

Cross-Party Group on Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse

Date and Time 18th February 2026 6.00pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Fulton MacGregor MSP, Convener, Collette Stevenson MSP

Angela Constance MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs

Jenny Gilruth MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Invited guests

Sophie Tonnar Gray, Scottish Government, Daniela Latina, Social Researcher, Tony Marr, Speak Out Scotland, Lynsay Wilson, Scottish Government

Non-MSP Group Members

Anne Macdonald, Health & Social Care Adviser, Secretariat, Stuart Allardyce, Lucy Faithfull Foundation, Secretariat, Sharon Belshaw, Break the Silence, Sandra Brown, Moira Anderson Foundation, Andrew Campbell, Campaigner, Ewan Law, Fife College, Leigh McFarlane, Kaizen Safeguarding, Janine Rennie, Campaigner, Dr Eric Swanepoel, Writer & Researcher, Shaun Taylor, Eighteen & Under, Carol Willson, Campaigner

Apologies

Brian Whittle MSP, Depute Convener, Giles Moffatt, Edinburgh Academy Survivors, Beth MacLean, Health in Mind, Paul Purcell, Campaigner, Ashley Scotland, Thriving Survivors

Agenda item 1

Welcome and apologies

Fulton welcomed everyone to the meeting and we all provided introductions.

Agenda item 2

Approval of Minutes of Meeting 8th October 2025

Amendment made to include Janine Rennie's attendance at the Redress meeting with Kate, Forbes MSP Deputy First Minister

Proposed: Sharon Belshaw Seconded: Anne Macdonald

Agenda item 3

Meeting with Jenny Gilruth MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and Angela Constance MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs to discuss our views on survivor engagement

Fulton started by noting that he wrote to Jenny and Angela recently. They were keen to speak to members of the group and to make sure survivors voices are at the heart of public policy.

Ms Gilruth thanked Fulton for the invitation to meet with the group following her Ministerial Statement in the Chamber before Christmas. She wants to know what issues we are covering and discuss how Ministers conduct themselves on their approach with survivors. She intimated that we will all be aware of statements on this subject and calls for Inquiries into grooming gangs. The work by the four Inspectorates, the National Strategic Group. How MSPs engage with survivors is a key issue. She has no set agenda for tonight but wants to listen and learn.

Ms Constance said it was good to have the opportunity to join the group tonight and that engagement with survivors is vital. She has experience of child abuse and sexual abuse in her previous portfolios and is keen to learn how engagement and collaboration with survivors could best be developed.

Both Cabinet Secretaries assured the group that we should address them by their first names.

There was a full and frank discussion by several survivors on their experiences of child sexual abuse. We will not minute names and details of their histories of abuse as expressed by them at the meeting for reasons of confidentiality.

The areas they wished to highlight were as follows:

Education was my way out of abuse

It is not about State Justice where the abuser is found to have breached the law. It's about restoring life back as in Article 39 UNCRC. Putting right that was done wrong.

We're not getting things right for children now.

How do we get people from harm to living well. Living well is so important.

The Moira Anderson Foundation was a great support. Survivor agencies save our lives; they need to be fully funded. Survivors trust the 3rd Sector more than statutory services.

Mandatory reporting should be implemented in Scotland.

Engagement with survivors - often expressed as trauma informed is too often lip service.

Sometimes trauma informed work can feel like a tick box exercise. There is a need for a survivor council. Lived experience people are vital.

It doesn't consider specialist needs many survivors had. Not just specialists from psychology but from those who understand trauma, for example dissociation. A medical model is not helpful.

Trauma informed training is great but wider systems still fail and vicarious trauma is common.

It's as if the system wants people to stay ill and there is no genuine step forward apart from education and psychological support.

Social work has failed me and so many other survivors. The Criminal Justice System is traumatising for those survivors who report their abuse

More must be done for male survivors.

Funding for colleges is based on outcome measures and not the journey travelled which makes experiences not trauma informed.

Multiple points of exclusion, for example the Department of Work and Pension is a traumatising system. Moral injury effects in public sector organisations are now very well documented.

Ms Gilruth was very grateful for survivors sharing their experiences and knows this will not have been easy and thanked them for their contributions. The power of education came across loud and clear. Trauma training is important and the Government has not ruled out another Inquiry into Grooming Gangs.

Ms Constance said she understood the point about the difference between justice and accountability. Education can be a passport to improving life chances. It's about tackling stigma, looking at the difference types of engagement with survivors, reducing re-traumatisation.

It is imperative that people need to speak to their own truth. Not everyone gets justice. Systems can be oppressive. I believe in supporting people's personal autonomy and personal journeys. Sometimes people really trust small community-based services in the ways they might not trust authority. Key messages to be

passed onto Higher Education colleagues. Trauma informed practice is a commitment to cultural change.

Fulton thanked Ms Gilruth and Ms Constance for attending the meeting and hopes we will continue to work together for the benefit of survivors. He hopes that the future government will look towards Mandatory Reporting being implemented in Scotland.

Ms Constance thanked Fulton and the CPG, especially all the survivors who shared their experiences tonight. She invited us to feel free to follow up with her and Ms Gilruth anything else we would wish to add following the meeting.

Agenda item 4

Matters arising:

It was agreed that these issues need to be moved forward to the new session of parliament following the Election.

Redress Scheme
Health Inequalities
Mandatory Reporting

National Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Strategic Group

Stuart provided a brief update. There are working groups on data collection, workforce development and mandatory reporting now up and running.

Some of us met with Professor Alexis Jay who will now chair the Strategic Group. We discussed the links between our work and agreed that we will engage and work collaboratively whilst retaining our independence from government. It was suggested that we form a subgroup of the CPG and meet on a quarterly basis. This was agreed.

Sibling Sexual Abuse

It was agreed for Stuart to escalate sibling sexual abuse to the NCSAE Strategic Group to progress and keep us updated. **Action Stuart**

Fatal Accident Inquiries

Alison and Stuart will speak to the Care Commission to see how we move on good, trauma informed linkage between Learning Reviews and FAls. **Action Stuart and Alison**

Andrew noted that he had submitted a letter about gender and failures of our systems regarding male survivors. It is the child that has been abused whatever their gender. He would like this to be discussed at a future meeting, and this was agreed.

Agenda item 5

Applications for membership: Daniela Latina, Social Researcher and Tony Marr, Speak Out Scotland

Daniela Latina - Social Researcher

My interest in joining the Cross-Party Group on Adults Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse stems from being a survivor myself, and co-founder of the Brave Movement in Scotland. From a personal perspective, I have lived experience of trauma, social inequalities and long-term mental health concerns, and therefore understand how these aspects can impact survivors.

From a professional perspective, as a social researcher (working with lived experience individuals on a matter of topics), I find myself contemplating that there is no real consideration on how trauma, from survivors of childhood sexual abuse, is understood as having severe impacts.

I would therefore like to be part of a group that engages in debate and also aims to promote initiatives and implement change to support such challenges individuals are met with.

Daniela updated the CPG on the plans to try and form a BRAVE Movement in Scotland, of which she is a co-founder and a Survivor Council, such as those already in place in England and Wales

Tony Marr - Speak Out Scotland

As a survivor and someone who works with survivors at Speak Out Scotland and Redress Scotland, I appreciate the challenges faced by Government, while having an insight into survivor needs, key issues and the current shortfall in services. Working with survivors at all stages of their journey, I firmly believe their collective voices should inform and shape policy and practice in Scotland. It would be a privilege to represent survivors as part of the Cross-Party Group and I would be fully committed to constructive discussion on areas such as support, justice, and systematic change, while ensuring continuity of key issues across different Parliaments.

It was unanimously agreed to welcome both Daniela and Tony as members of the group. They have been sent our Terms & Conditions. Anne will inform Standards.

Shiela Gaul has informed us that she is no longer able to remain a member of the CPG and thanks us for everything we have and are achieving for survivors. Anne has emailed Sheila thanking for her support and contributions over the past years, and informed Standards to remove her name from our membership list. Fulton thanked Sheila on behalf of the CPG and gave all best wishes for the future.

Agenda item 6

Continuity of the Cross-party Group beyond the 2026 Election

We need to look at how we best carry out re-registration of the CPG as last time it proved quite difficult. Now that so many long-standing MSPs are not up for re-election we need to publicise our work as much as we can. Commitment to continue support came from Fulton and Collette if they are re-elected - if they don't, they would be happy to support the group in some way moving on. Collette thanked everyone for their contribution to the amazing work of the CPG.

Anne took the opportunity to formally thank Fulton and Collette and the group's other MSPs for their commitment to this difficult issue. Thanks also to Rob Byrne, from Fulton's office, who has been incredibly helpful in keeping the group moving forward. Anne has put together a brief paper about the history, work and achievements of the group and will send it out to MSPs as soon as parliament resumes following the election.

Fulton thanked Anne, Stuart and all members of the group for the work that is carried out in the background of the group. Fulton noted there are a lot of CPGs, but this is one of the highest importance which is why it will continue into the next parliament.

Sandra added that during this winding down period that it's important to ensure that Janine and Sandra as former treasurers, their names as signatories are removed as some correspondence is still being sent to them. Stuart acknowledged that this is moving forward, and he is meeting with Ashley to update the bank account details.

Action Stuart and Ashley

Agenda item 7

AOCB

As Convener of the group, Fulton said he wished to pass on his thoughts and condolences to Sandra on the sad loss of her husband Ronnie.

Anne echoed Fulton's remarks and thanked Sandra for her attending our final meeting before dissolution at such a sad and challenging time.

Carol passed on her condolences to Sandra on the sad loss of her husband Ronnie and reaffirmed the importance of the group.

Future funding for survivor agencies

We discussed the requirement for secure funding for survivor agencies and how considering the imminent Budget and decisions that government are taking on child sexual abuse, funding has to be made available, as more survivors will come forward, and there will be anxiety for the agencies with already full waiting lists.