

# University of Leicester

## Student Sex Work Toolkit

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### 1. Introduction and Aims

The University is firmly committed to sustaining an inclusive learning, working and research environment characterised by respect and dignity, and free from harassment, bullying, abuse and discrimination as detailed in the [Dignity and Respect at Leicester Framework](#). This includes students earning money through sex work. We recognise the social stigma associated with sex work and are supportive of students who earn a living through sex work.

Sex work refers to providing sexual services directly or indirectly in exchange for money or other consumables and may include escorting, webcamming, stripping, adult entertainment, phone sex or other markets such as 'sugaring'. Please be aware that not all individuals sign up to the status of being a 'sex worker', especially those who are not escorting or providing direct services.

We recommend that this toolkit is used alongside the [University of Leicester's Student Sex Work policy](#) and [Leicester Students' Union and Standing Together student sex work campaign](#).

#### **The aims of this toolkit are to outline:**

1. The picture of student sex work within the UK
2. The legal context of the UK Sex Industry/Adult Entertainment Industry
3. How to offer appropriate support to Student Sex Workers and internal support and resources available at the University of Leicester
4. Relevant local and national Support Services within the UK

## 2. What is sex work?

Sex work refers to providing sexual services directly or indirectly in exchange for money or other consumables and may include escorting, webcamming, stripping, adult entertainment, phone sex or other markets. It is legal to sell and buy sex between consenting adults in the UK. If the sexual act is not consensual, it is not only not legal, it would also not be classed as sex work. Non-consensual sexual interactions are sexual violence – one example being sex exploitation. There are laws which make it illegal to solicit and loiter on the street, work collectively (with one or more people) in a brothel and assisting in the organisation of brothels (such as receptionist / manager).

Recent research, The Student Sex Work Project (2015) at the University of Swansea highlighted that rising costs of University fees and associated living expenses are resulting in an increase in the numbers of students entering the sex industry reporting almost 5% of students had worked within it and 20% considered it.<sup>1</sup>

Conducted mainly across Wales but also including other areas of the UK, the research had 6,773 responses from both students and academic staff to their online survey aiming to enhance knowledge regarding the experiences and needs of students involved in selling sexual services. The project highlighted the gaps in support student sex workers felt they were experiencing whilst trying to both complete their studies and financially support themselves by working in the UK adult entertainment industry.

The project underlined the need for Higher Education (HE) institutions to specifically include student sex work within policy development to ensure staff are appropriately aware of the legalities of the sex industry, the needs of students involved and the availability or development of non-judgmental support.

The findings highlighted that student sex workers were motivated by such practical reasons as being able to fund their studies with flexible work hours and avoid debt but also driven by the “anticipated pleasure” they felt the industry could bring.<sup>1</sup>

The most negative aspects of the work was cited by respondents as having to keep their work secret, fear of violence and negative judgement from friends, family and professional bodies such as universities, with the latter being recommended to “recognise the presence of students who work in the sex industry”.<sup>1</sup>

Such limitations and failings drove sex work organisations such as ECP, SWARM and SCOT-PEP alongside NUS LGBT+ (the National Union of Students’ LGBT+ Campaign) to conduct further research in 2018 which again reiterated that student sex workers did not feel they were receiving the help they needed. Respondents described experiences such as isolation, stigma and discrimination, whilst still having to keep their work secret for fear of repercussions from their universities.<sup>2</sup>

This latter research highlighted that a large proportion of student sex workers were from marginalised

backgrounds or were vulnerable. 71% identified as women and 17 % as non-binary. Over 70% identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Queer with over half describing themselves as having a disability; 14% were international students.<sup>2</sup>

Diversity within the online sex industry, the most utilised aspect of the market by students due to its hidden nature, was highlighted within the largest online research project ever conducted within the UK, Beyond the Gaze.<sup>3</sup> The BtG study revealed the diversity of sex workers using the internet in their work. Although the majority were female, male, and transgender, non-binary and intersex identities were also represented working within a variety of roles, both direct and in-direct and using a variety of platforms. There are also other markets such as 'sugaring' (where commercial relationships are made in return for intimacy). BtG reiterated the continued safety risks that workers face within the industry due to having to work alone or lie about their activities. This again highlighted the need to improve awareness, education and acceptance of selling sexual services.

### **3. The legal context of the UK Sex Industry/Adult Entertainment Industry**

The Law regarding the sex industry within the UK can be somewhat confusing as, although selling sex is legal, certain associated activities are criminalised.

Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 & the Policing and Crime Act 2009 the following main activities are criminalised:<sup>4</sup>

- Soliciting – selling sex or attempting to sell sex on a street or public place
- Kerb Crawling – with the intention of buying sexual services
- Keeping (and working collectively in) a Brothel – it is an offence to incite 'prostitution' or control it for personal gain, i.e. manage a brothel. This also relates to when more than one sex worker shares premises for the purposes of safety.

In 2016, the Home Affairs Select Committee recommended that both soliciting and sharing of premises be decriminalised in the interest of safety as a matter of urgency.<sup>5</sup>

Despite this and other recommendations from the National Chief Police Council who advise against disruptive operations unless exploitation is found to be present, sex workers can still be charged with 'gaining from prostitution' if found working together indoors.<sup>6</sup>

Street sex work is also still penalised although the severity can depend on geographic location with police forces across the country applying varying models of monitoring.

Below highlights the main sex work activities both direct (offering services face to face) such as independent sex work/escorting, selling in a brothel/street and indirect such as stripping, lap dancing, glamour modelling and working within the porn industry, offered within the adult entertainment



industry and their legal status within the UK.

Legality of the Sex Industry UK		
Activity	Illegal	Legal
Independent sex work/Escorting (i.e. working lone)		x
Sharing premises with another sex worker	x	
Selling sexual services in a brothel		x
Operating/managing a brothel/arranging the purchase of sex	x	
Soliciting for sex on the street	x	
Webcamming (performances streamed online)		x
Lap Dancing/Pole Dancing		x
Professional Dominatrix/Submissive		x
Sex chat phone lines		x
Stripping		x
Glamour modelling		x
Butler in the Buff		x
Selling underwear online for sexual gratification		x
Sugaring (being a paid companion for a sugar daddy)		x
Working in the porn industry		x

\*\*Information taken from <http://www.thestudentsexworkproject.co.uk/>

#### 4. Support and Disclosures

A recent survey detailing experiences of student sex workers reported that less than 15% of respondents thought their institutions or Students' Union were providing sufficient and appropriate support.<sup>2</sup>

All members of the University of Leicester community are expected to behave with respect and courtesy at all times, and operate with a non-judgemental and supportive attitude. The Dignity and Respect policy identifies some behaviours that are unacceptable which have a clear legal definition and have the ability to be dealt with under the relevant legal framework. Other behaviours noted in the Policy may not constitute a criminal offence, but may still be deemed as a breach of our University student regulations or staff ordinances.

Reported behaviours that are perceived by an individual to be unacceptable will be managed under the relevant procedures. Acceptable behaviours are the those that demonstrate due regard for the feelings and rights of others, and in turn create an environment where dignity can be preserved and enhanced, as detailed in the Dignity and Respect at Leicester Policy and Definitions Document.

#### Support & Guidance available at the University of Leicester

##### For Staff

For University staff, appropriate, non-judgemental services are crucial to provide support if and when needed by students who sex work to ensure both physical and mental safety and wellbeing. To support with this, the tips below aim to offer practical guidance, to staff with supporting responsibilities. Please note, the University has no control over external professional regulatory bodies, and so some contents below may not be fully applicable to students and staff from the Schools of Allied Health Professions, Medicine, and Education. If you are unsure as a staff member, please contact your department.

The tips below aim to offer practical guidance to any staff member who may receive a disclosure from a student in relation to their status as a sex worker. Please don't feel as though you have to act out of your current job role as there will be staff in the University and Students' Union who are trained, and are able and experienced in dealing with sensitive and complex disclosures. Please do, however, give students time and information for them to make their own informed decisions. Contact University Student Support Services or the Students' Union Advice Service if you have any questions, and email [concerned@le.ac.uk](mailto:concerned@le.ac.uk) with any specific, more serious concerns about students



### Do...

- ✓ treat *all* students with respect to allow for a trusting relationship to develop where disclosure and discussion regarding sex work can happen if needed
- ✓ allow students space to talk at their own pace, but suggest where sensitive disclosures could be made with trained members of staff (e.g. Student Support Services) where you don't feel able to respond within your job role
- ✓ only ask questions that are needed in order to signpost or refer the student to relevant support, and don't probe unnecessarily about their work
- ✓ ensure student is safe within their work
- ✓ expect their involvement with the sex industry to be hidden due to risk of stigma/judgement
- ✓ gain consent from any individual before sharing information unless serious safeguarding issues, or specific considerations in relation to professional regulatory bodies, are present which makes prior consent not needed
- ✓ offer practical solution focused guidance within the area of your current job role (e.g. most students may want advice on how to juggle their sex work and their study time/assignment deadlines)
- ✓ ensure you are aware of relevant referral pathways/services if needed – contact Student Support Services or Students' Union Advice Service if you have any questions, and email [concerned@le.ac.uk](mailto:concerned@le.ac.uk) with any specific concerns about students
- ✓ be aware of specific terminology and legal context of the adult entertainment industry within the UK (using this toolkit will help)
- ✓ ensure colleagues are aware of appropriate, factual information regarding the sex industry to lessen stigma for those involved.
- ✓ Suggest the student completes and submits a disclosure via the Report & Support (<https://reportandsupport.le.ac.uk/>) system if they have encountered any form of unacceptable behaviour (including bullying, harassment, abuse and/ or violence).

### Don't...

- break confidence regarding sex work involvement unless there is a risk to an individual's safety (concerns can be shared anonymously with Student Support Services in the first instance in order to identify appropriate next steps)
- write information on files or announce in broader student related staff meetings
- discuss sex work involvement in open forums or in front of other people
- inform Police unless the student has specifically asked for help doing this, or an individual is in immediate danger
- make assumptions regarding involvement/motivations (you should treat each person as an individual with varying needs and motivations)
- ask details about their sex work unless student has asked for specific help regarding this (but still sensitively try not to take on additional detailed disclosures if you are not the correct person for the student to be speaking to – consider whether Student Support Services or the Students' Union would be more appropriate and support the student in accessing this support)
- listen to or perpetuate myths regarding sex work but rather gain reliable factual information
- discipline someone for being involved in sex work including course suspension/expulsion (this may differ for students on professional courses with external regulatory bodies)
- make assumptions about drug involvement, personal lives etc.
- assume the student wants to leave sex work
- patronise when discussing their involvement in the sex industry.

The key support services at the University of Leicester to signpost students are:

Name of Support	Details	Contact
<p><b>Student Welfare Service</b> (this can be used as the main contact for Student Support Services in general)</p>	<p>Student Support Services in the University encompasses trained and experienced staff with varying backgrounds and specialties. Services and support offered by these teams includes general options and support conversations, needs and risks assessments, finance support, practical advice and guidance, Counselling sessions, and academic study support sessions and general support for students with disabilities, including mental health conditions and learning differences.</p>	<p>Phone: 0116 255 2448 Email: <a href="mailto:studentservices@leicester.ac.uk">studentservices@leicester.ac.uk</a> or <a href="mailto:welfare@le.ac.uk">welfare@le.ac.uk</a> Location: Charles Wilson Building.</p>
<p><b>Leicester Students' Union Advice Service</b></p>	<p><b>The Advice Service can:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Listen to you explain your situation and provide you with advice and support, identifying appropriate services for you and next steps you can take e.g. accessing further services.</li> <li>2. Liaise with other services and departments on your behalf where needed, with your consent.</li> <li>3. Review and provide further guidance on any documentation you need to collate for any procedures you need to follow, before you submit.</li> <li>4. Continue to provide advice on any outcomes you experience and anything else you'd like advice on during your student journey.</li> </ol>	<p>Phone: 0116 223 1132 Email: <a href="mailto:advice@le.ac.uk">advice@le.ac.uk</a> Location: Percy Gee Building</p>
<p><b>University of Leicester Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team</b></p>	<p>The EDI Team work to create an inclusive learning, working and research environment where all students, staff and visitors are treated with dignity and respect. The Team supports staff and students providing advice and guidance around The Equality Act 2010, including the protected characteristics.</p>	<p>Phone: 0116 373 6420 Email: <a href="mailto:equalities@le.ac.uk">equalities@le.ac.uk</a> Location: Astley Clarke</p>
<p><b>Report &amp; Support Online Disclosure System</b> (managed by the Standing Together team)</p>	<p>This system can be used to make disclosures of unacceptable behaviours experienced by students. This can include bullying, harassment abuse and/ or violence, as well as any other behaviour experienced either recently or historically that a student has been distressed by. Students, or staff who students have disclosed to, can complete a submission on the system and receive contact from the Standing Together team to discuss their options and provide ongoing support.</p>	<p><a href="https://reportandsupport.le.ac.uk">https://reportandsupport.le.ac.uk</a> <a href="mailto:standingtogether@le.ac.uk">standingtogether@le.ac.uk</a></p>

## Disclosures and Reporting

### For Students:

As a student, you can decide when, how and if you want to make a disclosure in relation to your experiences of sex work – including whether you want to share your sex working status at all. Disclosures of this nature can be made without having to make a formal report or complaint (e.g. to the University or Police). Unless there is a safeguarding concern, or specific consideration in relation to your membership with external professional bodies etc., how, when and where your information is shared is your decision.

Please note, the University has no control over external professional regulatory bodies, and so some contents below may not be fully applicable to students and staff from the Schools of Allied Health Professions, Medicine, and Education. If you are unsure as a student, please contact your department or the services or organisations provided above or below.

You can discuss your options and any concerns or issues you may have with a member of Student Support Services using the contact information above – you don't have to explain the circumstances in the initial contact if you don't want, as you can just request to speak with an advisor about a personal matter.

If you would like to make a disclosure of an experience of unacceptable behaviour (e.g. bullying/ harassment/ abuse/ violence) you have experienced, either whilst working or not, you can do so by completing a Report & Support submission using the details above. The Standing Together team (who are based within Student Support Services) will then discuss your options and provide ongoing support if required.

### For Staff:

The University offers a Dignity and Respect Contact Service to members of staff who feel that they are experiencing unacceptable behaviours, such as bullying or harassment, or who are responding to complaints about unacceptable behaviours.

Dignity and Respect Contacts provide staff with accurate information about relevant University, policies and procedures and the options available to them.

If you would like to meet with a Dignity and Respect Contact please contact:  
[dignityandrespect@leicester.ac.uk](mailto:dignityandrespect@leicester.ac.uk).

## 5. Key Services

Below are the main national and regional support services for sex workers across the UK.

Name	Detail	Link
<b>National</b>		
<b><u>National Ugly Mugs (NUM)</u></b>	Reporting scheme to help protect people involved in Sex Work from violent and abusive individuals. Their mission is to end violence against sex workers.	<a href="http://uglymugs.org/um/">uglymugs.org/um/</a>
<b><u>Student Sex Work Project</u></b>	Aims to generate new learning regarding student sex work and highlight the need for policy, guidance and training.	<a href="http://www.thestudentsexworkproject.co.uk/">www.thestudentsexworkproject.co.uk/</a>
<b><u>SWARM (Sex Worker Advocacy and Resistance Movement)</u></b>	<i>A collective founded and led by sex workers who campaign for the rights and safety of all who sell sexual services.</i>	<a href="http://www.swarmcollective.org/">www.swarmcollective.org/</a>
<b><u>SCOT-PEP</u></b>	A sex worker-led charity that advocates for the safety, rights and health of everyone who sells sex in Scotland.	<a href="http://www.scot-pep.org.uk/">www.scot-pep.org.uk/</a>
<b><u>ECP (English Collective of Prostitutes)</u></b>	An organisation of sex workers working on the street and in premises with a national network throughout the UK.	<a href="https://prostitutescollective.net/">https://prostitutescollective.net/</a>
<b><u>SAAFE (Support and advice for Escorts)</u></b>	A collective of independent escorts offering advice and support to all adult industry performers.	<a href="https://saafe.info">https://saafe.info</a>
<b><u>Pineapple Support Society</u></b>	Free and subsidized emotional support and professional therapy for adult industry performers.	<a href="http://pineapplesupport.org/about-pineapple-support/">pineapplesupport.org/about-pineapple-support/</a>



Name	Detail	Link
<b>Regional Services North East</b>		
<b>A Way Out</b>	Outreach & Prevention Charity offering services to women work on the street, families and young people.	<a href="https://www.awayout.co.uk/">https://www.awayout.co.uk/</a>
<b>Arch North East</b>	Rape crisis service that offer a specialist service to support people involved in the sex industry who have experienced rape or sexual assault.	<a href="https://www.archnortheast.org/">https://www.archnortheast.org/</a>
<b>Regional Services Yorkshire &amp; North Lincs</b>		
<b>Basis Yorkshire</b>	Charity who supports indoor and street sex workers who identify as women, and young people who are sexually exploited.	<a href="https://basisyorkshire.org.uk/">https://basisyorkshire.org.uk/</a>
<b>Regional Services North West</b>		
<b>The Men's Room</b>	Offer outreach & support to marginalised young men engaged in sex work or at risk of exploitation.	<a href="https://mroom.co.uk/">https://mroom.co.uk/</a>
<b>Red Umbrella Project</b>	A service to combat instances of violence and crimes committed against anyone in the sex industry.	<a href="https://www.changing-lives.org.uk/services/">https://www.changing-lives.org.uk/services/</a>
<b>Regional Services Midlands</b>		
<b>Jasmine House</b>	Leicester based charity working with female survivors of sexual abuse, sexual violence and rape.	<a href="https://www.jasminehouse.org.uk/">https://www.jasminehouse.org.uk/</a>
<b>First Step</b>	Leicester based charity working with male survivors of sexual abuse, sexual violence and rape.	<a href="https://firststepleicester.org.uk/">https://firststepleicester.org.uk/</a>
<b>Juniper Lodge (Sexual Assault Referral Centre)</b>	Service covering Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland for people aged 13 and over who have been raped or sexually assaulted either recently or in the past, regardless of gender or gender identity.	<a href="http://www.juniperlodge.org.uk/">http://www.juniperlodge.org.uk/</a>



Name	Detail	Link
<b>The New Futures Project</b>	Leicester based charity supporting sex workers with drop-ins, outreach and ongoing holistic support.	<a href="http://new-futures.org.uk/">http://new-futures.org.uk/</a>
<b>The Annex</b>	Project within Loughborough supporting sex workers with drop-ins and basic needs.	<a href="https://www.falconsupportservices.org.uk/the-annex">https://www.falconsupportservices.org.uk/the-annex</a>
<b>Leicester Sexual Health</b>	Providing a range of clinical sexual health services for commercial sex workers.	<a href="https://leicestersexualhealth.nhs.uk/leicester-sexual-health/csw">https://leicestersexualhealth.nhs.uk/leicester-sexual-health/csw</a>
<b>POW</b>	Project within Nottingham supporting sex workers and those at risk of exploitation. They hold a specialist clinic on the first Monday of every month for students working in the adult industry.	<a href="http://pow-advice.org.uk/">http://pow-advice.org.uk/</a>
<b>SAFE</b>	A sexual health service for people who work, have worked or may start working in the commercial sex industry across Birmingham and Solihull.	<a href="https://umbrellahealth.co.uk/our-services/safe">https://umbrellahealth.co.uk/our-services/safe</a>

## 6. References

<sup>1</sup> The Student Sex Work Project (2015) - <https://www.thestudentsexworkproject.co.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> Student Sex Worker Briefing (2018) - <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/student-sex-worker-briefing-2018>

<sup>3</sup> Beyond the Gaze - <https://www.beyond-the-gaze.com/briefings/>

<sup>4</sup> Release (Drugs, The Law & Human Rights) – Sex Workers and the Law (2017)  
[file:///C:/Users/gayno/OneDrive/Documents/Student%20Sex%20Work%20Project/SEX\\_WORKERS & T HE LAW 2017.pdf](file:///C:/Users/gayno/OneDrive/Documents/Student%20Sex%20Work%20Project/SEX_WORKERS_%20HE_LAW_2017.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> House of Commons, Home Affairs Committee – Prostitution (Third Report of Session 2016-17)  
<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/prostitution/>

<sup>6</sup> National Chief Police Council – National Policing Sex Work and Prostitution Guidance (2019)  
<http://library.college.police.uk/docs/appref/Sex-Work-and-Prostitution-Guidance-Jan-2019.pdf>