

THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT
CROSS PARTY GROUP ON ADULT SURVIVORS
OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE

Meeting Minutes, 19 November 2014

PRESENT

Margaret Mitchell MSP; Elaine Smith MSP; Felicity Hollands, Scottish Parliament; Sarah Nelson, University of Edinburgh; Javita Narang, University of Edinburgh; Dawn Fyfe, SAY Women; Dr R. Eric Swanepoel, Writer & Publisher; Andrew Campbell, Bravemouth; Sandra Brown, Moira Anderson Foundation; Anke Kossurok, University of Edinburgh; Anne MacDonald, SurvivorScotland Team, Scottish Government; Lisa Gamble, Barnardo's; Julie Fisher, Barnardo's; Marnie Collin, KASP; Colin Howard, HarrisHoward Psychology Practice; Sue Hampson, Safe To Say; Janine Rennie, Open Secret; Romany Purvis; Nick Hobbs, SCRA; M. Mowat; Catriona Dalrymple, Head of Policy, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service; Malcolm Graham, Assistant Chief Constable, Police Scotland

APOLOGIES

Martin Henry, Stop it Now; Sharon Guest, Barnardo's; Dr. Sandra Ferguson, Royal Edinburgh Hospital; Anela Anwar, Roshni; David Moore, Circle; Traci Kirkland, Open Secret; Valerie Barr, Cornerstone; Jen Stewart, RASAC P&K

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Andrew Campbell suggested a correction to his statement. He will rephrase his statement and share with the CPG Secretary. Besides this change, overall the minutes of the last meeting (August 2014) were agreed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

None

UPDATE: REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD ABUSE

Anne MacDonald provided a brief overview of the National Strategy including its history, background, formulation and progress since it has been developed. A written note on the same was circulated. She shared the development of the National Confidential Forum following the Irish Model.

She also raised the concern over the Public Inquiry into historical abuse. She indicated that it was a matter of concern that no one in the Strategy team has experience of working with the survivors and its implications were discussed. It was agreed that Margaret as the Convenor, would write to the Cabinet Secretary Angela Constance to share the concerns of the CPG over such a public inquiry.

PRESENTATION: Ms Catriona Dalrymple, Head of Policy, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)

Fulfilling the CPG's commitment as per the action plan agreed upon in January 2014, Ms Catriona Dalrymple was invited to this month's CPG meeting. Ms Dalrymple eloquently explained the Prosecutor's approach to child sexual abuse cases, focussing on the following key aspects:

- Composition and role of COPFS, explaining that it is the sole prosecuting authority. COPFS receives majority of the cases from the Police Scotland.
- Volume of cases that the prosecutor deals with, indicating that approximately 80% of their High Court trials and almost 3/4 of their High Court work are now around sexual offences. In 2012-13, around 39% of all cases indicted to the High Court were sexual offenses and in 2013-14, around 52% of new petitions that became High Court cases were sexual offences.
- All COPFS staff specialize in the investigation of sexual offences. They complete a mandatory intensive training course focussing on various aspects such as the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009, Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005, myths and misconceptions, human trafficking, survivors of sexual abuse, children as witnesses, drafting reports etc. Ms Dalrymple appreciated significant inputs received from the third sector for the specialised approach taken.

- A National Sexual Crimes Unit was established in 2009 to ensure all serious sexual offence cases are prepared according to the highest possible standards, in an appropriate and timely manner.
 - Investigation procedure and steps taken when the police reports a case and the options available to the Prosecutor were explained. The process of a case depends on the available evidence. Hence it is ensured that there is sufficient available evidence of the crime that has been committed.
 - Challenges faced in investigating sexual crimes were shared highlighting that private nature of sexual crime makes such cases challenging. Similarly, historical allegations are particularly challenging.
 - All sexual offence cases are reported to Victim Information and Advise (VIA) at the earliest opportunity. Meetings with the victims are held to share information and provide assistance as required.
 - Victim strategy with regard to the High Court cases was shared.
 - Finally recent developments were explained such as the setting up of the Independent Scrutiny Panel for domestic and sexual offence cases, improved training involving quality assurance by third sector, and gradual extension of the moorov doctrine through the appeal court. The Crown will take the decisions to argue the cases to extend the law of moorov.
- PRESENTATION: Mr Malcolm Graham, Assistant Chief Constable, Police Scotland

Mr Graham shared the following key aspects with the CPG members:

- In 2013, structural changes have been made in Police Scotland. Some of the changes include clear leadership in divisions; clear delegation of responsibilities and accountability; bringing a specialist into the local team especially in investigating cases related to child protection and adult protection issues. A very senior position of a detective inspector has been recently created.
- Different task forces and units have been set up such as the National Rape Task Force, Human Trafficking Unit, and creation of the Child Abuse Investigation Unit is in the process.
- Assessment and investigation procedures were explained. One officer assigned to the victim for the duration of the investigation.
- A pilot initiative that is in the process of being developed - a helpline service with Rape Crisis Scotland to inform victims what police services will do to deal with a victim's case.
- Reporting of cases has been increased, which is being viewed as a positive sign that police has good structure and procedure in place. 1/4th of reported abuse cases are related to child abuse.
- While it was shared that reporting of cases has increased, it was also stated that only 1 in 5 cases of abuse are reported, with further decline in numbers of child abuse cases. Often victims contact the Rape Crisis after more than a year of the offense being committed without having contacted the police at all. Barriers for victims to come forward with their cases were discussed.
- Finally, he shared he assured the members of his commitment to work on this issue.

The discussion after the presentation centered on the following key aspects:

- Child Abuse Investigation Unit: It was further explained by Mr. Graham that it would be locally deployed but centrally led. Local arrangements would be ensured for child abuse investigations and for child protection. Additional police officers would be employed in a specialist unit working on child protection however it takes time to build capacity. The plan is to set up first at the central area followed by Inverness and Aberdeen (East) and then the West - with recognition of different needs in different areas of the country.
- Issues of organized abuse and how the information about it is stored: Both the speakers reinforced that the information is stored and recorded. Mr. Graham further clarified that there is a system of storing and recording this information, however past evidence is not consistently recorded (not all of it is recorded and may be recorded in different ways) and it is difficult to make historical links.
- How is the victim who has dissociated from the abusive event handled? Can dissociative memories be treated as evidence and is there a trauma specialist/psychologist available? Both the speakers confirmed that adult protection would be in place for dissociating/vulnerable victims. It was further explained that the staff is not experienced to deal with complex cases hence link with specialists is established. It was also agreed that a trauma psychologist may need to be available earlier than is currently the case.

REPORT FROM THE TREASURER

The treasurer Marnie Collin provided an update on the financial report and funds available. There was a discussion on how the available funds could be utilised and there was an agreement on saving the funds for now until needed for later use. Marnie reminded the members to pay the membership fees reiterating that it was coming in slowly.

AOCB

- Two new members are interested in joining the CPG.
- Margaret raised a confidentiality concern: a non-member had used the CPG group email to circulate non-CPG related information. This matter would be discussed further at the next CPG meeting.
- Sandra Brown shared that some events are being planned to celebrate Matthew McVarish's homecoming and the information would be shared with the group in due course.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

January 28 at 5:30 pm