

Cross-Party Group on Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Tuesday 6th February 2024 18.00-20.00

This will be an online meeting.

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Ruth Maguire MSP SNP Co-convenor
Rhoda Grant MSP Scottish Labour Co-convenor
Ash Regan MSP Alba

Non-MSP Group Members

Jacci Stoyle	Secretary
Claire Jones	You My Sister
Sasha Rakoff	Not Buying It
Chris Hall	Not For Sale
Ann Hall	Not For Sale
Ali Morris	FiLiA
Sally Jackson	FiLiA
Susan McKellar	Scottish Women's Convention
Zara Wynn	Individual
Steve Rawbone	Individual
Sophie Reymbaut	Individual
Michael Veitch	CARE for Scotland
Ann Hayne	NHS Lanarkshire
Ailsa Scott	Individual
Janice Wilson	Soroptimist Scotland
Anne Martin	Individual
Alison Scott	NHS Lothian
Isabelle Kerr	Biera's Place
Beverley Johnson	Individual
Esther Purim	Nordic Model Now
Anna Fisher	Nordic Model Now
Maren Schroeder	Researcher for Ash Regan
Janet Warren	Individual
Siobhan Jess	Individual
Linda Thompson	Women's Support Project
Emily McLean	Scottish Government observer

Issac Hulse

Individual

Agenda item 1

Welcome and apologies for absence

Apologies

John Mason	MSP SNP
Elena Whitman	MSP SNP
Jeremy Balfour	MSP Scottish Conservative
Michael Conroy	Men At Work C.I.C.
Pam Hunter	Say-Women
Alison Raybould	Salvation Army
Linda Rodgers	Edinburgh Women's Aid
Roseann Cameron	Routes Out
Aileen Fleming	SOTHIS
Chris Ringland	Evangelical Alliance
Teresa Little	Individual
Bryan Little	Individual
Bronagh Andrew	Community Safety Glasgow (TARA)
Agnes Martony	Individual

Agenda item 2

Parliamentary update

Ruth Maguire provided an update on a successful debate held on the Model for Scotland International insights, of note one speaker had changed position after visiting the Women's Support Project exhibition in parliament. The debate had been covered positively in the press both nationally in the Scotsman and locally for Ruth in the Irvine Times. Ruth also informed the group that the Scottish Government had this week published their document, ***Scotland's strategic approach to challenging and deterring men's demand for prostitution and supporting the recovery and sustainable exit of those involved in prostitution***. She suggested sending out some information to members and discussing the document at our next meeting. Rhoda Grant agreed this was a good idea.

CPG update

Jacci Stoye informed the group that the CPG had sent in a submission based on the CPG Inquiry into Sexual Exploitation Advertising websites to UN Special Rapporteur on VAWG, Reem Alsalem. This was in response to Reem's call for evidence in the preparation of her report on **Prostitution and VAWG** to be presented before the UN Human Rights Council in June 2024. Jacci congratulated the many individual member organisations who had also sent in their own submissions and thanked them for their hard work. Jacci reminded everyone that Reem was also calling for a second submission based on the UK in light of her official visit to the UK, which is from 12-24th February. The deadline for submissions is the 10th of February. Ruth thanked Jacci for her contribution on behalf of the CPG.

Agenda item 3

This evening, we were delighted to welcome some new members of the CPG for CSE to talk about the vital work they do for women needing support. Our first speaker, Ailsa Scott, shared her particular role in the work of Simon Community Scotland, who provide support and accommodation to people experiencing, or at risk from, homelessness.

Ailsa told us that the Simon Community have an Access Hub in Glasgow, where they work alongside other agencies providing help with finances, benefits, counselling, legal advice, and housing. There is also a Street Team that goes out to where people are and who do rough sleeping checks in the morning to make sure people are okay. Ailsa said the women are often involved in prostitution, which they often engage in to support long term drug use and are very vulnerable. Sometimes they will talk about it, but often they won't.

The women tend to have long term trauma, that extends back to childhood. Unfortunately, despite having single sex residential facilities, there are only mixed sex rehabilitation services, and Ailsa felt that more women would go if there were a women's only facility. Ailsa described her role as assertive outreach, meeting women where they are, being a person, whom they can trust, and helping them with anything they need, such as accompanying them to the Sandyford Clinic or referring them to Routes Out. The team are always trying to build relationships and give support. They try and establish phone contact to keep a check on the women, texting often to see if they're okay. In member's questions, Ailsa was asked what would most help the women's needs. She said robust mental health provision to deal with multiple traumas from childhood and better addiction services with single sex rehabilitation. In the ensuing discussion, it was pointed out that mixed sex rehabilitation services were, in fact, unlawful.

Agenda item 4

Our second presentation was from Sophie Reymbaut and Zara Wynn who both work for the WISHES partnership. WISHES is a joint initiative between NHS Lothian's Harm Reduction Team, Chalmers Centre and Sacro's Another Way service.

Sophie Rembaut is the Outreach Sexual Health Nurse for Wishes, whose role is pivotal in overseeing the ethos of the Wishes Partnership (Women's Inclusive Sexual Health Extended Services). Wishes provides for emotional and social health as well as a full and extensive range of sexual health services and is a rebranding of the former Women's clinic. In addition, to welcoming women who are engaging in transactional sex, Wishes is open to marginal and vulnerable women, who may be experiencing homelessness, addiction, or be a migrant woman, for example. There are two clinics, one on Chalmers St and one on Spittle St, but Wishes staff can access any clinic in the Lothian area if the women need their services. Following a public health review five years ago, the need to include emotional and social needs for the women was included, envisioning a 'one-stop-shop'. Consequently, the enterprise with Sacro was created and the Wishes partnership came into being. In addition to running the clinics, Sophie and her colleague, Emily from Sacro, also undertake outreach work in the saunas, encouraging the women to come to clinic.

Wednesday's clinic is an appointment only clinic with a more hospitalised approach, whilst the Thursday afternoon clinic, run alongside addiction services, is more informal, with tea and biscuits, a drop-in approach and flexibility; you can come as often or as little as you wish. The Thursday evening clinic is a women only space -no men (including staff) are permitted to be there. The emphasis is on building trust and having a trauma-informed

approach. They will do anything to make the women feel at ease, such as waiting for them outside, to welcome them in. The staff have a brilliant debriefing and support strategy built into their routine, ensuring that they are protected from vicarious trauma.

Zara from the Another Way service, which is part of Sacro, introduced herself and her role in the Wishes Partnership. Another Way is an outreach service, which covers Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders and is now 20 years old. It supports people experiencing gender-based violence and abuse and those selling sex. The service hasn't been well known due to stigma, but Zara and the team are endeavouring to change that so that both women and services know they exist. They go out to meet the women and try to talk to them offering practical, emotional and safety support and signposting them to other services such as housing, addiction, police (they are often victims of crimes) and legal services as well as the Wishes clinic. They also have a drop-in space where they focus on well-being and are training to become trauma counsellors to undertake individual counselling and become a one-stop-shop. They also offer training to other service providers, such as housing and addiction services about how to approach the subject of transactional sex with women who may be engaging in it. Zara explained that often when the services talk about risk assessment, one of the biggest factors of risk that these women face, selling sex, isn't even being spoken about.

Agenda item 5

Our third presentation was given by Claire Jones and her colleague, Esther Purim, who work together in You My Sister, which is an organisation that offers mental health support and employment advice to survivors of domestic abuse and the sex industry. There are many parallels between the recovery of both these forms of violence and more long-term mental health support is needed. Some of the harms that affect survivors of both situations are as follows: PTSD, panic attacks, depression, anxiety, anger, disassociation, triggers. Equally, the following feelings are similarly experienced, shame, stigma, feeling isolated and self-blame. Therapeutically this can be tricky if you are told by a counsellor that they respect your choice, particularly when you may have experienced (as many women have) years of child sexual abuse. Self-confidence, self-esteem and making relationships all suffer as a consequence of these traumas.

The course follows the Recovery College Model, which has a good reputation as an educational model. It is based on a shared learning approach, where everyone's opinion is equally valid and where everyone is a survivor. This is a high impact, low cost course that has the following aspects, reflecting back, highly interactive, peer led, breaking down social isolation, dealing with stigma and self-blame.

There are three courses that You My Sister run, one for sex trade survivors, one for domestic abuse survivors and a recovery course, which focuses on tools to manage mental health. They have had some very positive feedback from attendees, such as, 'broke my isolation', 'life saving' and 'nothing else like this exists'. The courses have been running for three years and every one has been full, so it is obviously something that is very much needed.

Agenda item 6

Ruth introduced Ash Regan, who wanted to speak to the members under AOB. Ash updated the members on the current situation of her private members' bill, which has three basic elements: (1) to criminalise paying for sexual services, (2) to repeal section 46, and (3) to help women to exit prostitution. Ash is at the point of finalising the consultation and appealed

to anyone in the group who could help her with data regarding the numbers of women selling sexual services. Ash told us that she had been in conversation with the Procurator Fiscal and Police Scotland and that they felt the proposed Bill was enforceable. She thought that the consultation would be launched in a month or so and was hoping to avoid huge numbers of consultations as she only had a small team and would appreciate volunteers. She said that unfortunately she didn't receive the support of the NGBU to support the drafting of the new bill but had since found an external drafter to help.

Sasha Rakoff wanted to inform members under AOB about 2 issues. Firstly, that national police chiefs have agreed to reconsider their policy statement on 'sex work guidance' and have accepted mediation with Not Buying It. Sasha recommended mediation as a positive way forward; it is less confrontational and less cost risk than a court case.

Secondly, she said she wanted help to challenge Edinburgh who are renegeing on their strip club policy. She said it was very difficult finding a lawyer who will take legal aid clients and if anyone knew of one, she would be very grateful.

Ruth told members that there wasn't a date yet for the next meeting, but we would email it in due course.