

condoms or other barriers.

Typically you will be asked to 'prove' you are clear of STIs, including HIV, by having a certificate from a clinic. These are mostly there to protect the producer, not you!

### **Problems with relying on certificates**

Unfortunately, it can take up to three months for someone newly infected with HIV to produce antibodies to the virus and it's these that nearly all 'HIV tests' look for. (One test can detect HIV directly after about fourteen days.) Before then, the person will probably be more infectious than someone who does test HIV+.

What can happen when relying on certificates rather than condoms was shown in 2004: a US male porn star, newly infected with HIV, infected three of the thirteen women he had sex with before he tested HIV+.

Certificates also usually cost money, whether from a private clinic or an NHS one. One free source is the specialist Indigo Clinic for porn performers at the Charing Cross Hospital (also home to the Diamond Clinic for male & trans sex workers in general).

### **Before you say yes, ask...**

1. What are you being hired to do, and who by?
2. Where, when and who with?
3. How much are they paying you?
4. When do you get paid?
5. Will taxes be deducted?
6. What do you need to bring - will wardrobe be needed, and should you do your own makeup or will there be a makeup artist?

---

SW5 is part of the Terrence Higgins Trust.

Terrence Higgins Trust is a registered charity, number 288527.

A company limited by guarantee, registered in England.

Registered Company number 1778149.

The legal information in this leaflet may apply to England & Wales only - contact SCOT-PEP for advice about Scotland. It is believed to be correct but it is not legal advice. For that, you need to speak to a solicitor or some other qualified person.

Copyright © SW5 2004-06. Last updated: 20th February 2006

SW5, 11 Eardley Crescent, London SW5 9JS ☎ 020 7370 0406

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**

#### **The Indigo Clinic**

Part of the West London Centre for Sexual Health, it offers a free service and certificates, including one hour HIV tests, full sexual health screening, Hepatitis B vaccinations, and contraception.

It operates an appointment-only service.

Charing Cross Hospital, Fulham Palace Road,  
Hammersmith, London W6 8RF

☎ 020 8848 1579 (ask for the health advisers)

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

**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)

#### **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.saafe.co.uk](http://www.saafe.co.uk)

# SW5

.advice  
.drop-in  
.info  
.health  
.support

working with male & transgender sex workers

## **Performing in Porn**

### **- a brief guide -**

## **Performing in porn**

**Performing in porn and most other forms of sex work are legal in the UK.**

## Legal bits: R U 18?

Most of this affects producers and publishers rather than performers, but it's a good idea to know if what you're being asked to do will be legal in the UK or not.

### U-18?

Since May 2004, it's been illegal to **possess** an indecent image of anyone, *real or imaginary*, who is or *appears to be* under 18.

(If you're married to or living with someone aged 16 or 17, you can have images of them, but only if they consent and the images don't involve and are not seen by anyone else.)

Even if it's obvious that you're older, you should be expected to have some proof of age, e.g. a passport. This means that although you may be using a 'working' name, someone will have your real details on file.

### Obscene Publications Act 1959

This says **distributing** something is illegal if it has 'a tendency to deprave and corrupt those likely to see it'. In practice, modern juries will only convict images of child abuse, extreme sadism and bestiality.

The police will also sometimes seize other material and use a section of the Act that means magistrates, not a jury, decide its fate.

### Video Recordings Act 1984

This makes it illegal to **distribute** videos without a certificate from the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). They used to cut virtually all explicit sex...

### R18

... until 2001 when a successful appeal by some porn producers meant the BBFC was forced to introduce the R18 certificate. The guidelines changed in 2005 and are rather more opaque than before.

Looking at the BBFC's decisions, it's clear that they still allow explicit images of people having sex in a variety of ways in ones, twos and mores, including using toys. They also say they make no distinction between heterosexual and homosexual activity.

But there are still some restrictions, mostly based on what the police think of as obscene, i.e. anything

- o otherwise illegal. This includes sex in public spaces, and in the past, gay group sex
- o likely to encourage an interest in sexually abusive activity (e.g. paedophilia or incest) which may include adults role-playing as non-adults or adults talking about past behaviour
- o including sexual activity which involves lack of consent (real or simulated) or using any form of physical restraint which prevents participants from withdrawing consent, e.g. ball gags
- o involving inflicting pain or physical harm, real or (in a sexual context) simulated. Some allowance "may be made" for mild consensual activity
- o with penetration by any object likely to cause actual harm or associated with violence. They include hands ('fisting') and ice lollies in this, as well as the more obvious guns and knives etc.
- o including sexual threats or humiliation not part of a clearly consenting role-playing game

Although the guideline banning "degrading or dehumanising" material has gone, they are still cutting scenes of female ejaculation under the mistaken impression that it is urination during sexual activity.

A court case in 2005 confirmed that R18 videos may only legally be sold in licenced sex shops, and not via mail-order or the internet.

## Male, female & trans

For a variety of reasons, there are more men who think they can be porn stars than there are opportunities for them to do so. Consequently, if you're male, producers can often demand you need to be conventionally good-looking, under 25, with a substantial penis, and able to ejaculate on demand more than once in a short time before they'll hire you.

Women who think they'll enjoy sex with strangers while being filmed are rarer, so consequently have more opportunities and more bargaining power.

MTF transsexuals are seen as a niche fetish, primarily based on their 'pre-op' period when they have both breasts and a penis. Before and after this time, it will be harder to find work.

## Think about your future

Various scandals involving originally private sex tapes of the (in)famous have highlighted this issue: once it's out of your hands, the porn will probably be around forever. Do you want a future employer or partner to see it?

Plus if the sex you're having is illegal, just filming it is risky: several people (including the Operation Spanner group of gay men into SM) only ended up in prison because the police discovered videos they'd made.

## The price of fame

You're very unlikely to become a porn star: the average length of a performer's career is between three months and three years. The pay can also be less than escorting.

If you ever become famous in another field, history suggests that someone somewhere will have a copy and sell the story to the media. Being in a 'soft core' film cost one woman the chance to be a princess...

## Model releases

This is the contract that a producer will ask you to sign. The actual wording varies slightly, but the essential content of what you will typically be asked to agree to remains the same: you will lose all control over the images and they can do what they like with them, without any further payment to you.

After you sign, you have no power. Before you sign, you do. Without some form of model release, they will have great difficulty in doing anything with the images without your permission. So the time for negotiation is before you sign, not after!

You may wish to restrict where it can be published or for how long or want a royalty from each sale or... Many producers will be very reluctant to give you any of those, but if you don't ask, you won't get.

In the end, it's up to you: is the money you are being offered enough? If not, don't sign.

## Condoms & HIV

Many producers believe that porn that doesn't involve condoms is more likely to sell than porn that does. Consequently, if you will be having sex with someone else, you will often be expected to do so without using