

Complicit Camden Failing Safeguarding, Equalities & Women

Sexual Contact, Straddling, Pimps: Spearmint Rhino

Private Investigators



Despite the sexual contact, pimps, prostitution and possible trafficking exposed at its 'stringently regulated' strip clubs, it's 'business as usual' with Camden's 'new' strip club policy.

This 'new' policy is no different from its old one. If anything it is worse. Despite stating that 'no clubs are appropriate anywhere in the borough', it effectively (and unlawfully) ensures the rubber stamping of all 7 of its currently operating strip clubs – as has happened under its old policy for nearly a decade.

Although legislation was brought in nearly 10 years ago to give 'local people more say' over strip clubs - Camden ignored the calls of over 90% of respondents to its consultation on this policy who called on Camden to shut down this branch of the sex trade.

Even more concerning, the hard evidence of abuse and exploitation at Camden's strip clubs was deemed irrelevant to the consultation on Camden's strip club policy despite the fact that the entire premise of the policy is that its clubs are 'stringently regulated'.

Instead, respondents were told to refer to the council's 'full Equality Impact Assessment'. This 'full assessment' dedicates one sentence to the impact of strip clubs on women, despite their well documented impact on the women in them, in their vicinity and in wider society. **In fact, this 'assessment' apparently didn't raise any equality concerns whatsoever:**

7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out in conjunction with the Policy Review. The Equalities Impact Assessment **did not highlight any areas** where the revised Policy would raise issues on inequalities or place anyone within a protected characteristic at a disadvantage. The full Equalities Impact Assessment can be found at **Appendix 3**

But perhaps most concerning of all are the 'safeguarding' measures wheeled out by the Council, presumably after listening to a Trade Union which claim to represent lap dancers (which at the same time has called all hard evidence of abuse a lie) and women currently in the industry, who are totally under the thumb of strip club operators. Perhaps that is why the policy's definition of a lap dance is now so truly absurd:

'Dance or performance' is an interaction with the intent of entertaining the customer.

Yes, the policy talks about setting up a 'performers' forum' – again great on the face of it, but this also is like to do more harm than good - becoming yet another echo chamber of denial.

As 'Meta' who has left the strip trade explains:

"The women can't be honest with themselves usually nor even the friends they "work" with ... so a meeting won't work"

The fact that women in the industry have to operate under an alternative reality in order to survive is echoed by every woman who leaves and speaks out against it. A truth universally ignored by the media despite the frenzied reporting on 'lap dancer's rights'.

And yes, the policy mentions an 'exit strategy' – but if this is created with those with a vested interest in supporting the industry or in denial about its reality this is likely to be of little support, or even actively harmful, as it cannot acknowledge the harm and abuse of the industry.

The policy also puts Strip Clubs in charge of dancer welfare:

6.10.1 Concerns have been raised in relation to the vulnerability of the performers working and the welfare checks undertaken. A condition of all our licensed premises is that **the licence holder shall assess all risks to the welfare of dancers and shall devise, implement and maintain a policy for the protection of their welfare while on the premises and when they leave' (condition 35).**

It is concerning that clubs already seem to be trying to provide in-house "therapy" to lap dancers. Laughable on the face of it (why license a venue which means its workers need therapy?) but with a much darker side. The kind of 'therapists' offered up by a strip club will no doubt be the kind who will work hard to keep women trapped in the industry, such as 'sexologists' with no qualifications and no regulatory board, many of whom happily tell rape victims to watch rape porn.

So, apart from an amendment that 'water should be available to performers *without* their having to request it', the Council is now failing women in the industry more than ever before:

6.10.3 The draft policy includes the minimum requirements of what the Licensing Authority expect to be included within the Dancers Welfare Policy. One of the requirements is that 'dancers shall be provided free drinking water on request'. The suggestion has been made that 'on request' be removed (page 50, condition i). The draft Policy has been amended to reflect this change.

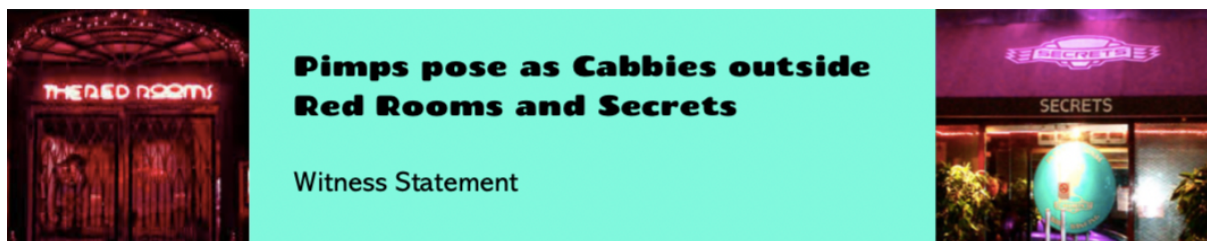
Yet again, the voices of women who have left the industry and speak against it have been ignored. Even though these are the only individuals without a vested interest in propping up the industry and the only ones in a position to be able to speak the truth about it. Ignored too is the evidence and concerns of human rights groups like Not Buying It who have worked closely with such women.

But Camden is just one in a long line of councils who seem hell bent on supporting this branch of the sex trade.

Manchester recently suggested equally absurd 'new regulatory' measures like 'clubs should hire their own compliance officers' and have a 'designated welfare area' where lap dancers can flock to complain to the Council or Trade Union about 'any concerns'. This was after sexual contact (ie 15 minute 'dances' comprising 15 minutes of masturbation) and women trying to prostitute themselves was exposed as standard in its strip clubs.

Sheffield seems happy with the 'clean bill of health' offered up by 'independent' inspectors. These 'independents' are hired and paid by Sheffield's strip club with the club's Vice President even knowing when their visits are made! This was after wall-to-wall sexual contact, including women having sex with each other, was exposed – dismissed as 'arm brushing' by some who support the club.

Why are our local Councils twisting themselves up in knots to prop up the local sex trade?



END



Clubs Always know when Council 'Inspections' are taking place

Rachel worked at Secrets Euston

Contact

no@notbuyingit.org.uk

More Info

Camden's strip clubs: 20 years of abuse: www.notbuyingit.org.uk/Publications#PressCamden

Camden's new strip club (SEV) policy:

<http://democracy.camden.gov.uk/documents/s84475/Review%20of%20Sex%20Establishments%20Policy.pdf>

Camden's Response to Respondents and Equality Impact Assessment:

<http://democracy.camden.gov.uk/documents/s84476/Review%20of%20Sex%20Establishment%20Policy%20Appendices%201-3.pdf>



I worked in strip clubs across London. Camden's 'Venus' was by far the worst

Former Lap Dancer