JUSTICE COMMITTEE

PRE-BUDGET SCRUTINY OF THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT’S DRAFT BUDGET 2019-20

SUBMISSION FROM ANN MOULDS, CEO, ACTION AGAINST STALKING

Action Against Stalking (AAS) is a UK-wide charity based in Scotland which has pioneered the recognition of stalking as a specific criminal offence, offering support to victims of stalking and has championed the rights of victims.

1. What is your view on the current trends in funding in the justice portfolio and the Scottish Government’s rationale for these?

The inclusion of the Offence of Stalking as a standalone offence into the Scottish Governments Portfolio.

I am pleased the Scottish Government has invested money into addressing new types of offences that have come to the fore in recent years, but I have noticed the Offence of Stalking is not included in the Scottish Governments portfolio. The crime of Stalking is a relatively one of the new types of criminality that has come to the fore in recent years. The Offence of Stalking sec 39 of the Criminal Justice & Licencing (Scotland) Act 2010 supports and is supported by the recent wave of new Government legislative reforms which aim to tackle psychological harm and abuse.

Scottish Crime & Justice Surveys have categorised stalking as sexual victimisation and stalking rather than the stand-alone offence that it is, overlooking the fact the majority of stalking cases do not hold a sexual element.

The high prevalence of this crime in our society warrants it is given the same attention as other highly prevalent crimes such as Domestic Abuse, Rape & Sexual Crimes, Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation.

2. What is your view, in particular, on the Scottish Government’s proposals for spending on the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service? This includes recent announcement of an additional in-year budget of £3.6million to fund the recruitment up to 140 permanent staff.

I am in full support of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service to receive extra funding to meet the demand of the changing and complex nature of crime.

3. What is your view on the level of current funding and planned spend on the rollout of electronic monitoring to ensure that the courts, prisons and Police Scotland have sufficient resources to provide for an enhanced service in all parts of Scotland? Additionally, is sufficient funding provided to third-sector and voluntary groups who provide services in relation to people who have such a device fitted as well as helping people with prior convictions or who have been accused of a crime?
4. What funding issues arise more generally from the work of third-sector and voluntary groups who operate in the civil and criminal justice systems, especially in terms of preventative spend?

It is often the small charities that are best placed to meet the demands of complex needs and there appears to be a lack of recognition of the challenges smaller charities face in their capacity and resources to compete for funding.

I would like the Scottish Government to consider commissioning a process both at national and local level to give smaller charities an opportunity to compete for funding to support core costs towards effective delivery and create the opportunity to grow and expand.