

CSE Cross Party Group

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2017

Scottish Parliament, Committee Room 3, 1-2pm

Attendees:

Speaker: Catriona Graham (Turn off the Red Light Campaign/Immigrant Council)

Ash Denham MSP

Jacci Stoye (ACTS) Secretariat

Chris Hall (Not For Sale in Scotland)

Ann Hall (Not For Sale in Scotland)

Gordon Macdonald (CARE)

Katherine Gilmore (Church of Scotland)

Brandi Lee Lough Dannel (LGBT Youth Scotland)

Pam Cairns (Soroptimist/Free to Live Trust)

Janice Wilson (Soroptimist International)

Erika Grant (Project Turnkey CIC)

Lesley Johnston (NHS Lothian/Edin VAWP)

Billie Weallans (Women's Equality Party)

Lisa-Marie Taylor (FiLiA)

Anna Zobnina (European Network of Migrant Women)

Lorna Kettles (Scottish Women's Convention)

Lorna Ferguson (International Justice Mission)

Kathy Betteridge (Salvation Army)

Trish Godman

Marlyn Glen

Lesley Brennan (Cllr Dundee City Council)

Linda Thomson (Women's Support Project)

Janice Johnstone (JBC)

Alison Scott (Women's Clinic NHS Lothian)

Kate Fry PA

Rhoda Grant MSP

Janet Warren (Graduate Women Scotland)

Annie Wells MSP

John Mason MSP

Apologies

Catriona Laird

Ann Hayne (Gender Based Violence)

Hazel Watson (ACTS)

Rachel Adamson (Zero Tolerance)

Andrew Bevan (International Justice Mission)

Ann Henderson (STUC)

Agenda

Commercial Sexual Exploitation Cross Party Group

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Agree the minutes of the previous meeting
4. Aim of meeting: to consider ways in which we can raise awareness of CSE to the general public and promote legislation for the Nordic Model/Sex Buyer law
5. Update the group on the outcome of the research on CSE commissioned by the Scottish Government – Rhoda Grant MSP
6. Welcome and introduction to our speaker Ms Catriona Graham who played a significant role in the 'Turn off the Red Light' Northern Ireland campaign
7. An opportunity to ask Catriona questions about the TOTRL campaign
8. Ideas for engaging with the media and forming links with Westminster and Northern Ireland
9. AOB : Lisa-Marie Taylor wishes to speak to the group about the FiLiA Conference in October

Agenda Item 1, 2, 3 &5

Rhoda Grant MSP (RG) and Ash Denham MSP (AD) opened the meeting. The apologies were read out and the minutes of the previous meeting were agreed. Item 5 was put aside as neither RG nor AD had had any update on the publication of the research commissioned by Michael Matheson.

Agenda Item 4 &6

RG introduced Catriona Graham (CG) from the Republic of Ireland's Immigrant Council to speak. CG was instrumental in leading Eire's recently successful campaign, '*Turn off the Red Light*,' to bring about the criminalising of the purchase of sex. The legislation for this was passed on 14th February 2017.

Catriona's presentation:

The campaign was made up of 70+ organisations. The Immigrant Council acted as a lead partner in the campaign and as liaison between partners. Although the campaign started in 2006, it had its official launch in 2008. It began as a grassroots campaign, but it shifted towards a political focus in the last three years.

Crucially, in 2006 there was a trafficked woman who was referred to the Immigrant Council; her case was complex. She was sold as a girl, she didn't speak the language, she had been forced into criminal acts and had a daughter. She was passed from service to service due to her complex legal and practical needs.

The case sparked off a deeper scrutiny of commercial exploitation. 'People say trafficking is wrong, however prostitution is something else, but they are interlinked'. The team sourced funding for research and found that the extent and impact of the sex trade in Ireland was much more than they had realised and in speaking to other services, they concluded that they needed a united voice. All women in prostitution were at serious risk of violence.

The response was the formation of the Turn off the Red Light (TORL) campaign. A big step forward came when the Trade Unions said, 'No, we cannot regulate this.' Decriminalisation creates a growth in trade –the Swedish model was better. The numbers of women in street prostitution fell; growth of the trade overall was limited, a person-centred approach created greater access to the women for education, financial support and health matters.

In June 2015 Northern Ireland criminalised the purchase of sex and there was a huge shift across the border.

One of the questions was 'Why is it okay to target men?' The notion that the buyers of sex are lonely and vulnerable men needed to be challenged. The research undertaken showed

that most buyers were affluent men (one in fifteen buy –most men don't). Buying sex isn't an innocent act.

There was another iconic case of a former sex buyer who is now a supporter of the Nordic model. He paid for sex from Eastern European women and tried not to buy trafficked women. He would question them to 'make sure' they were happy. Then one day a woman who had said she was happy cried when he offered her a phone as she had not had access to a phone to call her family. He realised he didn't know the truth at all. He thought he was innocent, but his actions weren't.

Prostitution is inherently against gender equality; if a buyer has money he can do what he wants. It is imperative to listen to the voice of survivors. It is important to keep in mind your core message. The next step is looking at the Act's implementation.

Questions/comments from the floor:

1. How did you get the Trade Unions involved?

It is helpful to use links that are already there. Approach them with a plan; ask them what is happening with prostitution in their area and if they think that prostitution is a valid form of work.

2. Have we got links with the Trade Unions in Ireland?

Linda Thomson said that Ann Henderson from the STUC had supported the UNITE Conference and suggested she would be a good person to contact.

There are difficulties in that Scotland is further along and the opposition are more entrenched.

There are issues around waiting for the commissioned research to be published.

3. Nine years is a long time; do you have any learning from that?

The campaign has had a cyclical nature – setbacks, then gearing oneself up for another go. There have been positive experiences as well with TORL; it's important to keep it moving forwards. Actions in one area bolster another – so political movement can lead to media, which leads to events, to new partners, new evidence, further political action and so on. We had a core active group with a range of expertise. It's good to have events and to keep people updated.

4. How have you managed to protect your team and keep people safe?

Don't feel obliged to put pressure on yourself. You don't have to engage if people are intimidating and aggressive.

5. Was there a coalition with an office?

TORL was housed in the Immigrant Council and CG was paid. The CEO of the Immigrant Council, Ms Denise Charlton, became the Chair of TORL.

6. How do you manage the media?

We put a press release out every week. It's important to find the right language and to give them the information; to make it easy for them. We wanted to show women who are survivors; that we were standing alongside them.

7. Can you tell us about the review period? There is a review period of three years, which they will have to resource. This helps us to check the deterrent factor; we need to ensure focus is on prevention and not just prosecutions. Sweden had a review period of ten years.

8. Did you target men and boys in the campaign?

Yes, but not just men and boys –women as well. It's important that they know it's not okay to buy consent.

Gordon Macdonald asked if the CSE CPG could write to the government about the publication of the commissioned research or perhaps if RG or AD might raise a motion for debate in the house. RG and Ad said they would draft something.

Agenda Item 8

RG asked Jacqui Stoye (JS) about ideas for engaging with the media and networking with other groups in the UK. JS said press releases were one of the things we had agreed to discuss in the meeting; it was decided that one should be released about the first meeting of the CSE CPG. JS said she would try to establish contact with the CPG in Westminster and the parliamentary groups in Northern Ireland and Eire.

Agenda Item 9 AOB.

Lisa-Marie Taylor, who is the Chair of the Women's Rights charity, FiLiA wanted to tell members about the Feminist Conference that they are organising which will take place on the 14th and 15th of October (provisional) in London. Central to their theme will be sexual violence against women and Lisa-Marie wondered if anyone might be interested in speaking at the Conference specifically about the aims of the Cross Party Group.

AOB continued...

1. JS asked whether the group might like to have a Facebook page like the TORL group have in Eire. Members were against an open FB page, until we were ready to 'go

public' with a campaign. However, members felt a private page might be a good idea.

2. Linda Thomson (LT) told the members about the launch of the Inside/Outside project, which refers to the sex industry, and which will take place in the Garden Lobby at the Scottish Parliament on the 13th March, which is the week before the SNP Conference.
3. Members asked if Michael Matheson could be invited to speak at the next meeting. JS agreed to invite him.
4. The group discussed how a Scottish campaign could go forward and what it might be called. No decision was taken on a name.
5. Members suggested it would be helpful to undertake a mapping exercise of the skills of group members, so that jobs might be delegated out to individuals.
6. After further discussion, it was agreed that a paid co-ordinator was needed to lead a Scottish campaign similar to TORL. A sub-committee was formed to look at arranging funding for this. The members are: Chris Hall, Linda Thomson, Gordon Macdonald, Lisa-Marie Taylor and Anna Zobnina. Jacci Stoye would be copied into emails for information.
7. The next meeting will be on Tuesday 23rd May 2017 between 1-2.00pm at the Scottish Parliament.