

CPG Commercial Sexual Exploitation Meeting

Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 24th September 2019

5.30-7.30

Minutes

Apologies

Hannah Sanderson	Church of Scotland
Marlyn Glen	Individual
Bella Orpen	Individual
Jeremy Balfour	MSP
Billie Wealleans	WEP & Soroptimist International
Erika Grant	Project Turnkey
Stuart Weir	Care
Janet Warren	Graduate Women Scotland
Ann Hayne	NHS Lanarkshire
Steve Rawbone	Volunteer for SOHTIS
Aileen Fleming	Jubilee House
Ruth McGuire	MSP Co-Convener

Attendance

Siobhan Jess	Nordic Model Now
Linda Thompson	Women's Support Project -Encompass Network
Alison Scott	NHS Lothian
Lisa Gallacher	University of Edinburgh
John Mason	MSP
Shairi Bowles	Scottish Women's Convention
Pam Cairns	Free to Live Trust and Soroptimist International Scotland North
Janice Wilson	Soroptimist International Scotland North
Beverly Johnston	Salvation Army
Kate Brown	COSLA

Pam Hunter	Say Women
Teresa Little	Individual
Roseann Cameron	Routes Out
Kirsti Hay	Glasgow VAWP/GCC
Chris Hall	Not For Sale in Scotland
Ann Hall	Not For Sale in Scotland
Susan Moffat	Not For Sale in Scotland
Rhoda Grant	MSP Co-Convener
Joan McAlpine	MSP
Kate Fry	Rhoda Grant's office
Jacci Stoye	Secretariat

Minutes

Apologies

Apologies were read out as listed above.

Agreeing the Minutes of the previous meeting

Rhoda opened the meeting and asked if the group could approve the Minutes of the previous meeting (4/6/19). They were unanimously approved.

Rhoda welcomed our speaker DCI Rory Hamilton.

DCI Rory Hamilton, National Rape Task Force & Human Trafficking Unit

DCI Rory Hamilton told us that he is based in Gartosh and Dundee, and previously had had responsibility for prostitution, but he has since moved into the Human Trafficking Unit and is currently working in this area. He works around policy and procedures with a variety of partners in order to identify perpetrators and to disrupt their activity. They meet quarterly with invited partners such as TARA, Migrant help, SPS, Border Force; the police cannot fight human trafficking alone.

He says it is important to support survivors. One of the biggest challenges that the police face is the reluctance of people to speak to them. They have partners in the EU (which will be disrupted by Brexit) and have intelligence that comes in from all over the world. There is an influx of women who come in from Romania and the police have operational meetings with colleagues there to discuss the best way to tackle the criminal gangs.

There is a problem winning the trust of victims, and not everyone in Romania trusts the police. It is always difficult to get a victim to stand in court to testify. DCI Hamilton believes

that the priority first and foremost is to rescue exploited women. They are trying to find ways to charge organised criminal gangs without the testimony of victims and there has been some success with this in England. It is something they are trying to explore through other avenues such as finances, adverts, renting properties etc. There are also initiatives to help keep women safe by using Ugly Mugs and an app called Client Eye. The prostitution community haven't always had a good relationship with the police and the police are trying to change that.

Another issue with organised crime groups is to look at the premises used as brothels. There was a case where someone had a lot of properties that were being used as brothels; it's important to raise awareness of this with landlords. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is also helpful; victims who are over 18 have a choice to be referred, but minors do not and are always entered. More people are willing to tell their story than previously, but it is still not as good as it could be. Human trafficking is in every single authority across the whole of Scotland. It is difficult to say to what extent this is, as it is still a hidden crime. Whilst on street prostitution still exists -off street is more prevalent.

In Scotland, for some unexplained reason, the majority of human trafficking victims come from Vietnam (about a third). This includes trafficking for a variety of purposes, such as nail bars and growing cannabis. DCI Hamilton went on a fact-finding mission to Hanoi trying to identify trafficking routes. He also wanted to get a secondment of Vietnamese police officers to come to Scotland, as had happened with the Romanian police officers. This situation is also complicated by the fact that there are very few interpreters in Scotland. He met with the Vietnamese government who were very open to the suggestion of working together to tackle human trafficking from both countries.

There are human trafficking champions in every Police Scotland region across Scotland. They work with TARA and Migrant Help to support victims and ask them to tell their story. He has never undertaken a human trafficking media campaign but there is a rape campaign currently running. He will be speaking to the judiciary so that Sheriffs can be more aware about what the Police face.

The trip to Sweden was interesting (the report by the secretariat of this CPG follows in the Minutes), especially the account by the police. There are challenges, particularly as the Swedish Police can work differently with the prosecution service.

Question from Teresa Little: Why are you not targeting the pimps who are selling the women?

DCI Hamilton: Our main priority is to ensure the safety of the women.

Question from Linda Thompson: Legislation targets the women, not the men. Not many men are charged for kerb crawling or running a brothel.

DCI Hamilton: The problem is demand; there needs to be more public awareness.

Linda Thompson: We still have saunas operating openly. Why can't we do anything about that?

DCI Hamilton: There is a difficulty with legislation over licensing.

Roseanne Cameron: The focus should be on demand, not criminalising the women.

Jacci Stoye gave feedback about the sub-group's campaign.

Stuart had given his apologies for not being able to attend the meeting. The campaign website was virtually complete and ready to launch, but unfortunately, CARE were not now in a position to fund the campaign any further, nor to support a spokesperson financially.

Kirsti Hay presenting on the licensing of sexual entertainment venues.

This presentation was postponed due to time constraints so that the presentation concerning the trip to Sweden could be heard.

Jacci Stoye gave feedback from the parliamentary fact-finding trip to Sweden

The presentation is summarised as follows:

My overall impression from the two days of presentations, discussions and listening intently to the key players in this battle was their passion and enthusiasm for The Sex Purchase Act, and their total commitment to implementing it. They were all on board, not one of them had any doubt about its effectiveness. The only discussions were about implementation and appropriate punishments, but never about the principle of criminalising the buyers and perceiving the sellers as victims of exploitation and abuse. I believe that the fundamental reason for this was because it works!

In the beginning, they had tentatively come to it, some hoping it would work with fingers crossed and some, like Anna and Josefine from Talita and DI Häggström, with great apprehension, but now after twenty years of training, implementation and evaluation, they can see an amazing difference both in the numbers of women caught up in the sex trade and in the change of attitude of the Swedish people to sex buying *per se*. We have seen how effective this law is without filling the courts with hordes of otherwise law-abiding men and how a comparatively light punishment can be such a successful deterrent. Not only that, but the win win continues with the loss of gang culture because the traffickers have gone elsewhere and the money saved from the cost of prostitution to society in terms of health care, police and judiciary services, drug offences, homelessness, local authority care of children and so forth.¹ Not only does the Sex Purchase Act prevent trafficking, grooming, abuse and exploitation of vulnerable people, it also deters organised criminality of all kinds, is comparatively cheap to implement and creates a huge saving to the public purse. I think it would be appropriate to finish with the former Chancellor of Justice's closing quotation from *Les Misérables*, written by Victor Hugo nearly 160 years ago.

'We say that slavery has vanished from European civilisation, but this is not true. Slavery still exists, but now it applies only to women and its name is prostitution'.

Following the presentation, members asked for a written copy. This was duly undertaken and emailed out to every member.

Anna Zobnina's suggestion regarding the poster display, *Rise Up Against Oppression* to be exhibited in the parliament foyer.

Anna was unable to attend and Jacci put her suggestion to the group. It was met with great approval and Jacci was asked to relate this to Anna and request that she submit the Exhibition form to the parliament (via Rhoda) with a suggested date of March 2020.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is the AGM and it will take place on 19th November, Committee Room Q1.03, at 5.30pm at the Scottish Parliament.

ⁱ After the five murders in Ipswich, a successful, multi-disciplinary Swedish approach had been taken in Ipswich to support young women exiting from prostitution. The University of East Anglia (UEA) was commissioned to conduct an independent evaluation and they assessed it as successful and cost effective. In fact, they said that every pound spent on the strategy saved the public purse two pounds, because of lower criminal justice and social support costs. <https://nordicmodelnow.org/2017/11/14/how-a-nordic-model-approach-to-tackling-prostitution-was-implemented-in-ipswich/>