

Cross-Party Group on Commercial Sexual Exploitation

24th November 2021 from 18.00-20.00.

Minute

Present

MSPs

Rhoda Grant	MSP Scottish Labour: Co-convener
John Mason	MSP SNP
Elena Whitman	MSP SNP

Invited guests

Josephine Bartosch
Dr Sasha Rakoff
Manjulika Singh MBE
Susan Lochrie

Non-MSP Group Members

Jacci Stoyle	Individual: Secretariat
Janice Wilson	Soroptimist Scotland
Leanne Hughes	Wishes: NHS Lothian
Lauren Agnew	CARE for Scotland
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
Heather Williams	Women's Support Project
Steve Rawbone	Individual
Anne Hayne	NHS Lanarkshire
Janet Warren	Individual
Emily Millar	Salvation Army
Anne Martin	Individual
Teresa Little	Individual
Bryan Little	Individual
Agnes Martony	Individual

Apologies

Pam Hunter	Say-Women
Elaine Smith	Individual
Sophie Reymbaut	NHS Lothian
Alison Raybould	Salvation Army
Linda Rodgers	Edinburgh Women's Aid
Agnes Tolmie	Scottish Women's Convention
Chris Ringland	Evangelical Alliance
Bronagh Andrew	TARA
Ryan Kane	Speaker

Agenda item 1

Welcome and apologies for absence (see above)

Rhoda Grant (RG) explained to members that from now on we would be sending out the Minutes digitally, rather than agreeing them at the next meeting.

Agenda item 2

Introduction to our plenary on campaigning tips and skills for members.

Our speakers tonight have a wide variety of media skills; they will give a short presentation and then answer questions from members on their area of expertise. Unfortunately, Ryan Kane, our speaker on social media was unable to attend.

RG introduced Manjulika Singh MBE (MS):

Manjulika Singh MBE @Manjulika1Singh

A woman of many talents and achievements, who is also a presenter on Awaz FM in Glasgow, talking about approaching your local radio station and being interviewed on radio.

MS was nominated twice for radio awards and has been a presenter for 11 years. She told us that the Community Radio Service offers a third model of broadcasting, which seeks to be popular and relevant to local listeners and is often overlooked by the commercial radio stations. Research has shown that more people listen to community radio than the commercial stations. There are more independently owned community radios in Scotland, and they are an excellent vehicle for social change. There were questions to MS about discussing the sensitivity of the topic on local radio and Manjulika pointed out that she had interviewed Jacci Stoye (JS) on her show previously on the topic of trafficking and prostitution and it had been well received. MS offered to answer questions by email: her email address has been sent to members.

RG thanked MS and introduced Jo Bartosch (JB):

Jo Bartosch @jo_bartosch

Journalist – words in the Critic, Spiked, Telegraph, New Statesman, The Article, Independent, Unherd, The Spectator, MoS & more. Proud reporter @lesbiangaynews

What do journalists want from campaigners?

JB advised: Offer case studies rather than statistics, (survivors can be protected by an actor reading), have an immediate quote ready, and keep your word limits short (no 1000-word essays for journalists to precis).

How and who to approach?

Building relationships are crucial, make sure you have a story, and match the story to the journalist. You need to be a trusted authority on your topic (back to relationships) and have a photo if possible.

What makes a news story?

Think about impact, timeliness, human interest, proximity, conflict, and controversy. Tap into the trade press as a useful resource. Think about reframing how things are presented and say something different, e.g., the use of the phrase sex work, rather than prostitution, normalises abuse as simply a job.

JB was asked if she would share her slides and she kindly agreed. These have been sent to members.

RG thanked JB and introduced Sasha Rakoff (SR):

Sasha Rakoff director of no@notbuyingit, an NGO which works closely with survivors to challenge the porn and sex industries, talking about preparing for, and undertaking, media interviews for press, TV, and radio

SR spoke on media interviews.

Staying safe.

SR explained that giving interviews often provoked abuse online, both to you and your children and that survivors needed to be protected. The following ways of protecting someone's identity maybe by a pseudonym, an actor's voice or disguising the voice and not providing pictures. Organisations can also take the flak, rather than an individual. Remember its always okay to say no.

How to prepare the interview.

Find out who the interviewer is, don't face a hostile audience, (one to one is much better) find out who you are debating with, is it pre-recorded? Live is more daunting, but they can't edit you out. Find out the length of time, the questions they will ask, if there's a call in (get friends to phone in) and where its hosted afterwards and if you are not happy, you can say no.

How to prepare yourself.

Be yourself, reframe the situation, it's not all about you. This is a practice for all the other interviews you may do in the future, and they are not interested in you personally. Practise alone and with someone else, have 3 key points and write down single words to remind you, and have water in case you need it. Have sound bites ready to respond with, e.g., to the comment, 'prostitution is the oldest profession', you can retort, 'no, prostitution is the oldest *oppression*'! Relax!

The Interview

Be yourself, sit comfortably, speak your truth, breathe, have water and your key words. Be like an MP, don't answer the questions they ask, answer the questions you want to be asked! 'That's an interesting question, but the real question is this...'

The Aftermath

Publicise the interview and keep a record, put it on your own YouTube channel, be prepared for other interest later, get trustworthy feedback and good media training. SR was asked if she would share her slides and she kindly agreed. These have been sent to members.

RG thanked SR and introduced Susan Lochrie (SL):

Susan Lochrie, an excellent community journalist from the Greenock Telegraph. She will be encouraging members to approach their local paper/advertiser.

SL explained that all local newspapers are short-staffed and therefore it is the ideal method to get your story out there. Sexual exploitation happens everywhere and therefore is of local interest. You need a local person in your campaign, a voice, and a face, who will speak on this issue, and make contact with a journalist. You don't have to have big stories to get into the paper and always make sure to get photographs whenever possible. There's no point sending a general press release, get a story. Make it short, direct and provide a quote. Local papers are always looking for stories. There is also the online platform of local newspapers. SL offered to answer questions by email: her email address has been sent to members.

RG thanked SL.

Agenda item 3

RG opened up the meeting for questions and comments from members as follows:

1. Young people have been captured by the pimp lobby; how do we challenge them? They are brought up on extreme pornography with everything on their phone, how do we get through to them? How do we challenge the dominant discourse that prostitution is work? They are not joining the dots to pornography and violence against women, and they think these things happen in some sort of vacuum.
2. Are people aware of the Zero Tolerance media guides? (The link was sent out to members).
3. Are people aware of the link between prostitution and grooming?
4. Some people were speaking out about exploitation locally, yet when asked, the police said they knew nothing about it.
5. Yes, what you found, is happening in a lot of local areas, and in terms of the police response, they are 'posted missing'.
6. Yes, local people say there were pop up brothels in their street, yet the police did nothing, and maybe they are afraid of the pimps and the traffickers?
7. Police Scotland have not been very proactive with on street prostitution in the pandemic, but they were good with Routes Out before the pandemic. We need to be more joined up about using the laws that we currently have. It takes so little to deter these men because the deterrents are so effective. Yet we still find that people use the term sex work, even when they know it's exploitation.
8. The police don't go after prostitution because they think decriminalisation is coming. Alternatively, they think it's organised crime and too difficult. Social media favours the pimp lobby because they get revenue from them.
9. The police are trying hard not to target women, and they don't penalise women for working together for safety when it's clear it's not a brothel.
10. Local newspapers have digital content now and they will flood Facebook and Twitter, which would be good way to get a message out. It was done recently with Mental Health Day.

Agenda item 4

Actions

To continue to campaign and lobby your parliamentarians about these issues and to take advantage of our 7 list MSPs. Try and see them in person if you feel comfortable with this.

Agenda item 5

AOB

RG asked JS if there any other business? JS suggested that she would look at the previous suggestions given at the AGM for speakers for our next meeting. She will ask members on the googlepage what they would like, which will be subject to speakers' availability as well. The date will be early March, again dependent on our speakers.