EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

Tuesday 1 May 2001
(*Morning*)

Session 1

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE
9th 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

Nadia Foy
Dharmendra Kanani (Commission for Racial Equality)
Clementine MacDonald
Sharon McPhee
Carol O'Halloran
Sue Robertson (Engender)
Jeanette Timmins (Engender)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Lee Bridges

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Richard Walsh

ASSISTANT CLERK

Roy McMahon

LOCATION

Committee Room 4

Scottish Parliament

Equal Opportunities Committee

Tuesday 1 May 2001

(*Morning*)

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

10:15

Meeting continued in public.

Items in Private

The Convener (Kate MacLean): The first item on the agenda is to seek the committee's agreement to take items 6 and 7 in private. Do members agree to do so?

Members *indicated agreement*.

Travelling People

The Convener: I welcome the young people who will give evidence to the committee this morning. Although you have been told about most of the people here, I will introduce myself and the others around the table. I am Kate MacLean, the committee convener; Delia Lomax is the committee adviser; Richard Walsh—whom you have already met—is a clerk to the committee; and Kay Ullrich, Michael McMahon and Cathy Peattie are MSPs and members of the committee. We are hoping that you will give a brief talk, after which members will ask some questions. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer, but the committee wants to hear what you have to say. I hope that you will take the opportunity to have your say.

I understand that Nadia Foy will start.

Nadia Foy: I have been doing voluntary work with Save the Children for a couple of years and the main issue that I want to consider is discrimination. In England, Gypsies, and in Northern Ireland, Travellers are recognised as ethnic minority groups, but that is not the case in Scotland. As a result, if a black or Asian person in a school is called a "black so-and-so", they have a case. If someone calls us something, we can try to take the case to court, but there is not a lot we can do, as we are not recognised as an ethnic minority group. In my experience, such discrimination is harsh on kids.

I live underneath a lot of pylons on a site in Dalkeith. Although the council has taken some readings and has said that there is no link between the pylons and leukaemia or other cancers, other reports have reached different conclusions. For example, a German doctor in Dalkeith medical centre said to my aunt, "If you think anything of your children or your family, you'll find somewhere else to stay." When the council tried to get planning permission for an old folks home on our site, it did not get it. The council will not build any houses or a school on the site, but Gypsies can live there. That is discrimination.

When a man tried to get on to a site near Newtongrange, he was told by the site owner, "We don't want your type of people here." However, the site owner also had a garage and was happy to take the man's money for fixing his cars and vans. He did not let the man on to the site because his children would be there day and night, whereas holidaymakers are there only in the morning or at night. Signs that say "No traders", "No Gypsies", "No hawkers" and "No vans" are also a bit harsh.

I want us to be known as an ethnic minority group with our own culture. You do not just decide

one morning to be a Gypsy/Traveller; it is a way of life, but society does not accept that. We are not looking for anything special; we want respect and the same human rights as everybody else. We have not got that so far.

In every community there is good and bad, rough and nice, people with money and people who are not so well off. We have asked for skips at the roadsides. People read in newspapers about the mess that Gypsies have left, which is not a nice impression, but we asked for skips about 18 months ago. Over that period, Craigmillar has been rebuilt, a new Parliament has been created, new houses have been built—including penthouses close to the new Parliament—and, as yet, we have not been given one skip.

It is not the first time that we have gone to the council. We have submitted petitions and have even asked to be transferred from the site to a piece of land where we will pay rent, which we can keep clean and tidy and where our children will be kept safe. That has not, as yet, been accepted.

I do not know of any council sites where there are not rubbish dumps, tips, sewerage places, railway stations or pylons. Every site for Gypsies is somewhere where nobody wants to be—in the middle of nowhere, where no buses run and there are no shops. It is not too bad for people who are better off, who have cars and transport and who can go to the shops, but it is not very good for people who do not have their own means of transport.

If Travellers do not have a permanent address, they cannot get access to doctors' surgeries, health education and social security. There is a park bench in London that acts as an address for down-and-outs. They can get benefits, go to health centres and so on because of that address. A Traveller may need money and have no means of getting out to earn a living but be unable to get access to education, schools, doctors or benefits because he or she has not got a proper address. That is neither fair nor acceptable. They cannot get treatment at a dentist or a hospital because they have not got a proper address. If Travellers get those services they have to pay for them, but a lot of people cannot afford to pay for them because, as they have not got a proper address, they cannot get social security or any benefits.

We are looking for respect and for the same rights as anybody else. I am a young person and I have not met a lot of people who are willing to help us. We have got to help ourselves, but before we can help ourselves, people in power must help us to take the first step. That is why we are here today.

The Convener: Thank you very much, Nadia.

Do any of the other witnesses want to make any comments now?

Sharon McPhee: I am here to talk about education in schools. Schools are not equipped for Traveller children. My experience is that some teachers do not want the Traveller children there. One school put all the Traveller children at one table at the back of the classroom.

A teacher put me out of the classroom so that she could tell the other children that I was different and that they had to watch what they said in front of me. I was also attacked at school. The teacher said, "You kind of people have behavioural problems, so it must have been your fault."

My experiences are from different schools; they are not just from one school. Travelling mothers go to the schools to complain that their children are not getting work at the right level for their experience; they get work for much younger children. The children are treated like idiots. I would like that to change. I would like to see bullying of Traveller children at school stop. I would like a better response from teachers. They should be trained to deal with Traveller children; they are not.

I will also say something about health. Many doctors will not accept Travellers as patients because Travellers move around so much and so do not have a permanent address. There should be some sort of card for Travellers that would contain all their medical records so that Travellers could take the card to the surgery and the doctor would be able to check their records, but such things are not available.

Scotland is not equipped for Travellers. It is as if we do not have any rights. I would like to see a lot of changes.

Clementine MacDonald: My experiences have been somewhat different from Nadia Foy's and Sharon McPhee's because I have stayed in a caravan all my life and travelled. We have a house, which we live in for perhaps two to three months of the year when the weather tends to get cold.

I only had a primary school education. I enrolled for high school but, due to bullying, I left about three months into the term. I had leukaemia, so I was bullied because I had no hair. After I left school, none of the teachers bothered even to check why I never attended school. I am coming up 19, yet the school is still sending letters out about meetings and other things that are being held in the school. That is how much interest the people there paid.

When we are travelling, getting somewhere to stay is a big problem for us. The police are a big problem. They often charge us for trespassing. We will be given 24 hours' notice—sometimes—and

be told to move off the roadside. Often it is not a roadside but wasteland that no one is using—until a few caravans move on and then everybody wants a bit of it.

I honestly think that it is a waste of time moving us on. Why can they not give us bits of land to stay on and provide the basics that Nadia Foy mentioned, such as a skip and water? I travel a lot up in the Highlands of Scotland where some of the garages will not give us water out of the tap—we take full cans of water into the caravans with us. If they do give us water, they charge for it.

Sharon McPhee: We offer to pay for skips, but the authorities just will not bring them.

Clementine MacDonald: There are a load of problems regarding Travellers. I do not think that we can deal with all the issues today, but we can try to cover the basics. The basics are discrimination—

Sharon McPhee: And education.

Clementine MacDonald: As Nadia Foy said, travelling is not just a word. For instance, we had a meeting with an MP a few months ago, who asked us, "Can you stop being a Traveller?" I thought it was a bit stupid for a man of his age to be asking me that. No, you cannot stop being a Traveller.

Nadia Foy: I was asked how long I had been a Traveller.

Sharon McPhee: It is something you are born into. You will always be a Traveller.

Clementine MacDonald: People are afraid of what they do not know. In my experience, people do not know a lot about Travellers. I have been around the Stirling and Alloa area for about 10 years now. Even many of the people who know me personally still ask me, "What do you do in a caravan?" or, "How do you live and how do you get water?" or, "Do you all get together every year?" They think that we are a tribe who get together to do our chants or whatever. I usually give them a few stories, but it is not like that.

Nadia Foy: I have said before that we are willing to visit schools to educate kids about Travellers. I have visited two schools to educate them about how we live and about my experiences of going to school. That is good, but I think that every school needs to know how to handle a child who is a Traveller. Traveller children are not any different—they look the same, live the same and act the same as the next child. The only difference is that some children stay in a house and some stay in a trailer.

10:30

Clementine MacDonald: We are being forced to settle, either on caravan sites or in houses. We are not getting a chance to live on roadsides or in camps—either regular camps or in lay-bys. The authorities try to give us council houses or sites. They are trying to confine us.

Nadia Foy: They are trying to stop our culture.

Sharon McPhee: We cannot let it happen.

Clementine MacDonald: That sums it up.

Sharon McPhee: We are born the way we are born. It is not as if it is something that has happened overnight. Our grandparents' grandparents' grandparents' grandparents were all Travellers.

Clementine MacDonald: We should not feel like second-hand goods. We should not feel ashamed of what we are. We want to stand up and tell people exactly who we are and what we want.

Sharon McPhee: We are very proud of what we are.

Nadia Foy: On the situation in relation to doctors, a young girl on the site where I have lived for six years on and off—I say a young girl, but she was 21 and had two children—went to the local health centre. She was very wealthy, drove a nice car and had nice clothes and jewellery. She looked beautiful and the people in the health centre were lovely to her, but when they put her name into the computer, the address came up as a Gypsy site, and they said to her straight out, "We can't have your kind of people in here." Her little girl was very sick and she had to take her to the hospital because the local health centre would not treat her.

There are barriers at the entrance to the site, so anything bigger than a transit van has to be left at the gate or we have to go down to get the warden to open the gate. On one occasion, my auntie had meningitis, although we did not know that at the time. We sent for an ambulance, but it could not get in because of the barriers, so we had to break the locks. The council sent us a lovely letter telling us that we had broken council property and could be charged or taken to court, because we had let the ambulance in. The warden was not in, because he is there from only about half-past 8 until 5 o'clock at night. After then, we are locked in.

We are surrounded by 7ft or 8ft metal fences. The bays are all blocked off with metal fences too. The toilets and kitchen facilities are next to each other, so you have to walk through the kitchen to get to the toilet. That means that somebody could open the door to the toilet while you are cooking food in the kitchen.

Clementine MacDonald: So the kitchens never get used.

Nadia Foy: That is right. They never get used. The facilities were provided for us, but they were not arranged properly. I have brought that up at previous meetings. My uncle owns a bit of property and has done building work, so we know that a house that is being built will not pass health and safety regulations with arrangements like that, because they are unhygienic. If my uncle was building a house with the toilet next to the kitchen, he would get a 50 per cent grant to put the toilet in a different part of the house, to comply with health and safety requirements.

That is the kind of environment that the local authorities expect us to live in. There are rats on the site. There are mice crawling in the kitchen. You come out of the bathroom and see a mouse and you scream. Do not get me wrong; we are living in better conditions than people abroad, but we are not living in better conditions than other people here.

Sharon McPhee: I would like to make another point connected with what Nadia Foy said about the girl getting put out of the doctor's surgery. That would not happen if you were black or Asian, but because you are a Traveller it is allowed to happen. To tell the truth, I think that is just disgusting. That is one change I would like to see. We are not animals; we are people.

Carol O'Halloran: I feel most strongly about what Nadia said about the position of the sites. She has covered most of the points.

The Convener: Are the witnesses ready to take questions now? Not everyone has spoken yet, but you can speak at any time.

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): Perhaps the witnesses could all respond briefly to my first question. What do you as young people enjoy and value most about being a Gypsy/Traveller? I know that you talked about traditions and grandparents.

Sharon McPhee: I enjoy being able to travel about.

Clementine MacDonald: I value being independent and not having to depend on staying in one place where I would have a job. Travellers have a couple of their own trades. We can move around, do our trade and make a living, while living the way we prefer to live.

Sharon McPhee: Freedom is important.

Nadia Foy: Our lifestyle is the same as everybody else's. I go to church every Sunday; I am a born-again Christian. We have meals with our families and we visit our parents and grandparents.

Sharon McPhee: We go to the cinema and to nightclubs.

Nadia Foy: It is the same life as everybody else has, but if you wake up one morning and think, "I'm sick of looking at this place," you can pack up and go.

Cathy Peattie: What is most difficult for Gypsy/Traveller young people?

Nadia Foy: Discrimination.

Clementine MacDonald: Harassment.

Sharon McPhee: People treat us perfectly and everything is great until they find out that we are Travellers, when their attitude changes completely, and we become rubbish.

Clementine MacDonald: When policemen come to camps, they do not consider each person to be an individual. They speak to us as a group, as if we were a tribe.

Sharon McPhee: As if we had a leader.

Clementine MacDonald: They will say, "Last month, this place was destroyed," or, "Rubbish was left here." They will not treat us as individuals. That is what we must put up with. Many families will get up and move without saying anything, just to avoid harassment from the police, local councils and others.

Nadia Foy: Last year, when the Appleby fair was taking place, I went to a nightclub in Carlisle, which some Travellers had hired for a private party. We were travelling there with our seatbelts on in a nice car that was taxed, insured and roadworthy. I do not know whether the police could tell from looking at us that we were Gypsies, but they followed us for about a mile, then pulled us up. A policeman asked for our names and dates of birth, which we told him. I asked why I was pulled up. He said, "We've had a lot of Gypsies about here." I thought that he knew that we were Gypsies by looking at us, but he did not. He said that he wanted to check that everything was okay. I said, "I'm a Gypsy." He was quite shocked. I said, "Have you got a problem with that?" He said, "No." He tried a chat-up line, which did not go down very well with me.

Then, he asked whom the car belonged to. I told him that it was my father's. My father had just bought the car and had not yet registered it in his name. The police put the car's details through their computer, which did not produce my father's name. The policeman asked why my father's name did not appear. I explained that my father had just bought the car. The policeman did not buy that explanation and kept me for about 40 minutes. I had still to drive for three hours so I ended up giving him my name and address, then driving away and leaving him. Once he found out that we were Travellers, he was very resistant.

Clementine MacDonald: He was trying to get something on her.

Nadia Foy: There was nothing, however, because I was driving within the speed limit and I had stopped at the traffic lights. Obviously, I knew that the police were watching me, so I was being more careful.

Kay Ullrich (West of Scotland) (SNP): They have that effect.

Sharon McPhee: A similar thing happened to me. My boyfriend and I were driving in a car and were pulled over. The police did not know that we were Travellers and had no reason to pull us over. They told us that we were going too fast. They asked for my boyfriend's name and address. When they found out where he lived and that he was a Traveller, they turned the car upside down, to try to find something. They looked under the bonnet, round the wheels and everywhere else. The car was brand new. As Nadia Foy said, the police will turn cars upside down to see whether they can find something. They will check all the computer records, too.

Clementine MacDonald: If Traveller families have diesel vehicles, many police officers will check whether they are using red diesel. Many Traveller farmers, especially those who have vans, are constantly checked for that.

Sharon McPhee: Raiding sites now and again is something else that the police do.

Clementine MacDonald: I have experience of the police walking into my mum's caravan without a warrant, and looking in our cupboards and so on. There were never any reports to them of anything having happened, so they had no reason to come in, but they were obviously looking for stolen goods or whatever. That happened in Fort William. They took their own time to look about, raking through the caravan and the vans.

Sharon McPhee: Every so often, the police raid the Lochgilphead site, which was mentioned earlier. They have no reason to do so; they just want to see—

Clementine MacDonald: Honestly; they check cars, generators and everything.

Sharon McPhee: They check people's caravans and vans, just to see whether they can find something in them, which is terrible. Would they do that in a council scheme? Would they raid a scheme every so often, just to see whether they could find something?

Clementine MacDonald: We are obvious targets—we are there and we are on the road. To them, we are in the wrong. They have the upper hand and they will take advantage of that by any means that are available to them.

Cathy Peattie: You said that you felt that no one listens to you, that people do not understand about your traditions and that they make assumptions about you. You did not say that you were clans—what was the word that you used?

Clementine MacDonald: Tribes.

Cathy Peattie: That is it—I like that term.

It is clear that our inquiry is about trying to change some things.

Nadia Foy: It is about changing stereotypical views.

Cathy Peattie: Yes.

How could you become involved in helping folk make decisions about services and in trying to change some of the attitudes of the police and other people?

Sharon McPhee: We can do that by coming to meetings like this—that is why we do it. I have been to many different kinds of meetings, such as educational meetings and, with the Maryhill project, meetings with housing departments and doctors. I was even on television talking about the site in Inverness. We were trying to change people's attitudes, but all we can do is try.

Clementine MacDonald: We can only tell people about the way we live and about how we try to make a living. However, trying to tell somebody about that is more or less impossible. We bring all the information and say what is what and so on. However, having a wee conversation and trying to tell you what life is like is far from the truth, because we cannot go into proper detail. I cannot remember the details and tell you what was said or what happened.

If people are going to take an interest in us, it is time that they started coming to us more often to see the way we live, rather than us trying to explain it to them. They should come and sit back for a couple of hours, just watching what happens and how things are done. Maybe we could have hidden cameras.

The Convener: I should advise the witnesses that if they want to say something but do not want to say it in public or for inclusion in the *Official Report*, we can go into private session after this discussion. We would still be able to take those comments on board, although they would not be recorded in the *Official Report*.

Sharon McPhee: Cathy Peattie asked earlier what we could do to change things. We have been to loads of different meetings, but we got the impression—I did, in particular—that people were not really listening. I talked about that with Michelle Lloyd earlier. The people we were meeting said, "Uh-huh. Next question, please". A lot of that goes on, just so that people can say that they have met us.

Clementine MacDonald: There must be hundreds of issues that come up and the people with the power must sort out those issues. We have been trying for years to get our point across. Basically, we are getting pissed off with trying to do so because still we cannot get anything done. That is what we are trying to say.

Nadia Foy: I volunteered to go to schools and health education meetings to give information to teachers and children. We want to show them our background and a bit of our life to let them see that we are just normal people.

We are not sitting back and expecting everything to come to us. As Sharon McPhee said, we are actively working. I have done voluntary work with Save the Children for a couple of years and have visited the Parliament once before now. We have been to the United Nations and have done quite a bit of travelling in an attempt to get our point across. However, we need help—we cannot do it on our own. We have been told by MPs that they will do their best to help us if we get in contact with them. However, when we have written to them, we have received replies that say, "Your letter was lovely. Thank you very much. If there is anything that we can do with you in the future, please contact us."

10:45

Cathy Peattie: You need more help than that.

Clementine MacDonald: We are here talking to you, but many other young travellers who are fed up with the situation do not say so. Their frustration comes out in other ways and they get into a lot of trouble with settled communities because of it. There is a lot of friction and the situation is getting beyond a joke. A lot of young Traveller boys are getting into trouble for no reason—or, rather, because of the problem of discrimination, which could be stopped.

Sharon McPhee: As Clementine says, problems are caused by the fact that the boys get angry.

Clementine MacDonald: A lot of Traveller boys are fed up with the situation. We are here and we hope that that can help to make a difference, but we cannot speak for everybody.

Nadia Foy: About a year ago, there was a Christian convention in Stoke-on-Trent. About 90 per cent of the people at the convention were born-again Christians who would not throw papers out of their windows and so on because that is bad testimony, and who had the Christian fish sign in their car windows along with passages from scripture to bear witness to other people. However, when we went to a garage and politely asked for a can of water, we were refused and were told, "We won't have your type of people here."

We had paid around £1,500 for permission to have a number of vans in a field. The travelling men had put portaloos in place and arranged for a lorry to come to empty the waste. The public road to the field was not broad enough for the lorry, but a private road was. However, the person who owned that road would not let the lorry through because it was coming to empty the Gypsies' toilets.

The Gypsy/Travellers at that site were clean-living, polite and well mannered. It was a Christian convention, not one at which people were having parties every night with music playing full blast. There was a meeting in the morning and a meeting at night, which finished by 9 o'clock. People could not see us because we were hidden away in a corner of the land.

If people who are attending to church business are being treated like that, people who go to nightclubs and live a different kind of life will be treated worse.

Cathy Peattie: You talked about the bairns from Gypsy/Traveller families being made to sit at the back of classes. We have heard some evidence that education is difficult. Can you outline some of the issues and tell us whether you think that home education has worked?

Sharon McPhee: What do you mean when you say that education is difficult?

Cathy Peattie: How do the young folks and kids feel when they go into schools? You have told us a bit about problems in classes, such as people having to leave the class while the teacher talked about them—that is appalling. Is that the general feeling of the bairns?

Sharon McPhee: Yes. As soon as the kids go in, the other kids look at them and whisper.

Clementine MacDonald: It has got to the point at which kids are getting told that they must stick up for themselves in the schools. Kids come home every day saying that they are being bullied, but they must attend school to get an education. Therefore, parents tell their kids that they have to stick up for themselves.

A lot of kids who are told to go to school are coming back and saying, "Mum, the teacher asked me to stand up in the classroom and explained to the kids that I am a Traveller or a Gypsy." That happened to my wee sister. Those kids say, "The woman made me stand up in front of a blackboard and told all the other kids that I was a Gypsy, and they all asked me what I do and how I live."

Sharon McPhee: That woman should have known better. When I was attacked at school, the

teacher said, "It must be your fault, because your kind of people have behavioural problems." That is disgusting.

Nadia Foy: I went to school between the ages of five and nine. My father went to the same school, and his brothers, sisters, cousins and his father before him went to it. The school had had Travellers in it before me. My sister went to the school and went on to high school, so she got quite a good education. But I got bullied and called "stinky" and "smelly". I am not being funny, but I went to school dressed better than most of the pupils—I was always clean and tidy, whereas a lot of the others were not. I am not being discriminatory; I am just saying that what they were saying about me was not true.

I left school aged nine and could do very little. The teachers never gave me homework or helped me; they let me play with books and colour them in. If I wanted to do something, I did it. The school board never came to see what had happened to me. I got to the age of 15 or 16 and I could write my name and spell a bit, but not very much. I got a private tutor, who I hoped would teach me something. The tutor came to the trailer—she knew that I was a Traveller—and started me off. I could do some things, although I was not good at maths. She started me off with a sheet of paper that I got in primary one, which contained sums such as one and one is two, and counting up to 10. Then I was asked, "Can you spell bus? Can you spell car?" She kept me on that for three months, going from one page to the next. She knew that I was a Traveller, and I thought that that was her way of getting rid of me because she never wanted to teach me but could not refuse to teach me. She never gave me more advanced work that I could do or tried to start me off on higher levels.

Cathy Peattie: How do you overcome that? We have heard that bairns are not necessarily getting the education that they need: they are colouring in pictures or doing work that is not relevant.

Nadia Foy: I taught myself.

Cathy Peattie: How can we overcome that? How can we ensure that bairns get the education that they need?

Sharon McPhee: A lot of people think that it is not worth while teaching a Traveller's child, because they go on to lead their own way of life.

Clementine MacDonald: A lot of Traveller children do not get the opportunity, through education, to make another way of life.

Sharon McPhee: Yes. That is why we do it. To change the situation, teachers could work with the children and with us. They could sit down and ask the children what they want. They could come out to the sites and talk to the parents.

Clementine MacDonald: On certain sites, there are playbuses or teaching facilities for younger children. On sites such as the Kirkcaldy site where Peter McPhee—who is sitting next to me—lives, there are some facilities for teaching a group of four children. Someone comes and teaches them on the site, but they should mix with other children.

Cathy Peattie: Do you think that that isolates them?

Clementine MacDonald: Yes, it does. But in the Highlands, where I stay, there is no education at all—there is nothing for children, although there are a lot of Traveller families up there. There should be a bus or something that could come to the regular camps for Travellers. Even if Travellers themselves were to do the teaching, they should be able to get some money for teaching facilities.

Cathy Peattie: So the idea is to have home education or computer links with schools. Could that be tried?

Sharon McPhee: Yes, Traveller children could be taught more about computers, because this is the age of the computer, and everybody has to learn about them. That would benefit Traveller children a lot.

Clementine MacDonald: It would be good to have a computer on each site and get the kids involved, because there are 15 and 16-year-old girls and boys who cannot read or write, although many younger ones can read and write a little bit. Older boys who are 15 or 16 years old will not just walk in and say, "I'm going to start high school again." That is out of the question. They need something to get them involved and interested.

Nadia Foy: Kids can learn about computers, but they have to get a basic education, which a lot of them do not have. With Michelle Lloyd, I went recently to a school in Golspie. Before I went, I made some leaflets for the kids to tell them about my background and lifestyle. They were expecting somebody totally different. I went smartly dressed and was very polite. I was sent a letter afterwards, which said that they could not believe that I had left school at the age of 9, done all this work for Travellers, helped myself, and been to Geneva to the United Nations. The teacher was impressed. I am willing—I cannot speak for everybody else—to educate not only children, but adults, because there are lots of adults who have stereotypical views.

Cathy Peattie: Would it be helpful for teachers and others in education to visit Travellers as part of their training?

Nadia Foy: Coming to the sites would be a bad idea. They would look at where you live, the site and your things. They would look to see whether it

was clean, and at how your kids were dressed. If they saw something that they did not like, it would stick in their head.

Sharon McPhee: I think that it would be a good idea.

Clementine MacDonald: We are talking about education. The camps are dirty. I do not expect that anybody here would stay in them.

Nadia Foy: It is like us saying that we want to find out more about people who are not Travellers. How many of you would invite us into your home to show us how clean your toilet, bathroom, kitchen and living room are?

Clementine MacDonald: Would any of you want to do that?

Nadia Foy: That would be an invasion of privacy.

Sharon McPhee: For educational purposes it would be good to come and talk to parents, but not for any other reason.

Nadia Foy: The little kids and teachers would look at people and know that they have seen where they live.

Clementine MacDonald: Another thing about Traveller families, as everybody here will agree, is that they are very close. Because discrimination has existed for so long, they feel that they have to protect the home. They are strict-living.

Sharon McPhee: And they are protective of their children, especially their daughters.

Kay Ullrich: I visited the site at Lochgilphead, and I was interested to hear you talking about it. I speak for my colleagues when I say that we got a lot out of our visits to various sites. We were certainly well received. Clementine MacDonald brought home to me the kind of discrimination that you face when you asked how it would be if the police raided a council scheme. We know as politicians that there would be absolute hell to pay if that happened.

I want to move on from education to employment. I think Clementine MacDonald said that there are a couple of trades that Travellers pursue. Perhaps you could tell me what those trades are. My assumption is that they are mainly trades for men. Is that correct?

Clementine MacDonald: That is correct.

Kay Ullrich: Could you tell me what those trades are? What sort of employment would you like to be able to take up in future? Have you had the training opportunities that would enable you to pursue a particular line of employment or career and, if not, what could be done to help you achieve a career, employment or whatever goal you want? That was a rambling question. You have talked about the failures in education for Travellers. How do those failures affect employment opportunities?

11:00

Sharon McPhee: The failures affect employment opportunities for Travellers in that Travellers have to adapt their own employment, which is usually building work or tree work, which are mainly for men. The women do work such as selling things.

Clementine MacDonald: In a lot of places, such as the islands—the Isle of Mull or the Isle of Skye; the sort of places that I go every year—there are still a lot of old Travellers who have their own trades, such as making wooden flowers or working with tin. My granddad makes water cans, basins and so on. He is a tinsmith—he makes all his own tin. Such trades are dying away. It is not only the trades that are dying out, the tradition is dying out. Who goes to the doors? We call going from door to door selling things hawking.

Sharon McPhee: I have also done that.

Clementine MacDonald: A lot of older people ask, "Have youse got any wooden flowers?" or, "Have youse got any of what you usually sell?"

Sharon McPhee: They usually ask for clothes-pegs.

Clementine MacDonald: That is dying out. There are lots of trades that Travellers do. Certain families even do their own different things that others do not do. A lot of families will do something that others will not. There is whelk picking, which is a big thing for some Traveller families.

Anyone can do the work that Travellers do; it is not just Travellers that do those jobs. The difference is that a high percentage of Travellers do not have a good education, so they have no option but to do those jobs to make a living. You people have opportunities to do what you are doing now and whatever else you can do. It is not hard to go to a door to try to sell things, or to go and try to do a couple of wee quick jobs or whatever. I have done tree jobs. You have opportunities to do something. If you do not want to be MSPs, you can do something else.

Nadia Foy: If we do not have an education and have no qualifications or degrees, what kind of jobs are we going to get?

Sharon McPhee: Exactly.

Nadia Foy: I used to go from door to door selling rugs but we settled down for a while, so I got a job. The job that I got—considering my education—was in a restaurant. I would work from

10 o'clock in the morning until 1 o'clock the following morning, with a five-minute break every hour, so I packed in that job.

That is the kind of job that we get, with our education. If we want decent jobs, we have to go through education. To go through education, we must go to school and to get through school, we must go to school without getting bullied. That does not happen very much.

Clementine MacDonald: Therefore, it is easier just to go to doors and sell things.

Nadia Foy: Getting a job means settling down. We have to be in the same place day in and day out for as long as we need to—we cannot just pack up. We have to give notice, or we would have to break a contract, because sometimes a contract can last for three months at the minimum. Our way of life—our culture—is to get up and say, "Right. I'm gonnae go and try somewhere else and see if I can get a job today."

Clementine MacDonald: Our way of life is travelling.

Nadia Foy: The men might not have qualifications, but the boys of Peter McPhee's age and younger go with their fathers. That is their education. They learn the trade so that when they reach 17—the age when they can have a driving licence—they get their own vehicle, they get their own work stuff and are put out on their own.

I do not know many 17-year old Travellers who are signing on and trying to look for jobs, as many other 17-year olds are, although many of the others who are not signing on have a good education and go on to college. In our society, boys of 16 or 17 have already established themselves. They already have a good background—they already have experience.

Sharon McPhee: They have a van, they go out working and so they have money at 16 or 17.

Nadia Foy: Sometimes they are even younger than that.

Kay Ullrich: Are you saying that there is not really much call among young Travellers to look for employment outwith the traditional employment that is available?

Sharon McPhee: That is up to the people themselves.

Nadia Foy: It depends on how they feel.

Sharon McPhee: Exactly—it is up to each individual. It would be good for the older ones—those who want to learn—to be able to go to college at night.

Nadia Foy: That would be good, but many people are too settled in their ways for that.

Clementine MacDonald: Travelling families are very protective. Some of the children will not get the opportunity to have an education. They cannot say to their mum and dad that they will stay in one place until they finish school. Choice comes down to the individual, but not when you are talking about nine or 10-year-old kids.

Sharon McPhee: I was not talking about nine or 10-year-old kids, but about people who are older—16 to 19 years old. If they want to go to college, they can do so.

Kay Ullrich: There are obvious barriers, as you have told us.

Nadia Foy: Those barriers are hard to break through.

Kay Ullrich: Yes, it is the chicken-and-egg situation. If young Travellers do not go to school regularly, they will not get the necessary qualifications and so on. It is horrifying to hear about discrimination in education. One of the things about going to school is that, in school, children receive information about things such as health and social education. If young travelling children do not go to school, they will not get that sort of information; or will they? Is there another way that children get information on things such as health education?

Sharon McPhee: Traveller families are different in that way. They teach their own children about health and things like that. We have different views on certain subjects. Traveller parents teach their children about things in their own way—

Kay Ullrich: Sharon McPhee can say the word "sex" if she wants to.

Sharon McPhee: Traveller children do not get sex education at school, they get it from their parents.

Nadia Foy: They get it when the parents think that the children are old enough to understand it.

Sharon McPhee: Parents are very protective and it is the parents who teach about health issues.

Nadia Foy: It is not so much health education, but more the facts of life. Their mothers teach the children that.

Sharon McPhee: Or their friends.

Nadia Foy: School days should be the happiest days of somebody's life, when you have no problems or worries, because you are a child. Children want to play at playtime, have their snack, chat with their friends and have a good time. I can say honestly that my school days were the worst days of my life—I would never put my kids through that experience.

The Convener: I am not sure whether any of the witnesses have kids, but when you have them, will you send them to school?

Nadia Foy: No. I would send them to school only if I knew that the school would not allow them to be bullied. If I thought that they would get a proper education, then yes, by all means, I would send them to school. I would even go as far as to get them a private tutor to have them taught properly, but I would not have them go through what I went through.

Sharon McPhee: That is right. The experiences that we had were that the teachers did not want to teach us.

Clementine MacDonald: When I was a kid I, like a lot of other young Traveller kids, was bullied at school. A lot of kids do not tell their mums and dads that they are being picked on.

Nadia Foy: When my sister was in her last year at primary school, some boys were calling her names. My father went to the school and told the school about it, but the school did nothing. She was still coming back with bruises and with handfuls of hair coming out in her hands. He took her into school and made her go out and fight the boy that was doing it; she went and did what she had to do. The teacher expelled her for sticking up for herself, but the boys who were kicking her legs were never expelled. It was boy versus girl, but when the girl got the better of the boy, the school was not pleased.

It was a religious school—a Catholic school. If I did not go to church on Sunday or to confession on a Saturday, I had to say why in front of the whole class. It was only I who had to do that. If another child, who was not a Traveller, did not go to confession or to church, that child got away with it. I would have to say, "Well, my dad went to the pub." It was embarrassing, but I was still made to stand up and say, "My dad was at the pub last night and had a hangover this morning." If the kid next to me was in the same situation, they did not have to suffer the embarrassment of saying that their father was at the pub and could not take them to church.

Sharon McPhee: I, too, was suspended from school. A teacher was screaming into my face, saying that I was stupid because I could not do the work that the other children could do, but that was because she would not teach me. I said something back to her and walked out of the school. Because I walked out of the school, they suspended me, but they never did anything to the teacher for screaming into my face and calling me stupid. It was I who was suspended, and I was only 10. The adult should have known better, not the child.

Cathy Peattie: How do we change this?

Nadia Foy: To start any kind of change, we need to be classed as an ethnic minority group. We need to have rights and status.

Sharon McPhee: We cannot speak for all the Traveller people. We can speak only from our experiences.

Nadia Foy: If you asked an Asian or black person the same question—whether they wanted to be recognised as an ethnic group—they would give you the same answer that we gave. We need to be recognised before anything can be done.

Mr Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): Most people in the settled community have the opportunity when they go to school to develop what one might call leisure skills, if they are good at sport or art, for example. If you do not go to school, what opportunities do you have to develop those types of skills? Are you held back in any way by not having those facilities?

Clementine MacDonald: In my experience, we are not held back. My wee brother is 11 and he is a Scottish boxing champion. There are opportunities for individual kids. I am talking from my point of view, but I do not feel that we are denied the opportunity to participate in activities. My brothers and sisters go to school and go on trips. If anything happens at the school, they are involved.

Nadia Foy: I have a 14-year-old sister and an 11-year-old brother. They went to school in Dalkeith, but my family took them away from the school because my wee brother got stuff sprayed in his eye in the toilets and he had to go to hospital. He was blind for about an hour, so he was taken out of school. On the educational side, my sister is fantastic at drawing; she can draw beautifully. My wee brother is good at sports.

Sharon McPhee: My wee brother is also a boxer.

Nadia Foy: Leisure is something that you can do yourself. Anybody can teach himself or herself to play football, but it is hard to teach yourself how to read and write and it is hard to do maths out of school.

Mr McMahon: We have had the opportunity to go to some of the sites and there were a lot of children about, but no facilities for them. Is that something that you encounter everywhere, or was it just our bad luck to go to the sites where there is nothing?

Clementine MacDonald: It is the same everywhere. Where facilities exist, they are confined to the sites. There might be a small swing park, for example.

Sharon McPhee: It is only half thought-out and

there are terrible safety hazards.

Nadia Foy: On the site that we are on, there is a big grassy area at one end, with great big boulders that were put up to stop the kids from playing on their bikes on the soft grass.

One of the kids sat on a boulder and fell and split his head. There was just a bit of soft grass—the rest of the ground was tarmacked, stoned and kerbed. The kids would follow each other up and down and go up to the grass and have a wee play. They were only wee children.

Such sites are good, considering the conditions in which people usually live. The conditions that we have lived in—with pylons, sewage and rubbish tips—are bad, but there are good road sites that we can stay on.

Mr McMahon: How much would you benefit from some type of community facility on the site, even if it were just a portakabin in which you could have regular meetings?

Nadia Foy: We applied for one.

Mr McMahon: Do you think that that is desperately needed?

Nadia Foy: We applied for a chalet. In the morning, some women would take it in turns to have a toddler group to give mothers a chance to do their cleaning and washing. The kids would be looked after so that they would not be hurt. In the daytime, the kids would come back from school and would have somewhere to go, with a pool table and a television room. We were going to provide everything in the chalet once it had been provided. We would provide the work, the facilities and even the care. I do not know what happened to that. Perhaps Michelle Lloyd knows.

11:15

Mr McMahon: Perhaps you should find out, rather than leaving it to Michelle.

Nadia Foy: There is nowhere for 16 or 17 year olds to go at night. If there were a pool table, they would not need to go roaming the streets or have to walk miles. They would not get themselves into bother in the local schemes when they go to the shops.

There is a telephone box on our site. It needs a phonecard because they would not put a money box in in case we broke into it. There is a warden on the site who could have emptied the box every day. The warden would not even keep electric tokens in case we held up him up for the money for the tokens.

Mr McMahon: I would like to change the subject.

You spoke about discrimination and your need to be recognised as an ethnic minority—to be identified for what you are. That happens with other ethnic minorities, but the fact that they are identified as ethnic minorities does not stop discrimination.

Nadia Foy: Those people can challenge discrimination.

Mr McMahon: I appreciate that, but what about your ethnicity? Do people need to know? What would allow people not to discriminate against you and not to treat you separately?

Nadia Foy: What do you mean?

Mr McMahon: What are the main things that people who are not aware of your culture and values need to know about you?

Nadia Foy: We are not going anywhere. We are here to stay and will not be brushed under the carpet.

Clementine MacDonald: We have been around for long enough. It is not as if we popped up 10, 20 or 50 years ago. We have been around for perhaps as long as black or Asian people.

Nadia Foy: The Lord made the world and he made man. After he made man, we started. We have been here since the start of time and will not be put away.

Sharon McPhee: We want recognition.

Nadia Foy: It is not so much about recognition, although it is needed. We just want a nice lifestyle so that we can walk down the street without seeing a sign in a pub door that says: "No traders, no hawkers". We want to be able to pull on to sites.

We pulled on to a site in England that cost £110 a week. The extra £10 was for a van. We kept a load lugger for our kitchen, instead of an undertrailer and we had to pay an extra £6 a week for that. My father paid the rent. The site never knew that we had a van because it had not arrived. We put down the trailer, but as soon as the person on the site found out that we were Travellers, he slung us out, although he was getting about £140 a week. We did not leave mess, rubbish or black bin bags and stainless steel cans about.

Clementine MacDonald: People do not know about such things. Even in 2001, people do not know a lot about Travellers because they have never taken an interest.

Nadia Foy: They think that we wear long skirts, big hoopy earrings, jump over broomsticks to get married and dance around fires at night.

Clementine MacDonald: They think that we are a tribe.

Nadia Foy: When I went to Geneva, a woman who worked at the United Nations asked me, "Do you have many parties?" I replied, "All the time." I never knew that she was talking about stick parties—dancing round the fire. I thought that she was talking about nightclub parties and so on. I was sitting there, having a conversation on a totally different level. She asked me how long I had been travelling—I replied, "I just got my licence yesterday." I thought that that was quite funny, but she did not take it as a joke.

Another woman, at a fringe meeting, came up to me, and I told her about my education. She told me, "You're doing good work, but I feel that you need a bit more education." I replied, "Education for me is a lifestyle: it's not just about going to school and learning to read and write." I know that it is a big part of things, though. If you go to a doctor you need to learn to read and write to fill the forms in. You also need to fill forms in for a dentist. If you go to social security, or if you go for a driving test, you need to be able to read and write. Education is about the basics in life—everybody should be entitled to read and write.

A woman that I spoke to criticised me. To get to where we were, we had come a long way on a plane. I do not know how many miles it was, but it was a long way to go to put our point across, and to show that there are a lot of other Travellers. There were Travellers from Bulgaria and Romania. My hair is a different colour from what it was then—it used to be a bit lighter. The woman came up to me and said: "You have fair hair; you have white skin—you're no Traveller; you're a gorgio." A gorgio is a non-Traveller. People in those countries do not realise that there are other Travellers out there—in their community.

Clementine MacDonald: When Sharon McPhee and I went to Bulgaria last month, people kept coming up to us on the street, asking, "Why are you so white?" That is in a foreign country—they are not aware that there are other people like them all over the place.

Sharon McPhee: They touched our hair, too.

The Convener: Have members asked all their questions? Do the witnesses have anything to ask us?

Clementine MacDonald: Where—

Sharon McPhee: What—

Nadia Foy: Where is—[*Laughter.*]

The Convener: I do not usually ask that question, by the way—it is taking a high risk.

Sharon McPhee: What will you do to help us?

Nadia Foy: What will you do with the information that you have?

The Convener: We decided to have the inquiry after we took evidence last May about discrimination against Gypsy/Travellers. This is the first inquiry on it that the committee has conducted, and we have appointed an adviser. We have been out, taking evidence on sites, and we have taken evidence from a lot of different public bodies. In June, we hope to publish a report, which will have recommendations that we then take to the Parliament, to try to change policy. We are considering how we can influence changes in legislation, in particular the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

We hope to be able to make a real difference. However, the publishing of a committee report and changes in legislation or policy will not change people's attitudes. We have heard evidence to suggest that we could conduct some kind of campaign, with a bit more education for other people. I hope that this is the start, not the end. The committee's report and the Parliament's decision will not be the end of the inquiry, but the start of trying to change things for the better, so that you will be able to bring your kids up without the discrimination that you have faced.

Nadia Foy: Scotland has its own Parliament now, and its own recognition—nearly. We need recognition as well. Obviously that will not happen overnight, but we cannot wait for 10 years.

Sharon McPhee: Are you talking about awareness raising?

The Convener: That would be one thing—that sort of education is important. However, it would also be a matter of carrying out changes to policy and to legislation, so that it would be illegal for people to discriminate against Gypsy/Travellers in the way that they have done in the past. That would involve a number of things. Alongside educating them, we have to start with forcing people not to discriminate.

Sharon McPhee: That brings me to something else that I wanted to say. Jonathan Ross is always saying things about Travellers on TV—"dirty Gypsies" or whatever. If he said that about a black or Asian person, there would be war; there would be an outcry. I do not get it, but it is true.

Nadia Foy: Don't watch him. Turn him off. Let his ratings go down.

The Convener: It is true—there are different types of discrimination.

Nadia Foy: There was a children's programme on the telly—

Clementine MacDonald: "Gypsy Girl" or something.

Sharon McPhee: Yes; I saw it—it was terrible.

Nadia Foy: It was pathetic. My wee sister tried to get an address so that she could write to complain about it.

Clementine MacDonald: People have cheek to put money into making something like that.

Sharon McPhee: We thought it was highly funny.

Nadia Foy: Anyway—where do we go from here?

The Convener: We will take more evidence. We will produce a report in June, which will be discussed in the Parliament. I hope that we will actually start to change things in education and health.

On the issue that you raised about the Race Relations Act 1976 and about being a separate ethnic group, that is something that we cannot do. That would have to be changed at Westminster, but we can make recommendations about the matter.

Nadia Foy: How can we do it, then?

The Convener: The race relations legislation is reserved to Westminster.

Nadia Foy: Right—so how do we get in touch with Westminster?

The Convener: We will probably end up doing that. Anyway, the postcode is SW1A 0AA. [*Laughter.*]

A recommendation would probably go from the Scottish Parliament Equal Opportunities Committee to the Westminster Parliament. Once we have published our report, we can send it out and will consult on it over the summer. You might have some comments to make on it. It will, I hope, include some of the things that you want with regard to the future. We will discuss the report in Parliament after the summer recess. We will make recommendations, and the Executive must then decide which recommendations it will accept. That will be discussed in Parliament, and you will be able to see that.

Nadia Foy: On behalf of the girls and the rest of the people who have come along, I thank you for having us. There were two people who were also supposed to be here today but, because of evictions that were carried out by the police, they have been moved on and could not be here. Thank you for taking the time to listen to us. It was a pleasure to be here.

The Convener: Thank you very much for coming.

11:26

Meeting adjourned.

11:33

On resuming—

Budget Process 2002-03

The Convener: I welcome Sue Robertson and Jeanette Timmins from Engender women's budget group, and Dharmendra Kanani and Lucy Chapman from the Commission for Racial Equality. I apologise for the fact that they have been kept waiting—our very interesting evidence session with young Gypsy/Travellers ran on.

Members have a copy of the Engender women's budget group response to the budget, so the witnesses should give a short presentation before the committee asks questions.

Sue Robertson (Engender): I have passed round copies of the summary points to which I will speak.

We are pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the committee on this subject. We recognise that the spending plans are work in progress, but we are disappointed that they contain so little reference to equality. There is no reference to equality or gender equality in the overall objectives or the departmental objectives. Equality is dealt with in a separate section with the voluntary sector, at the end of the spending plans, so it has been sidelined. There has been an increase in the budget for equality from last year to this, but then the budget is static. The fact that no extra money is devoted to the equality strategy raises questions about it.

A general point about presentation is that expenditure is given in absolute amounts of money, so it is difficult to assess amounts in the spending programmes for individual departments. No percentages are given. Percentages would allow people to see what priority has been given to different programmes—one programme might be receiving a 10 per cent increase while another was receiving a 1 per cent increase. That information is not given, so readers have to work it out for themselves.

Another general point about the presentation of the spending plans is that the level of detail in objectives and targets varies enormously. Some sections give precise objectives and targets—for example, the spending plans for justice show so many weeks of training for fire service personnel—but other sections are vague and contain statements of intention, with no way of measuring whether those intentions are achieved.

I have highlighted in the summary a few specific points about the spending plans, which are also covered in our more in-depth submission. In

education, the only mention of gender equality is a statement that there will be measures to make education inclusive. The spending plans talk about

"supporting equal opportunities, pupil welfare, anti-bullying and developing a positive ethos in schools".

No objectives or targets are given. There is just a general wish for education to be more inclusive, but it is not clear how that will be achieved and how much money will be devoted to it.

The spending plans state that the Executive will invest £3.6 million in the child care strategy, but there are no targets for the number of places. Improving the qualifications of child care workers is mentioned, but there is no reference to the gender of those workers. That is a major issue, as the sector is predominantly staffed by females.

Similarly, in enterprise and lifelong learning, there are specific targets for business start-ups and modern apprenticeships, but there is no gender analysis. Both those targets are likely to be of benefit predominantly to males. The targets for higher education are given in terms of percentage of participation from particular neighbourhoods or socioeconomic groups. There is no mention of gender, so there is no way of checking whether more women are being encouraged to go back into education, which could be a crucial issue. Nor is there any mention of promoting equal opportunities in terms of what students are studying or the pay and conditions of staff.

Finally, in the spending plans for social justice, there is no reference to gender in the discussion of social inclusion and no explicit provision for things such as people's juries or panels to take account of equal opportunities issues.

There is a long way to go in analysing the spending plans in terms of gender impact.

Jeanette Timmins (Engender): Briefly, our overall feeling is of deep disappointment that, given all the joint working that has taken place over the years to ensure equality of opportunity in respect of gender, such as in the consultative steering group, which looked at how the Parliament would operate for the first couple of years, a commitment to gender awareness—never mind gender equality—is so visibly lacking in the budget document. After the support that was given to the women's budget group, and after the many seminars that have taken place over the years—especially in the past few months—it is disappointing how few objectives and targets are highlighted within the spending plans. Given that the budget's key theme is social justice, it is important to recognise that an opportunity to deal with that topic in a way that is fair to men and to women seems to have been missed.

The equality strategy, which was published recently, has a clear action plan to develop mechanisms for equality, such as impact assessments of budgets and spending plans. It looks at dates and outcomes. We are disappointed that the equality strategy has not been built into the budget process. We thought that the Engender budget group's response to last year's proposed budget and to the "Investing in You" document would have given the Parliament an opportunity to build in some of those issues to this year's spending plans. We are deeply disappointed that that opportunity has not been taken.

We are disappointed that the budget document has no gender-specific objectives or targets. The question that must be asked of each budget line or department is this: in what ways are the policies—and, more important, the resource allocations—likely to reduce or increase gender inequalities? The budget document has no way of showing that and has no method of trying to ensure that that question can be answered with a yes or no.

We need to recognise that a high level of commitment and co-ordination is needed throughout the Parliament—and throughout the public services in general—to undertake an assessment of the gender impact of line-by-line budgets. The research advisory group's work on mainstreaming equality in public policy is on-going. We hope that there are people beavering away in the background and working on those very issues. However, if gender issues are not specifically mentioned in the spending plans, we must assume that they are not in the thinking.

The Convener: Dharmendra Kanani or Lucy Chapman may make an opening statement now. We will then ask questions of all the witnesses, as if they were a panel, to avoid having to repeat the questions with both sets of witnesses.

Dharmendra Kanani (Commission for Racial Equality): I thank the committee for giving us the opportunity to give evidence on the budget. We have not made a written response to the budget, but we use this opportunity to flag up some key concerns.

One of the key points that we want to raise is that, given the absence of a clear line of spend against equality issues, it is difficult to secure a route to scrutinising the budget for racial equality and other equality issues. That is a huge difficulty for all agencies—including the CRE—that are trying to make sense of the budget.

Notwithstanding that, we welcome the fact that we have an opportunity to comment on the budget. It is excellent that the budget development process gives an opportunity to discuss, comment and come back on the various stages of development. We also welcome the First Minister's comment about ensuring that social

justice underpins the budget building process. In future—at least after the first session—we hope that the budget will build equality considerations firmly into spending plans. We see this early stage of the budget building process as a process of incremental change and development.

I draw the committee's attention to the new environment that we are operating in, as far as racial equality is concerned. The Race Relations Act (Amendment) 2000 placed a new duty on all public authorities proactively to promote racial equality and avoid racial discrimination. That general duty applies to the Scottish Executive. We regard the budget building exercise as a function of the Executive, but the budget document pays scant attention to ensuring that racial equality is firmly woven into that public function. We would like that issue to go back to the Executive and to be considered more thoroughly. The amendment was won through hard battle and we would like to see the evidence of how the budget identifies and works through that issue.

We also want to draw the committee's attention to the "Review of the Funding for Black and Minority Ethnic Groups in the Voluntary Sector", which was concluded earlier this year. I am not sure whether members have come across that review, which was led by Jackie Baillie as Minister for Social Justice. The document is out for consultation and comments must be back by July. The review is interesting because it provides a snapshot of where funding comes from for ethnic minorities in the voluntary sector. Page 67 of the review document—which, I ask members to note, was funded by the Scottish Executive—says:

"In terms of the strategic issues, the following conclusions can be drawn:

There is a current focus in Scotland, in the Scottish Executive and Parliament, on promoting equality and tackling social exclusion. Within this, there is a specific focus on race equality which is also consistent with the overall objectives of many local authorities. This does not yet appear, however, to be reflected in the pattern of grant provision evident from the findings of this research".

11:45

Clearly, even Government-sponsored research shows that there is no consistent approach to funding around equality issues, let alone racial equality concerns.

That is an overview of some of our key concerns. On specifics, there is a lack of information available to ascertain what spending is needed for racial equality, and, in particular, what problems need to be identified through the spending plans. Currently, there is a paucity of information on economic activity, on housing conditions, on benefit take-up, and on a whole range of social policy issues. As a result of that absence of information, we are not clear about how the budget will tackle some of those major issues.

We look forward to the Scottish household survey, which, we hope, will establish a benchmark for spending. The household survey should be related to the Scottish Executive's spending plans. It is important that we take that on board quite radically.

When the committee considers the way forward, it might want to consider the argument that has been made by my colleagues from Engender and by sister equality agencies. If what one wants to achieve through one's policy intentions on racial equality and equality per se is not factored into the budget building processes, one will end up with the same-old same old. Most members of the committee will know what I mean by that. I mean that when local government is asked to engage in a positive action exercise or to ensure that disability issues are addressed effectively, the first response will be, "We do not have the money for that", or "We do not have the resources for that". When we speak to certain education providers about access to, for example, courses in English as a second language, the issue is about budgets. If we talk about housing provision, or positive action processes within housing, the question returns to budgets. If the policy intention is to weave social justice and equality into the mainframe of governance and social policy issues across Scotland, it is absolutely critical that equality issues are woven in explicitly, so that we can fend off the arguments about lack of money.

The Commission for Racial Equality will look at how the Executive and a range of public authorities ensure that the duties that will be placed on them by the Race Relations Act (Amendment) 2000 are factored into their spending plans. We will look at how they assess the impact of their policy on racial equality and at whether the training that is provided to staff ensures that services are taken up. We will want to know how policy appraisals will be done and how ethnic monitoring will be achieved.

One of the key issues in the Scottish public sector is how to meet the language needs of a range of communities—not only asylum-seeking communities but other ethnic minority communities. That issue has huge implications on resources. The budget building exercise must not only support and enable public authorities to meet their requirements, but ensure that services are provided adequately and equitably across the board.

Members will know that in 1999, together with the Equal Opportunities Commission, we produced a checklist for MSPs on how to mainstream equalities within all policy matters that

members consider. I would like members to revisit the checklist in view of the Scottish budget plans and to ask some of the questions that it lists: what is the policy for, who is it for, what are the desired and anticipated outcomes—[*Interruption.*] I hope that the microphones did not fall over in reaction to the questioning process.

The Convener: We will adjourn the meeting until the sound system has been sorted out.

11:50

Meeting adjourned.

11:51

On resuming—

The Convener: We can restart the meeting.

Dharmendra Kanani: I will conclude in a moment—I do not want to give the sound system another opportunity to go.

As I said, I would like the committee to revisit the checklist in its response to other committees. It is important that the budget process be scrutinised effectively. If it is not, there will be no change of practice regarding equality matters. How does equality spending feature in the budget of this committee and in that of the department that you are responsible for scrutinising in terms of accessing communities of interest? That question needs to be asked.

We will give the committee some information on the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the guidance that we have produced on the general duty for public authorities to promote racial equality.

Mr McMahon: Almost from the outset of this committee's work, organisations have come to us saying that their biggest problem is lack of information. Again, we are in the middle of a budget process but the documents that are being produced as part of that process fail to mention equality. If equality is noticed only by its absence, how can the success of the budget process in ensuring equality be measured?

Sue Robertson: Two areas are relevant to measuring success. An analysis of spending must be conducted in relation to its impact on equality groups. For example, if a certain amount is being spent on business start-ups, an investigation should be conducted into how many of those start-ups involve men, how many involve women and what the impact is on racial equality and the equality of other groups. That would allow us to determine whether the needs of the relevant communities are being met.

Policies should also be inspected to determine whether they will address some of the disadvantages that groups face. For example, we should examine whether more women are able to access higher education so that we can find out the extent to which women are disadvantaged in educational terms. The objectives of the policies must be framed in terms of the equality strategy. In education, the policies are crudely framed in terms of neighbourhoods and social groups, which does not measure the other dimensions of equality that we have been talking about today.

Jeanette Timmins: Success can be measured only by asking the views of the people whom you hope will be affected by spending plans. As I said, attempting to get a true reflection of the situation would be a fairly large exercise. If you ask how the spending plans of the Parliament or local authorities impact on various people, you will get various answers across the board. If a group of women and a group of men are asked to pretend that they are the Minister for Finance for a day, they will produce two differing budgets.

Some of what I am saying is anecdotal, but much of the research that has been done on equality of opportunity and community empowerment is contained in a document that was commissioned by the Scottish Executive, "Women's Issues in Local Partnership Working". The document shows that there is no commitment on the part of the social inclusion partnerships to target spending on women. Many women sit on the SIP boards and there is a perception that, if that is the case, women's issues are being dealt with. However, if women in communities are asked about how the policies are affecting them, you will hear that that is not the case.

It is true that it is hard to make judgments when there is a lack of information, but the overarching point that we want to make today is that, if you do not state specifically that your intention is to ensure equality across the board, it will be difficult to ascertain the answers without a great deal of work. People must be asked directly.

Sue Robertson: The process of gathering information has been started. The Executive has produced one issue of "Men and Women in Scotland A Statistical Profile, which follows on from the work that Engender had done with the gender audit, but that needs to be an on-going process. We need to have information not only about gender, but about the other equality groups within that.

There are examples of that process being implemented in other countries and of the equality agenda being built in to the budgeting process. That is what we are trying to bring into the thinking in Scotland.

Dharmendra Kanani: We acknowledge the fact that the process is incremental. That cannot be avoided. An important starting point is the fact that our budget building process is more inclusive than that of other places. It is also important that a statement has been made that social justice is supposed to underpin the overall process.

Equality is relative: the starting point of the people whom I represent is lower than that of gender-based groups, because less information is available about the life chances and economic circumstances of ethnic minority communities in Scotland than is available about such issues in relation to women. Information has to be monitored across the board so that we can determine the ways in which public expenditure is affecting the life chances of those people. We need to have a range of performance indicators. For instance, in relation to local government, we need to know whether council leaders, chief executives and others are examining equality spend.

What is notable in the Scottish Executive's budget planning process is that, although there is a radical equality strategy over a period of time, there is no budget allocation associated with it. It is excellent that such a strategy exists, but we cannot say what its impact will be if there is no spend associated with it. I am aware, however, that the equality-proofing mechanisms that have been established, particularly those that are associated with the round table group, will have an impact on how we measure success.

The equality-proofing group is considering conducting a survey of Scottish Executive expenditure, but we are concerned that nearly three quarters of that expenditure is spent by local authorities, health boards and so on. Given that, we would like a review to investigate whether local authorities and health boards factor in equality issues to their work. Do they know how to? How can that process be enabled? For elected members and officers, the notion of equality-proofing budgets and assessing their impact on equality issues might seem to be too far removed from the detail of such things as refuse collection and debt collection. We need to find a way of engaging people around the issue in a more interactive way.

12:00

Mr McMahon: I have one further question—one that I have put to other organisations that have given evidence. Given the concerns and issues that you raise, would there be value in establishing a single equality commission similar to that in Northern Ireland? Would that help to address the concerns that you raise?

Jeanette Timmins: When a commission or group is set up to consider a particular issue, it can be distracting. There is the time factor: while the commission is considering whatever issues, life is still going on. It would be better to ensure that the principles behind the setting up of this Parliament—the principles laid down by the consultative steering group—were developed. The commitments on equality of opportunity that were signed up to when the Parliament started should be in-built. That will be a long-drawn-out process. We are trying to change people's attitudes. That has been evident in the budget: some departments have thought through the statistics and some have not.

What you suggest may be worth considering, but it is important not to reinvent the wheel. Within the Parliament and the Executive, there is a lot of evidence of fairly radical forward thinking on equality of opportunity. We have to tap into that and develop it. This is about partnership working, using expertise that is already there, rather than setting up another body.

Dharmendra Kanani: In the context of this debate, my response to Mr McMahon's suggestion would be: what problem would such a commission solve in the budget process? We need to understand the obstacles and barriers to achieving a budget process that factors in equality issues thoroughly and meaningfully. We need to ask whether that can be achieved through an equality commission, or whether the problem lies elsewhere and what is really needed are different ways of working in Government and the Executive.

We need to ask how the Government and the Executive engage with the Parliament and other agencies to ensure that there is a robust and healthy debate that leads to change. Would an equality commission, in this context, achieve that? I am not sure. Are the force, intelligence and diligence of the three statutory equality agencies in Scotland, together with the range of other equality groups, not enough to secure a quality debate on equality? Perhaps we should be looking for solutions other than that of a single equality commission.

Kay Ullrich: Do you believe that the Scottish budget demonstrates a mainstreaming approach to equality?

Sue Robertson: No, not at all. The budget would have to have some explicit recognition of equality issues for it to be described as having a mainstreaming approach. At the moment, we are a long way from that.

Kay Ullrich: Is that your basic worry? Here we are, a year on, and there is no evidence that equality has been anything other than an add-on, with people saying, "Well, while we're here, we'll mention equality."

Sue Robertson: Absolutely. Equality is not yet in the budget, despite the presentation of evidence a year ago, and that is a real problem. We hoped to see at least a beginning of an acknowledgement, in the overall objectives and in the departmental objectives, that equality needs to be considered, even though, in some areas, we are still working on the information base to allow objectives and targets to be set and measured. What has happened is disappointing.

Dharmendra Kanani: Despite the fact that—if we go by the policy statements of the Scottish Executive and by the founding principles of the Scottish Parliament—it was intended to take a mainstreaming approach to equality, such an approach is not evident in the Executive document. In the equality strategy that the Scottish Executive has developed, one of the key mechanisms for change is the consideration by civil servants of the equality impact of their proposals. We have before us a document that has not benefited sufficiently from that approach.

We need to consider why that is the case and bat that backwards. Where people start and who will take the lead are important questions. Perhaps a starting point might be in a Scottish Parliament committee such as this, which could lead the way by factoring equality indicators into how it allocates its spending to particular groups to access its deliberations. I hope that that would have a knock-on effect on other committees and on the Scottish Executive's departments.

Kay Ullrich: Do you prioritise any areas of inequality as crucial?

Sue Robertson: Social justice is key. If the Parliament is supposed to combat social injustice, a gender dimension to the analysis of that and the strategies to combat it is crucial. Education is also key to improving the situation.

Kay Ullrich: Is there any advance on education and social justice?

Dharmendra Kanani: No. We will not enter into dialogue about what we think is a priority, because that would presuppose or suggest that a hierarchy exists and that disability requires a different approach from race or gender, which it does not. The approach concerns ways of working, how the problem is addressed and how expenditure is allocated according to that. If the equality-proofing mechanisms are in place from the start, before people put pen to paper—if we change people's working mindset—we will achieve greater difference.

Kay Ullrich: We must get that right and we must have evidence that we are getting poverty proofing of the equality agenda right.

Dharmendra Kanani: Absolutely. That is why the process is important for what it will tell the Scottish Executive about rethinking the budget's building process.

Kay Ullrich: Are you saying that there is no evidence in the budget that the Executive is getting it right?

Sue Robertson: That is correct. The budget contains no objectives or targets relating to equality.

Kay Ullrich: The Executive may well be getting it right, but no evidence shows that.

Sue Robertson: I do not think that the Executive is getting it right. Unless explicit objectives are set, we do not know.

Kay Ullrich: How do we measure progress?

Sue Robertson: That is the issue.

Dharmendra Kanani: If we return to being pragmatic and considering development incrementally, we see that changes are happening. We are dealing with a relatively new body in a devolved setting. We must recognise that it will take time for equality issues to settle in. However, the budget has broad themes. Money is being spent in thematic bands. If the budget process is to be interactive, we must break it down much more to understand that if mainstreaming is a key Executive commitment, the document must make sense of it. At present, mainstreaming is not in the document.

Kay Ullrich: Thank you. I must go to another meeting shortly. By leaving, I will not be walking out on you or staging a protest.

Cathy Peattie: I am new to equal opportunities and I am trying to get my head round the approach to getting the budget right, so if I ask daft questions, please excuse me. Some positive developments on equality and social justice are taking place, yet the Executive has failed to include them in the budget. Dharmendra Kanani said that we needed to get the mindset right. The education department is not especially good at equality indicators or quality indicators. How do you measure whether a person is more confident or not discriminated against? It is easier to measure the number of highers that have been attained or the number of people who have come through the door.

A climate change is needed. How do we make progress towards that? People are willing to make progress and accept that change is needed in some of the documents and some of the work that is under way, but we do not see that change. How do we make the budget more interactive, as you said? Civil servants are not particularly good at interactivity—perhaps I should not say that. They will say, "This is the budget. This is what we do."

Kay Ullrich: You are doomed, Cathy.

Cathy Peattie: I was doomed a while ago. Do not worry about that.

If we are to deliver, we must be clear about how we do that. Sue Robertson said that we need to know what we are doing and how we measure that. The objective and targets need to be known. How do we achieve that?

Sue Robertson: In some areas it is relatively straightforward. In education, for example—

Cathy Peattie: People in education departments do not think that it is straightforward.

Sue Robertson: It is straightforward to collect information about the gender of students; to look at subject choices and what career opportunities boys and girls or men and women are pursuing; to consider ways of influencing people to achieve a more equal gender balance between different professions.

That is evident in relation to modern apprenticeships, where the programme is 80 per cent male and 20 per cent female. The females go on to take up very traditional opportunities. A programme of awareness raising needs to be undertaken among young people to let them know of the different opportunities that exist. Boys could get involved in the caring professions and girls could get involved in things that are traditionally seen as male. If that kind of programme is to be developed, it needs to have a budget.

The same situation exists in schools where, if equal opportunities among pupils are to be studied, resources need to be devoted to introduce awareness raising and programmes to encourage young people to consider different options. Statistics are then needed to judge what happens to the school leavers; the gender breakdown of the labour force needs to be monitored.

An example of where that needs to happen is in child care, which is a rapidly developing profession. The Executive produced a statistical bulletin on child care that included only statistics on the pre-school sector. The bulletin made no mention of the after-school sector, which is the biggest growing sector in child care. The Executive needs to ensure that the statistics are produced so that they can be analysed.

There is a similar lack of statistics on pay levels in schools and in further and higher education. There is a big gender gap in pay levels in higher education. Women are paid typically much less than men. That kind of thing needs to be monitored. Resources need to be devoted to correcting those gender gaps.

Dharmendra Kanani: We are talking about the relationship between spending plans and policy and legislative intentions. An attempt is being made to close the gap, but it needs to be closed much further. That will happen by the drip effect of looking backwards, as happens in this kind of process, and starting the scrutiny process much earlier on in the civil service.

I hope that the equality strategy can start in the Executive, so that we do not have to go through this process again. It is not tiresome, but we are having to make commonsense recommendations that should have been taken on board right from the start. It is not rocket science to say that if parity in economic outcomes, housing access and educational outcomes is to be achieved, a budget needs to be built in for that.

One of the key issues for the CRE is language provision or the question of how sufficient resources are provided for supported learning in schools. How do you ensure that local government and other public authorities are going to be geared up for their responsibilities, not simply for the provisions of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, but in the emerging human rights framework? As human rights become much more evidenced and tested in various frameworks, we know what the implications are in Scotland now and in the future. The public sector across Scotland needs to be geared up for that and the budgetary implications need to be thought through much more effectively.

Jeanette Timmins: We are not starting with a blank sheet of paper—we can look at examples from elsewhere. In the 1980s, the Australian Government developed gender-proofing budgets for the federal Government and for every state and territory. That was a 10-to-12-year process, which required departments and outside agencies to be specific about targets that related to gender. They had to ask questions such as "What impact will this policy have?" and "How will it impact on women?" That was introduced at a time when Australia had a radical Labour Government. In the early 1990s, when the Australian Government changed to one that was slightly less radical, things dropped off the shelf. That is not a reason for not looking at the issue. We need to look at examples of good practice from elsewhere and pick out the pitfalls. Rather than reinventing the wheel, let us see where gender-proofing budgets have worked before.

There is a fundamental assumption that civil servants in the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Executive are writing policy papers on their own, and that they are being required to include equality issues in those papers. We must give them support and ensure that, when ministers and MSPs make statements about equality of

opportunity, their message is transmitted to officers within the Executive and the Parliament who are writing papers. The support structures must be in place for equality of opportunity training, so that we are not throwing people in at the deep end and expecting them to think about a policy and write it.

Dharmendra Kanani: If our commitment is to bridge the gap between intention and spend, and to ensure that we have a more evidence-led formula in Scotland, we must establish how the Scottish Executive can be supported in implementing a programme of equalities data. We must get that right from the beginning. Some might argue that that would be too resource-intensive and difficult, but it would not. Rather than having to consider gender, disability, race and other matters individually, there must be a programme whereby public sector organisations across the board can learn from the Executive how to monitor take-up and geographical issues in a way that makes spending more accurate and focused.

The Convener: As members have no further questions, I thank you for giving evidence to the committee today. I hope that you have sent your questionnaires back, as the closing date for them was yesterday. The committee will consider an analysis of them at its next meeting, next week.

Jeanette Timmins: Thanks for your time.

12:16

Meeting continued in private until 12:26.

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