

## **Meeting of the Cross Party Group on Racial Equality in Scotland**

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2014 at 6pm - Committee Room 6 of the Scottish Parliament

### **Present:**

Bob Doris MSP

Hanzala Malik MSP

Anne McTaggart MSP

Annabelle Ewing MSP

Jamie McGrigor MSP

Carol Young

Stuart McDonald

Nicola Livingston

Rebecca Marek

Nicola Pringle MSYP

Trishna Singh

Jock Morris

Gozie Joe Adigwe

Davidson Chademana

Pinar Aksu

Fuad Alakbarov

Sukhi Bains

Harriette Campbell

Kiren Zubairi

Chris Oswald

Faten Hameed

Mahmud Al-Gailani

Bill Fraser

Karen Murray

Lydia House

Christina Greig

Luska Jerdin

Gavin Barrie

Mohammad Razaq

Danny Boyle

Nasar Meer

Zachary Marlay-Wright

CRER

CRER

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

Scottish Youth Parliament

Scottish Youth Parliament

Sikh Sanjog

Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees

STUC Black Workers Committee

University of Dundee

Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees

Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees

University of St Andrews

WSREC / ACWA

SIAA

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Scottish Iraqi Society

VOX - Voices of Experience

SDS (Skills Development Scotland)

SDS

Scottish Parent Teacher Council

Breast Cancer Care Scotland

Scottish Government Equality Unit

Scottish Government Fair Work Directorate

WSREC

BEMIS

University of Strathclyde

Intern for Hanzala Malik

### **Apologies:**

Jatin Haria (CRER)

Eleanor McKnight (CEMVO Scotland)

Pat Elsmie (Migrant Right's Network)

Jackie Baillie MSP

Surjit Singh Choudhary

Anela Anwar (Roshni)

Rohini Sharma Joshi (Trust Housing Assoc)  
Anita Shelton  
Nila Joshi (Edinburgh Intefaitth Womens' Group)  
Ekta Marwaha (ELREC)  
Naseem Anwar (Strathclyde University)  
Alan Cowan (Grampian Regional Equality Council)  
Khalida Hussain (Voluntary Action Fund)  
Meg de Amasi (Stirling Multicultural Partnership)  
Kash Tank (Glasgow Life)  
Sandra Deslandes-Clark (SEMPERscotland)

### **1) Welcome**

Convenor Bob Doris MSP welcomed attendees to the meeting.

### **2) Guest Speaker – Annabelle Ewing MSP (Minister for Youth and Women's Employment)**

The Convenor then welcomed Annabelle Ewing to the meeting. Ms Ewing had kindly stepped in when Cabinet Secretary Alex Neil could no longer attend due to a diary clash.

Ms Ewing explained her background prior to becoming an MSP and minister. She said that the Scottish Government very much saw equality as a cornerstone for its ambitions for the country, and that people were entitled to the same opportunities as a matter of principle. The census figures showed Scotland becoming a more ethnically diverse country. The Scottish Government aims to eliminate racism in Scotland, and recognises the problems faced by BME communities including barriers and negative attitudes which have to be tackled.

The Scottish Government aimed to create conditions so that every child can succeed. Levels of attainment are good but further progress is needed so no one is left behind. Statistics show that BME people aren't able to access employment equally. There is a need to address low pay, unemployment and poor housing across the board. Some of these challenges required, in the view of the Scottish Government, devolution of further powers.

There remain challenges including racism and racial harassment. Tackling racism is not a box to be ticked but something that is core policy. The Government was working with organisations to address these issues. It is aiming for a 50/50 gender balance on boards by 2020. This is not to the exclusion of other equality issues – but leading the way. Particular challenges facing BME women are recognised. Ms Ewing said she had visited the BRIDGES programme in Springburn and anticipated that the programme would be considered a success, and the Government would have to consider what more could be done to expand the programme. She also highlighted the Community Jobs Scotland programme for those aged 16-24 and which focussed on those further away from employment, including BME people. She acknowledged that there required to be a better mix of people on the Modern Apprenticeship scheme.

Ms Ewing then took part in an extensive Q&A session. Ms Ewing said that the timetable for ensuring fair representation of BME people on the modern apprenticeship scheme had to be realistic. Ms Ewing undertook to pass on issues re housing - including a possible role for the Scottish Government in monitoring SERCO's housing of asylum seekers in Glasgow - to the responsible minister, Margaret Burgess MSP. Ms Ewing was sympathetic to the view that the link between Scotland's wealth and the slave trade should be acknowledged in schools. However, the role of government was to set the curriculum on a broad brush basis through curriculum for excellence. She said she would take on

board comments that the focus on specific target groups should not mean the exclusion of others such as middle-aged women migrants, and she highlighted the work of the Equalities Fund.

It was explained that BEMIS were to work with SDS on employability issues. SDS representatives said there was an awareness that there was a long way to go for schools, employers and training providers to ensure equal access to programmes such as the modern apprenticeship, but a lot of work was already underway. Bob Doris requested a note on the strands of work that were being taken forward with BEMIS. In response to one question on Community Jobs Scotland Ms Ewing requested details of the specific issue by email and she would ask officials. On issues of multiple discrimination, it was easy to state that agencies should operate in a joined up manner, but this would always present challenges in practise. On the specific example of BME ex-offenders with mental health difficulties, some sort of gateway system would seem necessary. Issues such as mutual recognition of qualifications were addressed. There was discussion concerning whether enough was done to condemn the rise in anti-Semitic attacks as a matter of routine, rather than simply on specific occasions. Questions were raised about whether EQIAs were really effective, and really meant equality was being mainstreamed. The Convenor requested examples from the Scottish Government of where EQIAs had influenced policy.

The Convenor thanked Ms Ewing for her attendance at the meeting.

[Annabelle Ewing, Jamie McGrigor and Hanzala Malik MSPs left the meeting at this stage]

### **3) Guest Speaker: Christina Greig, Breast Cancer Care Scotland.**

The Convenor then welcomed Christina Greig of Breast Cancer Care Scotland, who made a presentation on the B-aware programme and lead a discussion on how best to raise awareness among BME communities. Ms Greig provided background information on the charity's work supporting people living with breast cancer, and on the incidence of breast cancer in Scotland. The B-aware programme seeks to target BME communities and other hard to reach groups. The goal is to ensure as early diagnosis as possible. Scotland has some of the poorest survival rates in Europe, and socially deprived people will be more likely to present later. We need to tackle this as earlier presentation and diagnosis can prevent the spread of the cancer.

Research suggest a number of reasons why BME people don't present early enough including lower awareness of symptoms; cultural factors, including that breast cancer might be less likely to be spoken about; lack of awareness that risk increases with age; lower prevalence (though it is rising); and underestimating significance of symptoms. There is a perhaps more of a stigma, taboo and fear about breast cancer in BME communities. Furthermore, cancer campaigns don't feature BME people. There is concern about the treatment that will be required, and negative experiences of NHS treatment might be a factor.

If people are less aware, they are less likely to go to screening – so even where incidence is lower, late presentation can mean poorer survival rates. Therefore the B-aware campaign seeks to address this through:

- Publications (in different languages)
- Team B-aware needs to include BME members – volunteers are needed
- Online resources for healthcare providers
- Taking a bus across Scotland for publicity
- B-aware learning resources

Ms Greig asked CPG members to cascade the request for volunteers for team B-aware.

In discussion, issues raised included ensuring health practitioners are trained to ask appropriate questions in order to ensure they have all necessary information eg asking about ethnicity instead of religion. One suggestion made was to invest in audio materials, as some people would not be literate even in their first language. Others suggested the recruitment of “champions” to spread the message by word of mouth. Some were concerned about the timing of screenings – for example people who had caring roles would be prevented from attending screening at certain times.

There was debate about whether the proposed bus tour would be a positive or could be off-putting. It could be taken to places of worship. There was also discussion about use of particular words, including “breast” as discussion of this might be uncomfortable for some – even saying “I’m a breast cancer volunteer”.

**4) Draft UK report to the United Nations under the International Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)**

**5) Legislative programme updates –**

Members agreed that the Secretariat would provide written updates on these two issues after the meeting, in order to allow further time for discussion of item 6.

**6) Presentation: Jock Morris, Pinar Aksu and Fuad Alakbarov of Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees**

Representatives of the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees then highlighted the UN Anti-Racism Day Demonstration in Glasgow on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2015. The background to the event is increased anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and the rise of far-right organisations across Europe. However, it was also important to remember the success of anti-Nazi movements. The collapse of the BNP was welcome, but other political organisations are pushing things to the political right in respect of a host of minority issues. There was therefore a need for a big demonstration. A large number of trade unions and third sector organisations had offered support. The First Minister and Lord Provost of Glasgow had been invited. Leaflets were available for distribution, and people could also find details on Facebook.

**7) Minutes of the last meeting and mattesing**

The minutes for the previous meeting were approved, and members were asked to raise questions about matters arising with the secretariat after the meeting.

**8) AOCB**

The issue of sickle-cell syndrome was raised – campaigners alleged that they had been refused participation in a forthcoming rare disease day event. The Convenor indicated he would check why that had happened. He will raise this issue with the CPG for rare diseases who would be better placed to pursue it.

**9) Date of next meeting:**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June.