

OBJECT Press Release
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For immediate release

Campaigners brand Jobcentre Plus 'Pimpcentre Plus' for advertising sex industry jobs

As a Government consultation into Jobcentre Plus (JC+) advertising for the sex industry draws to a close (1), human rights group OBJECT (2), along with the Feminist Coalition Against Prostitution (3) and EAVES Housing for Women(4), collected 200 letters in 1.5 hours from local people demanding an end to Government sanctioning of sex industry jobs such as 'masseuses', 'escorts', lap dancers and strip webcam performers.

Campaigners stood outside the Brixton Jobcentre with 'Pimp Centre Plus' placards and a blown up Job centre advert for 'Female Adult Webcam Models' to provide 'entertainment for a male client basis in which you will be required to be nude/semi nude and which will involve explicit sexual dialogue' (5).

The Department for Work and Pensions claims it has no choice but to carry these adverts following a 2003 legal ruling that Ann Summers should be allowed to advertise through JC+ (6). The consultation follows pressure from women's groups and incidents in which women as young as 17 applied for jobs as 'masseuses' only to find they were expected to sell sex.

Anna van Heeswijk, Grassroots Coordinator for OBJECT, said:

"It is nonsensical for the government to extend a decision applicable to retail premises to virtually the entire sex industry. It is well known that 'escort' and 'masseur' are euphemisms for prostitution. Working in Ann Summers is very different from providing direct sexual services in prostitution or lap dancing and new legal advice backs up claims that they should not be treated in the same way (7).

Sex industry jobs are not glamorous or harmless fun. They are exploitative, they make sexual harassment seem normal, and they promote the idea that women are always sexually available as long as you have a bit of cash to spare.

It is the Government's duty to protect the rights of women to be free from violence and sexual harassment and to be seen and treated as equals. It is not acceptable for a government agency to be promoting

jobs to women which often involve violence and abuse and which send out the message that women are sexual objects to be bought and sold.”

For further information or interviews please contact Anna van Heeswijk:
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(1) The Department for Work and Pensions consultation '**Accepting and Advertising Employer Vacancies from within the Adult Entertainment Industry by Jobcentre Plus**' ends on Friday 27th March and is available online:

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/consultations/2008>

(2) OBJECT is a human rights pressure group which campaigns against 'sex object' culture and the mainstreaming of the sex and porn industries

<http://www.object.org.uk>

(3) The Feminist Coalition Against Prostitution is a coalition of individuals and women's rights groups <http://www.fcab.tik.com>

(4) EAVES Housing for Women provides accommodation to vulnerable women and campaigns and lobbies against violence against women

<http://www.eaves4women.co.uk>

(5) The advert is currently available and can be viewed here

<http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/Internet/viewVacancy.do?selectedVacancy=0&ref=ROI/68892>

(6) The Judicial Review ruling of R vs Ann Summers 2003 can be viewed here: <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2003/1416.html>

(7) OBJECT and EAVES Housing for Women have both obtained independent legal counsel which unpicks the DWP's justification of its policy – and shows that there is no legal justification for extending the Ann Summers ruling to the commercial sex industry. Legal counsel have also advised the policy contradicts DWP's obligations under the Gender Equality Duty 2007.

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