

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

23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024, 18.00-19.30 via Zoom

## Minute

### 1 Present

#### MSPs

Rona Mackay (RMack), MSP  
Beatrice Wishart (BW), MSP  
Audrey Nicoll (AMcN), MSP  
Rhoda Grant (RG), MSP

#### Invited guests

There were no invited guests on this occasion

#### Non-MSP Group Members

Ann Fehilly (AF), ASSIST  
Hannah Brisbane (HB), Engender  
Amber Cully (AC), GEMAP  
Ann Hayne (AH), NHS Lanarkshire Gender-based Violence Services  
Claire Thomson (CT), Rape Crisis Scotland  
Sandy Brindley (SB), Rape Crisis Scotland  
Marsha Scott (MS), Scottish Women's Aid  
Nicola Gilbert (NG), Scottish Women's Aid  
Teah Zdanowicz (TZ), UN House Scotland  
Linda Thompson (LT), Women's Support Project  
Rebecca Mason (RM), The Young Women's Movement  
Catherine Robertson (CR), Zero Tolerance  
Alice Jackson (AJ)  
Anne Robertson Brown (ARB)

#### Apologies

Jessica Denniff, SafeLives

Natalia Equihua, Women's Support Project

Angela Graham, Central Advocacy Partners Falkirk

Melanie McCarry

Chris Ringland, Evangelical Alliance

Daisy Slate, NUS

Davy Thompson, White Ribbon Scotland

Richard Whitecross

## 2 Theme: The VAWG Strategic Funding Review

Thematic Session: 2024 Landscape – Update, Scanning and Discussion:

### A. Policy

#### • Rape Crisis (SB)

- SB spoke about the Victims, Witnesses, and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill.
- AN confirmed that the final version of the Bill was due by March 2024.
- AN reiterated how vital the inclusion of survivors' voices had been in informing the work of the Criminal Justice Committee.
- RMack thanked AN for her work as Convener of the Criminal Justice Committee and welcomed the degree of consensus that had been apparent.
- SB spoke about single complainer cases and about developments in the area of corroboration and consent.
  - There was some discussion around a significant case which had been heard towards the end of 2023.
- MS enquired if there was anything the Group could do to support the work involved in combatting vested interests.
- AH voiced concerns about the counter-use of trauma-informed evidence, and how quickly it was being integrated into cases. AH stressed that it would be essential to protect victims in the process.
- SB felt that trauma-informed training could be helpful to everyone.
- It was mentioned that defence lawyers are not currently trained in a trauma-informed approach.
- MS believed there was work to be carried out around how to gender a trauma-informed approach in this work.
- AN shared a link to 'Reducing re-traumatisation in Justice System: New Approach to better Support Victims and Witnesses, which is the new NES Knowledge & Skills Framework for Trauma Informed Practice.

- <https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/news/reducing-re-traumatisation-in-justice-system-new-approach-to-better-support-victims-and-witnesses/>
  - SB also stressed the importance of regulation and accountability in the legal profession.
  - MS suggested this could be a theme in the work of this Cross Party Group in 2024, and that possibly the group could invite a guest, such as Eric McQueen.

## B. General Election

- While much is devolved in the areas most relevant to the work of the Cross Party Group on Men's Violence against Women and Children, there was agreement that great interest would be taken in the manifestos of the various parties, and the hope would be that the Group would see, where possible, a 'joined-up voice' across all parties in Scotland to improve matters relating to men's violence against women and children.

## C. Themes for Sessions for 2024

- The following were suggested as potential themes:
  - Women's Support Project (LT)
    - A return to looking at services and support available to women involved in prostitution, along with the opportunity to reflect on work currently on the government agenda.
  - Audrey Nicoll (AN)
    - Potential session involving Police Scotland and their domestic abuse team.
      - RMack suggested she could invite someone from the Govan team.
      - MS suggested Bex Smith could be invited to a meeting.
      - MS suggested frontline involvement of the police regarding domestic abuse cases could be a focus of a meeting.
    - The subject of forced marriage and honour-based abuse.
  - Explore a possible joint Meeting at some point of the Cross Party Group on Men's Violence against Women and Children, The Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Commercial Sexual Exploitation and the Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Human Trafficking, to discuss areas of common interest.
    - RG is Co-convenor of the Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Commercial Sexual Exploitation and is the Convener of the Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Human Trafficking.

- AH is a member of both Groups.
    - The format of the meeting would need to be confirmed, to make the most of the opportunity.
- Prevention Agenda
  - MS suggested justice institutions could be asked to speak about what they are doing to improve the representation of women in their leadership.
  - MS suggested there also needed to be a return to mainstreaming, which seemed to have slipped from the agenda.
- Children
  - MS suggested an opportunity to reflect on domestic abuse and the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill.
  - Members of the group requested a copy of the Children's Services report.
- Misogyny and Toxic Masculinity
  - SB suggested this subject, and its impact, as a potential theme.
- Domestic Abuse/Coercive Control in Teen Relationships
  - ARB suggested this as a potential theme.
- Accountability
  - MS suggested this as a possible theme, in relation to developments that could arise from the Victims, Witnesses, and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill. It was suggested that a guest, such as Eric McQueen, could be invited to a meeting.
- Economic Abuse
  - Suggested by AC of GEMAP.
- Issue of UNCRC Requirements for Management of Young Offenders and the Diversion of Children's Hearing Routes.
  - Suggested by AH.

### 3 Cross Party Business

#### A. Approval of 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023 Meeting Minute

The minutes of the CPGMVAVWC meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were will be approved as an accurate record – proposed by Amber Cully of GEMAP (Financially Included) and seconded by Beatrice Wishart MSP.

#### B. New Member Applications

- A. Wise Women
- B. Scottish Women's Convention
- C. Elisabeth Loose

Wise Women, Scottish Women's Convention and Elisabeth were welcomed as members of the Cross Party Group on Men's Violence against Women and Children.

## 4. Member Updates

### A. Member Spotlight: Rape Crisis Scotland (Sandy Brindley and Claire Thomson)

SB introduced the work of Rape Crisis Scotland, that:

- Works with a network of 17 independent local Rape Crisis Centres across Scotland.
- Running a national helpline.
- National projects.
- A prevention programme across Scotland.

SB spoke of the impact of recommendations made by the Strategic Funding Review, in particular a suggested move to localised funding, single helpline provision and commissioning.

Rape Crisis Scotland was happy to circulate a paper that had been sent to COSLA. SB shared a link to the Rape Crisis Response to the Strategic Funding Review.

It was confirmed that, at this point, a holding statement had been issued. Once something firm was available, MS suggested an invitation could be extended to the lead for the Funding Review.

RMack confirmed she would be happy to ask a question in Parliament to confirm where matters are with the recommendations, as it stands.

CT followed on from SB's presentation and spoke to the Survivors Can't Wait project, that had been highlighted during 16 Days.

CT emphasised how specialised and life-changing the work of Rape Crisis services can be.

There was discussion about waiting list funding which, though welcome, was outstripped by demand.

It was stressed that, without an update on funding, some centres, which were already under extreme pressure, would be in critical circumstances.

The need for sustainable funding was essential.

MS echoed the issue of waiting lists, which were affecting SWA groups, and a demand for services that has risen from an already high level.

MS said that the longest waiting lists were for children's services, as shared in a report just prepared for Government.

MS agreed that sustainable funding was vital and that it needs to be an ongoing issue for the CPG to consider, as soon as there is a firm announcement from Government.

## B. Women's Support Project

LT shared information with the Group about upcoming work being carried out by the Women's Support Project, including the Building Bridges Programme, consultation work, launching of resources and a current high-profile case.

## C. Future Member Spotlight Volunteers

There were a number of volunteers for future Member Spotlights:

- Engender – Hannah Brisbane
- Zero Tolerance – Catherine Robertson
- Anne Robertson Brown – in relation to a cross sector working group.

## 5. Any other Business

- As a matter arising from the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023, RMackK reported that a letter had been sent on behalf of the Group to the UK Government and the BMA regarding the current situation for women and children in Gaza. However, a response had not yet been received. RMackK confirmed that there would be follow-up action to seek a response.
- AN suggested the Group write to ministers regarding the potential impact of the Funding Review, as discussed earlier in the meeting during the Member Spotlight session.

## 6. Date and Time of next Meeting

- To be confirmed.