

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

18<sup>th</sup> February 2026, 18.00-19.30 via Teams

## Minute

### 1 Present

#### MSPs

Rona Mackay (RMack), MSP  
Beatrice Wishart (BW), MSP  
Tess White (TW), MSP

#### Invited guests

Jennifer Cunningham, COPFS  
Laura Pearson, Fife Violence Against Women Partnership, Fife Council

#### Non-MSP Group Members

Robyn Moffat-Wall (RMW), Aberlour  
Humara Bashir (HB), Central Advocacy Partners Falkirk  
Collette Wormleighton (CW), City of Edinburgh Council, Community Justice, Domestic Abuse Services  
Joanne Hicks (JH), RASAC Perth & Kinross  
Nicola Love (NL), Rape Crisis Scotland  
Christina Schmidt (CS), Student Association President?  
Jessica Denniff (JD), SafeLives  
Nicola Gilbert (NG), Scottish Women's Aid  
Marsha Scott (MS), Scottish Women's Aid  
Magali Courades (MC), UNHS  
Mar Sanchez Fernandez (MSF), The Young Women's Movement  
Elizabeth Gilchrist (EG), Individual

#### Apologies

Katy Clark MSP  
Natalie Don-Innes MSP  
Rhoda Grant MSP  
Angela Graham, Central Advocacy Partners Falkirk

Colette Wormleighton, City of Edinburgh Council, Community Justice, Domestic Abuse Services  
Vikki Kerr, City of Edinburgh Council, Community Justice, Safer Families  
Leonie McConnell, Close the Gap  
Linda Rodgers, Edinburgh Women's Aid  
Catriona Kirkpatrick, Engender  
Lisa-Kristin Weylandt, Includem  
Alice Jackson, Individual  
Nancy Lombard, Individual  
Melanie McCarry, Individual  
Richard Whitecross, Individual  
Ann Hayne, NHS Lanarkshire Gender-based Violence Services  
Susan McKellar, The Scottish Women's Convention  
Katy Jackson, ThirtyOne:Eight  
Natalia Equihua, The Women's Support Project

## 2 Theme: Update on Case Management Pilots, with Jennifer Cunningham (COPFS)

### A

- Presentation
  - Jennifer Cunningham, Principal Depute of COPFS delivered a presentation on the Summary Case Management (SCM) pilot, covering:
    - Its aims and objectives, including:
      - Key features: Early disclosure, early engagement between the Crown and defence and early judicial case management.
      - Aims: Increase in the percentage of cases resolved at the initial stage (first calling or CWP); decrease in the number of witness citations issued; Increase in the effectiveness of trials which are fixed; improved experience of victims, witnesses and accused persons.
      - A description of the cases covered by SCM, as well as exclusions.
      - The twin track approach of the system (Track 1: Domestic Abuse cases; Track 2: Non-Domestic Abuse cases).
    - The SCM Process, including:
      - First Calling of the Case and Case Management Form.
    - Enhanced engagement with victims of Domestic Abuse.
    - The Outcomes seen so far from the pilot, including a:
      - Reduction in witness citations.
      - Reduction in outstanding trials.
      - A positive impact on journey times.
      - A positive impact on adjournments at trial and evidence led trials.

- The presentation was followed by a question-and-answer session.

## B

- Q&A Session

- A question was asked regarding what percentage of cases in the roll-out have resulted in earlier guilty pleas.
  - It was confirmed that all critical evidence is now received alongside the police report, including the statement of the complainer.
- A question was raised about what percentage of cases progressing through case management are domestic abuse Track 1 cases.
  - It was noted that the percentage would require confirmation; however, all domestic abuse cases fall within SCM and are therefore reported to COPFS with key evidence.
- Clarification sought on 'journey times' – whether this referred to the point at which the Crown gets the report from the police to the point of trial, should one take place.
  - It was clarified that the 'journey times' referenced were from first appearance to the trial diet. The evaluation figures would cover this period, but not the time taken to reach a decision on a case.
  - MS underlined the importance of these journey times in relation to witness attrition.
  - MS also asked about the position where an individual was on remand. It was confirmed that a case could not be continued without plea where the accused person was on remand.
- There was a question about Non-Harassment Orders (NHOs), which are particularly important in cases involving children.
  - It was confirmed that ASSIST communicates regularly with COPFS on this matter. The police should inform COPFS if the complainer wishes an NHO. This is now supported by legal members of staff making direct calls to victims, during which the issue of NHOs would almost certainly be addressed. These calls have been found to be vital.
  - The role of local implementation groups for SCM was discussed, including the bodies and representatives involved. NHOs are regularly discussed through these platforms.
- The withdrawal of the option of self-representation was highlighted. It was asked whether this included domestic abuse cases.
  - It was confirmed that accused persons cannot represent themselves at trial in domestic abuse cases, other than at the outset. However, where possible, a trial would not be set before representation was in place. The issue of self-representation applies more to non-domestic abuse cases.
- The Convener (RMack) thanked JC for her detailed presentation and noted that there was cause for optimism in the progress made to date in the pilot.
- Collette Wormleighton (CW) spoke about the rise her organisation had seen in Edinburgh in requests for domestic abuse justice social work reports, which had been viewed as positive.

- JC referred to the positive results in the roll-out, while also acknowledging challenges.
- It was noted that there had been an increase in guilty pleas in the pilot, but that had not been apparent so far in the roll-out. The reasons for this difference will be examined.
- JC confirmed to the Convener that the changes through the SCM had been radical for the justice system.
- The Convener thanked JC for her presentation and said that it would be very valuable for her to return to update the new Group. JC agreed, noting that the programme remains at an early stage.

### 3 Cross Party Business

#### A. Approval of 18<sup>th</sup> November 2025 Meeting Minute

- The minutes of the Cross Party Group on Men’s Violence against Women and Children meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2025 were approved as an accurate record – proposed by Marsha Scott and seconded by Rona Mackay MSP.

### 4. Member Updates

- NUS (Christina Schmidt - CS)
  - CS spoke to the Tertiary Education Bill, including its guidance for colleges and universities to incorporate gender-based violence training. The next step will be to review guidance issued by the Scottish Funding Council.
- Tess White (TW)
  - TW enquired about reference to ‘Emily’s Test’ within work relating to the Tertiary Education Bill and associated guidance.
- Mar Sanchez Fernandez (MSF)
  - MSF noted that schools in England are being allocated £20 million to provide education on sexism and misogyny, which differed from the position in Scotland.
  - MSF highlighted a conference organised by the Young Women’s Movement with academics and third sector partners on AI-enabled violence, particularly involving the use of explicit images. The Young Women’s Movement plans to undertake research on digital harm affecting young women (aged 16 to 32) in Scotland, which has increased substantially over the past year. MSF undertook to provide an update once the report has been published (likely before the end of 2026).
- Joann Hicks (JH)

- JH spoke about 'Equally Safe' in colleges and schools, confirming that it has been implemented.
- In relation to digital safety, JH confirmed that RASAC delivers a substantial number of prevention workshops in schools, facilitated by Rape Crisis Scotland centres across the country.
- Mentorship programmes are also delivered.
- Robyn Moffat Wall (RMW)
  - Aberlour – Public debt work. RMW provided an update on Aberlour's Urgent Assistance Fund.
  - RMW acknowledged receipt of just over £500k in funding from the Scottish Government in January. Applications have surged, and the sources of applications have diversified significantly, generating valuable data.
  - Over 1,000 families have been supported, representing more than 3,000 individuals, and almost all of the funding has already been distributed.
  - One in ten applications explicitly referenced domestic abuse.
  - Among awards referencing domestic abuse, debt arrears are now the third most common support need (preceded only by clothing and food).
  - This highlights the through-line from domestic abuse, via financial hardship, to public debt.
  - The majority of awards have been made to women-led households.
  - The data demonstrates that crisis funding of this nature is, regrettably, essential infrastructure at this point.
  - The call on the next Parliament to reform public debt processes will continue. There is a need to improve co-ordination across services to better support survivors and their families.
- Marsha Scott (MS)
  - MS highlighted an online conference being held by Scottish Women's Aid on 26th March 2026 concerning court experiences in child contact cases.
  - The Fund to Leave is now open for applications and is being rolled out across the country.
  - It is hoped that this will become an ongoing funding commitment under the new Government.
  - MS acknowledged the significant work of Aberlour's Urgent Assistance Fund and expressed the hope that public debt will receive greater prominence during the election campaign and hustings.
  - MS confirmed that Northern Isles Legal Services has appointed a solicitor, supported by funding from the Legal Education Foundation. This development will enable the provision of free services to women, accessed via Orkney Women's Aid or Shetland

- Women's Aid. There is optimism that this could become a permanent service.
- MS noted the extraordinary service provided to women and children by Sandy Brindley, who has now moved on from Rape Crisis Scotland.
  - In response to RMack's suggestion of a legacy paper for the Group, MS invited members to reflect on the work undertaken during the session and to suggest priorities for the future, including matters that may warrant attention during election campaigning.
  - RMack
    - RMack agreed that a legacy paper would be useful and suggested that it be published before the end of March, to be brought forward when the Group reconvenes after the election.
    - RMack confirmed that she would liaise with MS and NG on this.
    - RMack also confirmed that she would be content to lodge a motion in Parliament acknowledging the work of Sandy Brindley at Rape Crisis Scotland.
    - RMack asked the Group for views on the Scottish Government campaign targeting young men in relation to gendered violence.
      - RMW
        - RMW noted that the campaign was a positive first step. Nicola Love (NL) stated that Rape Crisis Scotland had been involved and that the campaign was impactful, though there were questions about whether young men and those supporting them would readily identify sexist content using the descriptor employed.
      - MFS
        - MSF also viewed the campaign as a positive first step, though noted that it was difficult to assess fully given that their organisation works primarily with young women rather than young men.

## 5. Any other Business

- MS thanked RMack and BW for acting as Conveners of the Cross Party Group, enabling these meetings to take place and allowing vital work to be undertaken and progressed.
- RMack thanked MS and NG for the high standard of secretariat support provided to the Group.
- RMack said that it had been a pleasure to be involved in the Group and that she had been continually impressed by the knowledge and expertise within the room at each meeting over the years.
- BW offered special thanks to RMack for her work in sustaining the Group, to MS and NG, to the members of the Group and to the many speakers who had contributed over the session.
- RMack wished the Group well in its future activities.

## 6. Date and Time of next Meeting

- The date of the next meeting to be confirmed in due course.