

Cross-Party Group on Commercial Sexual Exploitation

16th March 2022 from 18.00-20.00.

Minute

Present

MSPs

MSPs

Ruth Maguire	MSP SNP: Co-convener
Rhoda Grant	MSP Scottish Labour: Co-convener
John Mason	MSP SNP
Beatrice Wishart	MSP Scottish Liberal Democrats
Pam Gosal	MSP Scottish Conservatives

Non-MSP Group Members

Jacci Stoyle	Individual: Secretariat
Linda Thompson	Women's Support Project
Susan McKellar	Scottish Women's Convention
Chris Hall	Not for Sale Scotland
Ann Hall	Not for Sale Scotland
Roseann Cameron	Routes Out
Michael Veitch	CARE for Scotland
Chris Ringland	Evangelical Alliance
Anna Zobnina	Migrant Women Network
Aileen Fleming	SOHTIS
Christine Cosh	individual
Beverley Johnston	Individual
Steve Rawbone	Individual
Anne Martin	Individual
Teresa Little	Individual
Bryan Little	Individual
Agnes Martony	Individual

Agenda item 1

Welcome and apologies for absence

Bronagh Andrew TARA

Janice Wilson
Kieran Turner
Lisa Mackenzie
Elena Whitham
Janet Warren

Soroptimist Scotland
Evangelical Alliance
Individual
MSP SNP
Graduate Women Scotland

Agenda item 2

Rhoda Grant (RG) welcomed back Ruth Maguire (RM) MSP and asked her if she was happy to resume the role of co-convener. Ruth was indeed delighted to do so and thanked everyone for their good wishes whilst she was poorly. RM then took the role of Chair for this meeting.

Agenda item 3

Ruth Maguire updated the members on what has happened since parliament returned. Earlier in February there was a members' debate in parliament on the CPG's inquiry into online pimping, which was an opportunity to give new colleagues sight of it. It was good to hear new voices. There have been a couple more opportunities to raise the issue, once RM asking what action Ministers would take on online pimping, to which Ash Regan, the Minister for Community Safety responded favourably, reassuring the Chamber that online pimping is taken very seriously by the government and will not be seen, or dealt with, in isolation from other forms of procuring prostitution. This was subsequently tweeted by RM.

Secondly, on International Women's Day, RM commented on the terrible situation in Ukraine and that of women and children sought by traffickers to lure or abduct them for commercial sexual exploitation. RM was asking for reassurance that Scotland would be a hostile place for such traffickers. RM and RG concluded that it is important to keep up the pressure in the parliament to get the legislation in place.

Agenda item 4

Linda Thompson from the Women's Support project delivered her presentation *Outside* on what women need to successfully exit prostitution.

The reasons women find themselves in prostitution in the first place are the same ones that make it difficult to exit. They are complex, interwoven, and disparate.

These are common factors:

Poverty and financial pressures—debts and loans, welfare / benefits

Employment opportunities / situations

Caring responsibilities

Unstable, insecure, or unaffordable housing

Previous experiences of violence and abuse/ care system

Insecure immigration status and no access to support/resources/no recourse to public funds status

Racism/discrimination against marginalised women

Drug and alcohol addiction

Health / Mental health issues

Perpetrators of serious and organised crime who seek to benefit of profit from the exploitation of others

Easy access to market and opportunities to pay for or exchange sex

How to tackle this complexity

Women were sometimes involved in multiple areas of the 'sex industry' and that the demarcation between on street and off street isn't always as straight forward as is sometimes presented. There were links with other forms of violence against women.

Given the above, services need to work with one another in a multi-agency partnership with agreements and clear roles to meet such broad needs, but also to advocate for change. There is consensus in the literature that important enablers for exiting include, such as formal support services, other methods of earning a reasonable income, peer support and supportive relationships.

The Encompass Network recommends:

A national strategic framework should be developed to ensure a consistent approach.

This should define the core aspects of any local approaches, standards of service and principles of good practice.

VAWP should have lead responsibility for developing a local implementation plan to include the range of stakeholders and services.

Local approaches should take a multi-agency and partnership approach with a commitment to long-term engagement.

All approaches must be trauma-informed and flexible to address a range of needs.

Monitoring and evaluation systems for strategies, plans and approaches should include clear targets, reviews, and willingness to adapt, and change based on outcomes for women.

Local services should identify a champion or named leads within universal and mainstream services to ensure links to and from services to strategic groups.

Work on national and local levels needs to be informed by direct engagement with, and participation from, women who have experience of CSE and exiting.

There should be national and local capacity-building.

There should be adequate funding and resourcing over the long-term.

Agenda item 4

AOB

Jacci Stoye (JS) had been approached by the Festival of Politics team and asked if the CPG for CSE might be interested in pitching for a place. She thought it would be excellent publicity for the CPG and our campaign, A Model for Scotland. JS wanted to ask the members if they were in favour of this. Everyone was in favour and JS agreed to put in our pitch on the following day.

Agenda item 5

The date of the next meeting is Wednesday 1st June 2022 from 6.00-8.00 pm.

The topic is the grooming of young female students at university into commercial sexual exploitation and how to confront and challenge this. This will be presented by Anna Fisher and the Nordic Model Now team.