

have a closed-circuit TV system to discourage trouble. Are people checked out before they come in, or can anyone come through the door?

Don't forget other health and safety issues too – how would you get out if there was a fire, for example? Few brothels have a 'no smoking' policy.

### Other staff

Working alone can be isolating, but in a brothel you can share the ups and downs of the work with people doing the same thing.

However particularly if the brothel isn't busy, every client you get is someone the others didn't - and jealousy between staff can become a big issue.

### Avoiding control

Again, it's legal to be a sex worker at a brothel provided you don't assist in its management – that's just as illegal as actually owning it.

Taking money from other workers' clients and noting its receipt in a cashbook; putting up advertisements; paying bills; hiring and firing staff; supplying materials; banking and book-keeping have all been held to amount to a sufficient degree of control.

Activities such as admitting customers, cleaning, removing rubbish, making coffee or other duties of a trivial nature are **not** sufficient, but that's what the brothel should be employing a receptionist for.

### Working for more than one

Brothels vary: some will fire you if you work elsewhere or for yourself when you're not on duty with them, others are fine.

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working with male & transgender sex workers

This guide has been adapted from our website:  
[www.sw5.info](http://www.sw5.info) - look for the sex worker section

### Other useful contact addresses

St Mary's Hospital in Paddington, West London, has two specialist health clinics, one each for male and female sex workers:

**Working Men Project** Praed Street Project  
☎ 020 7886 1524 ☎ 020 7886 1549  
[www.wmplondon.org.uk](http://www.wmplondon.org.uk)

Jefferiss Wing, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street,  
Paddington, London W2

### Diamond Clinic

A service for male and transgender sex workers, it is part of the West London Centre for Sexual Health.

Charing Cross Hospital, Fulham Palace Road,  
London S6 8RF ☎ 020 8846 1579 (ask for the health advisors)  
[www.hivgum.demon.co.uk](http://www.hivgum.demon.co.uk)

**CLASH (Central London Action on Street Health)**  
Part of the HIV prevention team of Camden & Islington Health Promotion, *CLASH works with sex workers in Central London as well as on the gay scene.*

11 Warwick Street, London W1B 5NA ☎ 020 7734 1794

### IUSW

The International Union of Sex Workers is a group of sex work activists. Membership is free and anyone in the industry can join.

IUSW, PO Box 27465, London SW2 1YA  
[www.iusw.org](http://www.iusw.org)

### GMB

A trade union which includes the London Adult Entertainment Section, which includes escorts and other sex workers.

[www.gmb.org.uk](http://www.gmb.org.uk)

### Barnardos Young Mens Project

Works with young men under 18 selling sex

3 Morocco Street, London SE1 3HB ☎ 020 7378 8797

### SCOT-PEP

The leading sex work charity in Scotland.

70 Newhaven Rd, Edinburgh EH6 5QG ☎ 0131 622 7550  
[www.scot-pep.org.uk](http://www.scot-pep.org.uk)

### Escort safety website

[www.saafw.co.uk](http://www.saafw.co.uk)

## Working in a Brothel

## - a brief guide -

Escorts and the law

Escorts and money

Maids and the law

Working alone

Working for an agency

Working in a brothel

Performing in porn

Is sex work for you?

**Being a sex worker in a brothel is legal in the UK.** But owning or helping manage one isn't, and in May 2004 the penalties for doing so were greatly increased.

## **What is a brothel?**

Whatever it calls itself - massage parlour, private club, sauna - in law, a brothel is anywhere that more than one person offers sex. That's whether or not they're ever there at the same time, and - strange but true - whether or not they charge!

This means that a surprising number of places are, in fact, brothels.

## **Getting hired**

This is easier for women than men: there are very many more brothels with women workers than male ones.

Even so, because the average time someone works in a particular brothel is said to be a month or two, most brothels are always looking for new staff. Some people find they don't like the work or don't like working for someone else, and some have a high turnover because they're not worth working for.

If they take you on, they will usually try to treat you as self-employed. While this means they shouldn't deduct tax from their payments to you, this doesn't mean you don't have to pay tax! (And they may have to tell the tax people who you are.) See our *Escorts & Money* leaflet for more details.

Before you agree to work for anyone else, check their policies: what are you expected to do? How does that compare with what you are comfortable with? You shouldn't have to take clients who are drunk, rude, abusive, or have an infection, for example. Similarly, if there are services you're not happy offering, you shouldn't be put under pressure to change your mind.

## **Brothels to watch out for**

As it's illegal to own or run a brothel, it's not very surprising that some of the people doing so aren't nice. Some managers will expect you to have sex with them. It's your choice, but remember there are plenty of other brothels out there looking for staff.

Brothels have to pay taxes too. If they're not VAT registered, then they're new, or not very successful, or breaking the tax laws & risking being raided - one of

our local brothels was closed for failing to pay taxes. The use or sale of drugs, or the presence of people working illegally (either because they're under 18 or don't have a working visa) are two other danger signs.

## **What are you paying them for?**

Working for a brothel means you'll only get some of the money the client pays. In exchange, they should look after several things for you.

## **Somewhere to work**

If they didn't have this, they wouldn't have a brothel! Some are clean and tidy, with large beds with fresh laundry for each client, while others are cramped, smelly and/or filthy and are best avoided. You should also have easy access to good washing facilities like showers, and time between clients to use them.

Brothels can be good for separating the work from the rest of your life: outside the brothel, no-one need know you work there, or how to contact you, unless you want them to.

## **Clients**

Almost all clients will be men - virtually no women and very few couples visit brothels.

But many male clients like using brothels - they can usually see several workers before choosing; they don't need to reveal any contact details; they can arrive or leave when they want to; and it can also be cheaper than hiring an independent or agency escort. All of this should add up to a steady stream of clients.

But is a steady stream what you want? Having sex with many men in one day can be harder, physically and emotionally, than having sex with the same number over a week, for example.

In a brothel, clients pick workers, not the other way around. In some places, you will be lined up with other workers, or examined from behind a two-way mirror, so the client can pick one (or more) workers. If you aren't comfortable with that, and the feelings of rejection, you will have problems working there.

No good brothel will insist that you see anyone you really object to, or feel at risk from in some way. But if you refuse a perfectly average client because of the colour of his skin or his age, you will probably be fired.

Be careful of clients who suggest meeting them privately ("so you can keep all the money") as they may be looking for free sex or a relationship.

## **Advertising**

They will have ads. Where and how many will affect what sort of clients you get, as well as giving an indication as to how the owner(s) see the business.

As part of their ads or website, they may want to have a photo of you. Remember that once it's published, it will be out there forever. Do you want everyone to see your face or other identifying features on a brothel ad? Make sure you have the copyright of any photos, or that you trust absolutely the person who does.

## **Handling Calls**

As well as the 'walk up' trade, some clients will ring to see who is likely to be available. Bad brothels will say whatever is necessary to get them to turn up and it's you who will have to deal with any anger or disappointment that you're not as described.

## **Waiting**

The brothel will expect you to work at certain times. Many people find that the later at night, the more desperate / drunk / off their head / trouble the clients are. What shifts are you prepared to work?

If you work at the same times each week, it will be easier to build up a group of regular clients.

Better brothels have somewhere private you can relax while you're not with a client.

## **Charges**

Brothels almost always set prices, and often charge by the service as well as by time. If so, and a client hasn't paid to give you oral sex, for example, you'll be expected not to allow him to do so; if he has, you will.

Brothels will typically take between a third and a half of what the client pays. This should cover all of their expenses - check you don't have to pay the receptionist or pay for laundry etc too.

## **Security**

The brothel should take your safety very seriously. As well as having other staff around, they should also