

Without fear or favour: a voice for rape survivors in the criminal justice system?

A FREE joint Rape Crisis Scotland and Equality & Human Rights Commission conference considering independent legal representation for sexual offence complainers.

Friday 26 March 2010

Radisson Blu Hotel
301 Argyle Street
Glasgow G2 8DL

**RAPE
CRISIS
SCOTLAND**



**Equality and
Human Rights
Commission**

Scotland



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The past decade has seen significant concern about the ability of the Scottish criminal justice system to provide justice to rape survivors. The conviction rate for rape continues to be particularly low in Scotland, with the most recent figures suggesting only 3.7% of rapes reported to the police result in a conviction. Rape survivors continue to speak of harrowing ordeals when giving evidence in court.

The conference – organised by Rape Crisis Scotland and the Equality & Human Rights Commission Scotland – provides a timely opportunity to consider whether a new and radical approach is required to improve access to justice following rape.

Independent legal representation is a routine entitlement for victims in sexual offence cases in Europe. Currently in Scotland complainers of sexual offences do not have any direct legal representation – cases are prosecuted by the Crown in the public interest. This conference will consider whether or not having access to legal representation would make a difference to how rape survivors experience the Scottish criminal justice system.

The conference will:

- Hear from speakers from Canada and Ireland about how independent legal representation works in their countries
- Consider recent developments in Scotland in how sexual offences are prosecuted – including the establishment of a dedicated National Sexual Crimes Unit – and what impact these changes might make
- Debate whether or not there is a need for independent legal representation in Scotland and how this might work.

The Audience

We are keen to encourage the attendance of policy makers, sheriffs and judges, police officers, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal service, solicitors, academics, survivors of sexual offences, staff from rape crisis centres and other support agencies, local authorities, MSPs, statutory and voluntary organisations and individuals who wish their views taken into account.

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Programme

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Morning session chaired by **Angela O'Hagan**, Equality & Human Rights Commission

9.00 – 9.30am Registration and coffee

9.30 – 9.40am Welcome, introduction and housekeeping

9.40 – 10.10am **Setting the Scene**

Fiona Raitt, Professor, University of Dundee

10.10 – 11.10am **The experience in Canada**

Lise Gotell, Associate Professor,

Women's Studies Program, University of Alberta, Canada

11.10 – 11.30am BREAK

11.30am – 12.30pm **The Experience in Ireland**

Kate Mulkerrins, Head of Prosecution Policy Unit,

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Ireland

12.30pm LUNCH

Afternoon session chaired by **Sandy Brindley**, Rape Crisis Scotland

1.30 – 2.15pm **How modern prosecutors can remain independent while supporting victims of sexual crime**

Derek Ogg, Head of the National Sexual Crimes Unit

2.15 – 3.15pm Table discussions

- Key issues from speakers
- What might work in Scotland
- Key questions for panel discussion

3.15 – 3.30pm BREAK

3.30 – 4.30pm Panel discussion

(including feedback from table discussions)

4.30pm CLOSE

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Free Conference Booking Form

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TO BOOK

Please complete the form below and return to:

Julie Scobbie, Rape Crisis Scotland, 46 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 1HG

Email: julie.scobbie@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

For more information or assistance in booking,
please call **0141 331 4180** (voice & minicom)

Please let us know any information that will help us facilitate your participation in the event, including: communications support, publication or event papers in alternative formats, as well as any access or dietary requirements.

www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

Please reserve me a place at the FREE RCS and EHRC Conference

BOOKING DETAILS

Full Name:

Designation:

Organisation:

Address:

Postcode:

Contact person:

Tel:

Email:

Dietary requirements:

Access requirements:

Interpreting requirements: *(language)*

Signing requirements: *(please specify)*