I am the Director of the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance, due to lack of time and being unable to consult with our members and other relevant organisations I’m responding to this call for evidence in a personal capacity.

I don’t know of any employment support and advice in place to help BME people but would question whether its individual capacity building they need or the elimination of racial discrimination by employers. In my experience there is very little action taken by statutory bodies to address issues of institutional and personal discrimination faced by BME groups in Scotland. This I feel is evidenced in the monitoring data that is produced by some statutory bodies. The SPICe briefing was helpful with providing background information but I was disappointed that it did not mention the lack of consistent, strategic monitoring. The fact that statutory bodies have a duty to provide monitoring data and many still fail to do so is another area of concern. There is also no central accountability around monitoring and race which allows statutory bodies to neglect their duties.

All too often services are focused on interpreting and translation services or ESOL when in fact the majority of BME people in Scotland are young people who have been born and brought up here and have no need for such services.

There are additional barriers faced by BME people with the current political discourse regarding immigration, cuts in funding and the rise of far right ideology. In particular BME women, religious groups, people with long term conditions, people with disabilities, young people and people from lower socio economic backgrounds face multiple layers of stigma, discrimination and in the context of this enquiry, racism.

I think that if statutory bodies took steps to ensure that they employed staff who were representative of the wider Scottish population then that would help address some of the issues of discrimination and racism. It is Legal requirement that they publish data about local population, about the staff they employ, the numbers of people they interview for jobs, the services they provide but as I mentioned earlier the duties are ignored because there is no accountability at a strategic or national level.

The myth that persists in Scotland is that there is no racism. I think that as long as there is little or no monitoring of numbers of people employed and numbers of people accessing services then we will continue to fail in making progress to address barriers and racism. As long as there are no consequences or accountability and no commitment to initiatives such as positive action the imbalances in society will persist.
I’d be happy to provide further information to the Committee, if they wish.

Shaben Begum MBE
30 June 2015

The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (SIAA) is Scotland’s national membership body for advocacy organisations. The SIAA promotes, supports and defends independent advocacy in Scotland. It aims to ensure that independent advocacy is available to any person who needs it in Scotland.