

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

Tuesday 24 April 2001
(*Morning*)

Session 1

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

8th Meeting 2001, Session 1

CONVENER

*Kate MacLean (Dundee West) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

Kay Ullrich (West of Scotland) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP)

*Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

*Mr Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

*Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

Mrs Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD)

*attended

WITNESSES

Jane Baker (Falkirk Council)

Ann Carnachan (Falkirk Council)

Helen Chambers (Equality Network)

Adam Gaines (Disability Rights Commission)

Linda Graham (Scottish Travellers Consortium)

Margaret Gregg (Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association)

Tim Hopkins (Equality Network)

Elizabeth Johnstone (Save the Children)

Mark Kennedy (Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association)

Michelle Lloyd (Save the Children)

Rebecca McKinney (Scottish Travellers Consortium)

Dr Iain McNicol (Highland Health Board)

Angela O'Hagan (Equal Opportunities Commission)

Moir Paton (Highland Health Board)

Janet Williams (Highland Health Board)

Catriona Young (Scottish Travellers Consortium)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Lee Bridges

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Richard Walsh

ASSISTANT CLERK

Roy McMahon

LOCATION

Committee Room 2

Scottish Parliament

Equal Opportunities Committee

Tuesday 24 April 2001

(Morning)

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting in private at 10:07*]

10:17

Meeting continued in public.

Items in Private

The Convener (Kate MacLean): Item 3 on the agenda concerns items in private. Does the committee agree to take items 7 and 8 in private?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Travelling People

The Convener: We will take evidence from quite a list of people for item 4 this morning. I welcome Moira Paton, Dr Iain McNicol and Janet Williams from Highland Health Board. They will make a short presentation and then take questions from the committee.

Dr Iain McNicol (Highland Health Board): I am a general practitioner in north Argyll. Although I am here with the Highland Health Board team of Moira Paton and Janet Williams, most of my practice is in the Argyll and Clyde Health Board area.

I have, following on from my father, been a GP in north Argyll for 21 years. It has been my privilege to look after a travelling family that extends to about 300 members and which incorporates five generations. In the 21 years that I have been in north Argyll, I have seen a lot of discrimination from the health sector, from housing, from police, from the Benefits Agency and from education. The discrimination tends to be institutionalised, although individuals have been supportive of Travellers and have been innovative—sometimes in the most remarkable ways. For instance, out of the blue, I have had offers of quite large sums of money to buy instruments for a travelling persons music project.

The result of the discrimination is that the family has appalling health problems. Its members have a life expectancy of about 55 years. Life expectancy in the settled community in north Argyll is one of the highest in Scotland, so for an extended family to have a life expectancy of 55 years is particularly appalling.

The solution that I would like to see would be to take a whole-Scotland approach, because the Travellers—individual families and the whole travelling community—travel.

The family with which I deal travels to Fife, Grampian, Alloa, Alva, through north Argyll and up to Skye and Lochalsh. That is its normal run of travelling, which covers several health board and local authority areas. People who are moving in those areas find it difficult to join housing lists because everybody says, “You’re not our problem.” Health boards say that those people are not in their area all the time. It is difficult meaningfully to register Travellers with general practitioners.

An integrated and flexible approach is needed from health, social and education services and the Benefits Agency. Benefits are rigid. If the father of a young Traveller who is on a youth opportunity programme decides to move tomorrow, the young Traveller must go, so they are discriminated

against, because they cannot draw the benefit and join the training programme. Most of all, we must have a partnership with the travelling community. Travellers must accept their responsibilities and the responsibilities of the settled community and the statutory authorities must be made clear.

Janet Williams (Highland Health Board): I am a health visitor in Inverness. I am different from Dr McNicol, in that I have been involved in working with Travellers for only four months. I am involved in a project that has funding for a year and I work eight hours a week as a health visitor attached to the travelling persons site in Inverness. We managed to obtain funding with some difficulty. It took a couple of years, with the support of the health board and the local health care co-operative, to make a successful bid.

I feel that we are starting from scratch. My role so far has been to get to know people on the site. Building up trust with travelling people is important, because they have often had bad experiences with people in authority. I have been quite instrumental in enabling the travelling people to access health care. In my limited experience, that has been a major problem. Because many of them are not registered with GPs, they do not have access to the same range of primary care services as everybody else has. We have a GP who is sympathetic to Travellers, and to whom I can direct people. As I said, the project is in the early stages of development, but I hope that it will be able to develop and become more encompassing. However, at this stage, we have funding only until the end of the year.

Moira Paton (Highland Health Board): I am head of community care and community development with Highland Health Board. I am involved at arm's length with travelling people. A member of my team was instrumental in working with the Travellers partnership group in the Highland Council area and has been involved in pulling together agencies to address some of the issues that have been raised with us. She is on maternity leave, so I have the job of speaking to the committee.

We acknowledge a need to work with travelling people and to ensure that health services are made more accessible, particularly for the reasons that Dr McNicol cited. The inequalities in the circumstances in which Travellers live and the stigma and discrimination that they face have a major impact on their health. We must address that.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): I thank the witnesses for appearing this morning. All the witnesses suggested that funding plays a major part in projects. The health board's submission refers to a programme of health education work that Save the Children developed

with young Gypsy/Traveller teenagers. Are there any plans to undertake a similar programme? Does that depend on funding?

Moira Paton: We have made a bid to the children's services innovation fund, which is a health service fund. We seek money to pump-prime some work and have reached the second stage of that process. If we are successful, our aim is to bend mainstream funding. Accessing funding for small and excluded groups causes difficulties. In the Highlands, finding staff is also difficult. A major difficulty is employing GPs and nursing staff to cover more rural areas and some areas to which Travellers travel in the Highland Council area. The aim is to obtain some pump-priming money for a year or so and to use part of the activity that that money generates to stimulate the bending of mainstream resources to encourage GPs, nursing staff, health visitors and dental workers to be more accessible to travelling people.

Elaine Smith: Do the health issues affect a particular group in the travelling community—such as women—more than another group, or do the issues go across the board?

Dr McNicol: The issues affect the community across the board. One problem in life is that if one suffers social deprivation and has a health problem, such as a problem that involves alcohol or drug abuse, one is at 35 times the health risk of someone who is at the top end of the social spectrum. Someone in social class I can take cocaine and heroin and probably get away with it. Someone in social class V is 35 times more likely to get into problems. Problems that might not be too great for people who live in a settled community become very great for someone who lives on the road and has a large extended family, in which there is poor hygiene and who have poor facilities for heating their caravan in winter. Many traveller deaths are accidental, self-induced or fire-related. There are many drownings, burnings, a fair number of suicides and many deaths during childhood.

Mr Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): We are holding the inquiry because we received much information from Gypsy/Traveller groups and individuals about poor service and discrimination. Many examples that were given to us related to the health service. All the witnesses commented on their awareness of problems with service delivery. Will you identify examples of discrimination that might exist in the health service in the Highlands? How are those examples being addressed through monitoring those who provide services, monitoring the use of services and complaints procedures, and through training for staff in Highland Health Board?

Dr McNicol: I will not talk only about Highland Health Board, because my practice also works with Argyll and Clyde Health Board, and the Travellers with whom I deal move around Scotland. We are aware that Travellers find it difficult to register with primary care and with general medical practitioners. Some surgeries openly discriminate against them and say that they do not want Travellers to register. That is partly because Travellers are considered to create an excessive work load, as they have large extended families, many minor ailments and perhaps do not have the education—that other people might have—to deal with those ailments.

That attitude also comes partly from the system of remuneration of general practitioners. Much weight is given to achieving targets, including those for immunisation and cervical cytology. If a woman registers with a practice but then disappears, and the practice cannot prove that she has had a smear test, the practice's percentage uptake drops, and so its income drops. Therefore, the practice would rather not have such a patient. That is definitely a problem in larger practices.

I have encountered a consultant surgeon who refused to investigate somebody who had an enlarged prostate gland, because he was a "dirty traveller." If somebody refuses point blank to see a patient and says, "I will not admit him to my ward because he is a dirty traveller"—he was not a dirty Traveller, but was like everyone else—it is difficult to get over that. Much subtle discrimination is happening for various reasons, but in primary care, much of the explanation is financial.

Mr McMahon: I accept that some of the reasons are financial, but if funding were provided for training, would that have a benefit? Could the problems be overcome by educating service providers?

10:30

Dr McNicol: As part of the project that we ran in the west Highlands in 1996-97, we had a health facilitator, for whom we got funding for one year. One of Margaret Black's roles was to educate the systems. She was very successful, and got a lot of positive reactions. I suspect that the Highland Travellers forum has sprung partly from that work. People started to talk to one another: education started talking to social work, and social work started talking to health. People suddenly realised that there were common problems that could be addressed. We then ran into the funding problem. A large bid for a healthy living centre was turned down because funders were not satisfied that our links with other groups were robust, which we found quite incredible.

Mr McMahon: Moira Paton spoke about

funding. In the Highlands action plan, there does not seem to be a specific focus on funding for Gypsies or Travellers. Might some form of ring-fenced central funding, specifically for that purpose, overcome some of the problems that you have highlighted?

Moira Paton: To start off with, such funding would be crucial but, in the long term, I am not sure that special funding would be the right way to go about things. In a sense, that would be discriminatory. Everybody is entitled to a decent health service. However, to start with, special funding would be needed.

On the subject of training, one of the most powerful things to have happened in Highland recently was a presentation by two young Travellers to the joint committee for children and young people, which is a committee of Highland Council and Highland health services. The two young Travellers spoke about their experiences and it made a powerful impact on the policy makers, who have since vowed to do something about it.

Similarly, in Highland over the past few years, much work has been done by people who have experienced mental ill health and who have used the mental health services. Those people have been instrumental in changing people's attitudes. I am not sure whether what is required is training, or face-to-face awareness raising with people who experience stigma and discrimination and who can talk about the impact that that has had on their lives. The latter way seems to be pretty successful. If we get innovation fund money, we would like to see travelling people working with local health care co-operatives and other health care providers and talking about the experiences that they have suffered at the hands of the health services, and about how things could be made better.

Mr McMahon: Dr McNicol mentioned a doctor's statement on why a person would not be treated. If that doctor said that the person would not be treated because of the colour of his skin, would you have taken action against that doctor? If you would have taken action in those circumstances, why not take action when the comment is made against a Traveller? Is not that, in itself, discrimination?

Dr McNicol: A problem that we have in general practice, especially in remote and rural areas, is that we deal with very few professionals and we must work together. At the moment, I am involved in a case against Argyll and Bute Council. I am reluctant to be involved in that case, because I have to work with the council to get houses and social services for people. If that case—which involves appalling discrimination against a child—comes to court, that will lead to animosity between

me and people with whom I work. When we hear the odd casual, ignorant comment, we must say that it is merely ignorance. I do not deal very much with that surgeon.

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): In the submissions from the Highland Health Board and from Dr McNicol, great regret is expressed about the drying up of funding. Is it possible to make a difference without specific funding, or is funding absolutely necessary?

Dr McNicol: We have had three lots of funding since 1995. We received £300 in 1995, which started things off. We received £10,000 for a year to fund the health facilitator, and two years after that we received from Highland Health Board a one-off payment of £15,000. Those lumps of money took things forward dramatically. However, when they dried up we were left with raised expectations and raised needs, but an inability to satisfy them.

Mr McMahon: Many submissions to the committee have suggested that some Gypsy/Travellers are aware of service provision, but that others are not. There is obviously an information gap. Are you aware of that, and do you have any ideas on how information could be made more readily available to the travelling community, to ensure that they know what services the health board provides?

Janet Williams: There is a role for some kind of outreach worker, who would go and see people when they arrived in an area and make them aware of the facilities that were available, if they wanted to make use of them. That worker would need to be somebody with some sort of knowledge of, and sympathy with, travelling people's lifestyles, so that he or she would be acceptable to them.

The Convener: In your presentation, Dr McNicol, you said that the average life expectancy was 55 for Gypsy/Travellers, which strikes me as being very low. I imagine, although I do not know, that that figure will be lower than the life expectancy in even the most deprived settled communities.

Dr McNicol: Yes.

The Convener: To put that figure of 55 into perspective, what is the average Scottish life expectancy? Do you know of any other country or community where life expectancy is 55?

Dr McNicol: To answer the second question first, life expectancy in the Indian subcontinent, with all its problems, is slightly lower than 55; I think that it is around 49. In Scotland as a whole women live, on average, into their early 80s, and men until they are about 75. In the settled community of north Argyll, women live into their

mid or late 80s, and men are living into their early 80s. There is, therefore, a vast contrast between the travelling community and other people who live in the same environment.

The Convener: Is the figure of 55 the average life expectancy throughout Scotland?

Dr McNicol: No—that is the figure for the group that I know. This is one of the problems—cohesive information is very difficult to come by. The extended family that I have been dealing with for over 20 years has an average life expectancy of 55.

The Convener: As there are no further questions, I thank the witnesses for coming along to speak to the committee today and for their written submission.

Our next witnesses are Ann Carnachan and Jane Baker from Falkirk Council. Welcome to the Equal Opportunities Committee. I understand that you would like to make a brief submission and then take questions.

Jane Baker (Falkirk Council): Thank you, convener—I am very glad to have the opportunity to explain something of the work and the development in which the Travellers' support teachers service is involved.

One of the reasons that the committee gave for wanting to hear from what we in Falkirk Council call BATPUSS—the bilingual and Traveller pupil support service—was that we work both with bilingual and Traveller pupils and their families. I therefore thought that it might be useful to describe briefly the past, present and future of our service.

The Traveller project was set up in the early 1980s by Central Regional Council and Save the Children. Three teachers were employed: two worked from a mobile classroom and one was peripatetic in schools. At that time, there was also a separate group of EAL teachers—teachers of English as an additional language—but both groups came under the umbrella of one advisory teacher.

At that time, there were 70 unofficial sites in the region. Gradually the situation changed, and three official Traveller sites were set up in Falkirk, Stirling and Alva in Clackmannanshire. When the original funding ended, Central Region took over the project. A new mobile classroom was then provided, but it was decided to use it for secondary-age Traveller children only, as more primary-age Travellers were attending school by that time. By the early 1990s, increasing numbers of Travellers, including some secondary-age Traveller children, were attending school. Given that situation, it was decided to concentrate support in schools. Meanwhile, the number of

bilingual pupils was increasing, and Traveller support teachers began to take on some bilingual pupils for practical and logistical reasons. Thus the two services merged.

Falkirk Council's BATPUSS now has four teachers and one full-time and two part-time bilingual home-school liaison workers. Falkirk has two Traveller sites—one council-run and one private—and a growing number of housed Travellers, with only the occasional roadside encampment. Two teachers work with families on each site and support housed Travellers as well. Much of our work was outlined in our initial response to the committee, so I shall not repeat that. We visit sites regularly to make contact with the families and to encourage and facilitate enrolment in school, and we support pupils and schools in a variety of ways.

Many Traveller parents in our area now enrol their children themselves in local primary schools, and organise their own transport. However, Falkirk Council provides free transport, where necessary, for primary-age pupils, and we help to arrange that. Most of our primary-age Traveller children attend school and attendance is generally good. However, difficulties arise at the primary-secondary transfer stage. We try to address those difficulties in different ways, which I would be happy to elaborate on.

Each site has a multi-agency liaison group, which meets to exchange information and to try to improve conditions and services for the families on the sites. The service also does an annual survey of bilingual and Traveller pupils in schools. Although we have a range of support measures, we are aware of the issues and shortfalls that we have to address. Falkirk Council education service is currently carrying out a best-value review of the council's services to ethnic minority and Traveller families. It has consulted schools, pupils and parents, and its findings will help to shape our future plans.

Speaking of the future, it behoves all of us in education to be as innovative as possible and to link with many local and national initiatives to be able to give the best possible provision and service to Travellers. It is equally important that we enable Travellers to access the education that they need and want, not only through schools but through lifelong learning as well. At the moment, we have funding to research what Traveller parents want for their secondary-age children, and initial interviews have already brought several interesting issues to light.

With money from the inclusion strand of the excellence fund, the education service has purchased laptop computers and hopes to set up a base for secondary-age Travellers in the area. We shall be taking part in a training day on

Compact Club 2000 early next session. Two of our team have had videoconferencing training and the authority is now considering the purchase of equipment to enable us to facilitate distance learning for Travellers in the future.

The need for staff development on Traveller issues has been identified by the best-value review process, and we intend to put that into the staff development programme for next session. We recognise the need to make closer links with the careers service, our local college and community education to provide a more relevant and appropriate service to Traveller teenagers in particular and to adults. We have looked at the recommendations contained in the ninth term report of the Advisory Committee on Scotland's Travelling People to see how far we are meeting them and what further work is needed.

I hope that that has given you a useful overview of the history of our service, our present operation and some of the ideas that we have for the future.

10:45

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands)

(Con): A number of submissions have referred to the need for a clear education strategy for Gypsies and Travellers. Would you outline the approaches or specific education services that, in your view, should be provided for Gypsy/Travellers by each local authority? Should those approaches focus on the integration of Gypsies and Travellers into mainstream schooling, or on the provision of specialist education services to support children on sites or roadsides or to support families in providing home education for their children?

Jane Baker: I will answer your latter question first. During the seven years that I have been involved with Travellers, I have come to realise that one cannot make a single provision. When I first came into the job, I thought that one should encourage Travellers into school—especially secondary-age Travellers, for whom the problems seem to be more apparent—and provide support there. However, through experience, I have increasingly come to realise that, although that is possible and appropriate for some children, one has to look at provision case by case. In some cases, children will go into secondary school. In other cases, other provision has to be made, and that is what our service does.

At present, we have one secondary-age Traveller pupil attending secondary school regularly. I also have two Traveller boys who come into a secondary school but are not part of the mainstream school. I work with them separately, one morning a week. Another colleague does something very similar with three Travellers in another secondary school in Falkirk. We have

another boy who was in one of our secondaries until about a year ago. He went down to England and has come back, but we are having difficulty getting him back in, so we are now working with the school that he will go to, trying to provide some part-time schooling for him. We hope gradually to integrate him back into the school. We have to look at each case individually and give the appropriate support where possible.

Some of the measures that I outlined for the future may also help to address those problems.

Mr McGrigor: Do you have any more to say on the first part of my question, about the approaches or specific education services provided by each local authority?

Jane Baker: We have recently been instrumental in setting up the Traveller education network, known as the TE net. Teachers from the Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, central Scotland and Fife come together every two or three months. We have only just started, but it is clear that provision is very different around the country. There is not the same provision in every area, and approaches are very different, but I think that that is quite healthy, because people are responding to local needs. We can also learn from each other about the provision that is being made available in different areas.

Mr McGrigor: Funding for special educational services elsewhere in the UK has been raised in some submissions. In your view, should funding for Traveller education services be centrally co-ordinated and ring-fenced, or should funding be the responsibility of the local authorities?

Ann Carnachan (Falkirk Council): Local authorities already provide a range of funding, such as the funding for the support that we provide through BATPUSS. The excellence fund, which now has a specific strand to support inclusive approaches, has provided other opportunities. As Jane Baker said, we are using some of that funding to look at different ways of providing education, through distance and flexible learning packages, for example.

That funding is very helpful for trying out new ideas, pump-priming or piloting projects. However, once it has been decided that an approach is good and effective, it is important that long-term support and funding is available. Funding should either be made available for specific purposes, or there should be an assurance that sufficient resources are provided through the normal funding to local authorities to ensure that those good ideas can be sustained. Lots of pump-primed projects are not sustainable in the long term. We are not talking about an excellence fund for three years to support certain objectives and ideas; we are talking about long-term provision, which needs to

be sustained.

Mr McGrigor: In addition to funding, what else is needed to encourage local authorities to provide appropriate education and support? For example, submissions have referred to overt racism in the education system, to staff attitudes in schools and to bullying in school playgrounds and corridors. What is needed to tackle racism and discrimination in schools?

Jane Baker: Falkirk Council has an anti-bullying policy and every school also has to have one. Because we have the two sites, the receiving schools that regularly have Travellers are supportive and alert to the problems that can arise. That is not to say that there is no bullying—there is bullying everywhere and we cannot get away from that. Recently, there has been a serious case of bullying involving a Traveller pupil. She was a regular attender at her secondary school but moved to another secondary school, at which bullying again took place. However, with a lot of help and support from a colleague in my team and from the school, the problem has been overcome. The girl has been fed back in to school through the supported unit that the school has and is now happily attending again. We must be aware that bullying is a big issue but that, with support and awareness, such problems can be overcome.

I do not know how much information you want, but, in central Scotland, there is a racial attacks and harassment multi-agency strategy. All the services in central Scotland have had training in that and any incidents can be reported to RAHMAS and monitored and taken further through the police if necessary.

Strategies are in place, but that does not mean that all problems can be solved. Bullying is an important issue for parents and affects how they think about the suitability of a school for their children. We have to tell them about the strategies that are in place and demonstrate that we can support their children in schools. By and large, schools are aware of the problems and are supportive. They try their best.

Elaine Smith: I want to explore further issues relating to secondary education. You mentioned something about laptop computers. Following on from what Jamie McGrigor was asking, are you talking about having separate provision? What role is there for information technology—the internet and computers, for example—in the distance learning that you talk about?

Your submission mentions that Travellers would like individual tutoring for their secondary-age children in their homes. Is that because of problems with bullying or does it go beyond that? If Travellers moved, such provision would have to tie up with various local authority agencies.

Jane Baker: Staff numbers mean that the question of individual tutoring in Travellers' homes is not viable. Because people travel around it is difficult to link up tutoring across the country. We have tried to have a halfway house: we offer individual tutoring—that is basically what I and my colleagues do—but the children come into a secondary school that we use as a base. The children come in for only a short period—perhaps half a morning—and we work with them on core skills such as literacy and numeracy. However, we are aware that they also need core IT skills and that is what we hope to use the laptops and the videoconferencing for.

Those ideas are at a very early stage. I know that some Travellers have had such computer links with their base school, but we are not yet in that position. That kind of thing is a long way down the line, but we need to consider it for the future. If a pupil with whom we were working had a laptop, we could keep in touch and keep the work going.

Elaine Smith: You say that Travellers do not regard secondary education as relevant to their culture or needs. You also spoke about vocational education, literacy and numeracy. What about further education for young Gypsy/Travellers? Research by the Edinburgh youth social inclusion partnership has shown that a main focus should be on supporting further education for young Gypsy/Travellers. What is your view on encouraging greater take up of further education and training by those young people?

Jane Baker: That goes back to what I said earlier about forging closer links, as has been done with our local college in Falkirk. It also goes back to community education. At the moment, there is a gap. The children leave primary school and may drop out. They could be picked up at that point, and programmes could be worked out for them with community education or through the college. However, sometimes we lose them and we lose contact.

A much more coherent plan is needed for the children, to continue their education or to move them into work that they want to do. Travellers have many skills, a fact that sometimes goes unrecognised. We sometimes seem to think that the only skills we can get come through going to school but, of course, Travellers have many skills. Those skills may need to be certificated, to help the Travellers go on to further courses. We also need to share information, but to do that we must have closer links.

Elaine Smith: You seem to be suggesting that there is a problem with joined-up inter-agency working.

Jane Baker: Yes.

Linda Fabiani: I have two brief questions. The

first is straightforward. Why did Falkirk Council decide to combine the bilingual and the Traveller teaching services?

Jane Baker: As I said at the beginning, that decision was taken before my time. At that time, more of the children were going to school and there was less need for the mobile classroom. Traveller teachers were going to one school where there were Travellers. An EAL teacher was going to the same school to provide support for bilingual pupils. I think that people considered the arrangement and decided that, logistically and practically, it did not make sensible use of people's time. Teachers therefore took on each other's pupils and covered certain schools. For instance, I cover two high schools in our area and the primary schools in Grangemouth and Bo'ness. We have split the area between us.

Linda Fabiani: Have you found that to be a sensible way of working?

Jane Baker: At first, I thought that it could be problematic. With most bilingual pupils, the timetable is fixed. By and large, the pupils attend regularly—although they may go away for heritage visits to their own country—and the teachers work to a timetable. With Travellers, however, we need to be very flexible because of their movements and because of the time that it can sometimes take to work out arrangements with Travellers and schools. I can now see that, with funding, Falkirk Council can have a team of teachers who can respond when need arises.

We cannot have people sitting doing nothing. For example, if one of our sites was closed and not many Traveller pupils were in school, the teachers would not have much to do. As a result of the current arrangements, we can juggle things.

Linda Fabiani: The booklet that you provided notes that there is no cover for teachers from the unit who are off sick or away. How does that work in practice?

Jane Baker: That is a difficulty. Fortunately, it has not proved to be a long-term problem, as there have been just some instances of general sickness. That said, it would be very difficult for a supply teacher to come in for a week and pick up our work. For a start, they have to know the area, the schools and the children.

Linda Fabiani: My last question follows on from Elaine Smith's point. Your submission says:

"Secondary education is not regarded by the travellers as relevant to their culture or needs."

I find that statement somewhat prescriptive. What informs it?

Jane Baker: That statement is a bit prescriptive; I do not think that we can generalise in that way.

Some secondary school-age pupils are going through the education system, and what we need to do is consider each child's particular needs.

11:00

Mr McMahon: My question is not unrelated to the question that Linda Fabiani just asked. Although we have asked about where and how education is provided, we do not yet know what sort of education should be provided. That might be the crux of the problem. From what we have heard, some of the Traveller community believe that all that is required is a good level of literacy and numeracy. Is enough being done to encourage local authorities to ensure that education is appropriate in the eyes of the Traveller community, instead of the local authorities?

Ann Carnahan: It is very difficult to be prescriptive about what everyone should do. As Jane Baker has pointed out, local circumstances and needs will determine provision. As part of our service review, we have talked to pupils, parents and the local community to get a better handle on the kind of educational provision that parents and children are looking for and whether the support that they receive from BATPUSS is the kind of support they want. Interestingly, although parental views are very important, we are being asked to listen to the voices of young people more and more. We must balance what the parents and young people might be saying; they might or might not be saying the same thing, and we need to respond appropriately to those views.

Jane Baker mentioned that one of the schools is researching more fully the views of the young people's parents in that area. Those extensive interviews will help to inform more fully the sort of provision that people want. The question then is whether we can do more in future to introduce packages that allow young people to access learning through the internet or by keeping in touch with their local school or any centre that can provide on-line tutoring. We would have to ensure that the young people have the IT skills to do that; however, there is a certain unwillingness to engage with such an idea, and we want to find out how it can be developed.

Mr McMahon: It has been suggested that a national forum could be set up to consider issues that affect the Traveller community and to bring together education, social services and the health service. Does that idea have any merit?

Jane Baker: Yes, I think so. However, although such a forum should work at a national level, it should also operate locally. People must be aware of the national picture and how matters are being tackled in other areas, but service heads and

people from the different services should come together at a local level.

The Convener: I do not think that there are any other questions. I thank you both for coming along and giving evidence to the committee today.

Next we have another panel of representatives from Save the Children, the Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association and the Scottish Travellers Consortium to give evidence to the committee.

I thank you all for coming along to give evidence to the committee. I understand that you have agreed a speaking order among yourselves and that Mark Kennedy will kick off. There will be short submissions and then members will ask questions.

Mark Kennedy (Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association): Good morning. I thank you for allowing us to come here to conclude what started what seems a long time ago—nearly a year. I also thank those members of the committee who went to the sites and took the time and had the courtesy to speak to people.

I will start with a wee bit of good news, which may not be very big for other people but is certainly a massive success for some people who live on sites and is totally the result of MSPs' visits: people were given keys to a barrier. That may not sound like much but, believe me, it is major.

I have been asked to make a request and ask a question. The request is that people who are writing down "Gypsy/Traveller" please use capital letters. I am a Gypsy. There are many people in Scotland who do not seem to think that there are such things as Gypsies in Scotland, but I am one. The only reason that I have ever used the word "Traveller" was not to offend the settled community. As long as people hide behind the word Traveller, it takes away from my culture and allows other people not to take responsibility for things that they ought to do.

There are many Gypsy/Travellers who have a high expectation of the recommendations that may come from the committee and how those recommendations may be placed before the Scottish Executive. The question that I have been asked to put to the committee is: given that the Scottish Executive has refused consistently since its inception to meet Gypsy/Travellers, to speak to them or to answer them by letter or telephone, how, in the bright new world of social inclusion, can we expect the committee to get any further?

I speak as the vice chair of the Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association. The Executive has completely ignored us, although we are a national body, and has taken away what little funding we had. There are many people here who will help Gypsy/Travellers. That is really nice of you—I say

that with sincerity. Thank you. However, unless we are allowed to help ourselves, unless we are allowed to challenge decisions that are made locally and nationally and unless we are able to speak with one voice, there will be another committee inquiry 10 years down the line and in 20 years our grandchildren will be sitting around a table discussing this matter like we are. Until the Executive takes a lead for all councils and health authorities in Scotland, there is no chance of joined-up thinking.

Catriona Young (Scottish Travellers Consortium): I am an outreach worker in Argyll and Lochaber for the Scottish Travellers Consortium. I thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

I wish to speak about the work in the area that we cover, and, with the consent of the people involved, about a couple of cases. I started work with the consortium in the autumn of 1999. One of the first travelling families I met was a woman and her two sons who lived in a council house in Kinlochleven, which is a small village at the head of Loch Leven, in the west Highlands. The family had lived there since 1996. From the start of their tenancy, they were subjected to racist attacks and abuse: excrement was regularly put through their letter box; visiting family members had their vehicles systematically vandalised; and petrol was poured through their letter box and set alight. The younger son was bullied relentlessly. That bullying culminated in his being hung by his ankles over a bridge 20ft above the river. The mother was on anti-depressants and experienced weight loss due to the anxiety that she was suffering. Every day, members of the family were called "dirty black tinks".

Eventually, of course, the boys retaliated. However, rather than being viewed by the authorities as the victims that they clearly were, they were seen as the perpetrators and instigators and, as a result, are now within the legal system. Highland Council has consistently refused to acknowledge that any of the abuse that the family suffered was racist in nature, despite the in-depth support from and involvement of Grampian Racial Equality Council. The family left their home in September last year when the problem became so severe that they could no longer remain in the village.

The family then travelled while waiting for the council to secure some form of temporary accommodation for them. Securing such accommodation proved "impossible" according to the Highland Council. The council eventually acquired a substandard trailer, which it put in a local authority Traveller site for the use of the family. The family remain there today.

Although the family are council tenants and will

be rehoused at some stage, the urgency with which the case is being dealt is questionable. The family has no transport, the nearest shop is two miles away and public transport in the west Highlands is all but non-existent. It seems incredibly unjust that after suffering for four years, the family could not expect to receive the same service that any other council tenant would expect—to be adequately temporarily rehoused while awaiting a permanent offer of new accommodation.

The second case that I would like to discuss involves a roadside local authority site in Lochaber. The site sits on the A828, which is the main road between Oban and Fort William. The site faces north-west and has been built in a disused quarry. It gets very little sunshine at any time of the year—the sun never reaches further than the site's second caravan bay. Winter brings sub-zero temperatures to the quarry, with thick icicles permanently hanging off the cliff face surrounding the caravan bays.

One of the residents on the site is an elderly gent who lives alone, although he has his family around him. He has lived on the site for many years, and had an old static trailer, with a coal-burning stove that made his home warm and comfortable to live in.

In the spring of 1999, Scottish Hydro-Electric was blasting rock above the quarry to lay new power lines. No warnings were given to the residents on the site that that was happening, and no evacuations were planned. When the man returned from buying his groceries in Fort William one day, he discovered that his home had been partly demolished by a huge rock that had been blasted over the cliff face.

Highland Council refused to make any provision for the man, despite the fact that he had been made homeless and was in priority need. He was then offered temporary bed-and-breakfast accommodation in Fort William. Such accommodation would be unsuitable for most of us, but particularly for an elderly, infirm man who was expected to vacate the accommodation by 10 am each day and not return until after 4 pm.

This man chose the only option that he had: to cover the trailer with tarpaulin and make good what he could. He lived in those conditions for a whole year and throughout an extremely cold winter. When I insisted after many requests that the housing department visit the man at home, a housing officer arrived, handed me a housing form and promptly left. She was too busy to fill in the form with him.

During that time, the man found a local solicitor who was willing to deal with his case. Eventually, he received a meagre offer of compensation from

the electricity company, which he accepted. With that compensation, he could afford only a small touring caravan that had none of the luxuries that he had had previously, such as a coal-burning stove. He remains on the council waiting list but, in his own words, "has given up any idea of ever getting a house".

Those are two examples of many cases with which I work in the west Highlands. They highlight the lack of any cohesive package for that community. There are no community care packages or homeless strategies. Nothing is in place and that is unacceptable.

The Convener: Thank you.

11:15

Elizabeth Johnstone (Save the Children): My name is Elizabeth Johnstone and I am a Gypsy. I have had to move into a house as a result of personal circumstances. For the past eight or nine years, I have done voluntary work with Save the Children, which has been good experience that I can pass on to friends and family.

I have been on training courses on self-esteem and violence towards women. As a trainer, I have held a few awareness training seminars with the police, teachers, doctors and social workers, for example, at which we have spoken about how Travellers face discrimination and how they are treated. Those seminars are useful because people learn that we are all human beings and that everyone should be treated with respect.

A couple of years ago, I carried out research to prove that Travellers do not have equal rights when they try to get into holiday caravan sites. I collected opinions that showed the kind of discrimination that we face. Usually, Travellers are not asked for such opinions.

I have helped out at health education sessions for young Traveller girls. As I am a Traveller and a Gypsy, those sessions gave the girls more confidence. I enjoyed the experience because I found out helpful and useful things. Such work has meant that I am able to understand many things much better. I can pass my experience down to my children who will not need to take a back seat in future and will be able to know what is right and what is wrong. They will be able to speak up for themselves.

I have learned a lot about rights and wrongs that I can pass on to friends and family. Travellers have come to me for advice and we help each other. I enjoy my work.

The Convener: Thank you. Are there any other statements, or will I take questions?

Mark Kennedy: There are a couple of

statements, but we will keep them brief.

The Convener: Members have many questions.

Mark Kennedy: As all the witnesses have turned up, we had better let them speak or I will be slaughtered.

Margaret Gregg (Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association): I am a Gypsy and I work as a support worker for the Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association. I have been in my post for seven months. I will talk about the local authorities' lack of consistent policies affecting travelling people. Their allocation policies are discriminatory, because they do not address the cultural needs of Gypsy/Travellers, who need decisions to get on and off sites quickly. The application process to get on sites is tied up in bureaucracy. People must wait weeks or months to find out whether they can get on sites. If the Gypsy/Travellers are on a roadside, it is highly likely that by the time a decision has been made, they will have moved on or been moved on.

Gypsy/Travellers are required to pay deposits before they can join some sites. That is difficult for some poorer families. Rents differ from council to council and can vary by as much as £25 per week, but the amenities on the sites—or lack of them—remain more or less the same. For example, the rent at Swinhill in South Lanarkshire is £36.89 a week, but the rent at Forrest Street in Airdrie, North Lanarkshire, is £59.77. For that money, we receive a plot on which to put our caravans, which we must buy, an outside toilet and electricity, for which local authorities generally set a rate that is higher than the electricity board's rate.

I know of a young person on the Dumbarton site who spends £60 a week on power cards. When I challenged that, I was told that a meter could be installed to check the amount. A meter that was installed and left for a couple of months said that the rate was correct. By no stretch of the imagination can anyone who lives in a calor gas-heated caravan use £60 a week in electricity. The entrance to that site in Dumbarton is like a war zone—it is full of holes. When I speak to the council about the matter, I am told that it will be discussed at further meetings or that the council does not own the road and that other people must take legal advice on it. I speak to the council every week but still nothing has been done.

If I stayed on a council housing estate and I had constantly to drive my car on a damaged road, it would not be long before the council carried out the repairs, because I would seek compensation for the damage to my car. If I take up residents' complaints, I am pushed from pillar to post. Decisions are made and changed daily at the discretion of the housing managers, site wardens and a variety of local management.

I would like legislation to be introduced to give Gypsy/Travellers the same statutory rights as anyone else has, so that they are not subject to the discretion of people who are well intentioned but have no idea of the cultural and social needs of Gypsy/Travellers.

Rebecca McKinney (Scottish Travellers Consortium): I am a researcher at the Scottish Travellers Consortium. My submission to the committee was about education, and I recently completed a report about education issues for Gypsy/Travellers. However, the committee has heard quite a bit about education, so I will make some points about ethnic minority status. It might be a little more useful to talk about that briefly.

As members may know, the Race Relations Act 1976 recognises Gypsies, and more recently Irish Travellers, as ethnic minorities. The Commission for Racial Equality regards Scottish Travellers as an ethnic minority, but a test case has never established their standing under the act. The SGTA and STC argue that making legal distinctions between Gypsies and Travellers in Scotland is counterproductive, as it affords protection and legitimacy to some segments of what we might call a traditional travelling community, while denying them to other segments.

I read the *Official Report* of the committee's discussion on ethnic minority status with Betty Jordan a few weeks ago. I agree with her statement that the matter is sensitive and must be dealt with carefully, but I feel that many of the arguments that have been floating around have centred on misconceptions about the meaning of the word "ethnicity". I argue that the main and most dangerous example of that misconception is a statement that the Secretary of State for Scotland's advisory committee on travelling people made in its final report last year. The advisory committee said:

"Within the Traveller members of the Committee, there is a clear understanding that the confirmation of such status could provide substantial benefits for the community but there is also a fear that it could drive a wedge between the travelling community and the settled community, at a time where we have a wish for Scottish Travellers to be quintessentially Scottish first and Travellers second."

That statement seems to be founded on the mistaken assumptions that there is something quintessential about Scottishness—which is actually a national rather than an ethnic identity—and that Scottishness cannot accommodate ethnic diversity. The statement also implies that ethnic means foreign, alien or out of place. The racism inherent in such a suggestion should be apparent.

Following contemporary social scientific theory, I argue that ethnicity should not be seen as a fixed identity that is mapped out by objective

characteristics. Just as an individual's understanding of his or her ethnic identity will change over the course of their life, so members of a community will differ, often profoundly, in their ideas about where ethnic boundary lines are to be drawn. Gypsy/Travellers should not be viewed as unique in that way.

At the SGTA and STC, we recognise the diversity of historical and life experience and social and economic circumstance within the Gypsy/Traveller community. We also stress that, whether people call themselves Gypsies or Travellers, whether they are from the Borders or the west Highlands, whether they live in a house or by the road side, the people we have worked with all share the same experience of pervasive racism—both popular and institutional—against Gypsies and Travellers. We do not think that the legal recognition of ethnic identity would increase the incidence of that racism or, as the advisory committee suggested, drive a wedge between travelling people and the settled community, as the wedge already exists. On the other hand, a change in the law might afford protection to individuals who wish to use the law and could be used as a tool in their fight for greater awareness and appreciation of their culture and their on-going nomadic lifestyles.

Linda Graham (Scottish Travellers Consortium): I want the process that the committee has been involved in to result in some sort of legislative framework or guidance—bearing in mind what Rebecca McKinney said—that would govern the lives of Gypsy/Travellers. At the moment, when people cross council or health board boundaries, they receive different treatment and various levels of services.

Working individually, as part of the Scottish Travellers Consortium and in conjunction with the other Gypsy/Traveller-led organisations, members of my organisation are able to examine service providers throughout Scotland. The service providers fall into a number of categories. There are the good, the bad and the indifferent. Even a good service provider that is trying hard to meet people's needs finds that the lack of a legislative framework and guidance from the top makes doing so difficult. For example, I know that eight councils and one police force have tried individually to work out a policy for camping that will comply with human rights legislation. When we talk to councillors and the police in liaison groups, we are always asked what people in other areas are doing. We find that we spend a lot of time telling people what people across the council borders are doing. We do not mind doing that—in fact, we welcome that role—but there should also be some national guidelines. We might otherwise end up with eight good, but differing, camping policies and no provision in other council areas.

The issue touches all levels of service. At the moment, a health board is piloting hand-held health records for Gypsy/Travellers. That might deal with some of the issues that Dr McNicol raised. Gypsy/Travellers would be able to take their records with them and so the details of the medication that they need would be available at all times. That would make services more accessible, but if only one health board is doing that, the other health boards will have to decide whether they will use and fill in the hand-held records.

That health board really wants national hand-held health records, which is what other councils have also been asking for. One health board, in an area that has many people passing through, has developed the hand-held records and distributed them to Gypsy/Travellers. That health board will end up supplying the whole of Scotland, because sooner or later an awful lot of people will have been down in that area camping. However, that is clearly an unfair distribution of resources for that health board, so we need a legislative framework and guidance to clear up such issues.

11:30

A legislative framework and guidance would give us the sticks with which to beat bad service providers. Catriona Young spoke about casework. Casework can be taken so far, but there is no law that says how casework should work. There is no law to say that there should be a clear process for getting people on to a site or to say whether people should be allowed to camp at the side of the road. Some clear-cut law, as well as guidance from the centre, would make our individual casework and development work much easier, especially when we are dealing with bad service providers and discrimination.

Service providers should have to consult Gypsy/Travellers. Indifferent service providers simply do not contact us. As Margaret Gregg said, we get ignored, we get the runaround, and we get referred to different people in different departments. If social inclusion and all the Scottish Parliament's great and grand ideas are to mean anything, there must be direct contact with the people who receive services. That should be written into legislation. All councils—the good, the bad and the indifferent—should consult Gypsy/Travellers meaningfully, in order to provide services that are relevant to their needs.

We would like to see a legislative framework and some central guidance come out of the committee's inquiry.

The Convener: Thank you.

Michelle Lloyd (Save the Children): I am second from the end of the committee's list of witnesses, which you will be pleased to know,

convener. I have given a written submission and various appendices, so I will be brief.

The committee's inquiry is a long overdue opportunity to review current policies and practices. In consultation with Gypsies and Travellers—as Linda Graham said—we hope that positive ways forward will be developed. All Save the Children's work is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which values children and young people as citizens and recognises that they are entitled to fundamental rights and are capable of expressing opinions and participating in life.

Although we still provide some outreach services and engage in policy work, Save the Children has—since the inception of the Scottish Travellers Consortium—concentrated on working with young Gypsies and Travellers—partly because young people's views are often subsumed into the views of adults, or are neglected altogether. Most members of the committee will, I am sure, agree that account should be taken of the views of all groups in any planning and decision-making process—especially those groups who are without power or a voice. However, the exercise of young people's participation rights depends on access, ability and availability of the means to exercise those rights.

Save the Children has, in order to advance the rights of participation of young Gypsy/Travellers, promoted a variety of initiatives at local, national and international level. At local level those initiatives include the provision of advocacy and support for a family with a disabled child who live in rural Scotland. They have been waiting for nearly three years for the provision of basic adaptations and aids, so that that child might have some independence. Other local initiatives might include responding to demands from young Gypsy/Travellers for what have become known as trips. We refer to them in our funding applications as health education work or capacity building work, but I am sure that the young people would just recognise them as trips.

At national level, we have—to give but one example—been involved in supporting young people in carrying out some peer research, which formed the basis of a report that was submitted to the committee last November. Some of those young people will present further evidence next Tuesday.

At international level, young people have had a small number of quite significant opportunities to give presentations to some of the United Nations committees in Geneva. A study visit to Bulgaria has taken place and some of my colleagues in our London office are gathering data for a European report on the denial of the right to education for Gypsy/Travellers.

As the committee will no doubt appreciate, there are no quick-fix solutions to the difficulties that are faced by Gypsy/Travellers today, because the problems are interconnected and multifaceted. Before any of those issues can be properly addressed, there is an urgent need to recognise the prejudice that is faced and to make a commitment to challenge the discrimination that has, for many young Gypsy/Travellers, become a feature of everyday life.

As Linda Graham said, given the cumulative effect of that, a co-ordinated approach at senior level is needed. Such a strategic approach must have clear direction, the active involvement of a range of Gypsy/Travellers and must include a broad public-education media campaign and the development of training resources for the use of community workers and others. Elizabeth Johnstone spoke about the value of some of the awareness-raising training in which she has been involved. A number of Gypsy/Travellers have become very accomplished trainers, but training needs to be expanded and formalised.

Aside from the moral argument, it could be argued that there is a need to address seriously the difficulties that are faced by Gypsy/Travellers. To do so is no longer an option for public authorities—it is a legal requirement. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a statutory duty on all public authorities to promote equal opportunities and to consult with different groups and societies. Gypsies and Travellers should be part of that process. The cynic in me says that that will not happen unless there is clear direction from the top, or until legal challenges are made through the courts.

The current Government has already recognised how inequality and marginalisation can build up over time, which results in social exclusion. At Save the Children, we argue that the social exclusion that is faced by Gypsies and Travellers is acute. The examples of casework that members have heard today and in previous evidence are not one-off incidents. Such incidents are faced day in, day out by Gypsy/Travellers. Without a significant change in policy and legislation, Gypsy/Travellers are likely to remain among the most excluded groups in Scottish society.

The Convener: Thank you. Because of the number of witnesses who are present today from a number of different organisations, I will go round the table and invite members to ask all their questions, and to say to whom each question is addressed.

Mr McGrigor: As Gypsy/Travellers want to travel, especially during the summer months, can Mr Kennedy tell us about the importance of transit sites, in view of the fact that I am told that a lot of the roadside camping sites have been closed.

Mark Kennedy: I have a short story for members. Thirty years ago, we were on a site in the middle of nowhere. The army came along and decided to use the site for bullet practice. An officer appeared on the site, moved the entire encampment, found it somewhere to go and escorted us to the new site. Today they would just send for the polis.

As the suburbs have grown and people have become much more inward looking, people now do not want Gypsies and Travellers in their area. It is as simple as that. They think that we will steal their babies and break into their sheds. There might be some who will do that, but I will turn the question around to ask the caravan owners and caravan clubbers, "Why do you go on holiday in your caravans? Why do you hook your caravans on to the back of your wee motors on Good Friday and drive off to lovely caravan sites?" If they could explain why they do that, and why they enjoy the freedom that their caravans give them, people might understand better why we do it. We were born to it; they do it out of choice. Mr McGrigor's question would be better answered by those people than it would by us.

The Convener: Are you finished, Jamie?

Mr McGrigor: Further to that answer, I am told that there are not enough transit sites.

Mark Kennedy: There are none.

Mr McGrigor: Do you think that there should be some transit sites?

Mark Kennedy: There should be provision for stopping places. I grew up when it was possible to stop in a lay-by and on the landed gentry's estates, where provision was made for camps. As children, we camped on Sir Alec Douglas Hume's estate, but the land has been closed off. Because the suburbs have grown, the space has decreased. The City of Edinburgh Council has spent nearly 27 years looking for a second site, which it has refused to build. John Prescott said that brown-field sites should be used, but Edinburgh does not have any.

People must look within themselves and ask whether they are truly willing to provide sites. Most people in this room would not want a Gypsy/Traveller site next door to them, and the Church of Scotland does not think that one should be established next door to it. If the Church of Scotland makes that kind of distinction, how can we judge other people? Why would anyone want Gypsy/Traveller sites in their area? They are entitled to a peaceful life, and Gypsy/Travellers will only disrupt it. The answer to your question is that there should be more transit sites, but there will not be.

Elaine Smith: I have two questions, the first of

which I address to Linda Graham. Is it important to have national guidance on inter-agency working? What about the development of Gypsy/Traveller working groups in each local authority and statutory agency area? Would it be useful to have designated Gypsy/Traveller liaison officers in each local authority or statutory agency area?

Linda Graham: Yes. Gypsy/Traveller liaison officers might be useful, but that would depend on the background and the context in which they were placed. If they were placed in a statutory service, the focus of their work would be in a housing department, an education department or whatever. I would rather have Gypsy/Traveller liaison groups sitting in the voluntary sector—in Save the Children and the SGTA—because they would work better if they were orientated towards the community. There must be a two-way interface.

There is always a danger when liaison officers are put in place that organisations such as ours can become a safe alternative to talking to real Gypsy/Travellers. People phone us up to say that they need to visit a site and to ask us to accompany them. Why? They are not even people who go on to do negative things. If somebody from the council went to a site to say, "Get shifted now", I would understand that that person might feel a bit threatened. However, even people who are going to say, "Hi. I am from the school. Would you like your kids to attend?" want us to escort them, hold their hands and make it nice and safe for them. Therefore, there is a danger in establishing liaison organisations.

There should be national and local guidelines, consultation and liaison groups. The Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association is redesigning itself into regional committees, whereby a number of Gypsy/Traveller volunteers in each area will be able to provide Traveller awareness training and speak to different service providers and liaison groups. It is difficult to take people along to their first council meeting. We can tell them that it is going to be all right and that they have loads of stuff to talk about, but when they open their mouth the chairperson says, "That is later on the agenda." There must be a structure to involve the Gypsy/Travellers who are to be consulted, which will support them and enable them to see their way through the system. The way in which the committee conducted its investigation was very good: you visited people on their own territory. More organisations should do that before deciding what provision to make.

11:45

Elaine Smith: Thanks very much. My second question is for Catriona Young. I was shocked by the examples that you gave. Laws regarding

homelessness exist, and if both the examples that you gave were of people who were in priority need and unintentionally homeless, they should have been treated as should anybody under the law. Was any explanation given for why proper temporary accommodation was not available for the people whom you cited as examples? Do you think that there is an unwritten rule about dealing with homelessness applications from Gypsy/Travellers? Are they dealt with differently?

Catriona Young: I have received correspondence from the director of housing for Highland Council, who told me that the case of the family that I mentioned was not one of racism—end of story. I was told that, if the woman left that property, she made herself intentionally homeless. The local housing manager, however, decided that she was not making herself intentionally homeless and he sympathised enough to recognise that she had to leave. However, because of the response of the director of housing, the only option for that woman was for the Grampian racial equality worker—who was working outwith her catchment area—to take her case on as a goodwill case because she was so concerned by the circumstances.

Elaine Smith: The woman was fleeing harassment but was regarded as making herself intentionally homeless.

Catriona Young: Yes. That was Highland Council's decision. The legislation exists and the woman's case would eventually have been taken up, but she would have had to be a test case and to prove that the harassment was real. As a mother, she was not prepared—she is still not prepared—to go through the legal process that that would involve.

Likewise, the elderly gentleman of whom I spoke did not make himself intentionally homeless. A two-tonne boulder crashed through his caravan, taking half of it away. Nevertheless, it was decided that he could live in the other half of the caravan—which he did—or accept bed-and-breakfast accommodation as a reasonable offer.

Elaine Smith: Was other accommodation available, such as a homeless unit? Would any homeless applicant have been offered that type of accommodation?

Catriona Young: Yes, although some private sector accommodation can be leased. The reason that was given was that it was difficult to find accommodation for those people.

Mark Kennedy: I am handling a case at the moment in which two children were raped, but their mother cannot be re-housed. The Crown Office has been approached. The perpetrators live 200 yards away, but we can get nothing done because the council refuses to grant us a case

conference. We cannot get a judicial review or any kind of help. Perth and Kinross Council has done exactly what Catriona Young has described. We are talking about two small children who were raped by people who are under-age, and who have not been prosecuted. The woman must live 200 yards from the perpetrators because the council refuses to do anything about it. That case has been continuing for four years.

Elaine Smith: Do you think that the council's decision is down to the fact that the family are Gypsies?

Mark Kennedy: I have spoken to the council's housing manager, who says, "These people are taking up too much of our time and the decisions have been made." The council will give the woman private housing, but she will lose her right to a council house. Private letting in her area is limited. Because she is on a low income, her decisions are dictated by what the Benefits Agency will give her for rent if she gets private accommodation. She will lose her place on the housing list because technically she is making herself homeless. The fact that her children have been raped seems to have been missed. The case continues, and right now Perth and Kinross Council is ignoring it.

Elaine Smith: Thank you for bringing those examples to our attention.

Mr McMahon: I have a series of questions, but I will try to be as brief as possible. I had, with Jamie McGrigor, the benefit of visiting with Catriona Young the site in the quarry that has been mentioned. It is a beautiful setting and we visited it on a mild, beautiful and sunny day. However, I must put on record that the visit was one of the coldest and dampest experiences I have ever had.

This question is for Rebecca McKinney. One of the gentlemen to whom we spoke talked—as the witnesses have done—about what he wanted out of the inquiry. He said clearly that if all the inquiry achieves is some people being given ethnic status, the inquiry will have achieved nothing. He said that he could trace his roots back beyond the Jacobites, that he was Scottish, and that no one could change that. He said that if being given ethnic status was all that came out of the inquiry, our visit to the site would not have been worth the time.

Rebecca McKinney: Even if people can trace their ancestry back to the Picts, the whole point is that being Scottish and being an ethnic minority should not be seen as contradictory. To argue that to be part of an ethnic minority a person must be a foreigner of some description is to make a big mistake.

I agree that, if all that happens is a change in a law that no one ever uses, the inquiry will have been a waste of time. However, if the change

gives somebody a tool to fight a case, to make a stand, and to have something done, it will not have been a waste of time. For all the people who might not know what the laws are, or who might choose not to pursue them, there might be one person who will say, "No. I have a legal right. I have a legal case to make and I am going to make it." That might give others more courage to stand up and do the same thing.

Part of the problem that many Gypsy/Travellers have faced is that, when they have tried to make a stand, they have been pushed back down. That makes people feel disempowered. A law that gave people a little power—even if they chose not to use it—would be a positive thing.

Mr McMahon: I happen to agree with you; but if we are to consider the issue in terms of what we want to get out of the inquiry, should we concentrate on service provision or on what causes the denial of access to that service provision? Are they the same thing?

Rebecca McKinney: They are two sides of the same coin.

Mark Kennedy: It has been said that the information in the Scottish national census is for service providers. However, Gypsies and Travellers are not included. In the section on ethnic groups, the category is "other". If you go to anyone from another minority or another cultural background—Asian, Caribbean, Chinese—and ask them what "other" means, they might say, for example, "Scottish Chinese" or "Caribbean Scottish". If we are lumped into a category that has no meaning, and if it is not recognised that Gypsies and Travellers exist in the first place, how will the service providers—who keep being spoken about and who will consider the numbers and then provide services—provide those services? Come 2011, could we be included in the census, please?

Rebecca McKinney: When we press for services that take better account of Gypsies' and Travellers' specific needs, people say that the services are there for everybody and that everybody in Scotland has the same rights to those services. However, because we are talking about a cultural group that has particular lifestyles that some choose to follow and some choose not to follow, there are specific needs that should be taken account of. Legal recognition could help in that.

Mr McMahon: We have spoken about accommodation, education, health and issues relating to the police, but one thing that came through in all the visits that I undertook was the lack of leisure and recreation facilities, especially for children. Michelle Lloyd might be able to comment on her experience of that. How important are such facilities in assisting the Gypsy/Traveller

community to feel that their needs are being met?

Michelle Lloyd: My response might be obvious, but such facilities are vital. A lot of sites are in very undesirable locations that are miles from anywhere and which have many environmental hazards. The children have few areas in which to play. The provision of play equipment on sites, and of a communal meeting place, would go a long way towards meeting some of the needs of families. Some of the work that we have done with young Travellers has been connected with the fact that young Travellers have few opportunities to get together and just have fun. But who will fund that kind of work? You do not put on your grant application that your aim is to have fun; rather, you might—but it would be far down your list.

Very few—I do not know of any—Gypsy/Travellers are involved in any mainstream youth provision. Some community education teams, such as the one here in Edinburgh, make specific efforts to engage with young Gypsy/Travellers. However, very few other examples come to mind from the rest of Scotland.

I would like to add a final point on the ethnic minority debate, as it has become known. I have heard many Gypsy/Travellers say that they do not want to be regarded as ethnic or as a victim. I do not find that surprising. There is a huge misunderstanding about what is actually involved. There is no reason for people to be word perfect on, for example, the Mandla judgment of 1983. Most of us are not. Ethnic minority status does not change who anybody is. It does not change how they regard themselves, how they live their lives, or how they go about their daily business. It is simply a legal mechanism that could be utilised by some families.

I am sure that there are people in other ethnic minority communities in Scotland who do not regard themselves as part of an ethnic minority, or who do not like to be regarded in that way. Nevertheless, the mechanism exists so that they can challenge unfair practices and discrimination.

Mr McMahon: On tackling discrimination and unfair practices, some of the recommendations that we have received have suggested an awareness campaign or a zero tolerance campaign. What is your view on that, and who should lead such a campaign?

Mark Kennedy: The Executive. This is straightforward. The Executive has taken some really courageous decisions over the past couple of years in dealing with certain forms of discrimination. It must follow that through and continue to take the lead, so that councils and everyone who provides services can see what the needs are. People in the Executive—the First Minister and the Minister for Justice—must stand

up and say that discrimination is wrong. MSPs from wacky parties may stand up and say that it is wrong, but no one will listen to them.

If the Parliament does not stand up collectively and say that it is not prepared to accept it, within 10 years most Gypsy/Traveller sites in Scotland will have gone. The harassment and discrimination will have increased 30 times. Scotland will be out of touch with its counterpart, England. The minister responsible for housing in England recently claimed that Gypsy sites in England are a valuable resource. In Scotland, councils are secretly trying to run down Gypsy sites and close them. The Executive has taken no action at all. Councils in Scotland have given evidence to the committee and claimed that everything is fine and wonderful. If members of the committee come with me today, I will show them how wonderful things are. I will show them people who speak to me as though I am a piece of something on their shoes. There is nobody I can turn to. Nobody can tell me where to go. If I wanted to go to the CRE, I would need witnesses. I am very sensitive about such issues.

On the question of giving children play areas and letting them have fun, children can have all the fun in the world, but they must be valued for who they are and allowed to be who they are. All the fun in the world will mean nothing, because they will still have resentments, anger and the disappointment of having to hide who they are. I am 46 years old and am tired of having to hide who I am. I am tired of having to apologise and to speak to well-intentioned people who do not know what they are doing. They say that they are experts. People should ask me—I am an expert. I have 46 years' experience of discrimination.

12:00

Elizabeth Johnstone: I agree with Mark Kennedy. I stay in a house, but I also have to hide what I am. I have had to deny what I am so that my bairns do not get bullied at school. Although I have the same rights as other settler people, I feel like an outcast. I have lost the community of my own family. They are still out on the roads and I do not have anybody close. I am isolated in the house. I do not have a major friend or somebody I could speak to. My bairns say to me, "Ma, why are you saying that? Why do you not say that you are a Traveller?" I have to explain to them that they will face discrimination if we let the settler people know what we are. That is like lying. I have told my bairns to lie, to deny what they are. I should not have to do that. I am not treated the same as a settler person; I have to deny my background so that I can have a quiet life. I tell the bairns to lie so that they can get some education.

Linda Fabiani: It is always difficult for the final

questioner to be original, but I will try to be quick.

Regarding what Elizabeth Johnstone said, I had a stunning experience recently when I was out for lunch with a Gypsy/Traveller. I was amazed by the reactions towards me from local people. It was a strange experience and I can tap in to what Elizabeth said. Only after that lunch did I realise how overt the reactions are within communities in which Travellers have settled. I found the experience unnerving.

Elizabeth Johnstone: I have problems even with teachers and at parents' meetings, for example. My younger son attends hospital regularly. I need to get doctors to explain things so that I can understand them. Many teachers are great with the bairn, but sometimes I feel embarrassed if I have to ask doctors to explain problems more clearly because I do not understand them. I have never been educated in a way that allows me to understand some big words and forms, for example. Thanks to Save the Children and things that I have done with that organisation, I have got over some of those problems, but I still need to approach people for help. I feel embarrassed if I ask for help and people say that they cannot entertain me, or they come up with something because of my accent. They think that I am simply a Traveller. I still face such problems. I feel as though I have horns or am entirely different.

Linda Fabiani: I am trying to know what you mean. The inquiry has been a real learning process for me and I appreciate that.

I had many questions, but the witnesses have answered them in their submissions. The answers about the required national strategy headed, as Mark Kennedy said, by the Executive—of whatever hue—were all clear. Do you have any thoughts on how a national strategy could be implemented? Should the dispersal of services be carried out through the Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association or Save the Children, for example? Should some kind of Executive agency oversee good practice and lay down ways of working in all areas of Scotland and in the different service areas?

Linda Graham: It would be good if the strategy could be implemented through the Scottish Travellers Consortium, which will cease to exist in December 2001. We have three partner groups—the Scottish Human Rights Centre, the Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association and Save the Children. In December, my staff and I will be employed by the Scottish Gypsy Traveller Association, but the partner group is such that the close working between the organisations will continue. Most of the time, we manage to speak in unison—except at partner meetings behind closed doors—and to agree strategies.

Through those organisations and other Gypsy/Traveller-led organisations, we are in a unique position. We are in touch with many different councils and can pass on information. To strengthen and develop that role would be good. We are considering that with our funding and strategy for the next three years.

Michelle Lloyd: In Ireland, the Citizen Traveller campaign is run by a Traveller-led organisation at Pavee Point. I could get more information if members would find that useful. The campaign has received good feedback from Travellers from both Northern Ireland and the Republic. It has attacked the issue at various levels and has involved the media, awareness-raising training and work with service providers. From what everybody has said today, a strategy needs to tackle the issue at all those levels. It would be ineffective if it tackled the issue at only one level.

The Convener: The clerks have e-mailed to ask for information. They have also written to the census issues manager with some questions. That correspondence will be circulated to members.

Linda Fabiani: They are so smart.

The Convener: I want to deal with Mark Kennedy's comments on the problems that he is having with the Scottish Executive. I am happy to meet Mark again to discuss some of those problems and I will report back to the committee on that.

I hope that my grandchildren will not have to deal with such issues here years from now. I do not particularly want them to be politicians; I hope that the inquiry will make a difference. We have probably taken evidence much more thoroughly than anybody else has in the past. That was the result of the committee meeting in May 2000 at which we took the initial evidence. We decided that we wanted to explore more deeply many problems and to take things forward.

I cannot say at this stage what the committee will do with the information. We should be finished taking the evidence around June, when we would hope to produce a report. I suspect that, after the recess, we would use some of the chamber time that the committee is allowed. Depending on the views of the committee, I imagine that we would make a series of recommendations to the Scottish Executive regarding the campaign and the national strategy. We have much more evidence to take, but the evidence that we have heard so far has raised a number of concerns that the committee takes seriously.

The committee is serious about trying to tackle the problems that are faced by the Gypsy/Traveller community. It will, however, be later in the year before we can say what our recommendations are. We will consult on our report and involve people

who have given evidence.

Mark Kennedy: I thank everyone who has participated in the process—those with whom I have agreed and those with whom I have disagreed. I thank the clerks, who have put a lot of work into the process, the MSPs who have taken the time to get involved, the members of this committee and the Gypsy/Travellers who have given their time.

The Convener: Thank you. I will contact you to organise the meeting to discuss the specific issues that you want to raise with the Scottish Executive.

Budget Process 2002-03

The Convener: I apologise to the witnesses for the fact that we are running 40 minutes late. Bob Benson has had to leave to catch a plane but I am sure that Adam Gaines will be able to answer any questions that members might have.

As we are running late, the clerks have suggested that, unless our witnesses have short statements, we could move straight to questions.

Mr McMahon: As we have no specific details from the witnesses' statements to ask about, I will start with a general question that I will address to each organisation.

Do you have a view on whether an equality commission, such as exists in Northern Ireland, would assist with the way in which the Scottish Executive allocates its funds? Would such a commission help you to do your work and would it help in dealing with the issues that you want the Scottish Executive to address?

Tim Hopkins (Equality Network): The main issue for the Equality Network is that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues are not covered by any of the existing statutory commissions. That means that we have few national resources to take a strategic approach to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality or to provide expertise. We are a completely voluntary organisation, which means that Helen Chambers had to take a day out of her annual leave to attend today's meeting—I work part time, so I was able to attend. Lack of resources is a key issue.

LGBT equality has to be covered by law by the end of 2003 and there is a question about how that will be integrated with the other equality work that is being done. However, we do not have a strong view on that. The key issue for us is that, whether that is done by bringing LGBT equality into the remit of one of the other commissions or whether there is a joint equality commission, the focus should not be lost. Expertise should be focused on the specific needs of each of the different equality areas, and the resources should be available. Extra resources will have to be allocated when LGBT equality becomes a statutory requirement, as it will in a couple of years' time.

12:15

Angela O'Hagan (Equal Opportunities Commission): As Tim Hopkins has said, there is a need to maintain expertise and to focus on specific equality issues. The Equal Opportunities Commission's perspective on gender equality can occasionally be lost when equalities are brought

together. In the budget process, methodologies are being developed around gender impact analysis, both by the Executive and, more broadly, in other countries. Taking a gender perspective on the budget is not necessarily the same as taking a perspective from the issues of disability, LGBT or race. It is important that the focus should not be lost.

Another concern is the level of resources. Currently, the statutory equality commissions have varied levels of resources, with the EOC's work on women's equality, or sex equality, being the least well resourced. That is perhaps no surprise, considering the level of priority that is given to sex equality. In bringing together a joint equality commission, how would the different aspects and expertise be resourced?

Mr McMahon mentioned the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. There are mixed views on the success of that joint equality commission. I do not want to be perceived as commenting negatively on the commission's performance; I am talking about the effectiveness of bringing together the equality bodies with the human rights commission. That takes us into an entirely different debate about the status of the commissions and the prospect of a human rights commission in Scotland, as the statutory bodies are considered to be British and not even cross-border public bodies.

Adam Gaines (Disability Rights Commission): The Disability Rights Commission feels that it is important that disability issues are not lost and that the budget process gives them a proper focus. There are specific issues concerning disability, which a joint commission might not take sufficiently into account. Anti-discrimination legislation in relation to disability is still relatively new, and the budget process must recognise the growing number of performance indicators so that disability issues can be properly taken into account across the different departmental budget heads.

Mr McMahon: The way in which financial information is issued does not show how money is spent specifically on equality activities. Do you think that that information is required to allow you to evaluate the effectiveness of equality activity funding?

Adam Gaines: My understanding is that, as part of the equality strategy, performance indicators and work in this field will be considered in the budget process. Currently, the Scottish budget does not do that sufficiently, although one would not expect it to, as the equality strategy sets that out as a measure that will be implemented later this year.

Angela O'Hagan: I would make a distinction

between equality proofing the budget—the process of rendering visible the differentials in relation to mainstreaming—and the specifics of allocating against identified need. That distinction is particularly important with regard to gender. I stress that accounting for gender and a gender perspective in the budget does not mean privileging the needs of women over men or the other way round; it means recognising the differentials and ensuring that public spending is effectively targeted according to need and experience.

Elaine Smith: Is enough information available to allow us to do that? This spring, the Executive produced gender statistics, which Engender previously produced.

Angela O'Hagan: You will see from the smiles from the witnesses that you have struck a common chord. From a gender perspective, we welcome the Executive's publication of "Men and Women in Scotland: A Statistical Profile". That is a positive start and it is encouraging that Engender's work has been recognised. However, the profile is only a start. The absence of any equalities-disaggregated data in the budget documents is striking. Only one table in the health department information disaggregates by age.

For policy to be effectively informed, we argue that there should be cross-referencing with gender, income levels and geographical location, especially when one hears about locality budgeting across policy sectors.

Not enough information is available, certainly on the gender impact. Data should be more than quantitative; they should be qualitative, with information on impact, and they should take into account the processes that the service delivery organisations adopt and how those organisations assess and report on their performance.

Tim Hopkins: There are almost no data on LGBT equality. The Executive has not produced a little blue booklet about LGBT equality data, because it does not have the figures. However, we welcome the fact that the Executive has recognised that and is about to commission a research project to consider methodologies for gathering the data. The methodologies for gathering the data must be different for each topic. LGBT equality involves confidentiality, which makes it different from other matters.

That study will happen over the summer. It is important that the Executive does further research after that study is complete, using those methodologies and gathering the information. That can be done. Not just the Executive, but those bodies that spend the majority of the budget that the Executive does not spend directly, such as local government and health boards, should be

required to monitor and audit their work for equality. I will give one example of good practice, which shows that such monitoring can be done. Edinburgh youth social inclusion partnership monitors its outcomes on the bases of race, gender, disability and sexual orientation. Other social inclusion partnerships could take that up. That is one example of how that work can be mainstreamed.

Adam Gaines: The statistics and information that cover disability in Scotland are limited, which is one reason why we recently commissioned a baseline study to start the process. We must ensure that information covers the range of issues that affect disabled people. That will allow us to start considering whether expenditure is properly targeted. The information is as yet insufficient to allow that to be done, but the budget makes several references to targeted areas and programmes of expenditure on disability, with varying degrees of detail. In fact, the budget refers to disability about 20 times.

Mr McGrigor: Would the witnesses prioritise any areas of inequality as crucial? If so, are the resources in the Scottish budget adequate to address them?

Helen Chambers (Equality Network): LGBT issues are certainly cross-cutting. Every aspect of the budget contains an element that would impact on our communities. If we were to prioritise those aspects, we would say that education, children, health and community care and local government would be important. Social justice is one of the two major themes that underpin the budget; it very much impacts on our communities. At the moment, there is not enough understanding of the relationship between social justice and discrimination.

As far as the support networks are concerned, support for the equality unit needs to be examined. Although it plays a fundamental role, its funding represents one part in 20,000 of the available budget.

The Convener: Do members have any more questions?

Linda Fabiani: Michael McMahon stole all mine.

Elaine Smith: Were our witnesses consulted before the budget was published? What do they think of the Executive's consultation on the budget?

Tim Hopkins: The Equal Opportunities Commission, the Disability Rights Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality are members of the advisory group on equality and budgets, which has been going for a while. It is great that such a group exists; however, the first we heard of it was last Thursday, when we read

the Scottish Parliament information centre's research note on equal opportunities and the budget. That paper does not mention LGBT issues at all, which is a pity, because SPICe is usually good about using the wide definition of equal opportunities contained in the Scotland Act 1998. Our written submission was going to mention our unhappiness at not being invited to join the advisory group; however, we received that invitation yesterday.

Angela O'Hagan: For some time now, the EOC has been involved in the wider process of pushing for gender analysis in the budget. That work was initiated by Engender and the Engender women's budget group, of which the commission is a member. We had a meeting with the former Minister for Finance, who agreed to a number of action points, including the establishment of an advisory group. However, that group's remit was extended beyond a gender perspective to a wider equality perspective. The equality-proofing budget steering group has met twice and is to meet again and I hope that the new Minister for Finance and Local Government will consider elevating it to the status of a ministerial advisory group.

As for wider consultation, we did not receive direct communication from the Executive either in the lead-up to or after the publication of the documents. There are several underpinning concerns. How have the spending priorities been set? What consultation has informed the process? To what extent would it have been appropriate to give information on that consultative process in the budget documents as they stand, which would have contributed to more effective benchmarking against the Executive's targets?

Overall, the EOC welcomes the Executive's commitment to consult on the budget. We accept that it is still early days and that this is a learning process, but we believe that the budget process should be expanded to include consultation at an earlier stage. The Equal Opportunities Committee's initiative in opening up the process to cross-cutting consultation is positive. The other subject committees must now take cognisance of equality implications in their deliberations on the budget process. As the committee is aware, the EOC and the CRE presented questions on mainstreaming to MSPs in November 1999. We remind this committee and other committees to utilise those questions in their analysis of the budget this time round.

The Executive's equality strategy is undoubtedly a positive step. It contains targets on developing tools for mainstreaming in the budget process. It is a little out of synch at the moment, in that the pilot work does not start until later this year. The equality-proofing process of the budget does not rest with the equality unit; it should be done by the

divisions of the Executive, but that is not the case at the moment. That is compounded by the fact that, as Helen Chambers said, the definition of equality, and therefore its understanding, is hidden away in the commitment to social justice on page 28 of the budget summary document. We would have liked a strong and clear commitment to equality in the introductory statement to the budget process. We would also like the organisations that are responsible for delivering services on behalf of the Executive to be implicated in promoting equality. There should be a duty on those bodies to report to the Executive on their progress in promoting equality.

12:30

Helen Chambers: I would like to reinforce Angela O'Hagan's point. A vast amount of Scottish Executive funding is disbursed to other bodies, which tend to overlook LGBT issues more than do the Scottish Executive or the Scottish Parliament, which are quite good at addressing LGBT issues. That needs to be addressed with something much stronger than just a recommendation. There must be pointers to audit; it is important that people know that they will be called to account over these issues.

LGBT issues are not only not reflected within budgetary audit, they are not even reflected in the strategy on which the budget is audited. We have to go back a step with regard to the process, certainly with that aspect of equality and perhaps with others as well.

Adam Gaines: We, too, would like equality to be given a higher priority in the budgetary consultation process. We were not consulted until after the budget was set and, given the time constraints, we have not been able to consult our stakeholders and get their views to input into the process. In future, we hope that that will be possible. Moreover, we are mindful of the fact that there will be further requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in 2003-04 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill, which is currently at Westminster. We hope that those requirements will be borne in mind.

Mr McMahan: Does the idea of taking a snapshot at a certain time raise a problem in evaluating the effectiveness of the budget? Does there have to be an on-going process to allow the relevant information to be judged, or is the problem caused by the lack of information?

Angela O'Hagan: At the moment, the structures are not in place even to deliver that snapshot. We should consider the reporting requirements and the monitoring and evaluation systems that need to be in place. To what extent are they in place across enterprise and lifelong learning provision,

for example? The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 introduced a requirement on local authority education providers to report on their promotion of, and progress towards, equality. Where else does that requirement apply to service providers and other organisations? If the procedures are not in place, we cannot even get a snapshot. Evaluating impacts and outcomes is an on-going procedure and should feed back into the process to make for better government, better decision making and more targeted policies and programmes in future.

The Convener: Thank you for coming along to give evidence today. I am sorry that your session was shortened. I understand that you have the questionnaires that were sent out and I look forward to receiving them. I apologise for the short time scale for returning them. Everything is done in such a rush.

Reporters

The Convener: The next item on the agenda is reporters. Members have a written report from Elaine Smith, the reporter on gender issues. Elaine, do you wish to say anything?

Elaine Smith: I will comment briefly, because some of the recommendations applied to the budget process. My recommendations are that the committee should consult Engender and other women's groups on issues and policies that affect women. We should consult Engender's women's budget group to ensure that gender impact analysis becomes an integral feature of spending allocation plans, which ties in with what we have been talking about today. There is a slight mistake in my paper.

It should say "and to get a commitment from the Executive to the on-going production of a yearly statistical report on the position of women in Scottish society", such as Engender has been producing and the Executive has produced this year. I would like us to ask for an on-going commitment.

The Convener: Are there any questions?

Linda Fabiani: I read the report and I think that it is fair enough.

The Convener: Does the committee agree with the gender reporter's recommendations?

Members *indicated agreement.*

12:35

Meeting continued in private until 12:54.

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