Introduction

PATH (Scotland) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Equal Opportunities Committee inquiry into race, ethnicity and employment. PATH was established in 1998 as an independent voluntary organisation following the conclusion of a pilot project on positive action operated by Scottish Homes. The evaluation of this pilot recommended that the programme be continued but under the control of an independent agency. Subsequently, PATH Scotland was established, with charitable objectives. Historically PATH has operated under the positive action provisions of the Race Relations Act (most notably section 37 of the 1976 Act) to address the under-representation of black and minority ethnic (BME) communities within Scottish Housing. We now operate under Section 158 of the Equality Act (2010) and assist BME individuals to compete effectively for employment in housing and related sectors. Our comments are below and are structured under the themes provided.

1 Employment support and advice

What provisions are in place to help people from ethnic minorities to access employment support and advice?

1.1 Housing Trainees

The longest running programme offered by PATH Scotland relates to housing. The programme covers a three-year period and includes: work experience, accredited studies and specialist training. There is an incremental training allowance (£9,500 in the first year) and trainees are not required to pay tax or NI.

- Work Experience
  - Each trainee has a full time paid work experience placement for 36 months with a housing provider. Workplace assignments give trainees operational experience, exposure to leadership and decision-making processes, while also developing their personal skills and confidence.
  - Placements are designed around each trainee’s learning and support needs. Trainees are supported by a supervisor within the placement organisation and by PATH Scotland staff, throughout their work experience programme.

- Academic Studies
  - 75% of trainees are graduates and all will attend University/College courses to obtain a recognised qualification relevant to the work experience programme.
  - The courses available include the Level 4 Diploma in Housing Studies and the Postgraduate Diploma in Housing Policy and Management. Trainees are also given the opportunity to undertake the Test of Professional Practice, the work-based element of the Chartered Institute of Housing’s Professional Qualification.
  - Each trainee undertakes academic study on a day-release basis. The course selection takes account of the trainee’s own educational background and
existing qualifications as relevant. In most cases, the course will lead to a recognised qualification.

- **Specialist Training**
  
  Trainees participate in a number of training days designed to supplement work experience. They also participate in trainee forums which allow trainees to come together, provide input to their programmes and network with others.

**What do we do?**

PATH drafts the trainee adverts, sends out application packs, assesses applications and applicants in association with housing staff, oversees and participates in the recruitment process, deals with the administration around work eligibility/references/ qualifications and processes all aspects of college and university applications.

We also have contractual arrangements with both the trainee and the placement organisation which highlight the terms and conditions of the placement. PATH works with the placement organisation throughout the year and provides 6-weekly support and supervision to trainees. We also provide mentoring and coaching, and personal development support. We have designed assessment materials which are used as a basis for the support and supervision meetings and a work experience guide which is offered to placement organisations as a flexible tool when designing and delivering the training programme. The placement organisations also allocate a supervisor to the trainee who meets with the trainee regularly to assess and monitor progress on the training plan.

Finally, we run specialist training days which are intended as a supplement to the trainee work experience.

1.2 **Developing Leadership and Management (DMLS)**

We run a Developing Leadership and Management Programme in recognition of the absence of BME individuals in senior management positions. This programme is validated by the University of Glasgow and is highly regarded by participants (further information will be provided on the programme in the section on recruitment, retention and promotion).

1.3 **Coaching and Mentoring**

The coach works in partnership with our clients to: set career related goals, evaluate the strategies that individuals have been using to progress in their career so far, and identify other actions that could be taken that help people move closer to their desired goals. At the same time, the coach encourages individuals to think about how they could make leadership impact within their current role and organisation.

The coaching we offer is not training, but is instrumental in developing skills such as interpersonal communication, improving self-confidence and working with people.

Specifically, individuals are supported to develop career plans, improve their leadership knowledge and skills, and improve confidence
1.4 **Employability**

Support provided has included: assistance with researching job roles, discussing job descriptions and personal profiles for differing vacancies, assessing essential and desirable competencies required for the roles, and matching practical work experience and transferable skills to the competencies. Support also includes assistance with volunteering opportunities. We also look closely at competency based interview techniques and regularly carry out mock interviews with our clients.

2 **What provisions are in place to recognise and address the lower employment rates among some ethnic minority groups compared to others?**

We have established partnerships with Registered Social Landlords who are keen to recruit from the communities they serve. We have worked with many RSLs over the years including Govanhill Housing Association, most recently to highlight trainee opportunities for the Roma communities. Similarly with Queen’s Cross Housing to highlight opportunities to the Chinese communities. We work collaboratively with RSLs on a number and range of positive action measures and initiatives. The Partnership work we do has prompted participating Housing organisations to take a range of actions such as: influencing decision-making arising from Equality impact assessments; reviewing Equality and Diversity policies and practice; joining up Equality commitments with other policy areas; and supporting organisational leaders to identify Equality implications arising within their roles.

3 **Are there any innovative approaches being taken to address the challenges some people from ethnic minorities may experience in trying to access employment advice and support?**

We recently received Big Lottery funding for our Positive Moves programme which aims to support BME participants to improve their confidence, communication skills, ability to deal with conflict, problem solving skills, and their assertiveness whilst being supported to plan their career and realise opportunities for progression. Alongside this, employers are assisted to develop equalities work within their organisations. An aftercare service for previous trainees of PATH’s Housing Traineeship has also been set up, to help retain jobs and support further progression. We also work with housing organisations to develop their equalities policies, look at best practice and assist them to be better able to support BME staff in their progression.

The most recent external evaluation of our Big Lottery funded Positive Moves in the Workplace project, carried out by York Consulting in March 2014, highlighted the following:

- The flexibility and client-centred nature of the support provided across all three strands of project activity is a particular strength of Positive Moves in the Workplace.
- This is a key factor in positive client feedback, as clients perceive that they are benefitting from a “bespoke” service that actively listens to them and tailors support to their needs.
➢ The provision of employer support is welcomed by participating Housing organisations as an added value extension of existing positive working relationships with PATH Scotland.

➢ After Care and Leadership clients feel that the support provided by Positive Moves in the Workplace is essential help that would otherwise not be available.

➢ The After Care support has improved clients’ knowledge of employment opportunities, application processes, and alternative routes to training and employment.

➢ Leadership Coaching is has been a critical success factor in workplace changes such as improved confidence and self-expression; improved strategic thinking; improved ability to demonstrate ‘added value’ and desire to progress; improved application of skills and knowledge; and improved job satisfaction.

4 Recruitment, retention and promotion

*What evidence is there that discrimination in recruitment, retention and promotion is an issue in Scottish workplaces?*

There has been much research highlighting discrimination in employment in Scottish workforces. A report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, “A Review of Poverty and Ethnicity in Scotland” (2011), highlighted the following:

“There was some indication that educational qualifications do not match types and levels of employment in certain minority ethnic groups. High unemployment rates, strongly gender-biased employment patterns in certain groups and lack of knowledge regarding the extent to which self-employment (high in certain groups) is a positive choice or an alternative route to employment were also areas of concern.

This suggests that initiatives to facilitate access to education and training and increase the availability of affordable childcare need to engage more proactively with individuals from minority ethnic communities. The potential for straightforward discriminatory practices to continue suggests that greater effort needs to be invested in holding organisations, particularly large public ones, to account in reporting on the ethnic composition of their workforce at various organisational levels.”

Very recent research from the Coalition for Racial Equality demonstrates that public sector job candidates from BME backgrounds are twice as likely to be rejected at job interview stage as their white competitors (State of the Nation, CRER, 2013). Employment Tribunal decisions also illustrate the barriers being placed in the way of BME candidates, particularly in the case of promoted posts.

“In 2008 a Scottish council was ordered to pay a housing association chief executive £26,000 after an employment tribunal ruled it had racially discriminated against him. Ahsan Khan, 45, who was the Director of Lorburn Housing Association, applied for the job of head of housing at Angus Council in April 2006. The tribunal was told that he met all the requirements for the job, including substantial senior housing management experience.
But in the middle of the shortlisting, the council changed the person specification and Mr Khan was not shortlisted. The tribunal found the council had failed to follow the code of practice issued by the Commission for Racial Equality. The council was unable to explain why Mr Khan was not shortlisted. The tribunal said the explanation it attempted to give 'did not bear proper examination' and that the council had therefore been discriminatory.

PATH Scotland and the Chartered Institute in Housing (CiH) established a BME Network in Housing. A recurring theme amongst participants was the absence of BME employees in leadership positions with some members indicating that they would have to leave Scotland in order to secure promoted positions. A similar theme was apparent in the discussions had by participants of PATH (Scotland)’s DLMS Programme, who discussed the barriers they had faced when attempting to apply for promoted posts and difficulties experienced in work situations. Many of the participants who attend the DLMS programme are highly qualified and skilled, however have not been given the opportunity to use their skills and expertise. In some cases this has eroded self-confidence, motivation and energy. Below is a comment from one of the participants:

“The need for this type of training for BME communities is to assist in empowering like-minded individuals in reaching their goals and groups to come together to build a network, gain confidence, increase their skills set and set targets for personal development. This kind of bespoke training is not offered if looking at training that includes the wider community
Ghzala Khan

5 What are the barriers that lead to unequal outcomes (including lower rates of employment and employment segregation)?

PATH (Scotland) has 17 years’ experience of running positive action training programmes for BME Communities. The barriers recounted by the individuals on the scheme and on our leadership and coaching programmes include the following:

- Direct and indirect discrimination in recruitment and selection which often cannot be proven
- cultural bias at interview
- lack of employer engagement
- stereotyping and conscious bias
- isolation in the workplace

75% of our trainees have 1, 2 or more degrees. They come to us because they are either under-employed or unemployed, and for the reasons above are finding it incredibly difficult to access the labour market. They are attracted to the positive action advert which promises and delivers a new career path. 85% of our trainees gain employment post placement.

6 Promoting positive action — what measures are being taken to tackle workplace discrimination & segregation;
is there a need for a scheme that recognises positive action taken by employers (a “double tick” scheme for example).
PATH (Scotland) was establis
ished in 1999 as a positive action measure to address the under-representation of BME individuals in Housing and Employment. We have been very successful in this endeavour and 85% of our trainees gain employment in Housing post placement. We are concerned that a double tick scheme would have little or no impact on employers and while employers may use it to seek to show that they are a positive action employer, no real difference would be made. Legal solutions are not necessarily the strongest hand in promoting positive action. Nevertheless, modern regulation and the provisions of the Equality Act underline the need for strategic and informed action to tackle identified problems. Regulation would ensure that employers take this area more seriously. We believe that positive action should be used as a practical means of addressing the identified needs of disadvantaged groups.

- Our PATH Training programme uses positive action to address the identified needs of those who, despite academic qualifications, still experience the disadvantage and discrimination of those most removed from the labour market.
- Positive action is still just one tool for tackling the impact of discrimination and should not be used in isolation of the full range of good equality practice.
- There is clear, consistent and demonstrable need for the use of positive action within all sectors, not specifically housing as evidenced by a wide range of sources.

We have worked with a number of housing organisations who wish to work with committee structures to achieve meaningful change; who wish assistance in ensuring that equality and diversity is seen as a corporate priority and not just one for specialists; that all staff recognise and buy-in to the value of equality in their own roles, as well as recognising the need to ensure that providers are keeping up with development at the legislative as well as the policy level.

We believe strongly that organisations need to commit to putting appropriate policies and practice into place, commit to carrying out monitoring and assessment designed to reveal areas where there is discrimination or inequality of opportunity and commit to make meaningful changes by addressing such inequalities.

7 What are the examples of good practice that have improved outcomes, and if so what has been the key to their success?

The PATH Programmes have led to a change in the profile of the Scottish Housing workforce. While there is still under-representation in the sector, a recent Chartered Institute of Housing report into the “Experience of BME Staff in Housing” reported that PATH was “by far the most important route into Housing for BME employees”. 85% of PATH trainees have gained employment in Housing post placement.

The DMLS Programme has also led to the following outcomes for the 60 participants involved:
- at least 14 participants were promoted
- several others took on additional responsibility at work
- 2 stayed in the same job and negotiated a higher salary
- 20 have changed jobs for one at a similar grade but with better opportunities for development
- 2 unpaid volunteers are now in paid employment
- 7 have started their own business
- at least 12 are now more active in their communities

Some comments below from DMLS participants

“I had an interview for a promoted post I didn’t get the job but the feedback I received was positive – particularly on the presentation. All credit goes to the course “

Hameeda Haseeb

“Huge thanks to PATH (Scotland) for organising this course. It has changed my life. Big thanks to funders too for funding this very valuable course” As a result of the DMLS programme and follow up coaching. I have developed my confidence, leadership and management skills and have been successful in gaining a managerial post”

Tahir Mohammed

We believe the key to the success of the PATH Programmes has been the following:

We work collaboratively with our beneficiaries and our partners and believe in the importance of regular dialogue. We have listening and learning feedback mechanisms and also regularly undertake service reviews. These exercises make use of feedback from trainees and placement providers, data collection and analysis and on-going dialogue. Much of this work is used to inform service improvements such as the approach to recruitment. Whereas the trainees were initially selected, practice now dictates that the placement organisation is identified and then trainees are jointly recruited specifically for that organisation. In this way, trainees make more informed choices about where they would like to work and learn and placement providers feel more directly committed to the placement having been more closely involved in the initial selection process. In addition, we regularly ask for feedback from our beneficiaries.

We recently carried out an evaluation of our work, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, “A Life Changing Experience, The Impact of PATH (Scotland). The evaluation showed that 96% of the individuals and organisations working with PATH agreed with the aims of PATH and 95% believed they were achieving their goals with PATH. In addition to these outcomes, the PATH programmes have to maintain the confidence of participants in relation to content and delivery. There is a very high rate of satisfaction amongst both trainees and placement providers in key aspects of the programme. The support of a black led organisation was also high on the list for beneficiaries. Our final point is that our programmes are backed up by an academic component. The combination of theory and practice has worked well for our beneficiaries in both accessing and progressing within employment.

Below are some comments from trainees and placement organisations which sum up the strength of our work in employment:

“This is a life changing experience for me and my family and I feel that it should be supported and developed. There are so many people out there looking for
an opportunity like this.”
“There is fantastic support. There are networking opportunities. It is all very positive”
“The course offers huge support to me. Very positive, they provide good role models and supportive staff.”
“PATH goes the extra step – rigorous academic training, you have to be qualified to join and there is a selection process.”

Najimee Parveen
Director
PATH (Scotland)
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