

Notes of Meeting of

Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Racial Equality

held on 21st March 2012

Present:

Bob Doris	MSP (Convener)
Hanzala Malik	MSP (Vice-Convener)
Carol Young	CRER (Secretariat)
Nadja Conrad	CRER
Shona Barcroft	MECOPP
Pat Elsmie	Migrants' Rights Scotland
Hyo Eun Shin	Migrants' Rights Scotland
Lian Selby	Migrants' Rights Scotland
Iain Wallace	Scottish Parliament (office of Bob Doris MSP)
Nazerin Wardrop	STUC / Black Workers' Committee
Meg De Amasi	Stirling Multi-Cultural Partnership
Harriette Campbell	ACWA / WSREC
Gordon Reid	United for Human Rights
Jonathan Ssentamu	Waverley Care African Health Project
Mahmud Al-Gailani	VoX (Guest Speaker)

Apologies:

Jatin Haria	CRER (Secretary)
Chris Oswald	EHRC
Nancy Loucks	Families Outside
Drew Smith	MSP
Jackie Baillie	MSP
Shaben Begum	SIAA
Naseem Anwar	Strathclyde University
Davidson Chademana	UCU / Black Workers Committee
Mohammad Razaq	WSREC
Sandra Deslandes Clarke	Semperscotland
Eleanor McKnight	CEMVO Scotland
Graham Campbell	BEMIS

Welcome

Bob Doris, MSP welcomed everyone to the fourth meeting of the Parliamentary session and apologised that he would be unable to chair the entire meeting due to an unavoidable Parliamentary engagement. Hanzala Malik MSP had kindly agreed to chair a portion of the meeting in his place.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous meeting (25th January 2012) were noted and lodged.

Two matters arising were raised, both in relation to equalities training for MSPs and their staff:

- Bob Doris MSP has written to all Parliamentary Group leaders to ask them to draw awareness to the need for equalities training in light of MSPs' responsibilities as employers, and suggesting that MSPs might agree to voluntarily self-report on staff undergoing this type of training
- Hanzala Malik MSP reported that the European External Relations Committee has undertaken equalities training as a group; members agreed that this was commendable and that a letter should be sent to Christina McKelvie MSP on behalf of the CPG to this effect. Members also agreed that a letter should be written to the Chair of the Convenors' Group to recommend this course of action for other committees

After matters arising, Bob Doris MSP handed over the chair to Hanzala Malik MSP.

Guest Speaker: Mahmud Al-Gailani

VoX Voices of Experience mental health service users' project

Mahmud Al-Gailani presented a DVD on mental health stigma and recovery among black and minority ethnic communities in Scotland, drawing on the personal experiences of people with experience of mental health issues including both service users and mental health professionals. The resource was produced by VoX in partnership with GAMH and See Me. Its aim is to raise awareness of specific issues and experiences facing BME individuals who experience mental health problems; the DVD can be used as a resource for both professionals and community groups.

Discussion points following the DVD included the changes which have affected mental health services in recent years including funding cuts – VoX have recently undertaken specific research on this ('Real People, Real Cuts'). Difficulties remain for BME individuals in accessing services which are holistic and not purely medical / drug treatment focussed. Issues were also raised around lack of informed consent for drug treatment, lack of cultural sensitivity or appropriate language support and perceived unsuitability of GPs as a source of support, and poor service user retention rates due to cultural, emotional and physical barriers. Further research is planned to look at availability of Counsellors and Counselling Services specifically meeting the needs of BME individuals. Mahmud Al-Gailani recommended the handbook Mosaics of Meaning to members for further general information on mental health issues within BME communities.

During discussion on this agenda item, Hanzala Malik MSP passed the chair to Iain Wallace.

Following this agenda item, Pat Elsmie raised a short discussion item about impact of Westminster policy / rhetoric on migration, settlement and BME communities on the Scottish race equality context. Members agreed that this would be brought back as an agenda item at a future CPG to identify actions.

Discussion item: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination / CERD

Carol Young lead this discussion item with a brief overview of the United Nations CERD (Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination) assessment of the UK's adherence to the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination which took place in 2011. Points arising during discussion included:

- Concern that no delegates from the Scottish Human Rights Commission were in attendance at the 2011 evidence sessions in Geneva
- "Stop and search" policy in Scotland – anecdotal evidence but few statistics
- Scottish Government funding for projects working with the Roma Community (some previous good research on mental health but actions resulting from recommendations are unknown)
- Educational achievement is improving but not closing the employment gap for BME individuals

- Importance of getting more Scottish organisations involved in CERD monitoring processes in preparation for next assessment in 2014
- Possibility of Scottish independence from 2014 requires forward planning to ensure race equality and human rights are built into the new Scottish political landscape (CPG should aim to work alongside CPG on Human Rights to inform this process)

Other business

A short discussion on the operation of the CPG was held, including clarification on the roles of the Secretariat, Convenor and Parliamentary Members. The importance of commitment from members from both Voluntary and Parliamentary backgrounds to take forward tasks was raised. The group noted that it was disappointing to have so few MSPs in attendance, especially on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and commended the Convenor and Vice Convenors for their consistent involvement with the group. Iain Wallace provided some insight into possible ways for attracting more MSPs, such as members contacting their own constituency MSPs about involvement and arranging specific CPG events which would interest MSPs.

Nazerin Wardrop raised the possibility of a more public profile for the CPG and it was suggested that, in future circumstances, the CPG could consider releasing statements on key race equality issues.

Harriette Campbell lead a discussion on the issue of Sickle Cell Thalassaemia, a disorder disproportionately impacting people from some BME communities. Members agreed that a letter would be sent to the Scottish Government to enquire what progress has been made towards previous recommendations on this.

Actions

- Letter of commendation to be sent to Christina McKelvie MSP
- Letter to be sent to Chair of Convenors' Group re: equalities training
- Letter to be sent to the Scottish Government re: Sickle Cell Thalassaemia

Dates of Future Meetings:

A lunchtime meeting has been arranged for 14th June; it is hoped that the CPG may be joined by guests from the Welsh and Northern Ireland Assemblies to discuss the challenges of promoting race equality in devolved Government.