

Paying for sex is now illegal in Northern Ireland



A Belfast prostitute has launched a legal challenge against the new law saying it breaches her human rights

[Siobhan Fenton](#) 

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As of this morning, it is now illegal to pay for sex in Northern Ireland.

The region is the first part of the UK to criminalise buying sexual services. Under the new legislation, anyone convicted of paying for sex can be [fined up to £1,000 or imprisoned for up to a year](#). However, it is not illegal for sex workers to solicit for sex.

The new law is part of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Act 2015 which was brought to the Stormont Parliament by Democratic Unionist Party politician Lord Morrow last year.

The peer [said](#): "This legislation will not, in and of itself, eradicate trafficking. Ultimately doing so may prove impossible - that does not mean we shouldn't try."

He added that he hoped the new legislation will: "send a strong message that our society will not tolerate human trafficking and that we will not let the victims of such crimes down."

It is estimated that [some 17,000 people pay for sex in Northern Ireland every year](#).

A Belfast based sex worker, Laura Lee, has announced that [she is seeking a judicial review of the new legislation](#) in Belfast High Court, arguing that it breaches European Human Rights laws and will endanger sex workers by pushing the trade further underground.

She says that by introducing the law, politicians: "sent out a clear message to the sex work community that they don't care about us [sex workers], one of society's most marginalised and stigmatised groups."

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/paying-for-sex-is-now-illegal-in-northern-ireland-10289181.html>