

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

18<sup>th</sup> March, 18.00-19.30 via Teams

## Minute

### 1 Present

#### MSPs

Rona Mackay (RMack), MSP  
Beatrice Wishart (BW), MSP  
Audrey Nicoll (AN), MSP

#### Invited guests

Kaukab Stiubhard, MSP/BPA, Minister for Equalities  
Katy Bletchley, Review of VAWG Funding, Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights Directorate  
Eileen Flanagan, Head of the Women's Equality Unit  
Nathan Waldie, Scottish Government

#### Non-MSP Group Members

Humara Bashir, Central Advocacy Partners Falkirk  
Amber Cully, GEMAP  
Jessica Denniff, SafeLives  
Nicola Gilbert, Scottish Women's Aid  
Elizabeth Gilchrist  
Sarah Gurney, Rape Crisis Scotland  
Ann Hayne, NHS Lanarkshire Gender-based Violence Services  
Carlene McAvoy,  
Melanie McCarry  
Leonie McConnell, Close the Gap  
Susan McKellar, Scottish Women's Convention  
Gill McKinna, Community Justice Scotland  
Fiona McMullen, ASSIST  
Linda Rodgers, Edinburgh Women's Aid  
Marsha Scott, Scottish Women's Aid  
Sally Sheail, Church of Scotland  
Linda Thompson, Women's Support Project  
Colette Wormleighton

# Apologies

Rhoda Grant MSP

Tess White MSP

Dawn Brennan, Wise Women

Christine Gray

Rebecca Mason, the Young Women's Movement

Chris Ringland, Evangelical Alliance

Davy White, White Ribbon Scotland

## 2 Theme: Improving Funding Processes and Timing: A Discussion with Kaukab Stewart, Minister for Equalities

A.

- Welcome
  - MS welcomed the Minister, Katy Bletchley, Eileen Flannagan to the meeting and acknowledged all the work that they and their colleagues, including the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, had done to achieve the DES uplift.
  - MS observed that the aim of this meeting was to examine the timing of funding decisions, to aid the stability of organisations providing services in the sector.
  - RMack then introduced the Minister and her colleagues to the attendees.
- The Minister led off with opening remarks:
  - Minister Kaukab Stewart acknowledged challenges in funding cycles and timing, particularly the impact of the timing of budget approvals, in part, during this past year, due to the knock-on effects of changes in UK budgets on Scottish budgets. The intention was to avoid a repeat of later decisions going forward.
  - Recognised sector concerns about stability and the call for multi-year funding.
  - Noted that Scottish Government does not receive multi-year funding from the UK Government, which limits options.
  - Highlighted pilots exploring funding structures that may offer improvements in the future.
  - Expressed commitment to problem-solving and acknowledged the vital role of the sector.

C.

- **Discussion between the Minister and Members**

- Marsha Scott (Scottish Women's Aid)
  - Highlighted concerns regarding National Insurance contributions and the lack of engagement from the UK Government. MS asked if there was any update on that subject.
  - The 100 Day funding had been very welcome, but did not absorb the issue with National Insurance contributions.
  - MS enquired about multi-year funding, which had been provided in the past. MS was interested to hear what problems there were in repeating this and whether there were any ways the sector could influence thinking about multi-year funding among civil servants and politicians in good time for decision-making.
- The Minister
  - Recognised the concerns around NI contributions and that funding provided wouldn't absorb those increases.
  - The Minister expressed disappointment regarding the lack of engagement with the Scottish Government, in relation to the NI changes. Scottish Government was also very concerned about the additional pressure that decision placed on third sector organisations.
  - The Scottish Government had called on the UK Government to take an actual cost approach to compensation for the increased costs as a result of the increase in NI costs.
  - The indications from the UK Government are that the Scottish Government will only receive a Barnett formula share of funding provided to UK departments. Therefore, in the absence of full funding, the Scottish Government would be very restricted to the extent that they can respond.
  - Having said that, the Scottish Government assesses each proposal for a grant contract with a view to what can be realistically achieved and delivered with the funding they have. Scottish Government tries to respond as flexibly as possible.
  - With regard to multi-year funding, the Minister noted that those attending the meeting would be aware public finances remain under pressure across the board. The Minister acknowledged that the sector would benefit from some degree of certainty over the medium term, to enable them to plan ahead with service delivery and workforce. However, the majority of funding is controlled by UK Government decisions and this continues to have an impact on the certainty that the Scottish Government can provide.
  - As referred to previously, Scottish Government has been able to give an uplift of £2.4m in the delivery of Equally Safe.
  - Scottish Government was also trying to assist the sector in terms of improvements in the notification of continued funding, as well as increasing the number of two-year grants that could be offered, as part of the commitment to the Fairer Funding pilot.
- Linda Rogers (Edinburgh Women's Aid)
  - Echoed MS in recognising the difference Scottish Government work around funding had made.
  - Inquired about the timeline for funding applications in the next round (for '26/27), including DES funding.

- Eileen Flanagan
  - Confirmed that it is under consideration in the unit at the present time, including taking a realistic approach to the impact of the current financial climate, what could be achieved and aiding sustainability of sector organisations, in the vital work they deliver.
  - Spoke to the importance of working with the sector to achieve progress.
- The Minister
  - Gave assurance that, even taking into account current constraints, she would give active consideration to any practical proposals that are put forward, within her portfolio, to achieve progress.
- Rona MacKay MSP
  - Highlighted a comment by Amber Cully in the meeting Chat:

‘We were delighted to get an earlier letter of comfort this year and the uplift. The majority of workers funded by this fund are women themselves, which counteracts our fight for gender equality.

Working for the third sector means our jobs are already lower incomes than our counterparts in the public or private sector, with incomparable terms, conditions and pension contributions.

Our frontline staff give money advice to women, whilst being unsure of their own ability to pay their bills beyond March each year.

Staff also get concerned about the women they support possibly losing a vital service that they require and deserve.

We lost 1 member of staff who was trying to secure her first mortgage which was almost impossible in this situation’.

- Marsha Scott (Scottish Women’s Aid)
  - Some organisations, including Scottish Women’s Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland, had been invited to UK Government round-tables.
  - MS enquired if there was potential for the sector influencing UK Government thinking around multi-year funding.
  - Secondly, MS wondered if the introduction of some two-year contracts was linked to the lifetime of this parliament? If so, the sector could plan to lobby for multi-year contracts in the runup to the election.
- The Minister
  - Acknowledged that it was a good time for organisations to make robust representations.
  - The decisions on funding had been taken on the basis of seeking to aid the sector by improving continued funding notifications and increasing the number of two-year grants, as part of the Fairer Funding pilot. As with any pilot, there would be a full review, to gauge lessons learned, to inform any future development of the pilot.
  - In addition to DES funding, Scottish Government had given £48m to victims’ organisations in the period ’22-’25. Also, there was the victim-centred approach fund, as part of the Scottish Government

- commitment to put victims at the heart of the justice system. That now also formed part of Scottish Government Fairer Funding pilot.
  - The Minister also emphasised that, as part of her wider work as Minister for Equalities, mainstreaming and the work on some of the recommendations from the First Minister's Group on Violence against Women and Girls, she is endeavoring to persuade her colleagues to take a cross-portfolio approach to work.
- Eileen Flanagan
  - Noted:
    - That the government was working to improve transparency in gender budgeting.
    - A piece of work carried out by The Scottish Women's Budget Group had been highlighted by Councillor Chalmers, who co-chairs the Equally Safe Joint Strategic Board. The work focuses on local authorities in relation to the decisions they are making around gender budgeting work. That could provide an area of work between Scottish Government and COSLA, to look at how activity at strategic policy level moved to implementation at local authority level.
- Anne Hayne (NHS Lanarkshire)
  - Highlighted in the Chat that:
    - Pressures on the health system leave no room for funding on that work – Health was not an organisation that tended to be able to access funding, or be allocated specific funding to develop that area.
  - Went on to explain that:
    - NHS Lanarkshire was the only Board with a training worker, specifically focusing on violence against women. The trainer was employed on a three-day week basis, to cover a staff of 12k. Therefore, there was a gap in terms of the provision possible, and a range of areas of activity, including the trauma agenda.
  - Responded to a question from Rona MacKay MSP that:
    - There are very few full-time posts. They were usually merged posts, joint equality or joint with public protection posts.
  - Clarified that she believed:
    - Her post as a Gender-based Violence Manager was unique. They also have a small team of specialists and workers and provide training and consultancy.
    - Due to the nature of their provision, they often worked across health boards.
- Colette Wormleighton
  - CW has responsibility to deliver the Caledonian System in Edinburgh, a specialist court-mandated programme, working with male perpetrators, which also aims to improve the lives of women and children affected.
  - CW recognised the financial issues faced by third sector organisations, and also addressed the increasing demands placed on justice services, without sufficient increase in funding, which, in turn, had a knock-on effect on work with women and girls.
- Amber Cully (Project Manager at the Financially Included Project, a partnership between GEMAP Scotland (independent advice agency) and

the Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership) spoke to some of the Points she had made in the Meeting Chat:

- VAWG statistics were not reducing. One of the steps that the funding review board had suggested was a costing exercise for the actual cost to the public purse in terms of met and unmet need, Amber Cully saw this as a vital piece of work, but one that would take time, not one that could be fast-tracked.
- AC had been involved in an excellent piece of work in Glasgow, with Glasgow City Council and other third and public sector partners around the new child poverty programme/pathfinder, highly collaborative work around a completely new approach. It had taken a lot of work and time away from staff's normal roles but would see real change across the sectors. Learning could be taken from the project and AC thought a similar piece of work could be done across the VAWG sector. It would, however, require a smaller number of people - or workstream groups.
- The Minister
  - Had to leave the meeting at that point. However, the Minister thanked the Group for insights gained.
  - The Minister also encouraged members to contact her in writing, if they had not had the chance to ask her a question relevant to them during the meeting.

### 3 Cross Party Business

#### A. Approval of 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024 Meeting Minute

- The minutes of the Cross Party Group on Men's Violence against Women and Children meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024 were approved as an accurate record – proposed by Marsha Scott and seconded by Audrey Nicoll MSP.

#### B. Approval of 19<sup>th</sup> November 2024 Meeting Minute

- The minutes of the Cross Party Group on Men's Violence against Women and Children meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2024 were approved as an accurate record – proposed by Rona Mackay MSP and seconded by Marsha Scott.

#### C. New Member Applications

##### A. Aberlour

- Aberlour were welcomed as a member of the Cross-Party Group on Men's Violence against Women and Children.

### 4. Member Updates

- Fiona McMullen (ASSIST)
  - Highlighted ASSIST's work on Non-harassment Orders and the use of them in sentencing.

- In particular, FMcM referred to ASSIST's own statistics, which were able to distinguish what had been requested by a victim.
  - FMcM stated ASSIST would be delighted to work with other organisations in that area, that she knew of amendments that had been suggested for legislation, but that she was keen any amendments also consider domestic abuse offenses, rather than only sexual offenses.
- Linda Thompson (The Women's Support Project)
  - Highlighted
    - The launch of a report on commercial sexual exploitation and women with learning disabilities, scheduled for publication on 14<sup>th</sup> May.
    - The launch of the first easy-read version of information for women with learning disabilities, along-side other resources.
- Marsha Scott (Scottish Women's Aid)
  - Responded to Fiona McMullen, confirming that Scottish Women's Aid were also looking at the area of Non-harassment Orders, and that there had been the possibility of doing some research with Strathclyde University into their use, across all protective orders. MS said that Scottish Women's Aid would be very happy to work with ASSIST on that area of interest.
  - MS also noted a reluctance by sheriffs in using Non-harassment Orders in cases involving children.
- Rona MacKay MSP
  - Referred to a members' bill she had started around 2017 on stalking protection orders. It had been paused, as the Domestic Abuse Bill was being introduced at the time.
  - Much work had been done on stalking protection orders and RMack sought opinions as to whether it should be brought forward to the next session. RMack asked members to respond to her, if they would like, at some point following the meeting.
  - There were some comments in the meeting Chat:
    - Emphasising the importance of proactiveness from Policy Scotland in pursuit of stalking charge.
    - The need for robust and protective sentencing and measures to ensure better outcomes for victims.
    - MS stated in Chat that it would be appreciated if the Committee would support arrangements to support remote participation in domestic abuse trials and that there should be an independent chair.
- Ann Hayne (NHS Lanarkshire Gender-based Violence Services)
  - AH highlighted the Women's Health Plan and her efforts to include violence against women in the work covered by the Plan.
  - AH asked the Group to do anything they could to raise the visibility of the Women's Health Plan.
  - Regarding the Women's Health Plan, AH also mentioned the evidence of health impacts that could be tackled. The focus had been on contraception, terminations, menopause and heart health in the first phase. However, it would be beneficial if other conditions considered, including gastrointestinal conditions, migraines and so on. Conditions that are quite disabling to daily functioning.
  - AH spoke to training she had carried out with the HR department on sexual harassment in the workplace, which arose from a number of news reports around surgical and medical staff, in particular, experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace. The materials are available.

- Health Scotland were looking at a single passport of learning for staff, who would then have all their core learning ready to transfer, should they move to another board. At present, there was discussion around whether women and child protection should be included in the passport, and for training around public protection, including violence against women to be compulsory learning for everyone, as part of the passport.
- Rona Mackay MSP
  - Suggested that AH might be interested in also joining the Cross Party Group on Women's Health and that she could speak to the Convener of the Group.
- Jessica McLellan (SafeLives):
  - Spoke to a new strategy launching in April focusing on perpetrator interventions and improving data collection.
  - JMcL requested the input of members of the Group, to help SafeLives to start to explore perpetrator work in Scotland.
- Linda Rogers (Edinburgh Women's Aid)
  - Shared with the Group that there would be a new post, working with girls in school. The post had received funding for one year.
  - Edinburgh Women's Aid had also received funding through their partnership PhD, with the University of Edinburgh social work department, looking at school responses to girls' safety, support and justice, in regard to intimate partner abuse of school-age girls. The PhD was currently being advertised, and would start in September or October.
- Gill McKinna (Community Justice Scotland)
  - Reported that Moray local authority had come on board with the Caledonian System roll-out, taking the total to 21 local authorities. Also, Shetland would join in August and Angus later in the year. It would mean that 23 of the 32 local authorities would then be covered by the work.
  - Meetings were currently ongoing with COSLA regarding funding and agreements before any further rolling out.
- Colette Wormleighton
  - CW asked for members' experience of case management procedures that had been introduced. Also, she would be interested to know if there were there any unintended consequences regarding how people had been dealt with in court.
- Ann Hayne (NHS Lanarkshire Gender-based Violence Services)
  - Had significant experience of the case management pilot. AH suggested CW get in touch with the lead from COPFS.
  - AH confirmed that there had been some unintended consequences, in terms of early resolution. There was a concern that matters that were resolved more quickly at court, or longer-term at court, might not receive the attention to sentencing they required, which linked to the question of Non-harassment orders – If someone were to plead guilty quickly, it might be that the person concerned would be admonished, rather than receiving consideration for a Non-harassment Order.
  - There were advantages in terms of reducing the number of court witnesses and, where there was resolution, it did take the victim out of the court process. However, there were aspects to be considered in terms of how it was supported. Victim engagement from COPFS has been working well in many areas, but AH suggested that she and CW could have a catch-up after the meeting, to give it more time and to link in Jennifer Cunningham (COPFS) to the discussions.



## 5. Any other Business

- Marsha Scott (Scottish Women's Aid)
  - Marsha highlighted:
    - International Women's day, that had recently taken place, thanked everyone for the work they did in the sector, which was not easy.
    - That the summary case management cases were generating a good deal of discussion.
  - MS suggested inviting a representative from the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), for a session on the case management pilots.
  - MS suggested Fiona McMullen (ASSIST) provide some input in that session, if she would be willing.
- Audrey Nicoll MSP
  - AN believed members of the CPG should be aware that the Criminal Justice Committee was in the process of scrutinising the Criminal Justice Modernisation and Abusive Domestic Behaviour Reviews (Scotland) Bill. The aim was to:
    - Improve the processing of court cases and that would largely put measures on a permanent basis that had been put in place on a temporary place during COVID.
    - Developing a formal review process, where there is a domestic homicide.
  - The Bill was at the first stage of scrutiny. There was general agreement on the principles. It should now move to the next stage, where members would have the opportunity to submit amendments, where they believed improvements and adjustments could be made to the Bill.
  - AN would be happy to provide more detail and added a link to the Stage One Report, in the Chat:
    - <https://bprcdn.parliament.scot/published/CJ/2025/3/11/547bd929-6232-4c9f-929b-c8f9d3a99051/CJ-S6-25-03.pdf>
- Marsha Scott (Scottish Women's Aid)
  - Marsha spoke to:
    - The report mentioned by Audrey Nicoll MSP.
    - The possibility of victims providing evidence remotely, with safety and dignity.
    - Gratitude for all the work being done on domestic abuse deaths.
    - Some concerns about an uneven playing field in the oversight bodies, something that had already been experienced at local level.
    - The importance of having third sector victim support organisations involved, not just public sector professionals.
- Ann Hayne (NHS Lanarkshire Gender-based Violence Services)
  - AH informed the Group that she was on the Domestic Homicide Task Force.
  - Spoke with Audrey Nicoll about the competing review processes taking place across Scotland.
  - AH advised the Group that she was recently part of a discussion in South Lanarkshire around drug-related death reviews. There may be a clash – as they are all compulsory, but the time taken was approximately 1.5 years, which had an impact on making the process a timely one.
  - AH noted that at least a third of DA deaths involved a perpetrator using drugs or alcohol, and the victim using alcohol and drugs.
- Elizabeth Gilchrist

- EG emphasised that she was involved in work on developing new interventions for delivery in Justice, including the ADVANCE-D programme that addresses IPV and substance abuse. They were conducting a cost-consequences analysis, which could help argue for preventative spend across the sector.
  - Ann Hayne highlighted that North Lanarkshire uses Up 2 U.
- Audrey Nicoll MSP
  - AN noted that they were aware of the overlap and was interested to follow up on this with Fiona McMullen (ASSIST).
- Fiona McMullen (ASSIST)
  - Spoke to the following:
    - Where children were concerned, perpetrators adhering to orders that had been imposed by the court, and sheriffs robustly sentencing when those are breached.
    - Had not had the opportunity to look at the difference between perpetrators adhering to police undertaking conditions before they reached court versus Bail-imposed conditions by a Sheriff. It would be interesting to research whether there were any differences, for example, in how seriously they were taken. FMcM stressed it was not a matter of not supporting virtual trials and modernisation, but seeing any impact on sentencing.
    - Fiona McMullen observed that the discussion aligns well with work under DACA Scotland.
- Amber Cully (GEMAP)
  - Highlighted:
    - Welfare reform announcements that had been announced by Westminster on the day of the meeting. AC was concerned about the potential implications, particularly for the women for whom they provided services in the sector. For example, women who had health conditions or disabilities, those under the age of 22, those with problems around debt and welfare rights, as well as questions regarding Universal Credit.
    - Rona MacKay MSP asked if AC could provide input on implication of welfare reform changes on the violence against women and girls sector for the next meeting.

## 6. Date and Time of next Meeting

- The date of the next meeting to be confirmed.