BEMIS Scotland are the national Ethnic and Cultural Minorities led umbrella body supporting the development of the Ethnic Minorities Voluntary Sector in Scotland and the communities that this sector represents.

Our vision is of a Scotland that is equal, inclusive and responsive: A society where:

- people from the diverse communities are valued, treated with dignity and respect,
- have equal citizenship, opportunities and equality of life,
- and who actively participate in civic society.

BEMIS welcome the remit and scope of the Education and Culture Committees deliberations on raising the attainment in Scotland’s schools and fulfilling the potential of our young work force. We are encouraged by the emphasis placed upon a cross-sector approach and welcome the opportunity to provide evidence on this approach.

_The Committee wants to understand what would have to change in schools for the report and the implementation plan to be successful, and how they could enable all pupils to realise their full potential._

Within the report ‘Education working for All’ and the Scottish Governments response ‘Developing the Young Workforce’ there are key recommendations from which BEMIS recognise our key role and responsibility in progressing the objectives of the report and recommendations. Therefore, our submission will focus on two areas.

- Our response to relevant recommendations of Education for All / Developing Scotland Young Work Force and subsequent work programme
- Observations and broader BEMIS recommendations independent of Reports equality related recommendations

**Education for All – Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce Key Recommendations:**

- **Recommendation 26** Scotland should embed equality education across curriculum for excellence.
- **Recommendation 27**: Promotion and communication of career options should actively target equalities groups to promote diverse
participation across gender, Black & Minority Ethnic groups, young people with disabilities and care leavers. The promotion of Modern Apprenticeship opportunities should be to the fore of this activity.

- **Recommendation 31:** A targeted campaign to promote the full range of Modern apprenticeships to young people and parents from the BME community should be developed and launched to present the benefits of work-based learning as a respected career option and alternative to university.

- **Recommendation 32:** SDS should set a realistic but stretching improvement target to increase the number of young people from BME groups starting Modern Apprenticeships. Progress against this should be reported on annually.

BEMIS Scotland currently support these ‘recommendations’ and aspirations in part via our ‘Gathered Together’ project in partnership with the Scottish Parent Teacher Council. Within this context we have identified a number of considerations in the advancement of ‘Developing the Young Workforce’ recommendations from an equalities and race/ethnicity perspective;

- We have observed insufficient awareness of current equalities practice and a commensurate lack of confidence in the area of equalities and this coupled with persistent myths around aspirations and career paths within EM communities may have fed into the poor take up of apprenticeships for young people from EM communities.

We would call for increased opportunities for training and support for education practitioners in two specific areas:

- The practical application of 2010 equalities act and the need to be aware of principles around ‘same’ and ‘different’.
- Increased opportunities to engage with, and understand the specific concerns and lack of awareness around current qualifications and routes to further education and/or employment for EM young people and their parents/carers

- Gathered Together have found that parents from Ethnic Minorities are often unsure how to support their children with issues around subject choice and accessing further education, employment opportunities and apprenticeships. Parents who were not born in the UK are unfamiliar with the system and the supports that are available to their children - including the flexibility that is offered by the education system.

- Parents have a key role in supporting and guiding their children - under the UNCRC a child has “the right to be given guidance by parents and family” and greater support needs to be given to parents, ensuring that

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1 See Annex A
they have the correct information and are able to support their children throughout their educational journey and advancement into work.

- Gathered Together’s research with Ethnic Minority parents has found that, while parents are often actively involved in their children’s education at primary school level this is not continued into secondary school and the lack of contact between home and school can result in parents feeling increasing unable to help and support their children at this stage.

- Parents from ethnic minorities are passionate about their children’s education and have high aspirations for them, however without the right information they are not able to support their children to fulfil their full potential.

- Gathered Together have also met with parents who have attended information sessions about the Curriculum for Excellence and found the language used excessively technical - we are aware that the National Parent Forum Scotland have produced accessible information sheets eg “National in a Nutshell” but these need to be more widely distributed and parents provided the opportunity to ask questions about the individual situations of their children.

- Within the social justice context the challenge of adopting a place based approach in tackling endemic social issues presents a problem in coherently engaging with dispersed and diverse ethnic minority communities. A hierarchical focus on ‘areas of multiple deprivation’ over communities in poverty risks reinforcing existing disadvantage. This in part may explain the significant lack of EM communities engaging via national training providers such as SDS.

- EM communities in Glasgow reside disproportionally in areas of multiple deprivation. However in addition across Scotland and out with the focus of policy makers EM communities continue to reside in poverty ensuring that a one dimensional approach focussed on ‘place based policies’ risks reinforcing disadvantage for certain communities. Within the implementation of the ‘Developing the Young Workforce’ and SDS Modern Apprenticeships recommendations the focus needs to be on circumstances and needs and not solely confined to the highest concentrations of people.

**BEMIS General Observations:**

- Potential of the ‘London Challenge Initiative’ being paralleled by the Scottish Governments ‘Scottish Attainment Challenge’.

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The London Challenge Initiative began in 2003 and has been identified as an example of good practice in raising attainment of pupils.

One of the key assets identified in the programme’s success has been the influence of the ethnic diversity and composition of London classrooms.  

While it has been identified by ‘Fiscal Affairs Scotland’ that due to the significant differentiation of comparative demographics i.e. London 40% vs Glasgow 12% this ‘London effect’ of a more competitive and focussed migrant community influencing school culture hasn’t made any disenable impact on Scotland that it should continue to be of interest to Scottish policy makers.

The FAS report highlights;

“First, the potential for improvements from encouraging higher migration, especially if a knock-on effect for other disadvantaged school children's attainment levels can be better established.  
Second, the potential positive role played by early intervention policies (i.e., pre Secondary school).  
Third, the prospect of improving the performance of pupils in urban areas with a high concentration of disadvantaged schoolchildren”.

In relation to this general area of interest Gathered Together have collated a series of videos which document the experience of teacher and parents in increasing participation of EM communities in the broad school community and the positive impacts this can have on both the local community and individual educational experiences.

We would highly recommend consideration of these experiences in the committee’s deliberations.

*Series of videos evidencing parental and teachers experience*

http://gatheredtogether.bemis.org.uk/videos/

Annex A:

GATHERED TOGETHER is a pilot project working to support ethnic and cultural minority parents to become more involved in their child’s education and the school community.

We are a joint venture between BEMIS and SPTC, funded by the Scottish Government through its Third Sector Early Intervention Fund, managed by the Big Fund. We have been working closely with parents, schools and local authorities to identify and build good practice in inclusion and equality. We are

working in six local authorities- Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow and Stirling & Clackmannanshire.

We are working directly with parents and carers from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, finding out about their experiences of involvement with their children’s school and education, barriers that they experience to getting more involved and giving them information about their rights as parents and the role of the Parent Council in being a voice for parents.

We also offer training that gives parent councils the chance to think about why parents aren’t getting involved in the school community and provide the opportunity to develop practical solutions to help to overcome any barriers. SPTC are working with us to deliver this training. We want to share your good practice and offer practical advice when it comes to involving parents.