

Cross-Party Group Annual Return

Name of Cross-Party Group

Cross-Party Group on Women, Families and Justice

Date Group Established

15 September 2021

Date of Most Recent Annual General Meeting (AGM)

5 September 2023

Date Annual Return Submitted

19 September 2023

Date of Preceding AGM

20 September 2022

Group Meetings and Activities

Meeting 20 September 2022

This meeting was attended by 3 MSPs and 13 non MSPs including representation from 9 statutory and non-statutory agencies.

AGM

Post holders appointed:

Convener - Rona Mackay, MSP

Vice convener - Collette Stevenson, MSP

Secretariat - Anne Pinkman and Ashley Cameron, Families Outside

Meeting

There were 3 visitors to the group, Ash Regan, Minister for Community Safety, Lyndsay Ross, Scottish Government official, and Jennifer Stoddart, Scottish Government, Community Justice Division.

Ash Regan, Minister for Community Safety and Lyndsay Ross, Scottish Government official provided an overview of the issues for women involved in the criminal justice system. Ash Regan acknowledged the need to do more to empower women in our communities. The lack of data specific to women was highlighted too. These issues are being addressed by the recently established Women's Justice Leadership Panel. This Panel will publish a report next year.

Bail and Early Release from Custody (Scotland) Bill

Jennifer Stoddart, Scottish Government Community Justice Division, provided an update on the progress of this Bill. Jennifer will continue to provide updates on the Bill as it progresses through its various stages.

Invitation for CPG members to visit Glasgow Community Custody Unit (CCU) for women

The Scottish Prison Service has invited all members of the CPG to visit the Lilia Centre before it opens. The Lilia Centre is one of the first two CCUs within the new prison estate for women in Scotland.

Meeting 29 November 2022

This meeting was attended by 2 MSPs and 11 non MSPs representing 5 statutory and non-statutory agencies. 2 non MSPs submitted apologies. There was 1 invited guest, Brieg Nugent, Independent Researcher.

Paying the Price: The Cost to Families of Imprisonment and Release - presentation by Brieg Nugent, Independent Researcher

Families Outside commissioned researcher Brieg Nugent to undertake research exploring the financial impacts of imprisonment and release for families. Her research heard from over 50 family members supporting a relative in prison. The report illustrates the role of prison in creating, sustaining and deepening poverty for families. The cost is overwhelmingly borne by single women on low incomes who are spending up to a third of their income to provide support to a family member in prison.

A number of issues were highlighted in the report and echoed in the facilitated discussion that followed. These included the need for improved communication, stigma, people in prison being located in prisons closer to home, improvement to the Assisted Travel Scheme. CPG members acknowledged this burden had been carried far too long with women paying the price.

This report has been seen by the Chief Executive of SPS and the Scottish Government's Director of Justice, a copy of the report is to be sent to the Judicial Institute for Scotland.

Rona Mackay, MSP, Convenor of the CPG, asserted that the CPG, and its members, needs to do all they can to address the issues identified in the report.

Rona Mackay, MSP, offered to submit a member's motion to raise awareness of the issue in the Scottish Parliament. Collette Stevenson MSP confirmed she would support this.

A copy of Brieg Nugent's report was issued with the minute of this meeting.

[Paying the Price Report](#)

Agency Updates

HMIP (HM Inspectorate of Prisons) are finalising their program of inspection for 2023. This will include an assessment of the 2 new women's CCUs. All inspections will include a review of the prisoner transport service

Meeting 21 February 2023

This meeting was attended by 3 MSPs and 18 non MSPs. 16 statutory and non-statutory organisations were represented. 5 non MSPs submitted apologies.

2 invited guests attended: Sarah Beresford, Prison Reform Trust Associate and Jennifer Stoddart, Scottish Government, Community Justice Division

Child Impact Assessments – presentation by Sarah Beresford, Prison Reform Trust Associate

Children are impacted at every stage when their parent is involved in the criminal justice system. This can be from the point of arrest through to liberation from custody. Sarah Beresford has worked with a number of children and young people whose parents have been involved in the criminal justice system. Together with Sarah these children and young people have co-produced a toolkit entitled 'This Is Me'. This toolkit is intended to inform key agencies such as police and probation services, sentencers and defence agents about the impact on children and young people when a parent is arrested, appearing at court, and imprisoned. Sarah's presentation on the subject was well received and there was significant interest expressed as to the potential benefits of Child Impact Assessments being introduced in Scotland.

Bail & Early Release from Custody (Scotland) Bill- update Jennifer Stoddart, Scottish Government, Community Justice Division

The aim of this Bill is to reduce crime, reduce reoffending and protect victim safety. The Bill will seek to refocus how remand is used and to identify robust alternatives to remand. The Bill will also require sentencers to record why bail is not being granted.

In relation to early release from custody, greater use of electronic monitoring is being proposed. The Bill will seek to ensure that protections are in place for victims.

It was acknowledged that the Bill will not address the issues that occur when individuals are released direct from custody by courts. This is an area of concern for many members. Another area of concern related to the use of Criminal Justice Social Work Reports. Jennifer Stoddart confirmed that these areas of concern are being considered.

Jennifer Stoddart agreed to continue to keep the CPG updated on the Bills progress.

Rona Mackay, MSP, and Convenor of the CPG is also a member of the Scottish Parliament's Criminal Justice Committee and will be alert to any issues raised in the Bill that may impact on women and families.

Agency Updates

Concern was expressed by members including the Mental Welfare Commission and HMIPS about the numbers of men and women in prison who are acutely mentally ill. There is an issue about the numbers of beds available in the forensic estate. A stakeholder event is being held in May 2023 to address this issue.

Meeting 9 May 2023

This meeting was attended by 2 MSPs and 25 non MSPs, 15 statutory and voluntary agencies were represented.

2 invited guests were present: Shona Spence, Scottish Government official, and Sharon Stirrat, Social Work Scotland.

The Rights of Children with a Parent in the Criminal Justice System – presentation by Sarah Rogers, Families Outside

Sarah Rogers provided an overview of the UNCRC in relation to children with a family member in the criminal justice system. The rights of these children are ignored at almost every stage of the criminal justice system. Children's rights can be overlooked e.g. at the point of arrest, the parents court appearance and sentence, especially when a period of imprisonment is imposed. As discussed at the previous CPG meeting on 21 February 2023 the use of the 'This is Me' toolkit for using Child Impact Assessments would help agencies such as the police, courts, sentencers, SPS and local authorities to consider and uphold the rights of children.

Update on introduction of UNCRC (incorporation) (Scotland) Bill and implementation progress - Shona Spence, Scottish Government, Children's Rights Team

Shona Spence provided an update on UNCRC incorporation. Despite the Supreme Court judgement, the Scottish Government remain committed to making the required amendments as quickly as they can. An Implementation Group has been established and there is regular liaison with the UK Government. A variety of resources have, and continue to be, produced to enable agencies and organisations to consider the implications for their services.

Panel Contributions - Sharing good practice, opportunities and challenges in supporting the rights of children with a parent in the criminal justice system

Sharon Stirrat, Social Work Scotland advised that currently Criminal Justice Social Work (CJSW) Court reports do include, where appropriate impact of sentencing on a child, particularly if there is the likelihood of a custodial sentence being imposed on a parent with child care responsibilities. This will not be as detailed as that proposed in child impact assessments.

Group members acknowledged the benefits and challenges of UNCRC incorporation. There are currently three Bills being considered by the Scottish Parliament: the Bail and Early Release from Custody (Scotland) Bill; the Children's Care and Justice Bill; the Victims, Witnesses and Justice Reform Bill which are relevant to this issue. These 3 Bills should provide opportunities to ensure the impact on children at each stage of the criminal justice process is considered in accordance with UNCRC incorporation. Members acknowledged

the potential benefit of having a single agency with lead responsibility for UNCRC incorporation.

Agency Updates / Issues

The issue of the CCUs was highlighted. Only 2 of the planned 5 CCUs exist and the occupancy to date has been less than 50%. These CCUs are intended to allow women to be held in locations near to their home and would enable contact between a mother and her children.

The Convenor of the CPG gave assurances that the group will maintain a focus on the UNCRC incorporation, the progress of new legislation and the use of the CCUs in the coming year.

Invitation to visit HMP & YOI Stirling

The SPS issued an invitation for any of the CPG members to visit the new prison for women, HMP & YOI Stirling on 23 May 2023.

Visits and Activities

Scottish Parliamentary Debate 7 March 2023 on The Cost to Families of Imprisonment and Release - led by Rona Mackay, MSP, Convenor of the CPG on Women, Families & Justice.

[Meeting of the Parliament: 07/03/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

CPG Women, Families & Justice members visit to the Lillias Centre, the Community Custody Unit in Glasgow.

CPG Women, Families & Justice members visit to HMP & YOI Stirling, the new national prison for women.

MSP Members of The Group

Please provide names and party designation of all MSP members of the Group.

Rona Mackay – SNP

Miles Briggs – Scottish Conservative

Katy Clark – Scottish Labour

Michelle Thompson – SNP

Collette Stevenson – SNP

Audrey Nicoll – SNP

Maggie Chapman – Scottish Green Party

Non-MSP Members of The Group

For organisational members please provide only the name of the organisation, it is not necessary to provide the name(s) of individuals who may represent the organisation at meetings of the Group.

Individuals

Anne Pinkman
Carol Dearie
Karen Mabon
Briege Nugent
Elyse Brown
Maggie Melon
Yvonne Robson

Observer – Community Justice Division Scottish Government

Organisations

Scottish Prison Service
CJVSF (Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Forum)
Social Work Scotland
Families Outside
HM Inspector of Prisons Scotland
Mental Welfare Commission
Shine
University of Strathclyde School of Social Work and Social Policy
SCCJR (Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research)
Resilience Learning Partnership
Phoenix Futures Scotland
Angus Community Justice Partnership

	<p>SASW (Scottish Association of Social Work) Tomorrows Women, Glasgow 218 Centre – Turning Point Scotland Soroptimists International Scotland Sacro Apex Scotland Access to Industry Fife College (SPS Education Providers) Circle Scotland Stirling University St. Marys, Kenmure Glen Isla Women’s Project, Angus Council Criminal Justice Social Work Services Public Health, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Engender Prison Reform Trust Justice for Women Community Justice Glasgow Community Justice Scotland Stirling Community Enterprise HMP Barlinnie Visitor Centre Queen’s Nursing Institute Scotland Early Years Scotland SCSN (Scottish Community Safety Network) CrossReach</p>
--	---

Group Office Bearers
 Please provide names for all office bearers. The minimum requirement is that two of the office bearers are MSPs and one of these is Convener – beyond this it is a matter for the Group to decide upon the office bearers it wishes to have. It is permissible to have more than one individual elected to each office, for example, co-conveners or multiple deputy conveners.

Convener	Rona Mackay MSP
Deputy Convener	Collette Stevenson MSP
Secretary	Anne Pinkman (individual) and Families Outside.
Treasurer	N/A

Financial Benefits or Other Benefits
 Please provide details of any financial or material benefit(s) the Group anticipates receiving from a single source in a calendar year which has a value, either singly or cumulatively, of more than £500. This includes donations, gifts, hospitality or visits and material assistance such as secretariat support.

None

Convener Contact Details	
Name	Rona Mackay
Parliamentary address	The Scottish Parliament Edinburgh EH99 1SP
Telephone number	0131 348 5789