

**Minutes of Meeting of**  
**Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Racial Equality**

**held on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2014**

**Present:**

Bob Doris	MSP (Convener)
Jackie Baillie	MSP
Alison Johnstone	MSP
Jatin Haria	CRER (Secretary)
Carol Young	CRER
Harriette Campbell	ACWA
Vicki Burns	Show Racism the Red Card
Davidson Chademana	UCU/STUC Black Workers' Committee
Naren Sood	EMCC
Kash Taank	Glasgow Life
Naeem Khalid	Frae Fife
Eleanor McKnight	CEMVO Scotland
Danny Boyle	BEMIS
Nila Joshi	Edinburgh Interfaith Women's Association
Faten Hameed	Roshni
Rebecca Marek	Scottish Youth Parliament
Trishna Singh	Sikh Sanjog
Jock Morris	Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees
Khalida Hussain	Voluntary Action Fund
Chayanis Luxsuwong	CRER Political Shadowing Scheme
Rehana Faqir	CRER Political Shadowing Scheme
Emily Yeow	Individual

Guest speaker: Shona Robison MSP, Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport with responsibility for Equalities, accompanied by Lesley Musa (Scottish Government Equality Unit)

## **Apologies:**

Hanzala Malik	MSP
Patrick Harvie	MSP
Dr. Richard Simpson	MSP
Drew Smith	MSP
Shaben Begum	SIAA
Mohammed Razaq	WSREC
Meg De Amasi	Stirling Multi Cultural Partnership
Mahmud Al-Gailani	VoX (Voices of Experience)
Naseem Anwar	University of Strathclyde
Sandra Deslandes-Clark	SEMPERscotland
Jeannie Felsing	GREC
Nicola Livingston	SCOJeC
Rohini Sharma Joshi	Trust Housing Association
Audrey Coltart	Individual
Mohammed Afzal Chudrey	Individual
Anita Shelton	Individual

## **Welcome**

Convenor Bob Doris MSP welcomed attendees to the meeting.

## **Guest Speaker: Shona Robison MSP, Minister for Commonwealth Games and Equality. 'Equality and the Independence White Paper.'**

Shona Robison MSP provided an overview of how equality has been embedded into the Independence White Paper, with an emphasis on aspects relating to race equality. Some of the key themes from her input included:

- The commitment to a written constitution to enshrine equality and fundamental human rights, which places equality at the heart of the White Paper
- Independence offering the power needed to allow Scotland to shape issues like immigration in a way that suits its economic, demographic and social position; however whatever the outcome, the referendum process creates opportunities for dialogue in terms of Scottish approaches to race equality issues
- Anti-immigration rhetoric in the wider UK is at odds with the more positive political consensus across all political parties in Scotland

The Minister accepted questions and comments from members. Issues explored included:

International students:

The importance of international students as source of revenue for universities and also of specialist skills, e.g. in health services, was raised. It was hoped that Scotland would continue to take a positive approach to attracting students in light of recent concerns that UK policies are discouraging international students.

Making aspirations a reality:

The narrative begun in the White Paper will be further developed in terms of race equality through the forthcoming revision of the Race Equality Statement. This will build on the good work that has already been done. It was noted that Governments in Scottish Parliament since its formation have been dedicated to equality.

Equality law scrutiny and enforcement:

A written constitution ensuring that fundamental rights cannot be devalued would contribute to this. In terms of the current regulatory framework, Government already builds equalities into its work, however independence would create more opportunities to refine the approach. Government would welcome detailed thoughts on this.

Race equality statement:

The Government's last Race Equality Statement came to the end of its timeline in 2011 and has not yet been replaced, however a new Statement will be prepared this year. A discussion around whether a strategy would be of more relevance than a statement developed, and the central concern was that any Statement or Strategy needs to be practical and result in change, ideally going beyond Central Government and enabling joined up, strategic work on race equality across Scotland.

Diversity within minority ethnic and faith communities:

The tendency to sometimes concentrate on specific communities, for example the Muslim community, in Government discourse was raised and the need to recognise both common and differing experiences between Scotland's many minority ethnic communities and faith groups was noted.

### Citizenship:

The approach to citizenship set out in the White Paper was explored. It was established that there a variety of routes and options including dual citizenship are being proposed, but that being born in Scotland (as a standalone criteria) was not currently planned to be an automatic route to Scottish citizenship.

### Representation in employment / monitoring of employment and service use:

A wide variety of discussion was held around diversity in employment and service provision, and the inadequacy of how this is currently being measured and benchmarked in many cases. In terms of positive action towards more equal representation on Boards, the Convenor requested further information from Jackie Baillie MSP and Shona Robison MSP so that the CPG can explore this more fully. Monitoring of service provision and employment was also a key feature of discussion, including specific questions around Glasgow2014 raised by Harriette Campbell; the Minister agreed that if Harriette provided details she could look further into this matter.

Shona Robison MSP and Lesley Musa left the meeting at the end of this item.

### **Discussion: Scottish Government Race Equality Statement**

Emerging plans to renew the Scottish Government's Race Equality Statement were discussed. Initial discussions around the policy development process and the best ways to capture the views of minority ethnic communities and organisations have begun. A statement of intent on the development of the Race Equality Statement will be available in Spring and will help to focus wider consultation. There was some discussion on the nature of the consultation undertaken so far which appeared to be with member and intermediary organisations rather than locally based individual organisations; all groups present expressed a strong desire to be involved in the planned wider consultation.

A briefing on the policy development process, which addresses many of members questions regarding involvement, has been provided to the secretariat by Lesley Musa. This will be circulated subject to agreement from Lesley.

It was agreed that the Convenor will write to the Minister for Commonwealth Games and Equality (Shona Robison MSP) to explore some issues further:

- Updates on progress from the previous Statement
- More information on the consultation process

- What opportunities there will be for parliamentary scrutiny, for example will there be a full debate in parliament
- How the actions required to implement the Statement's goals will be resourced and embedded across Government

Some of the main points of discussion in relation to the Statement were as follows:

- Concerns were raised about a lack of monitoring and evaluation of progress following the previous Statement – this information is needed to inform future development
- It is vital that the new Statement should lead to concrete, measurable positive outcomes on race equality
- Requires involvement from a broad range of communities / individuals within those communities, an understanding of intersectionality and a solid evidence base

### **Legislative programme updates**

Carol Young and Danny Boyle met to discuss the Community Empowerment Bill prior to the deadline for consultation (other member organisations were invited but unable to attend). Members who would like a copy of CRER's response should contact Carol Young.

Jackie Baillie MSP invited member organisations to contact her with any views on the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Bill.

Bob Doris MSP raised issues around the UK Immigration Bill's potential impact in Scotland. Few member organisations are working on this issue; some due to lack of awareness and others due to other workload priorities. BEMIS have written to Alex Neil about the potential health sector implications. Danny Boyle will submit information to the secretariat for circulation to members.

### **Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**

The minutes were checked for accuracy, with no amendments or matters arising.

## **Any Other Business**

Jock Morris updated the group about the Europe wide activities on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, part of a week of action centred around the UN Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21<sup>st</sup> March). A Glasgow march and rally against racism and fascism is being co-ordinated by a group led by UAF Scotland and the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees, with widespread support from others. Over 50 signatories, including politicians, Unions and Third Sector organisations, are supporting the event and members were asked to add their support. The route and timing is to be agreed with Glasgow City Centre in due course. A leaflet with contact details was provided.

The possibility of a race equality audit for Scotland was raised. This had been discussed briefly at a previous meeting. This item will be carried forward to a future meeting subject to clarification of what might be required – Naren Sood agreed to write up an overview for the Convenor's consideration.

## **Dates and topics of future meetings**

The remaining meeting dates for 2014 are:

Wednesday 25th June, Committee Room 5

AGM: Wednesday November 19th, room to be confirmed

Each meeting will be held at 6pm; non-Parliamentary members should arrive at least 15 minutes before for security purposes.

Potential topics for future agenda items were discussed. These included:

- Post Commonwealth Games update from Glasgow2014
- Female Genital Mutilation; following enquiries from members, the secretariat has been exploring the possibility of having this as the main agenda item for the next meeting, however the Equal Opportunities Committee are currently planning an inquiry on the subject. It was agreed that the Convenor would write to them with an offer to support the inquiry in any way possible.
- Monitoring; much discussion at the CPG centres around evidence of representation in employment and service use, it is therefore proposed that relevant auditing and enforcement bodies could be invited to discuss this as a main agenda item. The secretariat will explore this option.

The Convenor reiterated that, as always, members are encouraged to email proposals for agenda items to the secretariat for consideration.