

EMAIL FROM THE PRESIDING OFFICER TO CLARE HAUGHEY MSP

Dear Clare

Thank you for your email.

I recognise that the process as set out in the Code of Conduct defines a role for the SPCB and also that the letter you have received from James Dornan has taken a different route. I agree that it is appropriate for your Committee to consider the matter and therefore, on behalf of the SPCB, I formally refer the complaint to the SPPA Committee.

Turning to other matters raised, the Parliament has strived to provide a safe, secure and welcoming environment for all who work here. All MSPs, MSP staff and parliamentary staff have access to the telephone counselling service, and subsequent face to face counselling where needed, which is provided by an external organisation. Where specialist emotional support is needed, we access this via our Occupational Health provider or directly with specialist providers. In terms of bringing about behavioural change, we also have 1 to 1 coaching arrangements accessible to us. We have made a specific offer to provide support to any staff who may have been affected by the case currently before the Committee. All of this is on a strictly confidential basis.

The Committee will be aware of the recent confidential survey undertaken on the extent to which sexual harassment and sexist behaviour is present in Holyrood and in MSPs local offices, which the Parliament commissioned in late 2017 following media reports of sexual harassment at Holyrood. The survey, which was conducted by the independent market research company Progressive, was completed by over 1000 people including MSPs, their staff and Scottish Parliament staff.

A Working Group has been established to identify the key strands of work it will take forward to address the issues raised by the report. This includes a comprehensive programme of education and development for those working within the Parliament and within Regional and Constituency offices. Prevention of the behaviours highlighted in the survey is paramount and we will ensure that the education and development programme gives everyone an understanding of our zero tolerance approach and will seek to address both unacceptable behaviour and lack of confidence in reporting. There will be specific training for those who manage people. This will include early intervention and prevention techniques and ensure managers are equipped to respond appropriately to those who experience sexual harassment. We also recognise the importance of improving the reporting procedures and that these are accessible, transparent, fair and confidential and take into account your Committee's on-going review of the Code of Conduct for Members

We are seeking views and input from those who have experienced such behaviour to supplement the results of the survey. We will use the information gathered to inform the type of support and training that will be offered to staff in the future, as well as using that information to shape support for those who require it now.

I will, of course, keep your committee updated with progress made.

I should lastly make it clear that we all have a duty to protect staff who work in Holyrood and that includes MSPs confronting and reporting unacceptable behaviour at the earliest opportunity. In turn, this affords the Parliament the best opportunity to quickly address matters that are within its gift.

Yours sincerely

Ken

Rt Hon Ken Macintosh MSP
Presiding Officer