

Cross party Group on Men's Violence Against Women and Children

Meeting held on Wednesday 14th December 2011, 5.30pm
Committee Room 4, Scottish Parliament

1. Present

Christina McKelvie MSP (chair), Malcolm Chisholm MSP, Claudia Beamish MSP, Claire Adamson MSP

Lily Greenan (Scottish Women's Aid) (minutes), Jenny Kemp (Zero Tolerance), Ann Hayne (EVA Services), Sandy Brindley (Rape Crisis Scotland), Elaine Wishart (Unite, CEC), Mhairi McGowan (ASSIST), Graham Goulden (VRU), Janet Fenton (WILPF), Steven Madill, Mridul Wadhwa (Shakti), Dave Smith (researcher)

2. Apologies

Jamie McGrigor MSP, Michele Corcoran (Edinburgh WA), Margaret Brown, Anne Meikle, Drew Smith MSP, Laurie Matthew, Janette de Haan, Scottish Women's Convention, Francine Orr, Jan Swan, Anne Salter, Christine Gray, Tine McGeever, Marsha Scott, Nick Croft, Stewart Maxwell MSP, Jeanette Myles, Lisa Reynolds, Kathie Norrie, Vicki Kerr, Duncan Gourlay.

3. Election of Office Bearers

Christina McKelvie and Malcolm Chisholm were elected as co-convenors; Jamie McGrigor and Claudia Beamish were elected as vice convenors; Lily Greenan was approved as minute secretary. Sandy Brindley offered to share minute taking/secretariat for the group with SWA and this was agreed.

4. Presentation

"Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence"

Lily Greenan provided a short, informal presentation about the Convention, which was passed by the Council of Europe in April 2011 and awaits ratification by a minimum of 10 states before it can come into force. Eight of those states must be member states of the Council of Europe. More information on the Convention is available at

http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/convention-violence/default_EN.asp?

The UK government has not ratified the convention. Speaking for the Government in a House of Lords debate in November, Baroness Verma indicated that

"legislative reform in various complex policy areas will be necessary if the UK is to sign and ratify the convention" and that work was ongoing "to identify obstacles in the way of signature and ratification so that they can be addressed". No timescale for this work was indicated.

Discussion at the meeting focussed on what actions might be taken. A letter to Fiona Hyslop asking that she bring it up at the Joint Ministerial Committee was suggested (*by Cmck or by LG?*). LG agreed to draft a sample letter for circulation to the CPG, which would call on the UK Government to ratify.

Janet Fenton asked whether a connection could be made between this and Security Council resolution 1325, which addresses the impact of war and conflict on women, children and young people.

Mhairi McGowan suggested it might be useful to provide case studies. Steven Madill noted that internet pressure groups can be useful.

All deemed to be constructive suggestions.

Future meetings

Dates are set and the Committee Room is booked until next Summer recess:

Wednesday 22nd February, 5.30 to 7pm
Wednesday 25th April, 5.30 to 7pm
Wednesday 27th June, 5.30 to 7pm

Themes for future meetings were discussed and the following agreed:

- An invitation to the Justice Secretary to attend the group to discuss pending legislation re victims and witnesses, the Carloway Review etc.
- Employer's responsibilities – Zero Tolerance have launched a pack called PACT on VAW
- Rhoda Grant's Member's Bill re criminalising demand for prostitution
- Bystander work – the VRU pilot on Mentors in Violence Prevention and the Get Savi project being run by SWA/White Ribbon/ZT/RCS were mentioned for possible presentations.

The meeting concluded with information sharing:

- Lanarkshire – MARAC has been running for a while, and a GIRFEC screening group; these are to merge and this is seen as positive.
- Relationship Scotland are piloting a small project supporting women who experienced DA
- Mhairi identified a problem with accused being remanded, contacting women from jail, and nothing able to be done about it because special bail conditions apply (but he's no longer on bail). She will draft something and send it to Christina and Malcolm who will write to the Justice Secretary.
- Steven reported that Working with Men project are beginning to get men calling who want to do something about their own behaviour which is encouraging. WWM are now monitoring to see the level of demand outside Edinburgh.
- ZT launched their employer's scheme last week.
- VRU launched their DA campaign on 1st December which has had great response; they will also be looking at how to get people to think about their drinking in relation to football fixtures.
- CEC implemented a DA policy in February 2011 and will run an article and poster campaign over Christmas.
- Rape Crisis Scotland reported that in 2010-11 rape prosecutions and convictions dropped dramatically and this is attributed in part to 'no-comment' interviews increasing post-Cadder decision. Sandy participated in STV Scotland Tonight debate on corroboration.
- WILPF are looking at institutionalised violence against women and how that impacts on women's lives.
- Shakti have had more professionals in touch about forced marriage since the launch of the Act and the media coverage of it. They will be doing roadshows next summer on the impact of DA on children and young people and the links with honour based violence.
- Edinburgh Women's Aid have started taking referrals in preparation for the launch of the Edinburgh domestic court. The court will sit fortnightly. Sheriff Mackie and Sheriff McIvor are involved.

The meeting closed at 7pm.