



Only Rights Can Stop the Wrongs

NSWP STATEMENT

In Response to Scottish Trades Union Congress Decision to Disregard the Rights of Sex Workers to Organise and Unionise

NSWP condemns the recent decision by the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) to cancel their agreement with Sex Worker Open University (SWOU) to provide a venue for the upcoming 'Sex Workers' Rights and Community Building Festival'.

The 'Sex Workers' Rights and Community Building Festival' brings together sex workers and allies from across the world and has attracted worldwide attention and public interest. It provides opportunities for both sex workers and other experts to share ideas and experiences, organise for sex workers' rights, and strategise around resisting harmful laws and policies. The decision to organise this festival in Scotland is extremely timely in light of recent attempts to criminalise those who purchase sexual services (known as the 'Swedish Model'). This approach is one that has been criticised heavily by NSWP and our members as it negatively impacts upon the health and human rights of sex workers.



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Sex work is recognised as informal labour by International Labour Organisation and sex workers are protected under ILO Recommendation 200¹. NSWP regrets and condemns the decision of STUC to take an approach to sex workers' rights that sits in contradiction to the recommendations of the ILO. This position is a clear dismissal of sex workers as deserving of trade union support and undermines their fundamental human right to organise and unionise.

In a statement the STUC claimed their decision was taken because the title of the event diametrically contradicts the STUC position – and yet the title of the event to have been held in the STUC building is ‘Looking at Laws and Policies that Impact on Sex Workers and Strategies for Resistance and Change.’, not as claimed “The Scottish Context: Opposing Criminalisation of Clients.”, which is the topic of one presentation by SCOT-PEP representing Scottish sex workers perspectives. The STUC decision clearly represents an attempt to stifle the voices of sex workers and evidence-based debate on the current discourse in Scotland and beyond. It should also be noted that the STUC did not refuse to host this event but cancelled the booking at very short notice after publicity materials had been produced and distributed, at significant cost to a poorly-resourced sex worker rights movement.

NSWP urge the STUC to review their position in relation to supporting sex workers to organise, rather than be part of the system that oppresses sex workers. Sex work is work and sex workers must be afforded the same labour rights as any other workers. Any political perspective or legal framework that refuses to acknowledge this violates the human rights of sex workers.

¹ International Labour Organization. Recommendation concerning HIV and AIDS and the World of Work (No. 200). 2010. (http://www.ilo.org/aids/lang-en/docName--WCMS_142706/index.htm)

