

Cross-Party Group on Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Tuesday 30th September 2025 from 13.15-14.00

This was an online meeting.

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Ruth Maguire MSP Scottish National Party Co-convenor
John Mason MSP Independent CPG MSP Member

Non-MSPs

Bronagh Andrew – TARA
Janet Warren – Individual
Ann Hall – Not for Sale
Chris Hall – Not for Sale
Maren Schroeder – Individual (Researcher for Ash Regan MSP)
Laura Jeffries – Individual (PA to Rhoda Grant MSP)
Lynn Benevento – PA to Ruth Maguire MSP, SNP
Susan McKellar – Scottish Women's Convention
Agnes Tolmie – Scottish Women's Convention
Michael Veitch – CARE for Scotland
Sasha Rakoff – No Not Buying It
Susan Smith – For Women Scotland
Steve Rawbone – Individual
Sally Jackson – FiLiA
Jacci Stoye – Secretary

Agenda item 1

Welcome and Apologies

Rhoda Grant MSP
Agnes Martony – Individual
Sophie Reymbaut – Individual
Teresa Little – Individual

Linda Thompson – Women's Support Project (WSP)
Diane Martin – A Model for Scotland (AMFS)

Jacci Stoye opened the meeting and said how delighted she and the group were to see Ruth back. Apologies were noted as above. Ruth Maguire MSP, Co-Convenor, welcomed members and expressed her pleasure at being back and able to update the group following her return to work.

Agenda item 2

Parliamentary update

Ruth Maguire MSP provided a short parliamentary update on recent work over the summer:

- The CPG website has been updated with recent reports and resources following a period of limited office capacity. Members were encouraged to visit and share material from the site.
- Ruth and Rhoda have written to the UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner highlighting the CPG's previous inquiry into pimping websites, noting the Commissioner's current inquiry into adult services websites, and urging a meeting to discuss progress.
- Work continues with A Model for Scotland to support members' engagement with MSPs in advance of the Prostitution Offences (Support for Victims) (Scotland) Bill. Guidance and a short campaign letter will soon be circulated with advice on effective MSP engagement.
- Ruth noted that she would be meeting with the Minister for Community Safety the following day and would report back at the next CPG meeting. Members welcomed Ruth back and thanked her for her continued commitment to the group's work.

John Mason MSP told the members that Restore Glasgow, Care and the Evangelical Alliance were holding an evening event with Ash Regan MSP on why the Unbuyable Bill matters. This will take place on Tuesday 4th November from 7.30-9.30 pm at St Georges Tron, Glasgow. (NB see attached info).

Agenda item 3

Update on the Prostitution Offences (Support for Victims) (Scotland) Bill

Maren Schroeder provided a detailed update on the progress of the Bill and the campaign surrounding it, including:

- Upcoming roundtable on sex trafficking and the Bill, featuring survivors from Canada and contributions from Scottish frontline organisations.
- Recent polling (17–25 September) showed strong public support for the Bill's key provisions, including criminalising buyers of sex. Support was particularly high among women and Liberal Democrat voters. Earlier claims by opponents that 69% opposed the Nordic model were based on misleading polling questions.
- Preliminary analysis of over 530 parliamentary submissions indicated that around 65% supported criminalising buyers. Submissions from the Crown Office, Police Scotland and COSLA were broadly supportive of the Bill's aims.
- Committee evidence sessions are scheduled to begin the following week, starting with survivor and frontline organisation testimony. Ash Regan MSP is due to appear before the Committee on 19 November, with the Stage 1 vote expected by 16 January 2026.
- Ongoing campaigning with support from For Women Scotland and other organisations, alongside efforts to counter misinformation from opposition groups through accurate media briefings.

Questions and Discussion

- Ruth asked about political engagement and current levels of parliamentary support. Maren advised that Ash was meeting regularly with MSPs across all parties, including leadership teams and policy advisors, and that discussions had been constructive.
- Sasha Rakoff asked whether the polling data would be published. Maren confirmed that an article had appeared in the Daily Record and that she would check with Ash about circulating the full dataset to the group.
- Sasha Rakoff also offered financial support for survivor speakers at events through No Not Buying It funding.
- Jacci raised the issue of existing legislation prohibiting public advertising for prostitution (e.g., in telephone boxes) and questioned why this principle could not extend to online advertising. Ruth Maguire MSP noted that communications law is reserved to Westminster but agreed that the issue remains important to pursue with UK bodies.

Agenda item 4

Election of office bearers

John Mason MSP took the chair to oversee the election of office bearers:

- Co-Conveners: Ruth Maguire MSP and Rhoda Grant MSP were nominated by Jacci Stoye and seconded by John Mason MSP. All members present agreed unanimously.
- Secretary: Jacci Stoye was nominated by John Mason MSP and seconded by Ann Hall (Not for Sale). This was also unanimously agreed.
- John Mason MSP thanked Ruth, Rhoda and Jacci for their continued service and support of the CPG.

Agenda item 5

Future meetings and discussion topics

- Detective Superintendent Stevie Bertram (Specialist Crime Division, Police Scotland), who was unable to attend a previous meeting, has offered to return to speak at a future session.
- Sally Jackson (FiLiA) proposed that FiLiA present findings from their recent FOI research into UK-wide support for women exiting prostitution, focusing on Scottish data and recommendations. This was welcomed by the group.
- Maren Schroeder invited members to contribute material for the website dedicated to the Bill, including survivor videos, talks, and organisational resources.
- Ruth and Jacci agreed to discuss offline whether the CPG's educational cartoon could be included on the site, noting some technical and copyright considerations.

Agenda item 6

AOB and Date of next meeting

With no further business, Ruth Maguire MSP thanked members for attending and confirmed that the next full meeting would be held in the evening to allow a longer discussion. The meeting closed at 14:00.