

Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group
on Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse

Virtual Meeting 5th October 2022

Minutes

In attendance

Fulton MacGregor MSP Convener, Collette Stevenson MSP, Brian Whittle MSP

Anne Macdonald, Co Convener, Janine Rennie, Wellbeing Scotland, Co Convener, Sharon Belshaw, Break the Silence, Sandra Brown, Moira Anderson Foundation, Treasurer, Andrew Campbell, Student, Ellie Forgan, Kingdom Abuse Survivors Project, Dr Sarah Nelson, Researcher, Brian Rodger, QHSE Adviser & Survivor, Dr Eric Swanepoel, Writer & Researcher, David Whelan, Quarriers FBGA

Guests

Mr John Swinney, MSP, Deputy First Minister
Mark Ferguson, Carol Lamont, Gillian Nixon, Scottish Government
Julie Hand, Birthlink

Apologies

Stuart Allardyce, Stop It Now Scotland, Emma Bryson, Speak Out Survivors, Lynn Burns, Break the Silence, Katy Clark MSP,

Approval of Minutes 7th June 2022

Approved: Janine Rennie Seconded: Anne Macdonald

Before our discussion Fulton informed the group that Janine has resigned her post with Wellbeing Scotland and will stand down as Co Convener. Fortunately she will remain an individual member. On behalf of all of the membership he thanked Janine for her commitment to the

CPG over the years and how much she has contributed to survivor's wellbeing.

Anne gave her personal thanks to Janine and expressed how much it has meant working together over the years campaigning for survivors and raising awareness of the long term effects of childhood sexual abuse.

Janine is really sad to leave her role in Wellbeing Scotland but realises this is the time to move on, but she will remain a member and continue to fight on behalf of survivors rights. It has been her best memory ever being part of our work.

Mr John Swinney, MSP, Deputy First Minister: Discussion on Scotland's Redress Scheme

Fulton welcomed the Deputy First Minister (DFM) on behalf of the group and expressed our gratitude for his interest in our work on behalf of all survivors of childhood sexual abuse. This meeting and discussion is particular on the experiences of survivors who were abused whilst in care that are accessing the Redress Scheme. The DFM has had previous sight of most of our questions prior to the meeting.

The Deputy First Minister said he was very happy to be here and due to time constraints he is he is prepared to answer any questions in writing or in person on another occasion.

The questions were raised from individual survivors and agencies. They covered issues such as:

- Timescales, timelines and timeframes for responses and the process
- Adequate resources to manage the above
- Delays and lack of communication resulting in distress, anxiety and traumatisation
- The understanding of trauma by the team
- The helpline and its limitations as well as requirement of specialist support, such as that offered by In Care Survivors Service Scotland (ICSSS)

- Speaking to many workers about their abuse and completing the forms has led to many survivors to become extremely distressed and it has led to further trauma and suicidal ideation
- Survivors have fed back that too many workers are involved in the process. They find this triggering
- Access to records support has to be light touch but many survivors would prefer fairly intensive support to go through that process
- It is likely to be impossible for survivors to have proof of sexual abuse
- “I nearly died filling out that form and I don't think I will properly get better until this is sorted. Why when every document is in does the person still have to wait? It's so unfair that's my question and no excuse about terminally ill and elderly will not be accepted nor will staff shortages
- An in care survivor wanted us to know about their experiences of the Scheme. They had felt that in the Scheme they might be dealt with in a sympathetic manner and that someone would at long last be listening to their story, however this is proving far from the case and would like this addressed as a matter of urgency
- There is no current legal requirement for insurance companies to keep historical documentation from other insurance companies they take over. They have a duty to look into claims involving legacy policy but unless you possess the actual policy documentation they can simply say: sorry we've looked and can't find where the company we bought out kept all their files. Coupled to this get out, there is no legal register for companies holding public liability insurance. They have a duty to register employer's liability but not PL. All the victims of Scottish football see abuse crimes are now left without compensation despite their abusers now in jail. Why is redress closed to the majority of children who were abused at home and have the evidence by failure to thrive through childhood or adulthood?
- Why is funding of services through violence against women or the off branch Rape Crisis Scotland(RCS) and funding not through a independent not gender model. Gender is a policy category that has been unhelpful in meetings the needs and rights of humans. CEDAW stance included
- Can the Deputy First Minister please define the difference between an abused child in a home run by organisations and those more temporarily in care of adults who were abused through the medium of football?

The Deputy First Minister responded:

The following notes were taken by officials in attendance at the online meeting of the CPG on 5th of October. The convenor focused on the questions that were provided in advance of the meeting and the notes reflect the responses given by DFM. Some comments are included from officials for information and these are not intended as any part of the note of the meeting so it is suggested.

These notes of the meeting should be considered in conjunction with the written response DFM has previously provided to the CPG following his attendance at the group.

DFM comments

1. Officials working in the Redress division are trained in trauma informed practice, and this is a key component of training and ongoing support for case workers in particular.
2. The emotional support helpline is one of part of a wide range of support in place, and an option for those survivors who may find it beneficial. Through the Redress Support Services survivors have specialist support, but these are not there to replace any other support that a survivor may already have in place.
3. By the very nature of what we are trying to address through the provision of the scheme it is a risk that applicants will suffer further trauma and that is why ensuring case workers are skilled in trauma informed practice, appropriate support services are in place and applications can be paused at any time, are so important. My officials will continue to do everything they can to support applicants through what can be a highly emotional time and will continue to work with partners and agencies such as Wellbeing Scotland who raised the question, in order to ensure the most supportive experience possible for applicants.
4. Given the feedback that the process for case worker allocation was taking too long my officials have introduced a new operating model which I accept will result in more case workers being involved in the process. On balance I feel this was the right approach, but I will take this point away for further consideration as we know that ensuring

that the process is trauma informed and built around the structure of relationships is important.

5. The Case worker role is to provide support to people to help them make successful applications. Support services are in place to assist applicants with accessing records as this can be complex and often requires the support of those who have specialist knowledge or experience in this area.
6. We understand that it is exceptionally difficult to find evidence of abuse. The aim of the scheme is provide positive outcomes for individuals and applying for redress should not feel like a test. The scheme has been designed so that all manner of contextual information can be included in an application so that Redress Scotland can made a decision taking into account all the available information, using their discretion in the event of a lack of documentary evidence.
7. The response to this question was included with others as the convenor had accepted there would not be time for all questions. DFM noted he could follow up in writing in relation to anything that was not able to be covered and the new points raised during the meeting.
8. I do not want anyone to wait for any longer than necessary. There are practical issues with applications and timescales and we will get through these. The data shows we are making sustained progress and with more case workers coming on board I believe that progress will continue.
9. DFM explained the matter is not devolved regarding legal requirements for companies to keep historical documentation, but that he would be willing to consider writing to UK Gov to raise the question with them.

Closing comments from DFM

When summing up DFM thanked the group for their commitment to ensuring the best outcomes and support for survivors, and also thanked officials for their hard work in delivering the scheme to date (noting the shared objective to continue to improve wherever possible).

DFM took the opportunity to reiterate that Redress Scotland will consider all applications with merit and he therefore encourages all those who believe they may be eligible to come forward.

Matters Arising

Letter to the Convener of the Cross Party Group on the Prevention and Healing of Adverse Childhood Experiences on their Commission of Inquiry into the delivery of 70/30 questioning why it's Terms of Reference excludes childhood sexual abuse due to their research has indicated that the causal pathways to sexually abusive behaviour is less clear cut, more resistant to change, and would require different approaches over a longer time scale to achieve the desired outcomes.

Our letter requested evidence for this exclusion for details of their research, data and evidence on why it should be excluded. In addition, we provided research, evidence and ethical argument as to why this does not support its exclusion.

There has been an article in the press about resignations from this Cross Party Group and we are unsure of its current status. Our letter was sent on 14th June 2022, to date we have had no response. Fulton will follow up. **Action Fulton**

At this stage of the formal meeting Fulton and the other MSPs present had to leave and it was agreed that Anne would lead an informal discussion on the other agenda items.

Survivor concern on Freedom of Information

Survivor concern on Freedom of Information responses highlighted that a very low number of staff in Health Improvement Scotland were trained in trauma informed practice. This has been raised and recorded in our minutes on behalf of the survivor's wishes.

Meeting and discussion on Sibling Sexual abuse

This will be taken to the next meeting.

AOCB

Bairns Hoose: There were some issues raised on the initial Consultation that appeared to be very medical model.

Policy that all graduate entry employment has a maximum age of 24 unless you are a care leaver or disabled, when it is 29. Many survivors do not disclose their abuse until later in life and any intervention or therapy taking place then this policy block entry into the Civil Service and secure employment.

Date of Next Virtual Meeting

23rd November 2022