



## First ever UK campaign challenging the demand for prostitution

The UK's first campaign challenging the demand for prostitution was launched today at a high-profile event in Portcullis House.

The Demand Change! Campaign, a joint initiative between women's charity Eaves and human rights organisation OBJECT, aims to:

- Promote an increased understanding of the myths and realities surrounding prostitution;
- Call for prostitution to be seen and widely understood as a form of violence against women; and
- Lobby for adoption of the 'Nordic model', which tackles demand for prostitution, decriminalises those selling sexual acts and provides adequate resources to assist people to exit prostitution.

At today's packed launch, award-winning Canadian journalist Victor Malarek spoke about his research into the demand for prostitution for his most recent book *The Johns: Sex for Sale and the Men Who Buy It* (2009). Other speakers included Gunilla Ekberg from the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), Professor Roger Matthews from London South Bank University, Slough MP Fiona Mactaggart and London member of the European Parliament Mary Honeyball.

### Some quotes from today

#### **Fiona Mactaggart:**

"It's a real opportunity to make progress on reducing exploitation of women, through addressing the demand."

#### **Victor Malarek:**

"Demand is fuelling the trafficking of women and girls, and payment is, for the Johns, the ultimate conscience-pacifier. This is a human rights catastrophe, alarm bells are ringing, and we had better do something to put the brakes on this insanity."

#### **Roger Matthews:**

"Punters often feel ambivalent and guilty about their use of women in prostitution. We need to understand and build on that ambivalence."

"We need a major campaign, like the smoking ban. Attitudes towards smoking have been changed very effectively – we need to do same regarding prostitution."

#### **Gunilla Ekberg:**

"Countries like Germany and the Netherlands have concluded that they have made a gigantic mistake. They both agree that the way to go is to criminalise the demand."

#### **Finn Mackay:**

"This is where that so-often misused word 'choice' will really come to matter – when each and every one of us chooses which side we're on. This campaign creates a space for the silent majority to start voicing the fundamental truths we all know about prostitution."

### Important time

OBJECT director Dr Sasha Rakoff commented: "Eaves and OBJECT are launching Demand Change! at a crucial time – one in which women are increasingly objectified, sexualised and stereotyped in our society. The 're-packaging' of one of the oldest forms of exploitation – prostitution – as empowerment for women is one example. This harms women and girls involved in prostitution, many of whom experience abuse and are unable to speak out. It also harms women in wider society, by sending out a damaging message that it is acceptable to treat women as sex objects, not people."

“It’s time to demand change by tackling the demand which fuels prostitution. We call for the UK to follow in the footsteps of Nordic countries which have decriminalised those selling sexual acts, whilst criminalising those who buy them and helping women to exit prostitution. We are delighted to be working with Eaves to achieve this”.

Eaves research & development manager Ruth Breslin commented: “There is much rubbish spoken about prostitution in this country, and one major myth bandied about is that prostitution is a safe, harmless job. It is not. Look at the statistics and you will see that women in prostitution are routinely raped; that a significant percentage began in prostitution before they were 18, and that a disproportionate number of women in prostitution grew up in care.

“We want people in the UK to see prostitution as a form of violence against women, and we believe the way to make women safer is to focus on curbing demand. We are looking forward to working with OBJECT to make this happen.”

Sandrine Levêque from OBJECT and Ruth Breslin from Eaves are both available for interview. For further information and to arrange interviews please contact Anna Bowden, communications officer at Eaves at [anna.bowden@eaveshousing.co.uk](mailto:anna.bowden@eaveshousing.co.uk) or on 020 7840 7126.

### **Notes for editors**

(1) Eaves is a feminist organisation which provides high quality support to vulnerable women who have experienced violence and who are at risk of homelessness, including those fleeing domestic violence and those trafficked into prostitution. It also carries out research, advocacy and campaigning to prevent all forms of violence against women. [www.eaves4women.co.uk](http://www.eaves4women.co.uk)

2) OBJECT is the leading human rights organisation which challenges the sexual OBJECTification of women in the media and popular culture. [www.OBJECT.org.uk](http://www.OBJECT.org.uk)

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