

Proposed Action Towards Implementation of Scotland's Strategic Approach to Challenging and Deterring Men's Demand for Prostitution and Supporting the Recovery and Sustainable Exit of Those Involved in Prostitution

Summary and Recommendations

This paper updates Members on the development activity taken to date by the Scottish Government towards implementing its strategy to address men's demand for prostitution and support individuals involved in prostitution, as outlined in the February 2024 [publication](#).

Members are invited to review the Scottish Government's proposed approach, to advise on any necessary enhancements to enhance local authorities' ability to participate in integrating policy principles into local policies and services, and to facilitate the development and embedding of provision of coordinated support pathways for women involved in forms of commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) in and across local areas. The Board is invited to approve:

Pending Members views and directions, that the Board

- i. welcomes the Scottish Government officials' presentation and the opportunity for discussion on the proposed pilot implementation of the model with Members on April 19 and with COSLA officers on April 30, 2024
- ii. confirms Members support for the model's strategic aims and principles, aligning with COSLA's commitment to address CSE, including prostitution as a form of violence against women
- iii. confirms COSLA membership in the Scottish Government's Multi-Agency Group on CSE, pending any requested changes to the appended Draft Terms of Reference
- iv. direct officers to
 - engage with Scottish Government officials to clarify expectations regarding the role and activities of local authorities, services, and strategic local partnerships in implementing and delivering the model's elements, including announced and imminent pilot activity and potential future rollout of activity.
 - identify any potential barriers to success requiring mitigation through consultation with local stakeholders including any additional resource and capacity implications for local authority systems, (e.g. Violence Against Women Partnerships in their role, as mandated by Equally Safe) and local services.

References

Previous reports on the Scottish Government's strategy to address men's demand for prostitution and support individuals involved in prostitution:

- Short Term COSLA Working Group on Commercial Sexual Exploitation - CWB Board Item 5.2; May 2021
- CWB Board Item 3.2; December 2022 [Framework for Scotland to Challenge men's demand for prostitution – proposed draft underpinning principles](#)

Proposed Action Towards Implementation of Scotland's Strategic Approach to Challenging and Deterring Men's Demand for Prostitution and Supporting the Recovery and Sustainable Exit of Those Involved in Prostitution

Purpose

1. This paper updates Members on the development activity taken by the Scottish Government towards implementing its strategy to address men's demand for prostitution and support individuals involved in prostitution, as outlined in the February 2024 [publication](#).

Current COSLA Position

2. As part of COSLA's joint ownership of the Equally Safe Strategy with the Scottish Government, it is recognised that all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) are connected and rooted in the same causal factors, primarily enduring gender inequality. The definition of VAWG includes CSE (Commercial Sexual Exploitation). This includes but is not limited to prostitution.
3. In addition, at the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic COSLA's Leaders identified women engaged in commercial sexual exploitation as a particularly vulnerable group. A multi-agency expert short-term working group was convened, comprising a broad range of stakeholders, including the Violence Against Women Partnerships (VAWPs), expert stakeholders from across the wider system, frontline organisations working with women engaged in CSE and those supporting women who have been trafficked for sex.
4. There was a strong consensus, robustly informed by women with lived experience of CSE, that women want gender competent, VAWG and trauma informed, joined up, non-stigmatising and accessible services. Specialist VAWG, mental health, employability, drug and alcohol addictions and housing services need to be resourced to work together to build sustainable and trusted models of local provision, through which stronger relationships between women and services can be nurtured and developed. It was also recommended that models of support require to be co-ordinated through Multi Agency VAWG Partnerships in their mandated role as the key engine drivers of local Equally Safe implementation across Scotland.
5. As a priority COSLA's stakeholders, including those organisations working to promote the views of women engaged in CSE and prostitution, identified that action was required to implement a P(plan) D(do) S(study) A(act) 'test of change' programme in and across local areas. VAWPs, if additional resourcing could be offered to support this work, were identified as key to the co-ordination required to drive forward action and learning.
6. The recommendations from this group were further informed through consultation with a broad range of Scotland's Elected Members and were considered by Leaders and the Community Wellbeing Board. The recommendations were shared by COSLA Community Wellbeing Spokesperson with the then Minister for Community Safety.
7. Following the Minister's announcement of the intention to develop a National Framework for Scotland to tackle Men's Demand for Prostitution, the recommendations were considered by Scottish Government officials and other stakeholders involved in early design development.
8. In support of the Scottish Government's ongoing design developments, but while also taking account of the increasing economic and capacity challenges facing local authorities, Members offered 'in principle' approval of the Scottish Government's [the national Strategy's underpinning principles](#), pending and depending on any potential, associated implications for Local Government

being identified as the design of the model's elements and planning for implementation progressed. The principles were published in December 2022.

What is changing?

9. [Prostitution - challenging and deterring men's demand: strategic approach](#) was published by the Scottish Government in early February 2024. This included the announcement that 'the collective approach, working with stakeholders across the wider public and third sector, to challenge and deter men's demand for prostitution and support those with experience of it' would be piloted in the summer 2024, in a phased approach, replicating the [support pathway model](#) described in the strategy. The intention of the pilots is outlined as being: *"that the local authority services in each area have a clear and managed pathway to accessing specialist support and that specialist support organisations have access to the relevant local authority contacts."*
10. The publication clarifies that the 'improved support pathway' aims to:
 - Raise awareness of CSE across Scotland
 - Ensure that the policy principles and the aims of this Strategy are applied in terms of relevant service design and delivery. The policy principles will inform a service agreement and set out the role of mainstream and specialist services within the pathway.
 - Share knowledge and good practice across all relevant partners, feeding into the new multi-agency group on CSE, which will help implement the Strategy and consider policy related to wider areas of CSE.
 - Help to ensure more timely support for women with experience of CSE, with a clearer route to the support needed.
 - Provide data/ insights on the support needed across Scotland- which will help inform future policy development- with the aim of continuing to improve support for women with experience of CSE.
11. To support the roll out [of local pilots of the model](#) in the SG's identified pilot areas (and the announced national rollout thereafter) the Scottish Government proposes that specialist organisations supporting women affected by CSE will be brought together within a National Hub for Specialist CSE support services. This will be overseen by a Scottish Government funded co-ordinator, with the aim of helping organisations share resources and good practice. It is intended that the co-ordinator will connect these services to the relevant local authority contacts when needed and through this strengthen the links between specialist and mainstream services locally and nationally.
12. In respect to all forms of VAWG, such co-ordination locally is mandated by Equally Safe to sit under the remit of Violence Against Women and Girls Partnerships. The additional impacts on capacity and resources required for the VAWPS engagement or for services additional resourcing need to re-design approaches to delivery to deliver co-ordinated and informed responses to women engaged in CSE with a range of complex needs, has not be costed or considered in the published plans or outlined investment commitment.

National Multi-Agency Group on CSE

13. In addition, a new multi-agency group on CSE has been established, to bring together key partners to help implement this Strategy and to consider the work to tackle wider forms of CSE. The group will aim to discuss future policy development and act as a forum for knowledge exchange. COSLA's representation has been invited as has representation from the National VAWP Network. The Proposed (Draft) Terms of Reference are appended. The group's work will be driven by the Equally Safe Strategy and the clear definition contained therein that commercial sexual exploitation is activity which includes prostitution, lap dancing, stripping, pornography, and trafficking. The work of the group will also align with the Scottish Government's Vision for Justice in Scotland.
14. Representation on the group will include stakeholders from the public and third sector- including practitioners working directly with adults with experience of CSE. A list of the membership is accessible [online](#)

Local Perspectives

15. Following the Scottish Government announcement both COSLA and the Violence Against Women Partnership Lead Officers in the identified 10 local authority areas contained in the pilot areas (Edinburgh and Borders, Highland, Perth & Kinross, Aberdeen, and Dundee and Glasgow and the Ayrshires) have sought further information and clarity from Scottish Government officials on the potential impacts on and considerations given to the role of local authorities and the VAWPS in supporting this approach.
16. Local concerns have been raised that there is a significant challenge in Scottish Government relying on existing resources and capacity in their introduction of additional tasks into local areas that will fall under the VAWPs remit. Engagement with and agreement from local reporting structures has been highlighted as key to local planning and governance, but, as yet this has not taken place. It has also been identified that the timescales set are ambitious and do not recognise the complexities inherent in re-designing approaches required from a broad range of services. These need to be managed in the current workloads and capacity within VAW&G Teams and more broadly across key and relevant services.

Proposed COSLA Position


17. Pending Members views and directions, that the Board
 - i. welcomes the Scottish Government officials' presentation and the opportunity for discussion on the proposed pilot implementation of the model with Members on April 19 and with COSLA officers on April 30, 2024
 - ii. confirms Members support for the model's strategic aims and principles, aligning with COSLA's commitment to address CSE, including prostitution as a form of violence against women
 - iii. confirms COSLA membership in the Scottish Government's Multi-Agency Group on CSE, pending any requested changes to the appended Draft Terms of Reference
 - iv. direct officers to
 - engage with Scottish Government officials to clarify expectations regarding the role and activities of local authorities, services, and strategic local partnerships in implementing and delivering the model's elements, including announced and imminent pilot activity and potential future rollout of activity.
 - identify any potential barriers to success requiring mitigation through consultation with local stakeholders including any additional resource and capacity implications for local authority systems, (e.g. VAWPs in their role, as mandated by Equally Safe) and local services.

Next Steps

18. Pending Members directions officers will
 - Collaborate with COSLA Policy leads, Scottish Government officials, VAWPs, and relevant specialist and mainstream services to consider the concerns raised and to identify pilot implementation opportunities and barriers.
 - Scope additional support that LA's and VAWPs in the identified areas require to address these opportunities and barriers, including the facilitation of local planning, ensuring local governance, and services capacity for engagement in these developments towards the establishment of new coordinated service delivery approaches for women affected by CSE.
 - Scope the additional activities and resources required to capture and share local learning from the pilot activity to inform local improvements, and future rollouts toward successful strategy implementation and delivery in local areas.
 - Ensure that Members receive regular reports of progress

April 2024

Contribution to COSLA Priory Areas and the Verity House Agreement:

<p>COSLA Plan 22-27</p> 	<p>Priority Area's</p> <p>Strengthen Local Democracy</p> <p>Secure Sustainable Funding</p> <p>Improve the Wellbeing of Individuals, Families and Communities</p> <p>Enhance Education and Support for our Children and Young People</p> <p>Deliver a Just Transition to a Net Zero Economy</p> <p>Support the Most Vulnerable in our Communities</p>	<p></p> <p></p> <p>√</p> <p>√</p> <p>√</p> <p></p> <p>√</p>
<p>Verity House Agreement</p>	<p>Shared Priorities</p> <p>Tackling Poverty</p> <p>Just transition to net zero</p> <p>Sustainable Public Services</p>	<p></p> <p>√</p> <p></p> <p>√</p>

Appendix

[DRAFT] Terms of Reference - Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Multi-Agency Group

Purpose of the Group

In recognition of the increasing activity to tackle instances of commercial sexual exploitation and as part of the work delivering Equally Safe, the Scottish Government has established a stakeholder forum to bring together key partners to discuss policy and developments, and the opportunity to take a more collaborative approach where circumstances allow.

The group's work will be driven by the Equally Safe Strategy and the clear definition contained therein that commercial sexual exploitation is activity which includes prostitution, lap dancing, stripping, pornography, and trafficking. The work of the group will also align with the Scottish Government's Vision for Justice in Scotland.

The Group forms a key part of our [strategic approach](#) to challenging and deterring men's demand for prostitution and supporting the recovery and sustainable exit of those involved in prostitution, published in February 2024.

The Group will:

- help support the Strategy's implementation and inform our wider policy approach to tackling all forms of commercial sexual exploitation,
- inform the longer-term monitoring, review of this Strategy, and ensure a broader recognition of the interconnected policy areas and the need for consistency in language and approach,
- discuss future policy development and act as a forum for knowledge exchange- co-ordinating the range of developments, strategies, and consultations to ensure compatibility with the aims of Equally Safe and the Justice Vision

We envisage the group would be the place where we outline ongoing policy work and obtain feedback and conversely for stakeholders to discuss the related work they are progressing and/or planning to progress.

Key areas of early discussion will include:

- Identifying and tackling instances of online CSE, including any planned research activity
- Considering opportunities to collaborate on awareness raising on CSE – in terms of practitioner learning and societal education and awareness.
- Supporting the implementation of the Framework to challenge men's demand for prostitution- including informing the development of the new support pathway pilot
- Information and intelligence sharing
- Considering how Equally Safe informs policy and development in addressing CSE, across SG and the public sector.
- The Human Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy refresh