



Public
Prosecution
Service

Serious Crime Unit
Public Prosecution Service
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Andrey Nicoll MSP
Convener
Criminal Justice Committee
The Scottish Parliament

BY EMAIL TO:
prostitutionoffencesandsupportbill@parliament.scot

13 November 2025

Dear Ms Nicoll

I refer to your correspondence dated 11 November 2025 in which you requested information regarding the offence of paying for the sex in Northern Ireland.

In particular, you had asked the following:

- **What impact have the changes in the laws governing the sale and purchase of sexual services in your country had on:**
 - a) **Levels of prostitution or the sale of sexual services as they have been observed or recorded by police, statutory and other service providers**
 - b) **The use of violence towards those active in the sex industry, particularly women and girls, either observed or recorded by police, statutory and other service providers**
 - c) **The number of offences and successful prosecutions of those purchasing sexual services**

In response to a) and c) above, please be advised that in the period 1 June 2015 to 31 March 2025, there were 138 files received by the PPS relating to 157 suspects for the required offences.

For the period 1 June 2015 to 31 March 2025, 22 prosecution decisions were issued in respect of the offence of paying for sexual services, 14 of which were summary prosecutions and 8 were indictable prosecutions.

In the same period, there were 131 decisions issued (16 Indictable prosecutions, 17 Summary prosecutions, 43 Diversions and 55 No prosecution decisions).

In the same period, there were 13 Crown Court outcomes (12 were found guilty of at least one offence and 1 was acquitted). Please note that whilst 12 defendants were found guilty of at least 1 offence, they may not have been found guilty of any of the paying for sexual services offences considered in cases where they were also being prosecuted for other offences.

In the same period, there were 14 Magistrates' Court outcomes (8 were found guilty of at least one offence, 1 was acquitted and 5 had an 'other' outcome). Please note that whilst 8 defendants were found guilty of at least 1 offence, they may not have been found guilty of any of the paying for sexual services offences considered in cases where they were also being prosecuted for other offences.

Below is the list of offences considered for the purposes of this query:

Complaint Offence Code	Complaint Offence Description	Complaint Offence Legislation
4211054AT	ATTEMPTING TO PAY FOR SEXUAL SERVICES OF A PERSON	Article 64A of the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008 and Article 3(1) of the Criminal Attempts and Conspiracy (NI) Order 1983
4211054SB	PAYING FOR THE SEXUAL SERVICES OF A PERSON (In force from 1 June 2015)	Article 64A(1)(a) of The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008
4211056SB	PAYING FOR SEXUAL SERVICES OF A PERSON	Article 64A of the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008

It has not been possible to provide a response to your question at b) above as we are unable to search our system for victims on the basis of their work. I can confirm, however, that we have prosecuted offences of rape against sex workers within the Serious Crime Unit.

- **Have there been challenges for the police, prosecution bodies or the courts in implementing and administration the new laws? If so, can you provide further detail.**

Whilst I cannot identify any factors specific to prosecutions of this nature, witness attrition generally in cases of sexual crime is something we are always conscious of. We understand that sex workers in particular may be reluctant to engage with in the criminal justice system. There may also be underreporting of the crime of paying for sexual services given that the transaction usually takes place in private and is unlikely to be reported by either of the individuals involved. We have become aware of these offences mainly where more serious offences have been investigated such as human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation or controlling prostitution or where an approach has been made to an individual to attempt to pay for sexual services and that person is not a sex worker.

Yours faithfully

Catherine Kierans

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Head of the Serious Crime Unit