eliminating violence against women and girls completely.”

UN Women¹¹⁰

““The police cannot tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG) on their own. By the time there is a response from the police, a crime has been committed, but action is needed to prevent it happening in the first place. The only way we can achieve bold and sustainable change is if national and local government, partner agencies, and organisations work together with the police to prevent women and girls becoming victims, and make sure those who do become victims receive all the support they need.”

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and FRS, September 2021 ¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ In 2018-19 Bristol had an employment rate of 78.9% which was the highest of British Core Cities and 3.9 percentage points above the national (GB) average. Its unemployment rate was 3.5% which is below the national (GB) average and lowest of the British Core Cities. By December 2020 despite the pandemic the employment rate was 75.4% and the second highest of the UK Core Cities. By July 2021 73.5% of Bristol women were in employment and they had an unemployment rate of 3.8%, well below the GB average of 4.7%..

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/32947/State+of+Bristol+-+Key+Facts+2018-19.PDF>

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/32947/Bristol+Key+Facts+2021>

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157348/report.aspx?town=bristol#tabempunemp>

¹⁰⁹ Bristol City Council Licensing Hearing 8th March 2021 Webcast

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O66GeA4KzMM> (28:55)

¹¹⁰ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/prevention>

¹¹¹ HMICFRS (2021) Police Response to Violence Against Women and Girls,

<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/police-response-to-violence-against-women-and-girls-final-inspection-report.pdf> p125

64. Evidence based research has now resulted in recommendations that the most effective way to bring down the prevalence of men’s violence against women is to refocus on **community-level prevention**: that is, to change the **cultural conditions which are facilitating men’s belief that they are entitled to harass, abuse and violate women**. These cultural conditions underpin the behaviour of individual men.¹¹² Authors of the 2019 report into intimate partner violence and sexual violence prevention by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) wrote that “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”. They said,
*“Because the outer layers of the Social Ecological Model [of violence prevention] (community and societal) affect the norms, characteristics, and conditions that make violence more or less likely to occur in a neighborhood, school, community, or in society, focusing on these layers has the potential to create a deeper, lasting impact.”*¹¹³
 Community-level prevention is the remit of local authorities. In 2019 the World Health Organization issued guidance for policy-makers¹¹⁴ which urges the development of “**strategies that challenge harmful gender attitudes, beliefs, norms and stereotypes that uphold male privilege and female subordination**” in order to prevent violence against women (p9).
65. This new focus is beginning to be reflected in policy and legislation. A number of local authorities in England have adopted nil-cap policies including Swansea, Winchester, Warwick and Slough.
66. In 2014 the Government Equalities Office published a report - *The Watched Body: Gender Roles, Body Image and Public Intrusions*¹¹⁵ - which states that the Government and its partners should be actively working to “**change the cultural and social stories of what women’s bodies are for – women are not objects**” (p12).
67. In Scotland, the Government’s *Strategy for Preventing and Eradicating Violence against Women and Girls* (2018) sets out a definition of violence against women and girls which includes commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution, lap dancing, stripping, pornography and human trafficking.¹¹⁶
68. The UK Government’s strategy – *Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2020*¹¹⁷ - made explicit the links between gender inequality, violence and harmful social norms. The strategy said (p16):
*“Violence against women and girls is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality. We will continue to **challenge the deep-rooted social norms, attitudes and behaviours that discriminate against and limit women and girls across all communities**”.*
 The Government’s refreshed strategy – *Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls* (2021) reiterates the importance of prevention through tackling the “*societal norms that condone violence and gender inequality*”.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Hester & Lilley (2014); Jewkes, Flood & Lang (2015); and see the recommendations made by Fulu et al. (2013)

¹¹³ Continuing the Dialogue: Learning from the Past and Looking to the Future of Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv/Continuing-The-Dialogue-508.pdf> (p8)

¹¹⁴ WHO (World Health Organization) (2019). RESPECT women: Preventing violence against women.

<https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/WHO-RHR-18.19-eng.pdf>

¹¹⁵ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417739/The_Watched_Body_PDF.pdf

¹¹⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2018/04/equally-safe-scotlands-strategy-prevent-eradicate-violence-against-women-girls/documents/00534791-pdf/00534791-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00534791.pdf> p12

¹¹⁷ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/522166/VAWG_Strategy_FINAL_PUBLICATION_MASTER_vRB.PDF

¹¹⁸ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005630/Tackling_Violence_Against_Women_and_Girls_Strategy-July_2021-FINAL.pdf

69. The national Women’s Equality Party was formed in 2015 to be a new collaborative force in British politics uniting people of all genders, ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, beliefs and experiences in the shared determination to see women enjoy the same rights and opportunities as men - so that all can flourish. In 2018 the Women’s Equality Party passed a conference motion calling upon all Local Authorities to ensure they fulfil their Public Sector Equality Duty by considering the impact of any sexual entertainment venues on all people within their jurisdiction, calling upon all England and Wales Local Authorities to use their power under the Policing and Crime Act 2009 to **adopt a nil cap SEV policy**¹¹⁹.
70. In 2018 the UK Parliament made the Women and Equalities Committee a permanent select committee of the House of Commons. The permanent establishment of the Committee was one of the recommendations to advance gender equality in parliament and government made by Professor Sarah Childs in her report *The Good Parliament* because of its key specialist role in analysing, scrutinising and shaping policy that promotes equality and diversity. The Committee has conducted a number of inquiries of relevance to the issue of sexual objectification, violence against women and gender inequality: see for example the inquiries into sexual harassment and violence in schools¹²⁰ and sexual harassment in the workplace.¹²¹ In 2018 the Committee held an inquiry into the sexual harassment of women and girls in public places¹²² and held an evidence session on sexual harassment at night, concluding that *“sexual harassment is the norm in the night-time economy, marinating women and girls’ enjoyment of going out at night”* (para 128). In oral evidence to the Committee, Karon Monaghan QC – expert on the Public Sector Equality Duty and who acted in the cases regarding Sheffield City Council and SEVs where the council was found to be in breach of the Equality Act 2010 – said in oral evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee on sexual harassment:
*“what has been said in the lap dancing public sector equality duty case is that licensing lap dancing clubs and sexual entertainment venues more generally, **have an impact on the wider community because they promote the idea that sexual objectification of women and sexual harassment commonly in those environments is lawful.**”*
 The QC went on to say,
*“There is so much that can be done using the public sector equality duty. Planning, environment, lighting, the way streets are organised, schools, **licensing sex entertainment venues.** How are we doing that in the 21st century? **We are not going to get rid of sexual violence if we mandate the sexual objectification of women in licensed venues.**”*
71. In July 2021 the Justice Inspectorate published its interim report into Violence Against Women and Girls, concluding that
*“The only way we can achieve bold and sustainable change is if national and local government, partner agencies, and organisations work together with the police to **prevent women and girls becoming victims**”.*¹²³
72. All public bodies in the UK, including Local Authorities, are a part of the national strategic response to gender inequality and violence against women and the UK has pledged to do its part under its international obligations. These include the main international law on women’s equality, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which requires the UK to take action to eliminate sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women, recognising that this is a form of discrimination and related to inequality between the sexes. In March 2019 the UN concluded its observations on the UK’s compliance with CEDAW, and made the following recommendation about this ‘principal area of concern’:

¹¹⁹ https://www.womensequality.org.uk/conf18_motions

¹²⁰ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/91/9102.htm>

¹²¹ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/725/72502.htm>

¹²² <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/701/70105.htm>

¹²³ <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/interim-report-inspection-into-how-effectively-police-engage-with-women-and-girls.pdf>

*“Take effective measures to **reduce demand for commercial sex**, including by carrying out education and awareness-raising measures targeted at men and boys and **focused on combating all notions of subordination and objectification of women.**”¹²⁴*

73. In 2012 the UK Government signed the Istanbul Convention and is committed to ratifying it imminently. The Istanbul Convention requires parties to take meaningful action to address violence against women and, again, recognises the inextricable relationship between discrimination, inequality between the sexes, and violence against women.
74. Similarly the UK is committed to meeting the targets under the United Nations **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs). Bristol is signed up to monitoring its progress as a city towards the SDGs and has launched the UK’s first Voluntary Local Review of the SDGs.¹²⁵ Goal 11 is to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. Goal 5 requires all forms of discrimination against women and girls to be ended, and all forms of violence against women and girls to be eliminated in the public and private spheres. The Bristol One City Plan puts the SDGs at its centre. The United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) (2015) has this to say about SDG 5:

“Women and girls experience cities in different ways to men and boys. While the city has been a place of liberation for women in comparison to their rural counterparts, it has also been a site of gender violence and female exploitation.”¹²⁶

The United Nations (2012) has this to say in its guide to gender issues in urban planning and design¹²⁷:

“There is a tendency to view urban planning as gender-neutral, not shaped by or in the interest of a particular sex. This assumes that both sexes are affected equally. In reality, what is ‘gender-neutral’ usually has a male perspective and is in men’s interest. The exclusion of women from urban planning means women’s daily lives and perspectives do not shape urban form and function. In other words, city planning overlooks the specific challenges and concerns that women and girls face, underlining the fact that the city is not inclusive and equitable in its design, infrastructure, facilities, and services.”

*“**The first task of local governments is to act as a model of best practice for our communities....Local governments are on the frontline of tackling violence and harmful practices against women**”.*

“Local governments should fully mainstream a gender perspective into local legislation, urban planning and policy-making in order to tackle the multiple barriers to women’s empowerment. Only in this way will women and girls be able to play an equal role in the economic, social, political and cultural life of our cities.”

UN Women, in its 2018 guidance “Towards an End to Sexual Harassment” says that

*“**All efforts must pay heed to those who have knowledge and experience – survivors, the women’s movement and experts on violence and gender inequality**”.*¹²⁸

75. The UK Government’s approach to VAWG prevention recognises the importance of political stakeholders and that *“it is unrealistic to think that the prevailing patriarchal norms underpinning in-country gendered relations are not also shared by the political elite”*.¹²⁹ This is why it is critical

¹²⁴ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, CEDAW/C/GBR/CO/8, 35(b).

¹²⁵ <https://www.bristolonecity.com/sdgs/>

¹²⁶ https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/the_role_of_local_governments_in_promoting_gender_equality_for_sustainability.pdf

¹²⁷ <https://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Gender-Responsive-Urban-Planning-and-Design.pdf>

¹²⁸ <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2018/towards-an-end-to-sexual-harassment-en.pdf>

¹²⁹ Crawford et al. (2020) p163-4

that political stakeholders and decision-makers all have access to evidence and guidance to inform and underpin their actions.

76. The large body of scholarly research outlining the causes and consequences of gender inequality and violence against women (throughout this document, and see the [references](#)) is supported by a range of helpful guidance setting out how those who are responsible for promoting gender equality and for preventing violence against women should go about this task. **We are now in an international policy and research context that makes it clear that the continued operation of SEVs directly interferes with the Local Authority's duty**, as well as their desire, to see men and women treated equally in the city, to have the same opportunities in life, and for women and girls to be free from fearing and experiencing what is sadly the very real violence of men, which remains one of the hardest policy challenges that exists, for politicians and for educators.
77. One of the reasons that this challenge is so hard is that the socio-ecological model of violence prevention¹³⁰ requires action on a number of different levels, all at the same time. These levels are: Individual; Relationship; Community and Society. **Public Health** – which sits under the Local Authority – must take action on all of these levels. The level that Local Authority politicians have responsibility for is the Community level.
78. Guidance is clear as to the “Risk Factors” and “Protective Factors” for preventing violence against women at the Community Level. World Health Organization Guidance for Policy-makers (2019)¹³¹ identifies relevant norms that policy-makers should be seeking to influence:
- Risk Factor: Harmful gender norms that uphold male privilege and limit women’s autonomy
 - Protective Factor: Norms that support non-violence and gender equitable relationships, and promote women’s empowerment.
- These norms that limit women’s autonomy (risk factor) and promote women’s empowerment (protective factor) refer to women as the class of people identified in UK law as sharing the ‘protected characteristic’ of sex. That is, any feeling or claim that individual women say they feel empowered by performing in SEVs is not relevant and is not what is meant by promoting women’s empowerment. Rather, **it is necessary to promote all women’s empowerment in relation to all men**. It is well established that **conforming to harmful gender norms in a sexist society brings rewards to individual women but not women as a group, who are disadvantaged by this**.¹³²
79. It is the role of policy-makers at the Community level to help to change the cultural conditions which are facilitating the belief of men that they are entitled to harass, abuse and violate women. Such beliefs are not formed or forgotten in a short space of time (e.g. one night’s visit to an SEV) but they are **reinforced instead of challenged, with every visit to an SEV by every man who already holds those views**. The UK Government’s flagship programme on what works to prevent VAWG warned in 2020 that those engaged in prevention need to look at the triggers which “trip up” success.¹³³ We identify the operation of SEVs on Bristol’s high streets as a trigger that threatens to trip up the work being done by other city partners to change norms and address VAWG in the city. Policy guidance makes clear that:

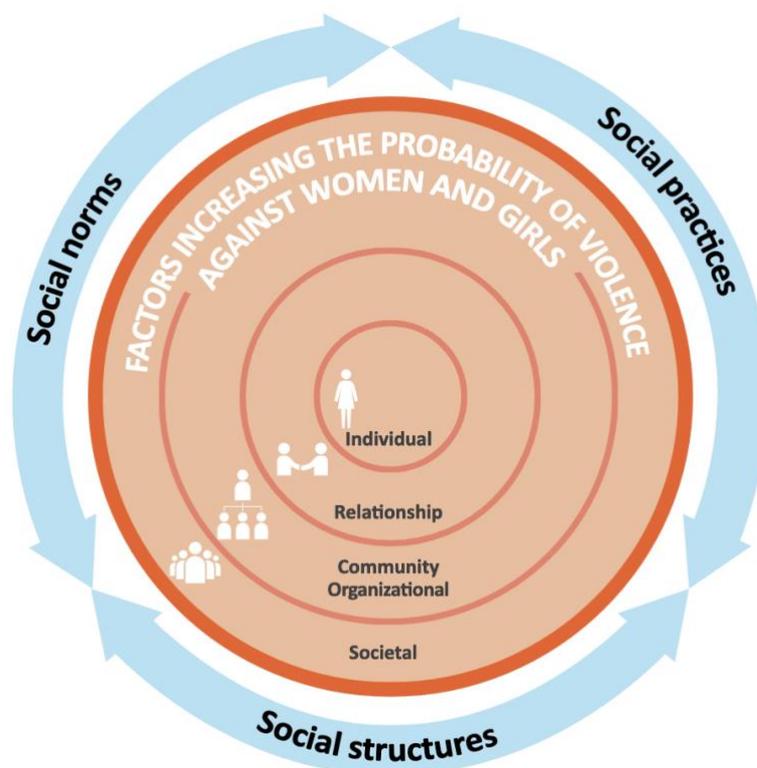
¹³⁰ See for example the CDC Model: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv/Continuing-The-Dialogue-508.pdf> and the UN/WHO/UDP/ILO/OHCR Framework: https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/prevention_framework_unwomen_nov2015.pdf?la=en&vs=5223

¹³¹ <https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/WHO-RHR-18.19-eng.pdf>

¹³² This phenomenon is known as the “patriarchal bargain” (Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with patriarchy. *Gender & society* 2 (4), 274-290).

¹³³ Crawford et al. (2020)

“A **coordinated and consistent approach** is needed to ensure that activities at one ecological level are supported and reinforced by activities at other layers. This mutually reinforcing approach has been identified as especially important in the prevention of violence against women.”¹³⁴



BRISTOL'S POLICY CONTEXT

80. In Bristol, reflecting the growing understanding of the importance of a community-level approach, a number of city-wide projects have been initiated to build a culture that does not tolerate abuse. These projects include: a rolling programme of public advertising across the city to challenge ideas of entitlement (www.thisisnotanexcuse.org/); a programme of education across all of Bristol's early years, primary and secondary schools (<http://www.bava.org.uk/professionals/projects/the-bristol-ideal/>); an intensive programme of education for students developed by UWE and commissioned by Public Health England and now based in Exeter (<https://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/research/interventioninitiative/>); workplace education sessions being developed by Public Health Bristol; Zero Tolerance programmes (www.bristolzerotolerance.com) developed via Bristol Women's Commission.¹³⁵ Bristol's own strategy against gendered violence, to which the City Council is a signatory, contains an objective to reduce the opportunities for sexual exploitation and negative perceptions of women that are afforded by SEVs.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, UNESCO, UDP, ILO, OHCHR (2015). A Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence Against Women. https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/prevention_framework_unwomen_nov2015.pdf?la=en&vs=5223

¹³⁵ Elsewhere, as a local education provider pointed out to Zero Option Sheffield about a local SEV, “the venue portrays that it is acceptable that women act as sexual objects which contributes to society's violence against women and girls. DECSY have been running a Gender Respect project with local schools for the past three years and the venue would directly undermine the work that we have been carrying out.”

¹³⁶ <http://www.bava.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/strategy.pdf>

81. Officers and members of the Licensing committee will be aware that for more than a decade now, multiple agencies in Bristol concerned with gender equality and with violence against women have expressed significant and ongoing concern about the presence of licensed SEVs in the city, making representations in policy reviews and at hearings, despite it being complicated, stressful and time consuming work and despite being unfunded to do so. This is because it is our judgement that this is a **strategically significant area** which requires our attention so that we can meet our aims of increasing equality between women and men, girls and boys, and of eliminating discrimination and harassment.
82. Bristol was the first major UK city to sign the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life.¹³⁷ The Charter makes these statements, which direct local authorities to place equality at the heart of their considerations:

“Equality of women and men constitutes a fundamental right for all, and an essential value for every democracy. In order to be achieved, this right needs not only to be legally recognized, but to be effectively applied to all aspects of life: political, economic, social and cultural ... Implementing and promoting the right to equality must be at the heart of this concept of local self-government.”

*“The **elimination of gender stereotypes is fundamental to achieving equality of women and men.** Local and regional authorities must promote the elimination of the stereotypes and obstacles upon which the inequalities in status and condition of women are based, and which give rise to the unequal evaluation of the roles of women and men in political, economic, social and cultural terms.”*

*“Gender assessments shall include... **Reviewing existing policies**, procedures, practices and patterns and volumes of usage, in order to assess whether they disclose any unfair discrimination, whether they are **based on gender stereotypes, and whether they adequately take into account any specific needs of women and men**”*

*The Signatory recognizes the right of each woman and man to security of the person, and to liberty of movement, and that these rights cannot be freely or equally exercised if women or men are unsafe or insecure, whether in the private or public domain, or if they feel unsafe or insecure ... The Signatory therefore commits itself **to develop and implement strategies, policies and actions**, including specific improvements to the state or design of the local environment, or to policing and related services, to enhance the practical security and safety of women and men, and to seek to reduce their respective perceptions of lack of safety and security.”*

*“The Signatory **recognises that gender-based violence arises from the idea, on the part of the perpetrator, of the superiority of one sex over the other in the context of an unequal relationship of power.** ... The Signatory therefore **commits itself to establish and strengthen policies and actions against gender-based violence**”*

83. All of the good work being done now in the city, and the resources being used to implement the work, sit in a context wherein Bristol City Council is currently providing licences to SEVs as part of the night-time economy and as part of our ‘cultural offer’. This is not compatible with the outcomes that the city aims to achieve: **a culture of equality between women and men where there is zero tolerance of violence against women.**
84. Avon and Somerset Constabulary, and Sue Mounstevens the previous Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset, expressed their support for a nil cap for Bristol in submissions to the Licensing Committee prior to the nil cap policy being introduced. The draft

¹³⁷ http://www.ccre.org/docs/charte_egalite_en.pdf

Police & Crime Plan¹³⁸ from Mark Shelford, Police and Crime Commissioner since 2021, names the **prevention** of crime and disorder as the fundamental mission of the police and lists the prevention of crime alongside fighting crime as Priority 1. As set out in this report, addressing the harmful social norms about men and women that are replicated and reinforced by SEVs is key to the prevention of violence against women and girls.

85. Philip Kolvin QC, Patron of the Institute of Licensing,¹³⁹ writes that in its policy as to numbers of premises in a particular locality, a local authority "*might state that in determining the correct number, it will attach **particular weight to... gender equality considerations***". He also says:¹⁴⁰ "*It would be helpful for the policy to state what are the overarching objectives of the authority in licensing sex establishments... This may include, for example, considerations of gender equality ... The policy might also establish how its aims cohere with other corporate aims of the authority... The idea is to give the reader a sense of **what really matters to the authority** in terms of its objectives, and how the policy sits within its wider aspirations for the area*".

86. Guildford's SEV policy, for example, states: "5.9 The Council has taken account of its own corporate strategies and priorities as represented by its Corporate Plan 2013-2016, Visitor Strategy and Economic Strategy. The council believes that, in taking these strategies into consideration, SEVs are not in accordance with a culturally rich and diverse Borough. In particular SEVs tend not to be inclusive facilities, appeal only to a narrow sector of the community and are unlikely to enhance the cultural reputation of the borough."

87. Philip Kolvin QC has also argued successfully against licensing city-centre SEVs. In 2015 councillors agreed not to renew an SEV licence in Chester after residents appointed Mr Kolvin to represent them. He said,

*"The new legislation is designed to give authorities much greater control over what goes where, taking into account community concerns. **Lap dancing clubs and historic city centres trying to promote a family-friendly image are not a desirable mix, particularly with a growing residential population on the doorstep.**"*

Mr Kolvin ... "*argued the venue need not close if the application was refused but could instead be converted into a restaurant, cafe or shop.*"¹⁴¹

88. Bristol has a number of **local policies and strategies** that reference the importance to the city of equality, safety and women's safety in particular. Conversely, we could find no reference in local policies that places positive value on the sex industry or upon SEVs in particular.

SPECIFIC DOCUMENTS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT FOR POLICY:

89. **Equality Act 2010 S.149:** a new SEV policy should spell out that a key factor to be taken into consideration in the decision making process shall be the impact upon women. The policy review should be referenced as an opportunity for the Council to meet its positive duties under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to i) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation against women which occurs as a result of SEVs, ii) advance equality of opportunity between men and women by removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by women, and iii) foster good relations between men and women. This report provides significant evidence that it

¹³⁸ <https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/AS-Police-Crime-Plan-2021-25-Draft-v2.0-1.pdf> accessed 31 October 2021

¹³⁹ Sex Licensing (2010), p.128 para 15.14

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.125, para 15.3

¹⁴¹ Cheshire Live, 29 June 2015 "Chester Platinum Lounge lap dancing club back in the spotlight"

would be perverse to have due regard to these issues yet decide that anything more than a zero-cap SEV licensing policy would be suitable.

90. As Burman and Johnstone (2015, p.146) have said in regard to gender-based violence:
“There is widespread international recognition that women experience gender-specific forms of violence, stemming from an interaction of interpersonal, institutional, and structural factors underpinned by institutionalised power relations between women and men, and that such violence is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequalities (European Commission, 2010). Framing violence as gender-based, that is, violence directed at a woman because she is a woman, or which affects women disproportionately, highlights the need to situate it within the context of women’s (and girls’) status in society, taking into account norms, social structures and gender roles, which greatly influence vulnerability to violence”.
91. Guidance and other texts relevant to the implementation of the Equality Act include the EHRC’s **Technical Guidance on the PSED** (2014) requiring relevant bodies to tackle the consequences of past decisions which failed to give due regard to the equality aims.
92. Safer Bristol Partnership: **Strategy against violence and abuse against women and girls and domestic and sexual violence against men** (Ibid.) – Strategic Objective (p18) *“Work with the Licensing authority to reduce opportunities for sexual exploitation and negative perceptions of women through lapdancing clubs.”*
93. Bristol’s **Corporate Strategy 2018-2023**:¹⁴² This document puts equality at the heart of the vision for Bristol’s future and states boldly (p14) that it can be “taken as read” that the city meets all its legal obligations, listing the Public Sector Equality Duty in the text. The document confirms that 2000 new homes are to be built (p7) – which means that city centre areas are becoming increasingly more residential and increasingly unsuitable for the presence of SEVs.
94. Bristol’s **Central Area Plan**:¹⁴³ *“Bristol City Centre will be a single, thriving city centre consisting of connected neighbourhoods each with their own distinctive and complementary character and role and a vibrant, safe and welcoming environment in which high quality new development integrates and enhances the city’s cherished historic environment”* (p1). *“New development will provide more family homes”* (p2).
95. Bristol **Development Framework Core Strategy**¹⁴⁴: *“Successful and vibrant mixed-use city centre environments will be delivered which provide for safe and mixed residential communities integrated with businesses, shops, leisure and open spaces.”* (p19) The minimum target for new homes in the City Centre by 2026 is 7,400 (p55).
96. Bristol’s **Old Market Quarter Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015-2026**:¹⁴⁵ Population change makes this area *“one of the City Centre’s fastest growing residential areas and its population is expected to increase further... between 2011 and 2026, the growth in population will continue and is anticipated that it could increase by a further 3,500”* (p10). *“An attractive mix of shops, cafés, bars, offices, arts and community facilities along Old Market and West Street will ensure that the area is well known as a great place to live, work and visit. The plan will help to*

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<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/239309/Bristol+City+Council+Corporate+Strategy+2018+to+2023/3e7d7377-ed1f-5d67-c6ab-af49b7159a5e>

¹⁴³ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/34540/BCAP%20Adopted%20March%202015%20-%20Main%20Document%20%26%20Annex%20-%20Web%20PDF.pdf>

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[https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/34540/Core%20Strategy%20WEB%20PDF%20\(low%20res%20with%20links\)_0.pdf](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/34540/Core%20Strategy%20WEB%20PDF%20(low%20res%20with%20links)_0.pdf)

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/403537/OMQNDP+made+version+WEB.pdf>

promote a balanced and diverse community with a mix of housing types for people at all stages of their lives.” (p16)

97. Bristol’s **One City Plan**¹⁴⁶ specifically states that its approach is guided by the SDGs (see above) and contains a wealth of commitments and targets that cannot be achieved without meeting the city’s obligations under the PSED for gender equality.

98. **Bristol Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2018**.¹⁴⁷ For young people in Bristol, mental health disorders are up to three times more prevalent in women than men. And in Bristol schools 42% of girls (compared with 27% of boys) report a low mental wellbeing score. The gender ratio for self-harm is 9:1 women to men, an increase from 5:1 in 2015. Bristol students accounted for 11% of self-harm attendances at the BRI. In Bristol the rate of sexual offences rose by 28% in 2015 alone (higher than national rates) and 84% of victims were female. Organisations such as SARSAS noted an 84% rise in victims seeking support in 2015/16. **The interconnected nature of women’s mental health and gender violence are priorities for Bristol.**

99. **Bristol Quality of Life Survey 2017/18**.¹⁴⁸ 25% of Bristol women said they experienced sex discrimination / sexual harassment / harassment on the basis of their gender in the past 12 months, the highest proportion for any group surveyed. 39% of Bristol women think that sexual harassment is an issue of concern in Bristol. 9.6% of Bristol women limit their freedom of movement in the city because of feeling unsafe.

100. **Enabling Women’s Voice and Influence in Bristol, 2010**: This report by GEM consultants surveyed women of Bristol and found that almost 92% were not sure or did not believe that decision makers take full account of women’s equality issues.

101. **GirlGuiding Girls’ Attitudes Survey 2016**¹⁴⁹:

“Girls are saying they can’t do the things they’d like because they don’t feel safe or because of double standards on what behaviours are acceptable or what roles are open to them compared with boys... From as young as seven, girls feel the impact of daily sexist images of women and girls in the media, online and all around them. Girls tell us that sexist objectification of women in the media makes them feel disempowered and that gender stereotypes make them feel that their gender will hold them back in life. They tell us they have to confront intense and unobtainable appearance pressures to be perfect and many say they feel they’re not good enough... Overwhelmingly, girls want to live in a world without gender stereotypes, where women and girls aren’t judged on how they look, where they are safe and where people are not discriminated against.” (p2);

61% of girls aged 11-21 have experienced people criticising their bodies (p7). 70% of girls aged 11-21 say sexism is so widespread it affects most areas of their lives (p9). 21% of girls aged 17-21 experience street harassment and 44% change their behaviour to avoid this (p14).

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.bristolonecity.com/wp-content/pdf/BD11190-One-City-Plan-web-version.pdf>

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/1655362/JSNA+Chapter+Women%27s+Health+%28V14%29/9024901c-46fe-e13a-a194-0260ed22a3c1>

¹⁴⁸ https://opendata.bristol.gov.uk/pages/quality_of_life_results_201718/

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/globalassets/docs-and-resources/research-and-campaigns/girls-attitudes-survey-2016.pdf>

WOMEN WHO WORK IN SEVS

102. There is a very small number of women who earn some money by working part-time as self-employed performers in SEVs in Bristol, often alongside other work. The same women’s groups in Bristol who support the nil cap policy have also been instrumental in advocating for the development of Bristol’s pool of conditions to ensure maximum safety and minimum exploitation of the performers in the city’s SEVs for as long as they operate.
103. In recent years the two remaining SEVs in Bristol, supported by a team of paid advisors, have elicited and submitted statements by performers to the Licensing (Hearings) Sub-Committees and to the Full Committee, stating that the performers wish to continue working as strippers. Together with industry interest groups and collectives, women who have worked in SEVs as well as people who have wider interests in promoting the sex industry have campaigned, demonstrated and lobbied to argue that SEV licensing should be treated as a single-issue matter concerning one group of individual women’s rights to choose to earn money stripping as well as in opposition to the straw-man argument that SEVs ‘cause’ sexual violence in the city centre as outlined above.
104. It is wrong to frame the issue as one of ‘individual choices’ rather than public policy. This point was reinforced at the Judicial Review hearing into Sheffield’s SEV policy on 28th June 2018 where the Council conceded on all grounds, including that they had taken account of impact of their policy on lap dancers but not of impact on women generally, and that they had failed to consider the advancement of equality between women and men. As the Judge commented, it was necessary to look at the impact on the class of people obviously affected (i.e. women), going *“beyond those just proximately affected”*.¹⁵⁰
105. For the reasons below, it is also ultimately futile to pit the choices of one group of women who wish to sell sexual entertainment against the choices of women and men who want to live in a city free of SEVs.
106. The ongoing campaign for equal pay for women in Bristol, and for women to have access to lifelong quality employment with decent pay, flexible working, good conditions of service such as maternity leave, sick pay and progression structures, has little overlap with the conditions of work in two SEVs.
107. Research (see for example Hardy and Sanders’ recent research with UK performers)¹⁵¹ shows that: performers in SEVs tend to be young women who are incentivised to *“stay below the radar of the state, for migration or tax reasons”*; there is a high turnover; the work is unreliable and *“profoundly precarious”*. A range of immediate health problems as well as longer-term problems associated with the physical and psychological demands of the work have been documented.¹⁵²
108. The performers at the clubs are self-employed women, who pay the owners a fee of up to £120 every night that they work, and who must manage all their own tax and national insurance contributions while others who work in SEVs (e.g. door staff) tend to have employment contracts with associated job security and privileges. The self-employed performers are uninsured unless they pay for their own workplace insurance and they have no sickness or other benefits¹⁵³ – one

¹⁵⁰ From hearing notes

¹⁵¹ Hardy & Sanders (2015)

¹⁵² Maticka-Tyndale et al. (2008)

¹⁵³ In 2020 in a positive step for workers’ rights an Employment Tribunal found that a self-employed performer in two London SEVs run by the same management was a “worker” for the purposes of employment law and therefore

reason why in Doncaster as reported in the national news, a young woman went back to work as a stripper 4 weeks after giving birth to her first baby.

109. On her first day back she was propositioned for sex by a customer who would not take no for an answer, and he punched her, breaking her face in three places. A man was recently jailed at Bristol Crown court after sexually assaulting a performer during a 'private dance'.¹⁵⁴ In Birmingham, a man has been arrested for raping a woman who was visiting a SEV. She was not a performer. She was assaulted by a group of men with connections to the SEV.¹⁵⁵ At the end of the day no amount of conditions or CCTV can make this work or this **context** 'safe' – as other recent news stories, all concerning licensed SEVs, illustrate.¹⁵⁶

110. Men who use the sex industry have less egalitarian and more hostile attitudes to women in general, than men who are not sex buyers,¹⁵⁷ which is a powerful policy driver towards reducing the demand for commercial sex. In addition, the same men also tend to hold disrespectful and **negative views about the women who they pay for sex**. Farley et al. (2017) found that men who were sex-buyers had less empathy for the women who sell sex, viewing them as intrinsically different from other women (inferior and less human than other women), compared to men who were not sex-buyers. Women who sell sex are more at risk of violence than any other occupational group and involvement in the trade has been described by researchers as "multitraumatic" - for example in a multicountry study 71% were physically assaulted while selling sex; 63% were raped.¹⁵⁸

111. Research shows that women who work in stripping are subject to high levels of abusive behaviour by customers: research in the U.S. (Holsopple, 1998) found that 100% of the women working in lap dancing who were surveyed reported that they had experienced physical violence from customers. All the women had been sexually abused in the club. All the women had been verbally harassed. Holsopple, who worked in the industry herself, wrote that "the strip club elicits and requires direct expressions of male domination and control over women". In a recent U.S. study 16.2% of performers reported some form of violence or threat from a client in the past six months.¹⁵⁹ In a UK study from 2011 almost half reported frequent verbal harassment and unwanted touching from customers (in other words, sexual assault).¹⁶⁰ In Canadian research, unwanted verbal harassment and sexual touching was described as ever present in most clubs and dancers felt that "the availability of lap dancing produced the expectation of physical contact"

entitled to some rights and benefits. Few workers are in a position to take SEV owners to Tribunal. (Nowak vs Chandlers Bars Group Ltd, UKET 3200538/2019) Most workers are strongly attached to the idea of being self-employed (Cruz, Hardy & Sanders, 2017)

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/amranuzzman-chowdhury-sexual-assault-dancer-strip-club-bristol-weston-super-mare-a9116901.html>

¹⁵⁵ Rocket Club in Birmingham, a city praised alongside Bristol by pro-sex work campaigners for its 'gold standard' approach to licensing SEVs: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-58738196>

¹⁵⁶ Bentley's, Doncaster 2017 – Performer assaulted outside after refusing sex with punter:

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/3393285/strippers-face-broken-in-three-places-by-racist-strip-club-punter-who-punched-her-after-she-refused-to-have-sex-with-him/>

Diamond Dolls, Glasgow 2017 – Dancer dragged out of the club by management and dumped onto the street (performer in question refused to speak to police, presumably out of fear of retaliation):

<http://www.ardrossanherald.com/news/15023857.Glasgow-kingpin-s-lap-dancing-club-shut-after-girl-dumped-on-street/>

Liverpool SEV, 2017 Convicted rapist forced girlfriend to work at city lap dancing bar:

<http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/convicted-rapist-forced-girlfriend-work-12735012>

Cleopatra's Lounge, Huddersfield 2016 - Man smashes club window when dancer refuses to 'meet up' with him outside of the club: <http://www.examiner.co.uk/news/west-yorkshire-news/man-smashed-lap-dance-club-11379793>

X in The City, Liverpool 2015 - Punter attacks lap dancer and steals her purse after she refused to give oral sex in a private booth: <http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/thug-attacked-liverpool-stripper-stole-9259574>

¹⁵⁷ Farley et al. (2017)

¹⁵⁸ Farley et al. (2003)

¹⁵⁹ Decker et al. (2017)

¹⁶⁰ Sanders & Campbell (2012)

resulting in some customers coercing or forcing physical contact.¹⁶¹ However, the reality is that this behaviour is routinely a) tolerated/accepted; and/or b) not reported to the authorities for many reasons. Bristol clubs' own "House Rules" state that any customer attempting to make physical contact with performers [i.e. the crime of attempted sexual assault] will be asked to leave the premises".¹⁶² Latest Crime Survey data for England and Wales shows that in the general population, there were an estimated 672,000 women aged 16-74 who were subjected to sexual assault in the past year. Fewer than 50,000 (under 7%) of these sexual assaults were reported to the police.¹⁶³ **The Licensing Objective the "Prevention of Crime and Disorder" is just that, and must not be interpreted as the "Prevention of specific types of crime and disorder which are reported to the police and acted on by the police".**

112. There are very high levels of protective security (CCTV, panic buttons, multiple security operatives) required to be in place in order to try to mitigate the threat of sexual violence and harassment against women working in SEVs. Some women have said that because of this security, they feel (relatively) safe doing the work under those conditions. This is at the same time a tacit claim that there is indeed some reason to expect sexual violence in the SEV context – which is a reason to have a nil cap. The security cameras and operatives go some way to meeting "*practical*" security needs of women taking part in high-risk activity. Meanwhile, the women and girls who live in Bristol are not safe in their homes, on the streets, on public transport, at school and college and university, in the workplace or while out attending festivals and nightclubs across the rest of the night time economy as the sexist attitudes promoted by SEVs go unchallenged. The answer is not for all women and girls to be accompanied by chaperones or recorded by CCTV wherever they go. The *strategic* gender needs¹⁶⁴ of women and girls are: for there to be **policy approaches in place which challenge and disrupt the social norms of men's entitlement to their bodies**. These harmful social norms, which underpin cultures of male violence,¹⁶⁵ are championed and reinforced every day that SEVs are operating on Bristol's high streets. Men and boys need to receive clear messages that the sexual objectification of women is not normal or acceptable, and they need to be able to promote those messages with confidence among their peer groups instead of being under pressure to take part in outdated, sexist and harmful activities.

113. A recent research study in the USA (Decker et al., 2017) concluded in a literature review that **the SEV environment itself "can enable violence victimization and pose barriers to engagement with the public infrastructure for justice and violence-related care"**. Club management is inevitably invested in ensuring that violence experienced by performers is not necessarily reported to outside agencies. It is worth reflecting that given what is known about the high prevalence of client violence towards performers, we should expect responsible management to be supporting performers to make regular reports to police and other agencies about assaults, attempted assaults and threats. An absence of such reports is concerning.

114. An example of how **violence against women in clubs, in this case assault, remains under the radar:**

This is from the police log for a Bristol SEV in 2012:

7/1/2011. AS-20110107-0050.

Council CCTV saw a male with blood on his face outside club. Police attended and door staff stated that the male had been touching the dancers. The male had then got behind

¹⁶¹ Maticka-Tyndale et al. (2008)

¹⁶² <https://www.utbristol.co.uk/rules.html> accessed 03-10-2021; [screenshot](#)

¹⁶³ ONS (2021). Sexual offences prevalence and victim characteristics, England and Wales. Release date: 18 March 2021.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/sexualoffencesprevalenceandvictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales>

¹⁶⁴ For more see <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1189>

¹⁶⁵ For more see Select Committee evidence session on changing cultures underpinning male violence (UK Parliament, 2021) <https://committees.parliament.uk/event/4365/formal-meeting-oral-evidence-session/>

the bar before being ejected from the club. The male refused to give any details about the incident. There were no allegations from either side so NFA [no further action] was taken.

115. In a hearing in 2013 the Licensing Committee heard from a SEV director that the action taken when a customer “makes contact” with a performer is that a designated person comes and tells them to stop. After that, a persistent offender may be ejected from a club. Neither of these actions will result in a recorded crime or in recompense for an assaulted woman. In 2013 when a Bristol SEV owner was asking for permission to reduce the number of door staff employed, he claimed that it was unrealistic to imagine that reducing the numbers would have any adverse impact on safety, because he claimed that he would have to employ “ten doormen” if he was to be able to intervene immediately.¹⁶⁶

116. There is no reason to assume that all women working in SEVs are exploited, abused or unhappy or will be personally damaged by the experience. However:

- Research from the USA has suggested that the longer women work in the industry, the more their feelings about it transform from “*elation*” into “*anger, disappointment and disgust*”.¹⁶⁷ In her research with performers, Barton found that despite the fact that “*individual women can experience dancing as liberating and rewarding, at least for a while*”, “**Structurally, dancing is exploitative and destructive to women both as individuals and as a group**”.¹⁶⁸
- Interviews in the UK with 197 performers revealed that 40% said that customers were rude or abusive towards them.¹⁶⁹ Almost half the women reported frequent verbal harassment and unwanted touching from customers.¹⁷⁰
- Many of those currently engaged in the sex trade are (unsurprisingly) critical of policy that seeks to end demand but many of those who have extricated themselves from selling sexual services favour policy to end demand.¹⁷¹
- Current SEV performers (i.e. before they exit) rationalise and attempt to neutralise the work by using three techniques:
 - denying that there is harm;
 - condemning those who are against lapdancing by characterising them in negative ways; and
 - making claims about how the work serves a ‘higher’ purpose for them, for example supporting a family or paying for education.¹⁷²
- Research has shown that managers use a range of “tactics” to manage performers through the economic precarity that is a feature of the job. These tactics, which we have seen employed in arguments in Bristol licensing hearings, include “normalizing uncertainty” and “using ‘teamwork’ discourses”. Research also shows managers encourage performers to self-blame if they are not earning sufficient funds due to the payment and staffing structures put in place by the management in order to extract profit. Meanwhile managers benefit from the precarious ‘self-employed’ status of the performers because it means that managers avoid paying taxes on their income and performers are also unable to file claims for discrimination and are ineligible for employment benefits or compensation.¹⁷³
- There is evidence from research as well as in testimony from exited performers that socially vulnerable women are over-represented among the women who work as performers in SEVs. Clearly this is a generalisation and not a rule. It is not to say that “all women working in SEVs” report it as a negative experience, and we have heard from local performers who have said the opposite. Drug and alcohol use by performers has been found

¹⁶⁶ Verbatim reporting from the hearing on 14th November 2013. twitter.com/bristolfawcett.

¹⁶⁷ Barton (2002), p596

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p600

¹⁶⁹ Sanders & Hardy (2011)

¹⁷⁰ Sanders & Campbell (2012)

¹⁷¹ Swedish Government (2010). This report concerns the sale of sexual services, normally described as prostitution specifically. See the next section on connections between stripping and the prostitution industry.

¹⁷² Thompson & Harred (1992); Thompson, Harred & Burks (2003)

¹⁷³ Mount (2018)

to be “*an integral part of the occupation*”, both making it possible to do the job and contributing to development of habits.¹⁷⁴ Indeed in a Bristol Licensing Hearing in 2013 the manager of a SEV outlined why the role of “house mother” was important. She said to the Committee,

“*We help girls from broken homes who do not have family support*” and “*these girls often have low self-esteem and problems with drinking*”.¹⁷⁵

Decker et al. (2017) identified high levels of victimisation in domestic abuse (intimate partner violence) among performers and they also say: “*Social and economic disadvantage and histories of substance use and incarceration are... common precursors to dancing.*”

In their research with students working in the UK sex trade, Roberts et al. (2013) found that a history of sexual abuse was significantly associated with erotic dancing and having an alcohol problem was significantly associated with stripping. One third of the performers interviewed by Sweet & Tewkesbury (2000) reported sexual abuse as a child and a further third reported mental/and or physical abuse or rape. The researchers noted: “*These negative experiences were, at least in the minds of these women, directly related to later decisions to enter into stripping*”.¹⁷⁶ It is clear why representatives from Bristol’s Universities have expressed concern that students coming to study in the city might be attracted to working in SEVs. Sex worker rights activists and academics, experts by experience and survivors of prostitution/sex work have written extensively on exploitation, ‘choice’, histories of abuse, trajectories of selling sex¹⁷⁷ and ‘empowerment’ **The task at hand in this consultation is not to make policy on prostitution/sex work** although there has been considerable effort to frame it as such, in the light of which it is important to offer a rounded view. Please refer to [Appendix 1](#) for further information.

117. Some women who work in SEVs state firmly that they see themselves as dancers and not sex workers. Others argue both that performing in SEVs is sex work, and that all sex work (i.e. prostitution) should be fully decriminalised and normalised on the high street.¹⁷⁸ It is also argued by some that by taking work in SEVs, performers are earning money in a way that is less dangerous to their personal safety than other forms of work in the sex trade would be, which they might be forced by circumstance into considering if SEVs were closed. Certainly, selling sex in prostitution is extremely high-risk for personal safety from male violence and has poor outcomes for long-term physical and mental health notwithstanding that women have the right to choose the work, and other women identify financial and other drivers that have pushed them into the work. The findings of an economic analysis of women’s involvement in the sex trade in Canada addressed the perception of lucrative monetary rewards in the sex trade. The study found that women selling sex experienced “*significant lifetime productivity losses of formal labor market earnings*” in addition to “*debilitating addictions and health conditions that are symptomatic of the stress and danger of engaging in this lifestyle*”.¹⁷⁹

118. The 2011 UK study into SEVs also reported that 30% of the women interviewed said that as a result of doing the job they had **lost respect for men**,¹⁸⁰ a finding echoed in our own research, and in the testimony of former performers (see [Appendix 1](#)) as well as in the Home Office research from 2019¹⁸¹ and also of relevance to the Council’s duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to foster good relations between men and women. Barton (2002, p592) quotes a performer who had this to say about clients:

¹⁷⁴ Forsyth & Deshotels (1997)

¹⁷⁵ Verbatim reporting from the hearing on 14th November 2013. twitter.com/bristolfawcett.

¹⁷⁶ p338 and see also Wesley (2002): most performers interviewed endured some kind of abuse as children

¹⁷⁷ E.g. [July 2021](#)

¹⁷⁸ See for example Bristol protest by SEV performers and sex workers: <https://www.bristol247.com/news-and-features/news/stripping-off-to-protest-in-front-of-city-hall/> and social media [framing](#) of the 2021 consultation

¹⁷⁹ DeRiviere (2006)

¹⁸⁰ Sanders & Hardy (2011)

¹⁸¹ Hester et al. (2019)

“I guess they feel like the normal laws of etiquette that govern any other social or business interaction are suspended there. It is okay to call someone a bad name or use foul language. They’ll say, “Turn around bitch, I want to see your ass. I’m paying.” Just to talk to someone in a way you’d never in a million years think of talking to someone in any other business or social interaction... That’s not something you have to contend with systematically in other jobs.”

119. We acknowledge the potential impact on current performers of a nil cap policy but we suggest that policy-makers should not assume or judge that those who are currently working as performers are restricted to future work in the sex trade or beyond that, in the entertainment industry alone.

CONNECTIONS WITH THE PROSTITUTION INDUSTRY

120. The **pathway from stripping to prostitution is well-researched and strongly evidenced**. Reuben et al. (2010) found that 43% of performers in their study also reported selling full-service sex (being involved in prostitution), of whom 92% began selling sex only after they began to work in SEVs. Among the 50% who reported heroin or cocaine use, over half had initiated this drug use after they began to work in SEVs. Mount (2018) reported that every manager she spoke to in her research mentioned that performers often tried to sell more than they were supposed to, in the form of sexual acts or prostitution. Maticka-Tyndale et al. (2008) report that women had the sense of *“getting trapped in the social world and careers of sexual and erotic labor and often knew of others who had moved from dancing to other forms of sex work”*.¹⁸²
121. Farley et al. (2011) interviewed 101 men in Scotland who had been clients of prostitution and found that **31% said they had bought prostitution in lap dancing clubs**. The Home Office study of Prostitution and Sex Work in England and Wales (Hester et al., 2019) conducted by academics at the University of Bristol found that women working in SEVs tended not to have previously worked in the sex industry: rather, they were attracted to erotic dance specifically. However, **the majority went on to escorting or working from home offering full-service (prostitution)**, though perhaps after an extended period of stripping. Again, without over-generalising, it is clear that more often than not taking up work in stripping is a gateway to ending up selling sex in prostitution with all the mental and physical harms that are associated with that choice.¹⁸³ Save Bristol Nightlife’s reference to performing in SEVs as *“the tame tip of the sex work iceberg”* correctly positions the work as a transition point for women as well as for sex buyers.¹⁸⁴
122. **The situation in Bristol:** it is no surprise that reviews of the Bristol clubs suggests that direct links between performing and prostitution is the case in Bristol as elsewhere¹⁸⁵ despite general agreement that Bristol clubs are probably ‘better run’ than many. In Bristol, we have heard from a woman who has now exited the sex trade who began by performing in SEVs and then went into prostitution. She started working in SEVs as a result of being a single mum and needing more money. After doing it for a number of years, she then progressed onto escorting and further sex work. She felt that working in SEVs had **“conditioned”** her for further work in the sex industry. We have also spoken with women who have sold sex in brothels in Bristol and who make direct links between SEVs and brothels, reinforcing what is known from research. One woman we interviewed said:

¹⁸² p103

¹⁸³ In November 2021 Elly Arrow reviewed the evidence for the disproportionate and unique health risks for women in prostitution: <https://ellyarrow.wordpress.com/2021/11/06/disproportionate-and-unique-health-risks-for-women-in-prostitution/>

¹⁸⁴ Save Bristol Nightlife, July 2021 [post](#)

¹⁸⁵ Screenshots available: in reviews posted online, a client reported a “happy ending” (**sexual service ending in ejaculation**) at **Bristol Central Chambers** in 2016 and a client reported booking a **Bristol Urban Tiger dancer for hotel sex** in August 2019.

“I worked in the sex industry in Bristol for several years. During the time I worked in the industry we were encouraged to go into lap dancing clubs to solicit business. We'd sit and drink and it was like dangling a carrot. Then the girls would go back to the parlour and the boss would sit there telling everyone those are my girls from my parlour down the road. ... The massage parlours don't have bouncers or security in them. All you've got is you and the other girls, and you've got a group of maybe 5 or 6 on a stag do that are all pissed up. They're out of control, it gets nasty it can get nasty. I've been assaulted, I've been puked on. It's hideous and there's no, no-one's got your back.”

She also said:

“lap dancing is a foot in the door to prostitution... Every girl that I've known who at first went in for stripping has ended up in prostitution with drug problems and I'd say 75% of those end up working on the streets. So if they wanted to look at the bigger picture, to have all these places open all this time, it's a bit ignorant to say we're just accommodating a need.”

123. Wherever individual customers may 'draw the line' it is obvious that the 'next step' for a stag party who have been encouraged to buy sexual performances in an SEV would be to buy sex itself.

124. Previous licensing committee hearings in Bristol have received direct and first-hand information from women involved in the trade:

“Should we not worry about the girls working on the street because they are choosing to work there? The girls on the street, the girls that are choosing to work on the street are the girls that are choosing to work in the strip clubs five years before. I'd love to be able to say that at least if one girl doesn't have to walk the same path because I've told my story, I'm really proud to do it. I went through hell for 10 years and if I can just say something to someone to just change someone's opinion it would make a huge difference.”¹⁸⁶

CONSIDERING INDIVIDUAL WOMEN WHO ARE NOT THE PERFORMERS

There are two reasons why seeking case-based evidence of harm to individual women is not all the work that has to be done when setting SEV policy. First, **prevalence data about violence against women bears very little relation to reported crime statistics** (and even prevalence surveys do not question victims about connections with SEVs). Second, **the issue is primarily strategic and cultural**, as outlined in this document. The paramount impact of SEVs on gender equality in Bristol is cultural and long-term and has been addressed in the previous sections. Women and girls as well as men and boys living in the city are negatively impacted now by the culture of sexism promoted by SEVs, and will continue to experience the impact of today's sexist culture for years to come. The removal of SEVs from the city is an important step in the right direction for changing harmful social norms. However there are also impacts upon individuals, some of which are set out below.

125. **The role of women's groups.** Women's groups in Bristol are advisers and advocates for gender equality, and specialists in prevention of SGBV as well as in supporting survivors of SGBV. Without the intervention of women's groups clubs may not have been told to cease running “sexy schoolgirl” nights,¹⁸⁷ to cease flyering female university students in recruitment drives,¹⁸⁸ and to cease ad campaigns urging men to “cheat” on their partners and encouraging men to “stalk” performers like prey.¹⁸⁹ Women's groups have documented the disparaging language used by customers about performers. Women's groups have supported performers

¹⁸⁶ Objection submitted to Bristol Licensing Committee, 2012

¹⁸⁷ See [here](#) and [here](#) for examples of sexy schoolgirl nights as widely reported in the national [press](#)

¹⁸⁸ See [here](#) for a flyer aimed at young female Bristol University students

¹⁸⁹ See [here](#) for the stalking ad

affected by violence and lobbied for measures in policy to make perpetrators more accountable. Women's groups and service providers have the remit and responsibility for advocating on behalf of all the women and girls in Bristol.

126. There are extremely limited reporting structures for sexual harassment across any areas of society and women very rarely choose to report it. This is because sexual harassment is what women expect in our everyday lives, and because women do not expect to be taken seriously if they do report (indeed, 85% of rapes are never reported and a sizeable proportion of women say this is because they fear being treated disrespectfully and/or being disbelieved. Certainly, they cannot expect justice in the courts as conviction rates demonstrate). In a recent sexual harassment survey carried out by Bristol Women's Voice,¹⁹⁰ women said:

"I wouldn't be taken seriously by anyone. Women, girls and those who identify as female have this happen to them all the time, every day"

"No confidence or belief that anyone would take any action"

"What's the point? No-one does anything and I'd just be told 'they were only trying to be friendly'"

Bristol's Quality of Life Survey 2020-21 found that one in six (16.5%) of all female respondents said they had been a victim of sex or gender discrimination in the past year (versus 2.9% of males and rising to more than one in four (26.1%) of all 16-24 year olds), and 29.4% of women said that sexual harassment is an issue in Bristol – increasing to over 50% of young people aged 16-24.¹⁹¹ Some women have submitted objections to renewal of SEV licences that include details of sexual harassment they have experienced in the vicinity of Bristol SEVs. These details are then lost, year on year, while licenses have continued to be renewed. One example from 2018 illustrates the point:

"It has come to my attention that last year, Central Chambers' lawyers claimed that there had been no complaints about sexual harassment outside the venue.

This has not been my experience.

I endured my worst experience of street based sexual harassment outside Central Chambers. I was walking past the venue, and a group of men gathered outside shouted at me "you've dropped something". When I turned around to check I hadn't, they yelled "drop your knickers". I ignored them and went to carry on walking. In response, the men chanted in unison "bitch, bitch, bitch" as I was forced to walk past them.

I was very shaken by the experience and started to cry. As I'm sure the panel will appreciate, being sexually mocked, and then having sexual insults chanted at you as you try to walk home, is deeply upsetting."¹⁹²

127. Many women report feeling unsafe, unwelcome, intimidated, second-class when in the vicinity of SEVs. Patiniotis & Standing (2012) reported on the effect of women of SEVs in city centres. They found:

"The women describe feeling frightened, disempowered, violated, embarrassed, unsafe (particularly if men are around), and avoid certain streets at night where they know there is a lap dancing club."

"...women also reported avoiding certain streets and feeling frightened in the day time, when the clubs are closed. It is the existence of the clubs that causes women to feel alienated in public space at all times, and fearful of the threat of violence posed by the sexual objectification of women on display outside the clubs and acted out within them."

"Attitudes and behaviours that in any other workplace or public environment would be considered to be sexual harassment and gender discrimination, are legitimised in clubs and are then carried into public space, creating 'no go' areas as women seek to minimise known and unknown risks to their safety and wellbeing." (p11)

¹⁹⁰ <https://www.bristolwomensvoice.org.uk/latest-news/newsletter-august/> accessed 30-10-2021

¹⁹¹ https://opendata.bristol.gov.uk/pages/quality_of_life_results_202021/bristol-trend-view#equalities-view

¹⁹² Objection sent to the Licensing Department on 28 February 2018

As Philip Kolvin QC notes in his book *Sex Licensing*¹⁹³ “the fears of women using the vicinity of premises may be reflected in decisions as to the location of such facilities... These concerns are directly reflected in the Royal Town Planning Institute’s Gender and Spatial Planning Good Practice Note, which states:

“...ensure that the views of women are considered. Evidence shows that in certain locations, lap-dancing and exotic dancing clubs make women feel threatened or uncomfortable”.¹⁹⁴

The United Nations Gender Issue Guide for Urban Planning and Design¹⁹⁵ says that designing and planning safe public spaces for women and girls is important because:

“It recognizes that **women’s fears are based on reality** (the relationship between feelings of fear and experiences of violence) and that women know when and where they feel unsafe in the cities and why”.¹⁹⁶

128. It has been suggested that women attending or performing in SEVs might be less likely to be sexually harassed than women engaging with other parts of the night-time economy, for example women visiting nightclubs where there is a high incidence of groping and other forms of sexual harassment. There may be some support for this phenomenon, but not because SEVs are more welcoming or safe environments for all women. In addition to the necessarily highly regulated security environment within SEVs outlined above (which still does not completely prevent sexual assaults from happening),¹⁹⁷ research has shown that men who endorse hierarchical (unequal) relationships between the sexes are not only **more likely to sexually harass women**, but also choose to sexually harass those women who “challenge the status advantage of males” which motivates men to put such women ‘in their place’.¹⁹⁸

129. Crimes of sexual violence in the vicinity of SEVs:

- Evidence gathered by the police in 2011 did suggest that the 50 metre zone around Bristol’s SEVs constituted a ‘hotspot’ for reported sexual violence – despite the presence of door staff which should mitigate strongly against this, all else being equal.¹⁹⁹
- Further evidence from Avon and Somerset Police in 2017 submitted at the renewal application for Central Chambers showed a number of incident logs (including a customer assaulting “a female” in the premises on 15/7/17) specific to Central Chambers but also detailing 40 reported sexual offences directly reported in the area in the previous 12 months despite the presence of security and CCTV deterrents. As the police said,
“if the perception of some males attending the premises is that the physical touching of females is acceptable in society, there must be heightened risks associated with lone females or groups of females as a result of the regeneration of the centre.”²⁰⁰
- Additionally, academic research suggests that men who have been primed by viewing the sexual objectification of women are more likely to misinterpret women’s friendliness as being sexually motivated, and to assume that a woman protesting a date rape is not ‘really’ protesting, and that “no means yes”.²⁰¹ This has a bearing on the safety of women from sexual harassment and stalking as well as from sexual violence, by men who have been recently primed to objectify women.

¹⁹³ Sex Licensing (2010), p86-87, paras 7.32 and 7.33

¹⁹⁴ <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20170106084636/http://www.apho.org.uk/resource/view.aspx?RID=93626>

¹⁹⁵ <https://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Gender-Responsive-Urban-Planning-and-Design.pdf> p47

¹⁹⁶ <https://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Gender-Responsive-Urban-Planning-and-Design.pdf>

¹⁹⁷ Report (2019) by Not Buying It <https://notbuyingit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/StripSleaze.pdf>

¹⁹⁸ Maass, Cadinu & Galdi (2013)

¹⁹⁹ <http://bristolofawcett.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Police-rpt-VAW-control-areas-Nov11.doc>

²⁰⁰ Bristol Police submission on behalf of the Chief Constable, Central Chambers SEV Renewal Report 2017.

<https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/g3044/Public%20reports%20pack%2001st-Mar-2018%2012.30%20Licensing%20Hearings%20Sub-Committee.pdf> (Appendix I of the bundle)

²⁰¹ E.g. Milburn et al. (2000)

- Further evidence submitted by police in March 2021 regarding the Cumulative Impact Zone²⁰² lists the top 20 licensed premises in Bristol for reports of sexual assault or rape, of which Urban Tiger SEV is one.
- Neither the police nor any other stakeholder would claim that venues in the night time economy linearly “cause” sexual violence to occur. The only “cause” of a woman’s rape is the decision of her rapist to commit the act. The venues do however present a conducive context for sexual violence not least because alcohol (available in all licensed premises) disinhibits perpetrators and adds to the vulnerability of potential victims. As set out earlier, alcohol plus sexual objectification is a particularly powerful risk factor for sexual violence perpetration.²⁰³ Presence of security and total CCTV coverage act as inhibitors in the same way that alcohol and sexual objectification increase risk. Nevertheless, those strong inhibitors put in place in Bristol SEVs have not been effective at entirely eliminating sexual violence even in the immediate environment.
- Police understand that their recorded data for rape and sexual assault bear little relation to the actual prevalence. They say so explicitly in the March 2021 data report. Crime survey data²⁰⁴ and the Justice Inspectorate Report²⁰⁵ show that:
 - Even the most serious sexual assaults on women (sexual assault by rape or penetration) are five times more likely to be unreported than reported to police: fewer than 16% of female victims reported to police.
 - Police efforts to encourage reporting are resulting in more crimes of sexual violence being reported to them over time: Prior to the decrease seen in the year of the pandemic, recent years have seen the number of sexual offences recorded by police almost triple. This largely reflects *“improvements made by police in how they recorded these crimes and an increased willingness of victims to come forward and report”*.²⁰⁶
- Women’s fragile faith and trust in police and in the wider justice system has been dealt a series of devastating blows in recent times. Women and girls need to feel that the authorities take their experience of sexism and of SGBV seriously, that **the authorities are in fact anti-sexist** and that the authorities want women to continue coming forward to report and seek justice as well as accountability for perpetrators. **A policing and licensing approach that treats the sexism and risk inherent to SEVs as not important or serious enough to merit balancing against other factors is one that sends clear messages about the extent to which these issues of the gravest and most urgent concern to women are not a priority for them.**
- Crime data²⁰⁷ show that 3% of rapes of women occurred at school, university or a place of study. 37.9% occurred in women’s own homes. Those who want to drive down SGBV are not calling for the closure of universities, nor for CCTV and security staff to be deployed in every woman’s home – rather, the call is to take every practical and proportionate step to address the **conditions that support male violence** not only in the immediate moment but culturally, in the form of powerful social norms, so that women and girls can be safe everywhere. The lawful decision to end the presence of SEVs in the city, in support of equality and in response

²⁰² <https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/s57902/APPENDIX%20D%20-%20Avon%20and%20Somerset%20Constabulary%20City%20Centre%20CIA%20Data.pdf>

²⁰³ E.g. Gervais et al. (2014); Edwards & Banyard (2018); Abbey (2011)

²⁰⁴ Sexual Offences overview, year ending March 2020

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/sexualoffencesinenglandandwalesoverview/march2020>

²⁰⁵ HMICFRS (2021) <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/police-response-to-violence-against-women-and-girls-final-inspection-report.pdf>

²⁰⁶ ONS Sexual offences overview year ending March 2020

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/sexualoffencesinenglandandwalesoverview/march2020#trends-over-time>

²⁰⁷ Nature of sexual assault by rape or penetration, year ending March 2020

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/natureofsexualassaultbyrapeorpenetrationenglandandwales>

to the epidemic of male violence, is both practical and proportionate.

130. There is in addition research conducted in the USA suggesting that “*sexually oriented businesses are associated with much higher rates of all types of offences in the immediate vicinity... and continue to have significant effects on crime levels as one moves further from the business.... In addition to increased crime rates, so too are sexually oriented businesses associated with **negative economic consequences for communities**... All types of crime – violent, property and public order – are more common at and close to the location of sexually oriented businesses*”.²⁰⁸ While the two Bristol SEVs are located so close to the city centre as to make unequivocal claims about cause and effect impossible, it is true to say that groups of youths who are suspected of criminal intent have chosen to set up a presence outside Urban Tiger.

²⁰⁸ McCord & Tewkesbury (2012)

APPENDIX 1: PERFORMERS PAST AND PRESENT

Those working in the industry may put forward views to be considered in any policy review, and there is a place for those views to be taken into consideration. It would also be right to give weight to the voices of those who, having left the industry, say their experiences of performing have had a negative impact both personally and more broadly.

We have canvassed and spoken with women in the industry as well as those who have left the industry in the course of our work on SEVs and they have offered a range of views, both positive and negative. We have used their views to shape our responses to consultations. However we do not have permission to share all their words, beyond the evidence cited [above](#). There are some views that are in the public domain, such those gathered by former dancer Jennifer Hayashi Danns in research for her book²⁰⁹ and those gathered in a consultation run by the charity Object²¹⁰ as well as those in the video compilations compiled by the charity Not Buying It.²¹¹

In their own words: current and former SEV performers reflecting on their experience.

- “It’s utterly degrading.”
- “No one is the same after working in the industry. You get used to being treated as a second class citizen.”
- “It was the hardest work I have ever done, either physically, emotionally or mentally.”
- “Men need to stop thinking that it’s OK to pay for sexual entertainment. Paying for it doesn’t just hurt the women providing that service. It hurts all women. It hurts all of us.”
- “Men would come in and ask the manager did she have any black girls and I would be wheeled out like a prize cow. At the time it seemed normal, but with hindsight . . . “
- “We were encouraged to act like little girls, lost demure, submissive and dumb, which is what makes men part with money quickest.”
- “They wanted a bimbo who would be subordinate to them”
- “It was dehumanising, soul destroying and filled with desperation.”
- “The strange thing about lap dancing is how things that would be unacceptable in real life become normal in the club.”
- “Many parts of my time in dancing are difficult to talk about. Often if someone asked me about my experience as a dancer I have responded with a socially acceptable answer, and simply asserted that I enjoyed dancing, that I made a lot of money, but in the end dancing was not for me. This explanation in no way conveyed the extremity of emotion and mental distress I experienced as a dancer, and in no way conveys the sexual degradation and humiliation I experienced and observed during my short dancing career.”
- “I always thought of the customers as vermin and, ironically, that is what they thought of me”
- “It’s screwed up my view of men . . . Every time I see a man now, I just see him as a punter. There’s only so many bad experiences you can have before you start hating them all . . .”

²⁰⁹ Stripped: The Bare Reality of Lapdancing by Jennifer Hayashi Danns with Sandrine Leveque

²¹⁰ Stripping the Illusion: the Lap Dancing Industry Exposed. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cwg57pLJZUI>

²¹¹ <https://notbuyingit.org.uk/strip-publications/>

- “You start to see men as nothing more than their wallets, idiots to be fleeced for as much as you can. You start to despise them for believing you when you flutter your eyelashes and tell them they’re the most interesting customer that you’ve ever talked to.”
- “You probably shouldn’t interview me. I’m the wrong person. I’ve been doing this for 14 years. I’m bitter as hell. I used to be a decent person, but I’ve turned into a real bitch. That’s what this job does to you. It makes you hell to live with, and hell to be around. These other girls always say things, like “nobody gets hurt,” and dancing topless is “harmless.” Bullshit! It hurts the dancers. It takes something away from you—away from your soul. It makes you hard. You don’t trust anybody, especially men. You can’t have a real relationship with anybody. I think it destroys people. Not only the dancers, but I’ve seen men in here who blow their whole paychecks in one night. Don’t tell me that doesn’t hurt their wives and children. The whole thing sucks. Sorry. I told you that you didn’t want to talk to me.”²¹²
- “I think men are mostly idiots. I didn’t think they were that stupid until I started being a dancer.”²¹³
- “This job takes something away from you—your dignity. It robs you of your heart and soul. I would tell anybody—you should tell everybody, don’t do it.”⁹⁰

Researcher Kelly Holsopple (1998) asked women who were currently working as strippers about their views of customers. She reported that “Strippers are largely disgusted by customers and describe them as pitiful and pathetic, stupid and ignorant, sick, controlling and abusive.” She recorded a number of the strippers’ views:

- "They are weak abusers who have to subordinate women and girls to feel like a man."
- "I see my dad. They're old enough to be my father."
- "Yuck. I am repulsed by the sight, sound, smell, and touch of them."
- "I'm embarrassed for them."
- "It affects your love-life and feelings about men."

In 2018 a campaigner against sexual exploitation spoke out about her experience as a lapdancer and the links that she now acknowledges between violence against women and girls, exploitation and lapdancing. She was interviewed in August 2018 by Sky News.²¹⁴ In her own words:

- I started when I was about 18, I got into the industry while working as a model - I kind of fell into it. I wasn't pressured, I wasn't forced into it and it was entirely my choice. However, I was abused as a child and I left school with no qualifications, very low self-esteem, not much self-respect, and I kind of didn't see anything wrong with it at the time. I did it for about nine years and what I noticed was a hell of a lot of the women that were dancers had been through something traumatic in their lives, they were abused as a child or had been through domestic violence and they were in that industry for reasons like my own - control, empowerment or just wanted to earn some easy money.
- I thought "this is my choice, my body, I can do what I want with it". I felt like I was in control of it and I felt like it was empowerment and when I look back now, I realise that's absolute nonsense. At the time, girls might be getting a lot of compliments, it might make them feel great, they're earning money but that's very short-lived. The impact long-term on your mental health and self-esteem is really very damaging.
- You take your clothes off and give a man an erection - that's not empowerment, that's not something little girls grow up and aspire to want to do. But I did it and it paid my bills. There were

²¹² Thompson, Harred & Burks (2003)

²¹³ Weseley (2002), p1198

²¹⁴ <https://news.sky.com/story/i-thought-lap-dancing-was-empowering-but-it-wasnt-11469167>

times when I made a lot of money, there were times when I didn't earn anything. The only people that win are the clubs.

- It's almost as if the clubs are grooming the girls to think that the people who work in these clubs are like a tight family network and that they care about the girls, that they're one big happy family. And it makes it really difficult for people to go against that and the moment they do, they're fired, they're shut down. Word will get round that they're a bad person to take on.
- Within the industry there's trafficking, prostitution, money laundering, fraud, drug and alcohol abuse and it's an industry that not many people know or understand. For the girls, how you get treated is horrendous. Some clubs are better than others but there is no way a club can control the amount of criminal activity that's happening. The verbal abuse I have received for speaking out has been absolutely shocking.
- At the time, if you had said to me the girls were being exploited - I would not have had any idea what exploitation was. A lot of things that were exploitative, I would not have realised were happening.
- No one should ever be expected to be touched, groped or assaulted. I know girls that have been drugged and raped. Some girls are drinking and taking drugs every night just to be able to do the job.
- It turned me against men, I viewed men as very weak and pathetic and I thought "you're giving me all your money". When you have that control it makes you feel good but now I realise that's not empowerment, that's manipulation.
- The simple fact is, the clubs don't want to raise the issues, the managers don't want to raise the issues and neither do the girls, because guess what? They're making money.
- Essentially, they're selling women - we're in 2018 and people think it's alright to go buy a woman for whatever sexual need it is?
- My message to women thinking about working in the industry and those who already are is - don't do it. You're worth so much more and I wish I had realised I was worth so much more and that I could go out there and do anything I put my mind to. There are plenty of ways you can earn good money without it being so damaging.
- I know you shouldn't have regrets but would I do it all over again? No, I would not.

In 2018, journalist Samantha Rea went undercover to work in eight different SEVs in London as a performer. She wrote an account of her experiences for the Independent newspaper which can be read here: <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/presidents-club-sexual-harassment-business-lap-dance-vip-exploitation-a8177691.html>

APPENDIX 2: AN EXAMPLE OF OBJECTIFICATION RESEARCH

The chart below, from an objectification study published in 2012, shows how both men and women in our society are trained by culture (i.e. representations of women in society and in the media) to dehumanise women when they are presented wearing very little, revealing, clothing. In this study, the brains of both men and women (the 'targets') have processed images of women in underwear in the same way as they would process images of objects. However, the images of men (whether or not in underwear) are processed using the special part of the brain reserved for humans.

“at a basic cognitive level, sexualized men were perceived as persons, whereas sexualized women were perceived as objects”.

This study is one of a growing number of scientifically robust peer-reviewed research studies concerning the objectification of women. Together, they link the objectification of women with dehumanisation and inequality.

Are women human? – not when they are sex objects.

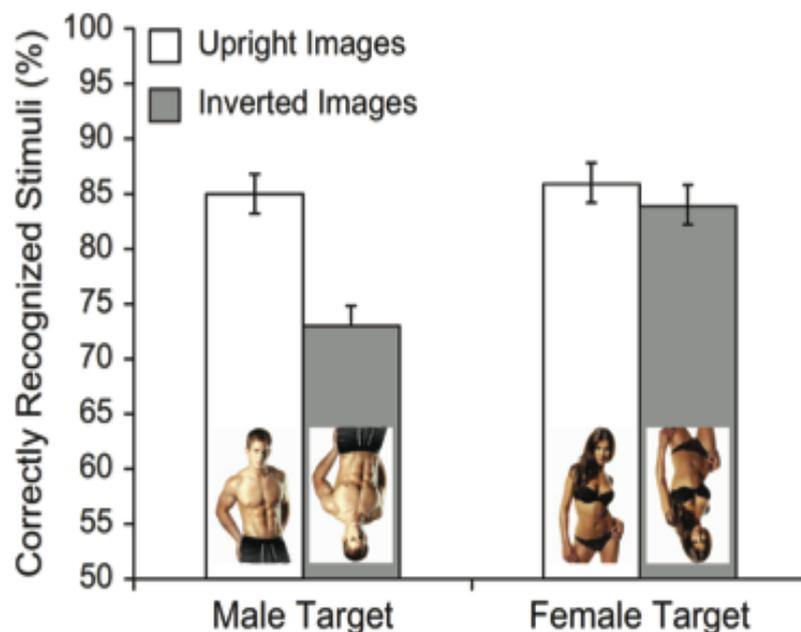


Figure 1. Percentage of correctly recognized stimuli as a function of target gender and target orientation. Error bars indicate ± 1 SEM.

“... our findings showed no differences related to participant gender, which suggests that cultural beliefs that women are sex objects are shared by both men and women”

Bernard et al.
(2012)

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