

### **Discussion 1, Sexual Exploitation.**

By criminalising the purchase of sex, you send a powerful message that exploitation will not be tolerated, and that consent cannot be purchased.

This is known as the Nordic Model and is law in 9 countries, including Northern Ireland. It effectively criminalises the buyers and decriminalises the prostitutes. By way of contrast, all prostitution is legalised in Switzerland, and has been since 1942. It effectively focuses on the seller and the buyer is all but invisible. It is regulated and licensed and members of the EU can buy passes from the Swiss Government to enable them to lawfully sell sex in Switzerland for up to 90 days at a cost of 5 Swiss Francs per day (£4.39).

The Nordic model is opposed by Amnesty International, the World Health Organisation and the Global Network of Sex Workers.

The debate is strongly argued and convincingly evidenced by both sides.

There are close to 79,000 prostitutes in England and Wales. Within this figure there are an unknown number of young girls, boys, women, and men trafficked and forced to sell sex by their slave masters.

If the Nordic model were to be adopted, might this lead to a reduction in the number of women and girls trafficked, both from within and outside the UK, for the purpose of sexual exploitation?

Discuss.

## **Discussion 2 – County Lines**

At least 27,000 children are believed to be trapped in county lines across the country. This epidemic of child criminal exploitation is being fuelled by gangs who use social media to target, groom, coerce, and track the movements of vulnerable children online, some as young as 11.

These children, known as clean skins, in that they have not previously come to the attention of the police, are able to operate under the radar. They are highly disposable and readily replaceable. They become drawn into a web of criminality, drugs, knife crime and violent coercion.

The continued criminalisation of the drug industry, including the personal use of drugs, is arguably the principal driver damaging so many of our young people. Is it not now time to follow the lead of 18 states in the USA and 30 countries including Italy, Spain, and, recently Germany, grasp the nettle and ‘sensibly and safely’ decriminalise, regulate, and take control of the drug industry whilst at the same time reducing the profit motivation encouraging the gangs and cartels?

Discuss.

For further information, see the 2016 report by Release, the UK centre for expertise on drugs and drug laws entitled ‘A Quite Revolution: Drug Decriminalisation Across the Globe’.

Kent was recently identified as the county having the highest number of county lines, outside of London, in the UK.

### Discussion 3 – The Illegal Migration Act.

In July 2023 the Illegal Migration Bill became law with the aim of stopping people from crossing the English Channel in small boats so saving lives lost at sea. The Act legislates that anyone arriving in the UK by irregular means will have their asylum claim deemed 'inadmissible – the Home Office won't even consider someone's claim.

The Refugee Council continues to advocate for a fair and humane asylum system governed by the principles of compassion and control. It emphasises that no matter where you are from or which war you are running from, your life matters!

The Home Office's own statistics highlight that three in every four people who crossed the Channel in 2022 would be recognised as refugees and entitled to asylum. Furthermore, the Act provides for the denial of support, and for the detention and deportation of people who are recognised to be potential victims of modern slavery. This is a denial of the rights such victims have under the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

There is currently a backlog of over 143,000 asylum claims waiting to be processed in the UK with an average of a further 25,000 claimants crossing the channel each year.

Reflecting purely on those escaping modern slavery such as forced marriage, labour, and sexual exploitation, is it justifiable that such persons can be denied a voice? Discuss.

Different considerations apply to unaccompanied children under the age of 18 – For another days discussion?

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