Notes on visit to PATH (Scotland) – 5 October 2015

Four members of the Committee visited PATH (Scotland)’s Developing Leadership and Management Skills in Public Life programme on 5 October. After observing some of the course, the members each spent some time with its participants in order to chat about the programme and some of the areas relating to the Committee’s inquiry. Some of the matters which were discussed are outlined below.

Discrimination in recruitment and employment

Some participants had experienced discrimination in the labour market/workplace whilst other felt that they had not. Examples discussed include:

- Some participants had been more successful in applying for jobs when they hadn’t included their name on the application form. Some felt that employers make judgements based on whether a name sounds ‘white’ or not.
- ‘Office banter’ can sometimes be hurtful.
- Some people are reluctant to reveal their ethnicity in data monitoring forms for fear of discrimination.
- Assumptions are made based on people’s ethnicity. For example, not expecting someone to speak English well or assuming someone will want to work in certain types of jobs.
- Some people felt they would face discrimination for attending PATH (Scotland)’s programme, particularly if they then went on to apply for a promotion.
- People may be scared to report discrimination in case it jeopardises current role and/or makes it more difficult to apply for future positions (even in other companies)

Promotion

- Role models are important. There is a lack of ethnic minority people on senior management positions (such as head teacher). Some participants in the group were highly qualified yet struggled to achieve promotion – this was described as ‘demoralising’.
- People from ethnic minorities are often over-qualified for the work that they do. Sometimes people are ‘pigeon-holed’ into certain roles. Rather than focusing on whether ethnic minority people in Scotland are in work, the Committee should look at what roles or pay grades they hold.
- Some entrepreneurs chose this path because they had negative recruitment and employment experiences.

Additional influences

- Other characteristics (such as gender or religion) overlap with race and ethnicity to affect people’s employment experiences. For example, sometimes someone’s cultural background can influence what traineeships or jobs they apply for based on their family’s expectations.
- Ethnic minority people should not be treated as a homogeneous group as different groups and people have different experiences.
• Economic factors can play a role in whether people have a job or achieve promotion. A large number of ethnic minority people work in the public sector and were therefore more affected by the recent economic downturn. Similarly, when funding is cut in the voluntary sector people lose out on roles.

• With fewer jobs available, there is less opportunity for employers to make positive, innovative changes.

**Suggested changes**

• One group discussed the introduction of quotas requiring employers to take on a minimum number of people from ethnic minorities – there was mixed views on this matter with some believing it would create more barriers.

• In relation to job role criteria, rather than focussing on whether someone already has, for example, ‘excellent communication skills’ employers should look at whether this could be achieved as part of someone’s development in the role.

• Work should be done to ensure that equality legislation that is already in place is fully implemented.

• The positive action provisions of the Equality Act are important and should be implemented.

• Better training is needed at senior management level if there’s to be a change in culture.

**PATH (Scotland)’s leadership programme**

• The programme is very useful, helping participants to see the ‘bigger picture’ and speak to people who have had similar experiences to their own.

• Programmes such as this one should run throughout Scotland. Some felt that the programme could be rolled out to employers, colleges and schools and that refresher courses should be run.

• Employers could do more to promote courses such as this one.