

**Mette 2019**

**Testimony from Mette to Camden Council re Strip clubs being in charge of dancer 'welfare'**

I am speaking as a survivor of the sex trade, including the strip industry.

I have learned that Camden is allowing the licence holders of strip clubs to establish systems to look after the welfare of those lap dancing. Also, that the Council is setting up a 'forum' for lap dancers.

I would like to point out that what you will actually be doing by relying on a system like this one is creating the circumstances that will perpetuate false information about what is actually happening in these places and also increasing the shame of those who have to believe they are there because "they love men so much" so a) they can make money and b) so they can live with themselves and be able to go back into the club the next night. Both of these two factors will reinforce each other (false information and increased shame) making it so the women will feel more responsible and more complicit in something that is preying on their vulnerabilities as women.

One very common way women are funnelled into the sex trade, a key vulnerability, is via sexual harassment they cannot escape in legitimate society so they wrongly think they should at least get paid for it while being numb to it via alcohol and drugs. This means of survival is of course the sale of their youth, their primary time of development in the world, and is taking advantage of them - sexually - with money as the force instead of helping them achieve a long term future with promise and hope.

In terms of faulty information, the women - have to - pretend they are making much more money than they are and pretend they are having fun doing it in order to look good and to not feel as vulnerable as they know they are. Nudity is the very establishment of their vulnerability and servitude in this space. Not only will they not tell the truth because it is too difficult to admit the truth of your situation since it brings on feelings you really don't want to feel but they are also competing for "customers" and know how to politely inch each other out. They are not going to open up in meetings.

The strip club is making money off these women, lots, and there is an obvious conflict of interest in allowing the licence holder to interpret their welfare. The strip clubs will of course reinforce the feel good stories the women need to tell themselves in order to psychologically survive the humiliation and in order to ignore the fear of what will become of them when they can no longer make money in the way they have learned to. This false information is what keeps the sex trade from being abolished. It is a horrible industry.

Being naked is of course the bare minimum of what goes on and even just naked is a very, very scary place to be. Becoming sexy and sexual is **not a choice** in this condition of nakedness. You are naked before those powerful who are judging you.

Make no mistake, what is happening in strip clubs is sexual exploitation plain and simple. It must be stopped.