

Grandma Takes Ground Breaking Legal Case against Strip Clubs

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A Sheffield Grandmother, Irene Gladdison, is [fundraising now](#) to take her Council to court after it decided that there should be no limit on strip club numbers. She knows that in a climate of #MeToo and 'President's Clubs' it will never be Times Up for sexual harassment in a society that says men have the right to buy women for sexual entertainment.

The law is likely to be on her side as, legally, Councils *must* consider how they can promote equality in all of their policies. In fact, the law goes further than this. Councils are *legally bound* to look at how they can *eliminate* harassment, discrimination and victimisation against women in all of their policies and decision-making.



"This is not what I want for my grandchildren"

And Irene is no stranger to this. Two years ago, she bought a similar claim against Sheffield City Council, which ultimately had to concede that it had got equality law wrong when renewing the license of notorious strip club chain Spearmint Rhino. It seems no lessons have been learned, since the Council again faces legal challenge – this time on its entire licensing policy on lap dancing clubs because they have got equality law wrong, again, and not looked at the impact on women properly.

As Irene succinctly puts it "I'm a 54 year old Grandma. With 5 grandkids. A Lifelong Feminist. And Proud Sheffielder. I refuse to be cowed by the City Council and allow them to 'OK' the sexual objectification of our girls. Because we will never have #Times Up or an end to 'President's Club' attitudes when men can buy women as sexual entertainment at Strip Clubs."

Irene is being supported by pressure group, [Not Buying It](#). As Not Buying It CEO, Dr Sasha Rakoff, asks:

"How can having no limit whatsoever on strip clubs, the very definition of harassment - and worse, possibly be compatible with any Council that is trying to promote equality? This is especially unacceptable when a quick press scan reveals at least a dozen clubs have had their licenses suspended in the last 2 years alone because of harassment or worse of performers – including full out assaults on lap dancers."



And it's not just about the treatment of performers in clubs that is a problem. What about the effect on the local community? It is well known that strip clubs can create virtual no go-areas for women and others in their vicinity. And Irene's Council is a case in point. Despite fierce opposition, its one current club is nestled in the heart of the City's Cultural Industries Quarter, bang in the middle of student accommodation, right by a student union and next to services for vulnerable people. And the Council has been informed countless time of local people who feel so threatened and intimidated that they cannot use the nearby streets or services and even of business women who have had to relocate offices because of the hostile environment the club generates.

“In fact, it’s hard not to feel that this is just part of a wider pattern of sex industry bias by the Council” says Rakoff.

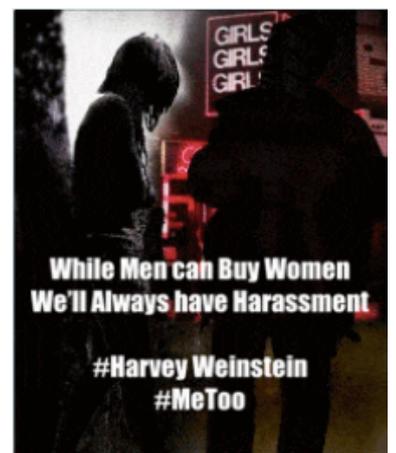
“There has been a reported [400% increase in prostitution](#) in Sheffield recently, far above that in any surrounding or equally deprived area. The Council funded last year’s ‘SheFest’ to celebrate International Women’s day to provide an inclusive celebration of women and girls, which included performances by pro-prostitution organisation, ‘The Sex Workers Opera’. And given the recent expose of a [child prostitution ring](#) in Sheffield you would think the council would be taking urgent action to reduce the sex industry. Instead it seems hell bent on expanding it not least by placing no limits whatsoever on the soft end of it, lap dancing clubs”.

And what about the effect on wide attitudes? Countless International Treaties, backed by global research studies, condemn the sexualised representation of women as directly influencing inequality and abusive attitudes towards women. Strip clubs are most certainly part of this.

Irene and Not Buying It need just £5,000 in the first instance. This will enable them to get the case off the ground. If the case can go ahead and the High Court rules that the Council’s approach is flawed, this sends a very clear message to Councils and the powerful strip industry across the UK.

Irene is being represented by Human Rights lawyer Louise Whitfield of Deighton Pierce Glynn, who says:

“The law is very clear that if a particular issue is highly relevant for gender equality, a public body must look very carefully at *any* negative impact on women. Unfortunately, the Council has taken a very narrow approach and only considered extremely limited evidence about the adverse effect these clubs have on women performers. We hope that as before, the Council will recognise their errors and agree to think again. If not, my client has no choice but to pursue her legal challenge.”



END

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Donations to the Crowd Justice funding page:

<https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/timesupforstripclubs>

More Info:

Recent Incidences in Clubs: www.notbuyingit.org.uk/StripSleazeRecent

The Harm of Sexualisation: www.notbuyingit.org.uk/ObjectificationHarm