

Cross Party Group on Men's Violence against Women and Children

25th November 2025, 18.00-19.30 via Teams

Minute

1 Present

MSPs

Rona Mackay (RMa) (Convener)
Audrey Nicoll (AN)

Invited guests

Robyn Moffat-Wall, Aberlour Children's Charity
Avril O'Sullivan, Individual

Non-MSP Group Members

Helen Heppenstall, Central Advocacy Partners, Falkirk
Vikki Kerr, City of Edinburgh Council, Community Justice, Safer Families
Leonie McConnell, Close the Gap
Linda Rodgers, Edinburgh Women's Aid
Amber Cully, GEMAP
Nicola Love, Rape Crisis Scotland
Jessica Denniff, Safe Lives
Marsha Scott, Scottish Women's Aid
Ella Lees, Scottish Women's Aid
Stephanie Millar, Scottish Women's Aid
Susan McKellar, Scottish Women's Convention
Ashley Scotland, Thriving Survivors
Linda Thompson, Women's Support Project
Natalia Equihua, Women's Support Project
Mar Sanchez Fernandez, The Young Women's Movement
Richard Whitecross

Apologies

Beatrice Wishart MSP
James Dornan MSP
Martin Canavan, Aberlour Children's Charity

Francine O'Rourke, ASSIST
Alissa De Luca-Ruane, Aberlour
Catriona Kirkpatrick, Engender
Lisa-Krist Weylandt, Includem
Nicola Gilbert, Scottish Women's Aid
Davy Thompson, White Ribbon Scotland
Samar Ziadat, Zero Tolerance
Elisabeth Loose
Melanie McCarry

2 Cross Party Group Business

A AGM

- a. AGM 2024 - Minute approval
 - The minutes of the AGM of the Cross-Party Group on Men's Violence against Women and Children, held on 19th November 2024 were approved as an accurate record – proposed by Marsha Scott and approved by Audrey Nicoll.
- b. Selection of office-bearers (Rona Mackay, Beatrice Wishart)
 - Convener
 - Rona Mackay, MSP was re-elected as Convener of the Group – nominated by Marsha Scott and seconded by Audrey Nicoll.
 - Deputy Convener
 - Beatrice Wishart, MSP was re-elected as Deputy Convener of the Group – nominated by Rona Mackay and seconded Marsha Scott.
 - Secretariat
 - Scottish Women's Aid was re-elected as Secretariat for the Group, proposed by Rona Mackay and seconded by Linda Thompson.

B Approval of previous Meeting Minutes

- a. 8th March 2025
 - The minutes of the CPGMVAWC meeting, held on 8th March 2025, were approved as true record.
 - Proposed by Marsha Scott and seconded by Rona Mackay.

C New Member Applications

- a. The Dots
- b. ThirtyOne

New member applications for the organisations The Dots and ThirtyOne: Eight were approved.

D Thematic Session

a. Aberlour Children's Charity work on Public Debt

- Robyn Moffat-Wall, Senior Policy lead delivered a presentation on the work Aberlour has been carrying out in relation to public debt and the intersection with domestic abuse.
- This was followed by an opportunity for questions.
 - Discussion points included:
 - Linda Thompson highlighted that illegal money lending and loan-shark activity were increasing pressures on women already in financial crisis, and noted that sanctions and fines in Edinburgh had, in some cases, pushed women into extremely unsafe situations.
 - Robyn Moffat-Wall described the significant shame many women feel about debt, which delays disclosure and leads to spikes in referrals months after the initial financial harm. She also noted positive engagement from local authorities, including the Tayside public-debt pilot, which has been operating since 2021.
 - Amber Cully reported that domestic abuse is the primary driver of women's indebtedness and highlighted that around 20% of the women supported by GEMAP were also experiencing other forms of gender-based violence. She outlined the referral pathways available through financial-inclusion services.
 - Richard Whitecross raised concerns about the gendered nature of sheriff court charges, emphasising the long-term impact these debts can have on women's credit and financial stability.
 - Marsha Scott referenced the debt-advice pilots in West Lothian and Dundee and stressed the need for payment-plan options or debt forgiveness to support survivors safely.
 - Rhona Mackay reiterated the importance of achieving cross-party commitment to reforming

public-debt recovery processes to ensure consistency across Scotland.

- Members were informed that the presentation would be circulated to the membership.

E Member Spotlight

- Women's Support Project
 - Natalia Equihua delivered a presentation on work carried out in connection with learning disability and CSE.
 - This was followed by an opportunity for questions.
 - Linda Thompson highlighted the context of constrained choices and the difficulty of challenging CSE where some social work responses frame women's involvement as "choice," which limits access to support.
 - Amber Cully noted that Adult Protection thresholds are exceptionally high, making it difficult for social workers to intervene even where women with learning disabilities are clearly vulnerable.
 - Mar Sánchez Fernández described the additional risks for women in rural areas, including isolation, targeting by local men, taxi drivers, and grooming through transactional "gifting."
 - Rhona Mackay emphasised that data must be prioritised when strategies are being redeveloped, to ensure this work is recognised.
 - Audrey Nicoll noted that reform of the Public Sector Equality Duty will be key to improving the quality of data and visibility of this issue.
 - Members were informed that the presentation would be circulated to the membership.

F Member Updates

- Members shared updates about their current work.
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 - Scottish Government will hold a debate on Tuesday 2nd December, with expected discussion of Fund to Leave and ongoing issues relating to child contact centres.

- A motion will be submitted to acknowledge progress relating to 2026 commitments.
- Audrey Nicoll highlighted developments connected to the Domestic Abuse Homicide Victims and Witnesses Bill, noting positive aspects within the proposals.
- Scottish Women's Aid informed members of the upcoming #ForThemAll vigil on 5 December, held annually to remember women and children who have died as a result of domestic abuse.
- Members also noted the recent launch of Scottish Women's Aid's Strategic Plan 2025-2030, setting out national priorities for the movement for the next five years.

G AOCB

- Marsha Scott highlighted the opportunity for a member to take the 'Member Spotlight' at the next meeting of the Group.

3 Date and Time of next Meeting

- a. The date of the next meeting is to be confirmed.