

Cross-Party Group on Commercial Sexual Exploitation

21st March 2023 from 18.00-20.00 on Zoom

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Ruth Maguire	MSP SNP: Co-convenor
Rhoda Grant	MSP Scottish Labour: Co-convenor
John Mason	MSP SNP

Non-MSP Group Members

Jacci Stoye	Individual: Secretariat
Janice Wilson	Soroptimist Scotland
Susan McKellar	Scottish Women's Convention
Chris Hall	Not for Sale Scotland
Ann Hall	Not for Sale Scotland
Janet Warren	Individual
Anne Martin	Individual
Michael Conroy	Men at Work CIC
Beverley Johnston	Individual
Agnes Martony	Individual
Aileen Fleming	SOTHIS
Joy Andrew	Restore Glasgow
Steve Rawbone	Individual
Sophie Reymbaut	NHS Lothian
Seonaid Boyle	NHS Lothian
Christine Cosh	Individual

Agenda item 1

Apologies

Katy Clark	MSP
Chris Ringland	Evangelical Alliance
Bronagh Andrew	TARA
Linda Thompson	Women's Support project
Teresa Little	Individual
Bryan Little	Individual
Rebecca Stevenson	Care for Scotland

Agenda item 2

Ruth Maguire (RM) welcomed the group and Jacqui Stoye (JS) gave the apologies. RM gave an overview of the Cross-Party Group for Commercial Sexual Exploitation's meeting topics and Parliamentary activities, which have been covered over the last year. At every opportunity, the co-conveners have creatively introduced the issue of commercial sexual exploitation into parliamentary debates and working committees, bringing the topic front and centre into the conversation. RM demonstrated how the CPG's Parliamentary Inquiry into Pimping Websites (results launched 19/3/2021) had led to a fruitful parliamentary debate (February 2021) in which Ash Regan, the then Minister of Community Safety, had promised that online pimping would be taken very seriously by the Scottish Government.

Our CPG speakers were excellent, informative, and relevant: Linda Thompson delivering on the Women's Support Project's ground-breaking work: *Outside; Helping Women Exit Prostitution Successfully*. Michael Conroy speaking about his vital work with young men on challenging men's attitudes to women by couching it in terms of 'how to keep themselves safe and how to keep them safe to be around'. The Nordic Model Now team were outstanding, describing their vital challenge to Leicester University's Sex Work Handbook and the dangers and vulnerability for young women students from being groomed into prostitution. Our venture into the Festival of Politics was well received, highlighting the authentic voices of prostitution from both the women and the punters in a dramatized reading. This was backed up by formidable speakers and grounded in Diane Martin CBE's powerful testimony of her lived experience.

The difference between the role of a cross party parliamentary group was clarified and that of our closely aligned sister organisation, A Model For Scotland (AMFS), which is more about campaigning in the community. John Mason (JM) praised the group's activities and wondered how we might be able to encourage a greater range of MSPs to attend.

Rhoda Grant (RG) relayed how the purpose of the group from its inception was to effect a change in the law regarding prostitution around the Nordic Model, i.e., criminalising the purchase of sexual services, not the sale. Whilst, we have

issues in common with the Human Trafficking CPG and may seek to share some meetings in the future, nonetheless, it was felt to be important to keep our purpose and focus distinctive.

Agenda item 3

RG said that the group had provided a range of interesting topics, and creative ways of delivery, and it was thought that this was a helpful way to continue in order to reach as many MSPs as possible. One of our members asked if the new Minister might be able to come and talk to the group and give us an update about where she saw the parliamentary progress for the changes in the law that we want. RM told the group that on the 6th June, we intend to hold our first in-person parliamentary CPG meeting since the pandemic. The Minister of Community Safety had accepted our invitation to attend and speak to us and this will be extended to the new Minister following any ministerial changes. At our next meeting, we will also be repeating the dramatized reading from our Festival of Politics event.

RM pointed out that the Misogyny Bill, and the subsequent discussion and consultation, would provide openings to talk about issues relating to prostitution and the root causes of both topics. This could provide timely opportunities for us to raise the issue of using legislation to criminalise the purchase of sexual services. Our member from Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) said they had returned from a New York Conference, where the topic had been on how technology was fuelling incel behaviour, as the case of Andrew Tate illustrates. She said that they intended to hold a conference on misogyny soon, which would include some examples of lived experience and incorporate a round table approach, hoping to change the narrative. SWC would appreciate some support for this and to encourage people to attend who would not normally go.

Agenda item 4

RM asked the group if anyone had any ideas of parliamentary activities that we might do, which could be 'short and sharp' events to give a briefing, or have

something interesting to take away, rather than a two hour session, which can be a lot to take on?

Our member from Not for Sale suggested that we could use the proposed exhibition based on women's experience of prostitution from the Women's Support Group (WSP), and maybe do so in a different way, instead of a traditional meeting. RM agreed this was a great idea and would be a good opportunity to invite more MSPs to view this and talk about the practical and legislative ways to create lasting change.

JS asked JM to expand on his query about having hybrid meetings, i.e. in-person parliamentary meetings with an online link into the room, which he did, and the group were in favour of this.

RG agreed and said the CPG was about quality, not quantity. RM suggested that we could aim for 3 good quality in-person meetings for the purpose of MSPs who were not from this group. Non-MSP members can look for opportunities in the community or in their organisations to campaign and MSPs can look for opportunities in parliament.

RM suggested formatting the events differently for the 6th June meeting; rather than describing the evening from 6.00-8.00 pm, it might be better to say the Minister will be speaking at a certain time and the dramatized reading will start at another time, leaving people able to drop in and out. We will need to think about what to do when the WSP's exhibition is here.

RM said she has asked colleagues from the Education Committee to place Equally Safe and colleges on the work programme to give opportunities to explore the issues raised by our online pimping inquiry and Nordic Model Now's excellent presentation on the Sex Work Handbook.

RM thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

The date of the next CPG meeting is 6th June 2023 at 6.00 pm at the Scottish Parliament and by Teams.