

# Cross-Party Group on Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse

Date and Time 22 April 2022 at 6.00 pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Fulton MacGregor MSP, Convener, Collette Stevenson MSP, Brian Whittle MSP

Invited guests

None

Non-MSP Group Members

Anne Macdonald, Co Convener, Janine Rennie, Wellbeing Scotland, Co Convener, Sandra Brown, Moira Anderson Foundation, Treasurer

Emma Bryson, Speak Out Survivors, , Andrew Campbell, Student, Ellie Forgan, KASP, Sheila Gaul, Retired Social Worker, Dr Javita Narang, International Consultant, Truama Care Sarah Nelson, Writer & Researcher Dr Eric Swanepoel, Writer and Researcher, David Whelan FBGA

Apologies

Stuart Allardyce, Stop It Now! Scotland, Lynn Burns, Break the Silence, Katy Clark MSP, Alexa Green, Student, Pam Hunter, SAY Women, Dr Adam Mahoney, Napier University, Rukhsana Saleem, Moira Anderson Foundation, Rachel Tullo, Stop It Now! Scotland, Carol Willson, Student

## Agenda item 1

### **Approval of Minutes of 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

Proposed: Janine Rennie

Seconded: Sandra Brown

### **Matters Arising:**

Reply from Mr Swinney to letter to Claire Haughey MSP on Redress Scheme and age when a child is recognised as an adult. This letter was sent to the membership for comment.

## Agenda item 2

### **Update from Brian Whittle MSP**

Brian had a positive meeting with the Lord Advocate, Dorothy Bain QC who agrees that the journey for survivors in the justice system is fraught with difficulties. She recognised the issues he raised and is amenable on how improvements can be made for survivors and their families and how a 'map' of the survivor's journey and the trauma of reporting childhood sexual abuse should look like. Brian will continue along with her and the group to further highlight their experiences.

Several group members expressed that in their dealings with the Lord Advocate have been supportive and whilst aware of the difficulties survivors face there remain deep flaws in the system the reality on the ground is still damaging. We will cover justice issues further on the agenda.

## Agenda item 3

### **Update on Redress Scheme**

David and Janine provided some updates. It was felt that the scheme has been set up too quickly and would inevitably run into issues that resulted in survivors being re-traumatised.

A recent example that came to the CPG from an in care survivor who wanted us to know about their experiences of the Scheme highlights the following:

- An unacceptable series of delays and promises not kept
- Cut and paste responses
- The delays and lack of updates have had a significantly detrimental effect on the mental and emotional health of the survivor and their family
- Addiction issues have been triggered

They had felt that in the Scheme they might be dealt with in a sympathetic manner and that someone would at long last be listening to their story, however this is proving far from the case and would like this addressed as a matter of urgency.

It was agreed that we approach Mr Swinney, who we believe is committed to survivors and our concerns, request a meeting with him to discuss the issues that are arising as he possibly is not aware of what we are being told. **Action Fulton**

## Agenda item 4

### **Justice Issues for survivors**

Fulton, Anne and Janine met and proposed we link up with the Strategy for Victims Reform as hosting our own Inquiry could be viewed as duplication. Fulton proposed we request a Members Debate.

**Action Fulton, Janine and Anne**

## Agenda item 5

### **Dr Sarah Nelson, Presentation: Use of Character Witnesses for defendants in CSA cases – the dangers**

Sarah's paper was distributed to the group prior to our meeting. She chose to highlight a few issues from her paper to lead us to discussion. We should establish how Scotland's Courts use character witnesses.

In a wide discussion it was agreed that the general public as Jury members are not aware of childhood sexual abuse actually is. They must be helped to understand trauma and perhaps the National Trauma Training Programme could be used as part of this education? How the judge directs/advises the jury can result in a poor outcome. Survivors cannot have someone to vouch for them and their character, some survivors have a history of addiction and this should be understood from adverse childhood experiences. Social status and class can be interpreted as somehow 'valid' in character witness statements. Due to time constraints we agreed that any further comments can be sent for Sarah to answer.

## Agenda item 6

### **BRAVE Movement: End Childhood Sexual Violence Global Survivor Action Summit**

Matthew McVarish gave a brief input on the BRAVE Movement and the Global Summit, whose links have been already sent out. BRAVE are a global network bringing together both survivors and allies to engage in powerful and coordinated advocacy and campaigning. They are committed to a common vision and mission to end all forms of sexual violence against children and adolescents everywhere.

The intentions of this global mobilisation are to:

- Acknowledge the magnitude of the global crisis of sexual violence against children and adolescents;
- Call for systemic change in communities, countries, and globally to address this global crisis;
- Call for long-term sustained funding for organisations focused on Prevention, Healing and Justice to ensure programmes reach all children everywhere;
- Unite organisations and advocates across disciplines, promote partnerships and share resources for effective Prevention, Healing and Justice policies and full-scale programmes that reach and safeguard all children everywhere;

Ensure that survivor voices and experiences are heard, acknowledged, honoured and included by governing and decision-making bodies.

**AOCB**

None

**Date of next meeting**

TBC