

**Notes of Meeting of**

**Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Racial Equality**

**held on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2011**

**Present:**

Bob Doris	MSP (Convener)
Hanzala Malik	MSP (Vice-Convener)
Jatin Haria	CRER (Secretary)
Carol Young	CRER
Nazerin Wardrop	STUC Black Workers' Committee
Davidson Chademana	UCU
Eleanor McKnight	CEMVO Scotland
Umbreen Khalid	CEMVO Scotland / Hanzala Malik's Office
Rohini Sharma Joshi	Trust Housing Association
Bushra Iqbal	N. Lanarkshire Muslim Women & Families Association
Naren Sood	
Khalida Hussain	CORE
Kash Taank	Glasgow Life
Agnes Holmes	Africa Centre Scotland
Max Matsvayi	Africa Centre Scotland
Rosa Mariani	Africa Centre Scotland
Pat Elsmie	Migrant's Rights Scotland
Trishna Singh	Sikh Sanjog
John Letford	Bob Doris's office

**Observers:**

Six observers from Unite the Union

**MSP Apologies:**

Jackie Baillie	MSP
Annabelle Ewing	MSP
Claudia Beamish	MSP

## **Welcome**

Bob Doris, MSP welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the group in the 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the Scottish Parliament.

## **Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the previous meeting (29<sup>th</sup> June 2011) were approved.

In matters arising, Bob Doris MSP stated that he has been investigating the issue of equality in the Scottish Modern Apprenticeship programme. Through written communication with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth it has been confirmed that employers wishing to take on Modern Apprentices are expected to have an Equality Policy. However, the breakdown by ethnicity of those participating in the Programme is not known. Members felt that data on completion by ethnicity was also important. It was stated that Scottish Government should ideally either collect this information itself or specify another body to take responsibility for this. Members felt that companies taking on Apprentices should have due regard to racial equality; however it was accepted that many are very small which makes proving such regard difficult. Hanzala Malik MSP explained that all organisations that the Scottish Parliament engages with are expected to abide by equality law. The importance of encouraging BME owned businesses to provide Modern Apprenticeships was also raised.

Jatin Haria confirmed that the secretariat has tried to obtain data on the breakdown of staff employed by MSPs by ethnicity. The Scottish Parliament Information Centre does not hold this information. An unrelated Freedom of Information request for information on gender balance appears to have been answered, suggesting that they do collect some form of equalities monitoring information. MSPs in attendance stated that this information is possibly not collected centrally because the staff are employed by MSPs rather than the Parliament itself; however it was suggested that the Scottish Parliament Human Resources Department may have access to this information as it assists in the recruitment process. It was also suggested that each Political Party's Central Office could potentially be asked to provide this type of information.

Concerns were raised by the MSPs about a perceived lack of equality training for MSPs and their staff, both stating that to their knowledge this had not been offered to them.

The importance of using procurement as a tool for promoting equality within the Scottish Parliament and Government was raised; this is an issue which may become clearer with the introduction of the new Scottish Specific Equality Duties which are expected to include a duty on public sector procurement.

### **Legislative Programme 2011/12**

Members and other Voluntary Sector organisations were asked to consider identifying an item from the current legislative programme to lead on monitoring progress, lobbying and providing Scottish Government with information on race equality impacts (as agreed at the previous meeting). Jatin Haria confirmed that so far, Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance have agreed to lead on the Mental Health Strategy. Rohini Sharma Joshi stated that Trust HA will lead on the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Agnes Holmes stated that the Africa Centre were interested in the proposals for Self Directed Support. The secretariat provided papers showing an outline of the legislative programme and members were asked to consider within their organisations whether they could lead on any element and to inform the convenor or secretariat as soon as possible. Carol Young provided an overview of some of the key issues relating to the legislative programme, including Equality Impact Assessments, impact of the budget at local level and race equality implications of the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications bill.

In discussion, some members raised the difficulty of maintaining lobbying work at a time when resources are severely stretched. The need for each organisation to prioritise its work as it sees fit was understood, as was the importance of working together with other organisations to increase capacity where appropriate.

MSPs stated that they appreciate the briefings they receive from Voluntary Sector organisations. In particular, they value briefings which are evidence based, brief and well structured. They also stated that MSPs and their staff can assist Voluntary Sector organisations in obtaining information from the Scottish Parliament Information Centre and working together on Parliamentary Questions and feeding in views to appropriate colleagues.

### **Revised Draft Specific Equality Duties for Scotland**

The secretariat provided a written overview of the new revised Draft Specific Duties, including comparisons with the previous draft proposals and the original equality duties prior to the Equality Act 2010. Jatin Haria provided a brief summary of the progress of this legislation and encouraged members to

respond to the consultation. Hanzala Malik MSP also encouraged members to feed in their views to MSPs prior to debate, particularly to raise any questions that might be useful. As well as completing individual responses, it would be possible to submit a list of issues raised by Cross Party Group members. Some discussion clarifying the scope of the consultation was held, including the focus on implementation of General Duties for the public sector under the Equality Act 2010.

### **Care and Housing Needs of Older BME People**

Rohini Sharma Joshi gave an overview of the difficulties being experienced by older BME people in accessing appropriate, culturally sensitive care and accommodation that tackles barriers. She stated that their needs have historically been ignored and continue to be so despite the ageing population increasing the volume of people requiring care. Discussion reflected the wide variety of needs within BME communities and the need for individual choice. For example, some older people may wish to remain in the family home but families require support and adequately sized housing to enable this. Some other older people may be forced to rely on family support, and particularly where language is a barrier to accessing services this can be damaging to their privacy, dignity and autonomy. Hanzala Malik MSP raised the possible need for political solutions to inadequate house sizes, for example a quota for new social housing which must be above a certain size. Bob Doris MSP suggested that the Housing Minister could be contacted to find out what the Government's strategy is for integrating housing, health and social care for BME older people.

### **Actions**

Bob Doris MSP recapped the actions agreed. Questions are to be raised with appropriate Ministers / departments regarding:

- How the Government intends to make sure Modern Apprenticeship participation and completion is monitored by ethnicity
- A breakdown of Parliamentary Staff numbers by ethnicity
- Equality training opportunities provided to MSPs and their staff
- How the Scottish Government integrates equality within procurement
- Integration of appropriate housing, health and social care provision for BME older people

A further action was identified for the Africa Centre Scotland to update Bob Doris MP on their work re: the Mental Health Strategy and Self Directed Support.

### **Dates of Future Meetings:**

An evening meeting has been arranged for 14<sup>th</sup> December 2011; there will be future discussion about whether evening or lunchtime meetings are more effective, or a combination of the two (NB: 14<sup>th</sup> December meeting subsequently rescheduled).