



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

Tuesday 4 October 2011

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE
5th Meeting 2011, Session 4

CONVENER

*Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP)

*John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

*Siobhan McMahon (Central Scotland) (Lab)

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con)

*Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Patricia Armstrong (Association of Chief Officers of Scottish Voluntary Organisations)

Dr Salah Beltagui (Muslim Council of Scotland)

Antony Clark (Audit Scotland)

Pauline Craig (NHS Health Scotland)

Susan Grasekamp (Scottish Disability Equality Forum)

Jatin Haria (Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights)

Jon Harris (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)

Colin Lee (Adviser)

Tallulah Lines (Improvement Service)

Dr Claire Monaghan (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers)

Dr Gina Netto (Heriot-Watt University)

Rami Ousta (Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Douglas Thornton

LOCATION

Committee Room 4

Scottish Parliament

Equal Opportunities Committee

Tuesday 4 October 2011

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 14:06*]

Draft Budget 2012-13 and Spending Review 2011

The Convener (Claudia Beamish): Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the fifth meeting of the Equal Opportunities Committee in session 4. I remind all those present that devices should be set to silent and mobile connectivity deactivated. It sounds very technical, but basically you should turn it off so that it does not interfere with the broadcast of sound.

I want to mention to everyone present, and remind committee members, that we are hosting a short theatre performance by students from Broughton high school in Edinburgh in committee room 3 immediately after the meeting. The performance is the students' response to the increasingly sexualised culture around them as part of Engender's eye of the beholder project. It is envisaged that the performance will last about 30 to 40 minutes; anyone who is taking part in the round-table discussion and members of the public are welcome to join us to support the pupils in exploring the issues.

I have received apologies from Margaret Mitchell.

We will take a quick turn round our large table and get everyone to introduce themselves. My name is Claudia Beamish and I represent the South Scotland region. I am the convener of the committee. At the table but not participating are, on my immediate left, the clerk to the committee, Douglas Thornton, along with Simon Wakefield from the Scottish Parliament information centre and two members of the official report staff. At the bottom right of the table, we have the broadcasting and production services office, which is supporting the committee's proceedings.

Starting from my right, we will go round the table and introduce ourselves briefly before I explain how proceedings will be conducted today.

Colin Lee (Adviser): I am the adviser to the Equal Opportunities Committee on the draft budget and equality statement.

Patricia Armstrong (Association of Chief Officers of Scottish Voluntary Organisations): I am from the Association of Chief Officers of Scottish Voluntary Organisations.

Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP): Good afternoon. I am the Scottish National Party member for Aberdeenshire West.

Dr Gina Netto (Heriot-Watt University): I am a lecturer at Heriot-Watt University.

Tallulah Lines (Improvement Service): I work for the Improvement Service.

Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP): I am an SNP member of the Scottish Parliament for the West Scotland region.

Jatin Haria (Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights): I am from the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights.

Antony Clark (Audit Scotland): I am from Audit Scotland.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I am an MSP for the Highlands and Islands.

Pauline Craig (NHS Health Scotland): I am from NHS Health Scotland.

Rami Ousta (Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland): I am chief executive of the Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland.

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I am a Central Scotland MSP.

Susan Grasekamp (Scottish Disability Equality Forum): I am a policy officer for the Scottish Disability Equality Forum.

Dr Claire Monaghan (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers): I am representing the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers.

Siobhan McMahon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I am an MSP for Central Scotland.

Jon Harris (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities): I am from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Dr Salah Beltagui (Muslim Council of Scotland): I am from the Muslim Council of Scotland.

The Convener: Also present, but not at the table, are Deborah Gourlay from the clerking team, our colleagues from security, and observers in the public gallery, who are also welcome.

Our sole agenda item is a round-table discussion on the spending review 2011 and the Scottish Government's draft budget 2012-13. The purpose of the discussion is to inform the session with the cabinet secretary that the committee will hold on 25 October.

All participants, members and those who are sitting round the table should indicate when they

would like to speak and either Douglas or I will make a list. If you have questions that relate to a subject that has already been raised, we will try to bring you in before we move on to a new topic. We are not mind-readers, so if we get it wrong we will just go on from there.

Are there any particular areas that our witnesses, committee members or indeed Colin Lee, our budget adviser, would like to bring up? Who would like to make a start?

Jon Harris: One of my responsibilities at a corporate level is equalities and I am a member of the equality and budget advisory group. My take is that Scotland is probably further forward on equalities than England, Wales or Northern Ireland, but we still have a long way to go. One of the issues that we need to address is building our capacity to undertake equalities and human rights impact assessments and to measure their outcomes, so that they can be put into single outcome agreements and so on.

The Convener: That was a useful start. Does Colin Lee want to come in on that?

Colin Lee: A single outcome agreement might be useful if there were measured outcomes from local authorities through the community planning partnership SOAs to the Scottish Government itself, and if there were some kind of race and other equality reporting mechanism. It might be useful for the committee to have a discussion about that.

Jatin Haria: I agree with Jon Harris that our process is probably further ahead than those of most other countries in the world, but it is just a process that has now been started. There is a long way to go in terms of outcomes and taking real action. I was looking at the 2011-12 budget equality statement—I do not know whether there were any equality statements prior to that—and, on ethnicity, it reads similarly to the 2012-13 statement and some of the outcomes are the same. I do not expect miracles to happen in a year, but it might have been good to get an annual progress report on what has changed. Without that, we are in danger of concentrating solely on the process.

On the single outcome agreements, this is a Scottish Government budget and budget equality statement. In recent years, the Government has been keen to devolve decision making and everything else to local authorities, especially councils. I suggest that it has been very hard for the Government to insist on anything that has been localised or delegated. A mechanism probably needs to be found to ensure that equalities are still being considered in local authorities. The general feeling is that, now that ring fencing and the central strategies have gone,

local authorities have moved on to other, more important—as they would see it—things.

Dennis Robertson: Can we build on the aspect of building capacity? Are you referring to what we should include in the specific duties? Should guidance be issued on the specific duties? Those questions are for Mr Harris.

14:15

Jon Harris: I take the point that we must deliver progress and outcomes. If we are to improve our ability to measure the impact of budget decisions on equalities, we will need to invest much more in that capacity. We need to develop the equality analysts network—that is a good start, but it is not enough. We need much better equalities and human rights impact assessments at strategic and narrower levels. We need to improve local equality data and advance equality outcomes collaboratively through SOAs.

In particular, we need to work together to develop reliable data sets nationally and locally for the new equality groups that are included in the general duty. We also need to do much more to engage equality groups—especially new groups—nationally and locally. Finally, we need to raise the profile of equalities in the best-value regime. That is my thinking.

The Convener: That is a detailed analysis. I am sure that we have people who take notes fast, but if you wanted to pass on notes on those issues, that would be great.

Dr Monaghan: The critical point is that we have an opportunity because of the equality focus on the budget and the new legislation that is coming along. When they are taken together, the opportunity exists to do what people ask—to use the equality legislation to start building equalities strategies in public sector bodies and capturing outcomes.

Public sector workers and those who are responsible for delivering equalities are a captive audience. They are all grappling with the issue together. They are looking primarily at capacity building, to which Jon Harris referred, to take forward the work collectively. A powerful network of equality officers meets regularly to review the issues.

If we take all that together, we are on the cusp of taking the big step forward. However, I agree that, in the absence of capturing the data, we can tell only anecdotes and stories to show that we are making progress. We need to have hard evidence and to capture outcomes. I agree with the committee's adviser that SOAs still measure inputs and impacts, but they are relatively new. The next iteration of SOAs will be much more

developed. Collective guidance and collective work on what the equality outcomes could be would be really useful.

Clare Adamson: I did not expect us to jump straight to the public sector part of the discussion. On that broader theme, one issue that is emerging is mainstreaming equalities in the public service. I want a general feel from people round the table about whether a move to mainstreaming is being made. Is it being adopted? Is concern felt that it might be a smokescreen for public sector bodies' implementation of strategies?

Dr Beltagui: As I have said, I did not expect to go into detail today. I will discuss two issues, one of which is reporting. It is important to report on all the equality strands, to ensure that nothing becomes small relative to other elements. Some people fear that issues such as religion will be small in single outcome agreements and will be considered little. The capacity of communities—especially minority communities—is very small, so they might be easily passed by. Reporting must cover all the issues.

We must also try to raise the capacity of the groups that are covered. Some of them have very good capacity—for example, faith communities do a lot of social work—but some of them are new and small and need not only social support but support to give them the capacity to be involved in civic and political processes. I know that the Scottish Interfaith Council has been doing a lot of work on dialogue, which is good for building cohesion in communities, but we also need capacity to deal with equalities, discrimination and so on in these areas.

Dr Monaghan: I am happy to say where I think local authorities are in this respect.

Equalities is not a matter of simply switching on a light and doing nothing more. Mainstreaming is a matter of evolving, bedding down and settling into local authorities and other public sector bodies but, although there has been a lot of progress in the past five to 10 years, it has faltered slightly in the past year because of uncertainty over where the legislation is going. Many authorities decided to keep going on the assumption that the secondary legislation setting out the public duties would be introduced and its absence has left some of those authorities feeling uncertain.

In general, there is a lot of anecdotal evidence about how mainstreaming is being developed and embedded and reporting would allow all that to be demonstrated more thoroughly. However, the journey to ensure that every officer in a public sector body thinks equalities first and completely understands what that means in practice is a long one. As Jon Harris pointed out, it will require capacity building and continuous staff training—of

the kind, in fact, that we are doing to embed sustainability in the psyche of organisations.

The Convener: These comments are all very helpful.

Tallulah Lines: I was not going to respond to Claire Monaghan immediately, but the issue of mainstreaming is very important. I have been working with four local authorities to improve local equality data and one of the many issues that we have come up against has been mainstreaming itself. It seems that people want to move in that direction and, instead of having it as an add-on, want it to be properly embedded in their work.

However, it all boils down to the availability of evidence. As others have pointed out, there are gaps in and problems with evidence not only locally but nationally with certain groups and a strong focus on improving availability would make a real difference.

A lot more work needs to be done on how evidence is used. What happens after evidence is collected locally or even nationally? How can we be sure that collecting the evidence has been a worth-while activity and will result in something that makes a real impact on people's lives? Focusing on that issue would cement what happens in that respect. Whatever happens with the draft budget and spending review, you can consider impacts only after you have thought about whether people, particularly at a local level, have the capacity and know what to do with that evidence. For example, those who will be responsible for making service cuts need to ask who needs the services, who in the community will be affected and how such a move will make people feel. That must be the key focus in thinking about how we go forward with the spending review.

John Finnie: The previous speaker has said almost everything that I was going to say, but I will rephrase my comments for emphasis. We hear a lot about processes and statistics. Clearly we need processes for dealing with all these issues. I note from our briefing paper that

"The Government highlights that evidence also shows that people living in deprived areas are more likely to develop lung cancer";

the paper then sets out the possible implications of that and asks whether the £30 million investment has been sufficiently targeted.

I represent the Highlands and Islands, and I have noticed that sometimes we have to consider not just the use but the potential abuse of statistics. Sometimes the representative sample can be too small. We, the practitioners, must use all the words that we do—such as "process" and "statement"—but the word "outcomes" actually means "people", as the previous speaker

suggested, and we must never lose track of the fact that we are trying to improve the lot of people. We have to treat everyone fairly, and consider how to do that within a budget of many different strands.

I probably have not added anything to what the previous speaker said, but it is important that we focus on people—that other name for outcomes. We can get too bogged down in statistics when it is people who matter.

Tallulah Lines: We have talked about statistics as part of evidence, but qualitative information is important, too. As Mr Finnie said, outcomes are about people, and people have to be allowed to get their voices and opinions heard.

We were asked to consider race and religion for today's meeting. Relatively, the sample sizes are small—things can be broken down past the term “ethnic minority” and we have to consider exactly who is involved. The sample can be so small that—although I would not say that issues are not taken seriously—some things could perhaps be taken more seriously. I am thinking about qualitative information on what people really feel about what is happening to them.

Jon Harris and Claire Monaghan mentioned building capacity, and building capacity for community engagement must be meaningful. We need to reach not only the so-called usual suspects who take part in consultations, but the other people who really need to have their voices heard. We must reach out to those people.

Dr Netto: From around the table, I have heard quite a few references to a lack of data and to the need to rely on anecdotal evidence. However, there is a danger of underestimating the amount of data that we have. We should concentrate on what can be done.

In the equality statement on the draft budget, the Scottish Government claims to be “an exemplar” in employment, but the statement also says that 1 per cent of its workforce is from an ethnic minority. That is in a country in which 3 per cent of the population is from an ethnic minority. There is quite a discrepancy between the Government's view of itself as an exemplar and the statistics that are given in the equality statement. The Government says that it is pro-equalities and that it places a lot of emphasis on equalities—for example, by producing an equality statement to accompany the budget. That is a very good thing, but the other side of the issue does not quite stack up. Hence, there is a real need for positive action to address this sort of discrepancy.

The issue does not lie only with the Scottish Government; across local authorities, only 1 per cent of the workforce is from an ethnic minority. As in the previous example, that figure is

disproportionately low. In the general population, 3 per cent of people are from an ethnic minority.

Data is there, and it is there to act on. What else can I say? We have the data, and now action is needed. We do not need to rely on anecdotal evidence on employment. The information is there in black and white.

The Convener: Thank you for highlighting those points.

Siobhan McMahon: I take the point that the equality statement has not moved on this year. We have to consider how it can move on in future. I do not mean to be disparaging, but I am hearing warm words from people around the room about how they are engaging and are enthusiastic about capacity building and, apart from the single outcome agreements, I am not really getting what you do to engage, other than tick boxes. We all have to do that, and I understand the problems that were caused by having to wait for the equalities duties to come in, but is that all we do? What else do you do to demonstrate that you are carrying out your equalities duties? I am talking specifically about religion here. We have read through the budget and the equality statement, and we have received many papers, but religion is specifically mentioned only once, in the context of justice and sectarianism. Religion is much wider than that, and I take Gina Netto's point about data being available and what we should read into that, but I am looking at a blank page at the moment. How do we engage with religious groups more effectively than we do, especially given that there seems to be the will around the table to do so?

14:30

The Convener: Does anyone want to come in on that point before Antony Clark comes in?

Dennis Robertson: My point is specifically about the collection of data. Gina Netto mentioned employment and I hope that the percentages in the data collected show people of working age rather than the whole population, because those are two different things. It is like comparing apples and oranges. When you are looking at an employer, whether it be a local authority or the Government or whatever, you must ensure that the information is being taken about those people who are in the employable age range.

Another thing to mention is opportunity. Local authorities and—I sincerely hope—the Government are exemplars in providing opportunities for people to find employment. Whether people are successful in getting the jobs might depend on the interview process and so on, but we have to ensure that the opportunities are made available. That is something to bear in mind.

I certainly take on board Siobhan McMahon's point. Religion is much wider than just trying to address the problem of sectarianism. We need to engage and encourage engagement from other groups, which is why we are all here today.

Antony Clark: I want to build on the points that Claire Monaghan, Jon Harris and others have made about the extent to which we can see progress. Audit Scotland has done best-value audits of all 32 local authorities and has done follow-up audits in most councils at least once and up to four times depending on what we found the first time round. During that follow-up work, we generally found that progress has been made. Leadership is better and more activity is going on on the ground, but we still have the familiar problem that councils and their partners find it difficult to demonstrate the impact of what they are doing. There is a lot of activity with different race groups, communities of interest and geographical areas, but councils seem to find it hard to demonstrate the difference that that activity is making in terms of the quality of services, and the experiences and life chances of the people with whom they are dealing.

Part of the reason for that seems to be difficulties caused by lack of consistency across the council. Experts in certain departments are doing very good work, but that good learning is not transferred across the rest of the council, and there is not always strong corporate leadership—it is often fragmented—which seems to us to be quite an important point. This afternoon, we have talked about the importance of single outcome agreements as vehicles for planning, delivering and monitoring services. SOAs are predominantly fed by CPPs but, when we think of the leadership for equalities across partnerships, the evidence is much weaker. The extent to which there is collective partnership commitment to equalities and the extent to which that is embedded in the SOAs seems to be a much more uncertain area.

I will not rehearse all the issues that people have mentioned already about data and data gaps. I would rather turn it round. Absence of proof is not always proof of absence. Just because you cannot prove that you have demonstrated something does not mean that you have not made a difference. We also need to be alive to the fact that we need to have quite complicated and sophisticated measures to work out if activities are making a difference. As Mr Finnie said, communities are complex. If something affects only one or two people but it affects them quite significantly, that can be quite important, but it might well be missed if we are looking only at aggregate data across a community planning area.

It is a complicated area. Someone asked whether there is progress; I think that we would cautiously say yes. Does much more need to be done? The answer is obviously yes. Like many panel members, it seems to me that the equality statement gives a useful overview of some of the risks and challenges that are presented. Next year, we need to find good ways of tracking the changes, so that we can find out whether the risks are crystallising and materialising for the groups that are commented on in the document.

The Convener: That is helpful. Quite a few people have indicated that they want to speak.

Stuart McMillan: Claire Monaghan talked about a perceived slowdown during the past year. Was that an effect of the Scottish Parliament elections coming up? I do not know, and I do not know whether such a trend was reflected prior to the elections in 2007 and 2003. Does legislation always need to be passed if we are to make a difference?

On mainstreaming, I am not sure that local authorities are always the best people to deliver some public services. That was not intended to be a negative comment about local authorities—I would not want anyone to think that. However, sometimes bodies in the third sector find it a wee bit easier than local authorities do to change direction when change is required.

Dr Netto, you mentioned the need for positive action in the context of your comment about 1 per cent of the Scottish Government's workforce coming from an ethnic minority. What would you like to happen to deal with the discrepancy that you described? You said that there is an issue for local authorities, too.

Dr Netto: Positive action on employment would include promoting the existence of posts widely in places where people from minority ethnic communities are likely to hear about them. It is about taking a more proactive public approach, by advertising vacancies widely and proactively encouraging people to apply, as opposed to routinely publicising information on a website or in a broadsheet newspaper that not everyone reads.

That is very different from positive discrimination. I should clarify that I am talking about ensuring that people get in on the basis of their qualifications and experience, rather than advantaging people just because they belong to an ethnic minority background. In the States, positive discrimination is justified on the basis of a long history of structural disadvantage, but in this country it is not legal. However, positive action is legal and has been in existence for a great number of years and endorsed as a way of redressing structural inequalities, particularly in employment.

Patricia Armstrong: On the point about ensuring that we capture evidence on impact and outcomes, we talked about statistics at national and local authority level, but it is also important that we manage to capture impact and outcomes that the third sector can have on the front line. The issue is complex, as we heard, in the context of the input through community planning partnerships and getting priority within single outcome agreements, but it is important that we collect evidence at all levels.

There are a couple of mentions in the equality statement of partnership working and how we all work better together. I have seen good work on mainstreaming, with specialist agencies working with beneficiaries on the ground. We need cross-sectoral learning with people in the public sector who are a bit distanced, so that we join things up better. There are good opportunities out there.

Rami Ousta: I want to make three points. Two are brief, but one is lengthy, so I hope that you will bear with me. Let me reverse a bit to what Jon Harris said about single outcome agreements. In the Christie commission review of the future delivery of public services, there is potential to enable single outcome agreements but, in the context of the cuts that local authorities face, there is a fear that local authorities might try to maintain their own workforce and provide services themselves at the expense of local third sector service providers. We would like assurances that that will not happen.

We hear a lot about mainstreaming but, even in local authorities, there is much misunderstanding about what it means. We still come across local authorities that think that mainstreaming is about closing local race equality groups and taking on the role themselves to fill the gap. We should be aware of that. Mainstreaming should happen at two levels at the same time: in the policy framework of local authorities and at civil level. We have to educate people about what that means. An ethnic minority person will ask why they should take part in a consultation that touches only on ethnic minorities. Mainstreaming is about creating a cultural shift to encourage race equality groups to start being proactive on such matters, as Gina Netto said.

On the budget, most of the attention is on public spending cuts. As someone said, budget cuts are always bad, at any time. However, the current cuts come at the worst time for race equality. We work at European levels and we know that work on the race equality dimension is much more advanced in Scotland than it is elsewhere—everyone agrees on that. However, it is time that we all—even race equality groups—started to use the budget to think not only about service provision but about how we create a new approach to the concept of equality.

Sooner or later we must face that issue. For a long time, thinking about race equality has been taking place in the context of service provision. People ask, “How can we help those disadvantaged poor souls?” Help them to do what? To be ethnic minorities or to become citizens? The budget should motivate us to start educating and progressing the race equality communities to become citizens rather than subjects. The budget is an opportunity for us to try to explain or understand race equality from a different perspective from the one that we are used to.

Positive action, which is vital, is missing from the equality statement this year and has been missing for a few years. We hear a lot about preventative spending, which is the Government’s direction of travel. Preventative spending is about not just avoiding social problems but creating cultural shift. What I mean by that is that we need a new ideology from the Government, the race equality groups and local authorities that promotes active citizenship and human rights education. That is happening in certain schools through the curriculum for excellence, but it happens only within the four walls of the classroom. Especially in the context of the current budget, a culture of human rights education should spread into service provision in health, policing and local authorities. Those are vital points for us to discuss today.

The Convener: That is very helpful.

14:45

Pauline Craig: I want to follow the thread of the use of evidence. NHS Health Scotland does not have a performance measurement role with health boards in Scotland, but I have seen a lot of progress on data collection, particularly on the setting up of structures for that. In the past five years, we have had much more data, and there has been much more sophisticated use of that data. We still have work to do, but there is momentum.

We have quite a lot of capacity in the health service around equality impact assessments, and such assessments have begun to be part of what people have been doing in the service over the past five years or so. We see lots of evidence that they are happening, but we are not seeing evidence of their impact. That point was picked up by Audit Scotland.

The question is how to get the results of impact assessments built into planning. We are not sure whether we are doing impact assessments at the right time. We can say whether a policy or service will perhaps not have an impact, but how do we get people to plan from the beginning so that retrospective thinking is not needed? That will be a

focus for a lot of our impact assessment work over the next few years, rather than just getting people to do impact assessments.

On the specific duties, it would be helpful if there was a bit more steer towards using the evidence that we get from impact assessments as opposed to just doing them, but I say that from a national health service perspective. Other public sector organisations might not have the same perspective.

The other thing that we are not very good at is using the results of engagement. In the health service, we might engage with communities or particular groups, but we cannot always give evidence on how that impacts on planning. We might be able to do so for some service use, but how do we get the bigger issues such as human rights and citizenship into planning services from the beginning, not just into where we are delivering a service on the ground?

There is still a lot of work to be done at the more senior levels. The chairs of health boards and board members are keen to see how the impact assessments of financial decisions, for example, are incorporated into the mainstream, core work of health boards. At the moment, there is no accountability structure that picks that up. It still has to be about influence and encouragement rather than having to do things. Anything that helps to build that thinking into planning from the very early stages of health service delivery would be helpful.

Dr Monaghan: I would like to pick up on several points, particularly those that Stuart McMillan made about the legislative position.

The equalities legislation position was extremely unusual. When the secondary legislation that would have brought the Equality Act 2010 to life was making its way through Parliament, a stitch was dropped. It was absolutely right for it to be said in Parliament, "We're not sure about this. Let's pause and make sure that we've got this right." I would not second-guess that approach at all. The problem is one of timing. With the new legislation coming along, many local authorities and I marched everybody to the top of the hill, briefed our elected members and introduced our new equality impact assessment frameworks, and we set up a new equality forum. The question then was, "Okay, is this hill going to change? Are we on the right hill?" We are pretty sure that we are on the right hill. I do not believe that the secondary legislation that will emerge will be radically different from what was considered previously, but we want to avoid a lot of re-engineering, and the clear message to officers is to continue with business as usual and to assume that we are not relying on the legislation to make the difference. However, we know that, until that legislation is in

place, we are operating without certainty, and we may have to re-engineer our processes as a consequence.

On the practical things that we have done to get decision makers to be conscious of equalities in anticipation of the legislation first time round and as it emerges from the consultation, we have built a section into every paper that goes to councils that asks what the impact on equalities is. If a proposal is likely to have a significant impact on equalities, it must be accompanied by an equality impact assessment. However, it is not just officers who are guardians of that process; elected members have become equality champions as a consequence, and they regularly challenge officers if they do not think that that is happening. I can give evidence of that.

With a new policy, it is relatively easy to ensure that equalities are built in right from the start. We have seen evidence of that recently, as we created a new equality forum in response to the legislation in order to refresh our thinking and bring everyone together to work on capacity building. We have examined some early policies as they are being developed—most recently on fuel poverty—which allows us to ask what sort of things we need to think about with regard to all the protected characteristics.

For policies that are already in place, it is much harder. We can ensure that we consider equalities, but we do not get the chance for root-and-branch reflection on what the potential impacts might be. We have taken account of human rights in our equality impact assessment, because we believe that that is the right thing to do. We have effectively combined those two elements for the consideration of our elected members.

A great deal of stuff is going on and we can see that it is making a difference; it is not just warm words. The legislative position was extremely unusual and, although I would not say that it has slowed the process down, it has led to a slight hiatus with regard to defining the direction in which the sector is going.

Jatin Haria: I agree with Gina Netto on the data collection issue. Although it is useful to have more data, that should not be an excuse—there is plenty of data available.

On employment, the 1 per cent figure that was mentioned earlier is, generally speaking, true across the board in Scotland. I used to work for Strathclyde Regional Council in the early 1990s, when ethnic minority employees made up about 1 per cent of the staff. We had the good times throughout the 1990s, but things did not really change. Now people are saying, "Well, there's a recession, so we can't really do anything." I would

buy into that if we had made some progress in the 1990s.

Data on employment is much easier to collect, and we have much more of it. If we still cannot do anything on employment, it will be much harder to do things on service delivery and service provision, where there is not so much data available.

What we really need—although perhaps the budget is not the best place for it—is some sort of target. We need to ask where we want to go with all this, and how long it should take. I am not talking about a six-month or one-year plan: we should have a five-year or 10-year plan. We could double the 1 per cent figure, although 2 per cent is still very small. Gina Netto might not agree with me—perhaps she thinks that we should be more ambitious—but I would be happy, given that we have not moved forward for 20 years, if we set a target of 2 per cent for ethnic minority employment over the next five years.

We should make the public authorities take steps, which is where positive action comes back in. If we just have a level playing field, nothing will change. The Scottish Government's latest figures on downsizing and its resilience report showed that the number of black staff who left the Government last year was on a par with the 1 per cent figure. If we continue like that, nothing will change. We need to find ways to keep the figure lower. Changes are needed. Power will have to be given up, and more black people will have to stay in employment. It is a difficult issue.

We need to build capacity for more black people on the supply side, which we have not discussed yet. All the evidence shows that black and minority ethnic people in Scotland are better educated, and that more of them are graduates. The demand side is also an issue. A recent Department for Work and Pensions study that submitted blind applications with white Scottish names and minority ethnic names revealed blatant discrimination, even in a paper exercise. We have not tackled that. There is racism happening in certain places and, unless we tackle it, we will not change very much.

The Convener: I ask Salah Beltagui to come in, followed by Dr Gina Netto. I will ask Colin Lee as our budget adviser to bring back any comments. I point out that although we are examining all the protected characteristics in relation to the budget, the committee has decided to focus particularly on race and religion and belief in considering its first budget. This is part of a rolling programme over the five-year session, so the approach does not in any way exclude other groups. We have not yet heard from Susan Grasekamp, so she can come in when we have gone through the next stage.

Dr Beltagui: Much of what I was going to say has been said, which is good. There are good things in the budget, but they need to be followed up. I am talking about, for example, preventive spending.

That brings me to the practical issues of mainstreaming and statistics. Equality is not just a matter of numbers. We are talking about the 1 per cent. If we treat the 1 per cent like 1 per cent, nothing will happen, but it makes sense to compare that figure with the 3 per cent in the general population. In some instances, that approach is not followed and the data are not classified as they should be. That is what I referred to earlier. In some areas, religion or another characteristic is forgotten altogether. We need to keep an eye on that.

The point has been made that there was little about religion in the budget. It is mentioned only as part of the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Bill, which is negative. We must do positive things. We must work on how to make a better society by dialogue. Some work is being done on that by all religions, not just one.

With the bill, we must watch that we do not concentrate on one issue only. Concentrating on sectarianism alone reminds me of the way in which the terrorism legislation of the past 10 years concentrated on terrorists coming from certain areas or a certain religion. What happened in Norway is an example of how, after those 10 years, circumstances have changed and far-right groups have now become a source of terror.

We must address all forms of extremism because if we concentrate on one alone, something else will happen. The consultation on the bill raised some of those issues. We need to take a balanced view, examine any source of extremism and work against it together. We must not take one side; we must encourage others.

Numbers are not everything; services are also important, as is whether they satisfy people's needs. The question is whether they are good services. A long time ago—about 20 years ago—we started to talk about whether we should have all mainstream services, all specialised services or services that were mainstream but sensitive and responsive to the needs of equality groups.

Dr Netto: I and others emphasise employment because it is well documented that, in a recession, the people who lose jobs most frequently tend to be from minority ethnic backgrounds. We cannot assume or take for granted even the 1 per cent about which we are talking. That is the reason for focusing on employment. When job cuts are made, as is inevitable, some consideration should

be given to the demographic dimension of those job losses.

We must also bear in mind that positive action is not only about getting people into the organisation, even though that seems to be an ambition and a target in itself; it is also about where they end up with their qualifications. There is evidence that people from minority ethnic backgrounds are underemployed relative to the qualifications that they hold. That stems from a number of factors. The discrimination that Jatin Haria spoke about is one of the main factors that might deter people from applying for jobs in organisations that they perceive to be largely white and to have a mainstream, white culture. Positive action is needed to counter such perceptions.

15:00

Colin Lee: It would be useful to capture some of the points that have been raised.

The discussion that we had on single outcome agreements was useful. It was also useful of Audit Scotland to highlight the work that it did for the Accounts Commission on the lack of leadership and demonstration of outcomes in local authorities.

It might be useful for participants to share thoughts on what measurement of outcomes could be useful to present to the cabinet secretary so that we can see where local authorities are making progress. That could be linked to the NHS admission that a lot of work still needs to be done. It would be useful to introduce race equality or other equality strand health improvement, efficiency, access and treatment targets through which the NHS sector could report back to central Government on progress—just as local government does through the single outcome agreements.

More important, it has been identified that there is no accountability as regards the measuring of race equality when community planning partnerships come together. The individual institutions that make up CPPs measure race equality, but collectively there is no accountability. There is an issue about how ethnic minority communities, race groups and other equality groups can engage in community planning processes. The equality statement quite clearly states that work will be done to support the third sector to engage more with CPPs. To be honest, equality groups might need that extra support.

The discussion of mainstreaming has been quite useful. Equality impact assessments are central to mainstreaming. If we look at a lot of the decisions that have been made, there is a fear of specialist organisations disappearing. In a climate of recession, local authorities or other public bodies

might use the recession or mainstreaming as an excuse for not having specialist services—they might say that such services are not needed because they have been mainstreamed. Some kind of measurement of progress with EqlAs would be quite useful in that regard, and it would be useful if some thought were given to a way for local authorities and public bodies to measure whether they have achieved mainstreaming before they make such decisions.

There is not much detail in the draft budget on equality spend, apart from the budget for the equality unit, which will decrease in real terms over the next three years. The budget for the equality unit should not be the only spend that is allocated to addressing race equality and other equality strands. The committee might consider continuous scrutiny of what proportion of the budgets of Scottish Government departments and of the public sector is spent on equalities during the year and in future years. That will involve drilling down to the level of budget spend on particular equality strands.

It is true that there are a lot of statistics out there, but it is a question of using them to provide a baseline of information for measuring progress so that we can plan future budgets and future service provision. Yes, there are a lot of stats, but perhaps the Government could take the lead in collecting them and could be stringent about what information would be useful.

That encapsulates some of the points that have been made.

The Convener: Before I bring in Dennis Robertson and Tallulah Lines, building on what Colin Lee said about further discussions, it would be helpful to have comments from the witnesses on what budget decisions the Government should be asked for more detail on in relation to EqlAs and the assessment of quality, content and accuracy. The committee is also looking for suggestions on NHS HEAT targets.

Dennis Robertson: I come back to the employment aspect and positive action. I had always thought of positive action—or positive discrimination, as it used to be known—as applying to recruitment; I had never viewed it as applying to the retention of people in employment at a time of redundancies. If I understand Gina Netto correctly, she is asking that, if there are to be redundancies in the job market, we apply positive action to retain people from minority groups in employment. I would probably welcome that, to be honest. It is probably something that we need to reiterate and get out there in all sectors, but especially the public sector.

There are areas of the country where the rate of unemployment is very low—for instance,

Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, where the rate of unemployment is less than 2 per cent. Is there any evidence about the employment of people from ethnic minority groups in those areas and whether that goes beyond the 1 per cent figure that we are looking at? Are there areas in Scotland where the employment of people from ethnic minority groups exceeds 1 per cent?

Tallulah Lines: I will pick up on a couple of the points that the adviser made about single outcome agreements and accountability for delivering outcomes that have an equality aspect. It is difficult to look at single outcome agreements in that way. There is a difference between local outcomes, which the community planning partners all have a joint responsibility to deliver, and equality outcomes, which are for individual organisations to deliver. That is important, but what is more important in making things happen and in addressing the practicalities of single outcome agreements is the idea of sharing information and working together, as Patricia Armstrong said. There must be more involvement with front-line services that are delivered by the voluntary sector.

Also, as Pauline Craig said, evidence must be used a lot more often. That is not just an NHS issue; it is important that evidence is used across all the community planning partners. That is something that everybody needs to work together on a wee bit more.

So, accountability is important, but it is not always going to be important for local outcomes that have an equality aspect. More important for those is that there is more working together and sharing of information.

Dr Netto: I will not say any more about employment except that it is linked to service provision—the two are not necessarily separate. A more culturally diverse workforce—one that is multi-ethnic and multilingual—contributes to the provision of more appropriate services to a diverse population. There is a danger that a distance is being put between the two.

I am considerably concerned about homelessness among minority ethnic communities. The research that we did for the Scottish Government way back in 2004 found that the level of recorded homelessness was considerably higher in minority ethnic communities and disproportionately high in comparison with the level in other communities. We do not have more recent data on the issue, but we are not optimistic that things have changed since then. I have looked closely at the housing and regeneration part of the budget and I am disappointed to see that there is no recognition of that issue—it has not been picked up as an issue of equality for minority ethnic communities. The Scottish Housing

Regulator has a key role to play, as it can monitor the performance of housing associations in terms of the composition of their tenants, but the performance of all housing associations in fulfilling their race equality duty is not published at the moment. There is no reason why that information should not be made public. If it is not made public, the suspicion will remain that some housing associations are lagging behind in fulfilling their race equality duty.

I take this opportunity to reaffirm what we have communicated, which is that the information should be made public. How funding is allocated and accountability for those decisions should be kept under review in the budget.

I want to pick up on concerns about an area that is linked to poor housing: the incidence of racial harassment. Numerous housing studies show people's fear of being harassed in their neighbourhoods. In some cases, that fear is of danger to people's lives, but in many more cases, it involves low-level, insidious, persistent racial harassment, which is difficult to address, because it does not amount to a crime where a police officer will say, "Stop. You can't do that." However, it is very damaging in the long term.

At a policy level, that aspect can get lost among other elements. I was glad that attention was paid to hate crime in the budget, but that term covers a broad range of phenomena. What are the interventions that are put in place to counter racial harassment? That needs to be carefully considered. If it is not, we will have divided cities and communities. The problems do not come to the fore, because people who experience them are not in a position to articulate their views in a way that means that their voices will be heard.

I feel quite strongly about the issue because it comes up in every housing research study that I come across. Racial harassment affects people's decisions about where they stay and is one of the reasons why they are afraid to live in certain areas.

The Convener: In relation specifically to the budget, is there a question that we can ask Mr Swinney about the issue? Are there any areas of the budget that might be used to address it?

Dr Netto: I mentioned the housing and regeneration allocation—

The Convener: I was thinking particularly of the issue of racial harassment.

Dr Netto: That is picked up under the policing and community policing parts of the budget. Jatin Haria and I were talking about this earlier. Policing is one part of it, but I think that what is done at the community level to counter racial harassment is more important. Often, the areas concerned are

deprived ones in which a lot of work is needed anyway.

Dennis Robertson: The Equality and Human Rights Commission's "Hidden in Plain Sight" document tackles the points that Dr Netto is making about low-level harassment. I urge everyone to read that consultation document, and I draw members' attention to the parliamentary motion that has been lodged on the subject. I agree that the issue is community based. I have some experience of the harassment that members of ethnic minority groups are having in the housing market. I am glad that Dr Netto raised the issue today.

Patricia Armstrong: You asked for particular points in the budget spend where there should be an equalities focus. I have a small list of those, but I would first like to pick up on the point that Rami Ousta and Gina Netto made earlier about the disproportionate impact on equalities groups of job losses. With regard to Rami Ousta's point about no compulsory redundancies in the NHS and local authorities, we must be careful that the cuts and losses do not get passed on disproportionately to the third sector.

15:15

I have identified a few areas in which there should be an additional equalities focus. The first relates to health and wellbeing and preventative spend. It is important that, as well as considering preventative spend for the nation as a whole and in terms of demographics, we consider how preventative spend can make a difference to the equalities groups.

A second issue is the Commonwealth games legacy. We must be careful that we focus on the positive impact that the opportunities from the Commonwealth games can have on equalities groups.

Under the finance, employment and growth budget, we need to consider what positive action can be taken for equalities groups in relation to the new jobs that are coming through the energy strand.

Another interesting issue is the increased broadband provision in the rural affairs budget. I have two points about that. One is that we need to ensure that the provision is equally accessible to all the equalities groups and consider whether there are any specific additional support needs. A second point is that we must be careful not to feel that, because everyone has increased broadband provision and we have hit the targets, that has ticked all the boxes. We should not lose sight of the evidence that, when people have a lot of their services and contact through internet access, that can increase social isolation.

Another brief point is on the young Scots fund, which is under the culture and external affairs budget. We must ensure that the money is accessible to all equalities groups. There might be an opportunity for co-production in the consideration of what would be most attractive to equalities groups.

A final point is on the new change funds. We must ensure that we learn from work that has already been done on change funds and bring that together. A lot of good work has been done. As well as considering new measures, we need to consider how existing good work can be rolled out across the country, so that we learn from what has already happened.

The Convener: Thank you. It is helpful to have thoughts on the various departments. As we all know, the issue is not only about the equality budget.

Jatin Haria: I have a small point on employment. The budget mentions the programme to have 25,000 more apprenticeships, but we have had trouble finding out whether any monitoring is being done, let alone any positive action being taken. Without monitoring, we will never know whether any young black people are on the scheme. We know that the age profile of the black and ethnic minority community is much younger, so that community probably makes up closer to 7 or 8 per cent of young people, rather than 3 per cent. That should equate to 1,000 or 1,500 of the 25,000 apprenticeships if all else is equal. It would be interesting to find out whether there are any figures on that and, if those are not the numbers, to find out why not. That is perhaps something to ask John Swinney about.

We know that more black and ethnic minority people go on to further and higher education and do not leave school at 16, so a programme that targets 16-year-olds for apprenticeships might not target the right thing. That is again where one size does not fit all. Perhaps a graduate apprenticeship programme should be considered, and maybe even one that is particularly for black and ethnic minority young people, as a positive action measure.

One more thing to ask John Swinney about could be the equality impact assessment of the economic strategy. That might be interesting.

Dr Beltagui: I wanted to raise the subject of housing, but Gina Netto has already mentioned it, which is good. The issue relates to equality generally and the whole population, and not just to ethnic minorities. In some areas, if you have a particular postcode, people look down on you. Some of those areas are mainly white and do not have a lot of ethnic minorities. A lot has to be done in housing, but it takes a long time. That may be

why it has not been mentioned before in discussions on equality. That is an important point to bear in mind, not just for ethnic minorities but for everyone.

Several years ago, in the dispersal project, a huge number of immigrants were brought from London to be dispersed in Scotland. They were put into one area of Glasgow, and that makes me feel a bit frightened, because there might be social problems. Again, housing must be considered as an equality issue.

Another issue is hate crimes or hate attitudes. The census will give background information, but we know that hate attitudes are increasing. We need to find out why. A lot of research has shown that social attitudes can be changed. Two pieces of research have been done—the first of them five years ago—and they showed clearly that social attitudes can be changed. We need to find out why hate exists, not by asking the people who are the recipients of messages of hate, but by asking the people who give those messages. Then we can try to find a way of changing those attitudes.

Pauline Craig: I would like to pick up on the question about HEAT targets for the health service. A few years ago, there was a concerted effort to find a way of including inequality in the HEAT targets. A lesson learned was that an action suitable for a HEAT target must be very well defined, so that progress can be measured. With inequality in general, actions are not always well defined. They can be quite diffuse, and partnership actions, or the causes of inequality, can be given a lot of attention, as well as outcomes. Inequality did not lend itself well to HEAT targets. However, a way round that could sometimes be found by building in proxy measures or actions.

When we consider equality, a health service need is not always predicated on a person's belonging to one group or another. Combinations of circumstances will be involved. More and more research has shown that poverty is an underpinning factor in health service need. When poverty is combined with other factors such as racism and discrimination, need is obviously greater. That can make it difficult to measure progress for a particular group.

It may be that a target for data collection in the health service will be a step towards equality. It would not be the complete answer, but it would ensure more comprehensive data collection. At the moment, some health boards are very good at collecting data, but others are not. One health board has imposed a local target for data collection, and that has become part of the corporate objectives for managers, so the board's figures have come right up. A target on data

collection may therefore be something for other boards to consider.

Colin Lee: What kind of data?

Pauline Craig: I apologise—I was talking about ethnicity data. I should have made that clear. Front-line service providers ask every patient questions about ethnicity. That has been part of the form-filling exercises and the assessments that are done. However, data has not always been collected particularly well, so the health service has put a huge amount of effort in, over the past few years, so that staff and patients understand why data is being collected and what will happen to it.

The issue is complex, but some boards are achieving better levels of collection than others. An incentive is required—perhaps an accountability target. We should certainly bring that on much faster, as it would make data more available for the necessary population-based analysis.

The Convener: I believe that you were going to make another point.

Pauline Craig: Indeed. The quality alliance board will be key to our work over the next few years, but I note that the equality statement for the draft budget states:

"The Quality Alliance Board is required to ensure that mutuality, equality and human rights are embedded in practice through implementation of the Quality Strategy."

Given that that infrastructure is still being built, it is not clear how equality will be taken into account. The suggestion is that, in mainstreaming all this, it will get a bit watered down. We need to ensure that equality is built into everything and not simply added on in an impact assessment once all the decisions are made. In relation to the NHS, there could be something in the budget to make it quite clear that the quality alliance board should report on equality.

Susan Grasekamp: On delivering and monitoring outcomes on the ground, I go back to Stuart McMillan's point that third sector organisations might be better placed than larger, slower bodies to effect change. The real-term cuts in the third sector budget will mean that we will simply not have the resources to cope with the increasing demand for support and guidance and it would have been nice to have seen some indication of growth in the budget to allow third sector organisations on the ground to monitor and deliver equality outcomes. It would be interesting to find out whether that was an option.

The Convener: Before I come back to Stuart McMillan, I wonder whether Jatin Haria could clarify for members' guidance why he focused in

particular on assessment of the economic strategy.

Jatin Haria: There was no specific reason. Perhaps I did so because it is John Swinney's area. As the budget is also his area of responsibility, if we cannot get the economic strategy right and equality-proofed, we are going to have trouble with the other bits. Given our discussion about employment, for example, it is clear that the economic strategy is important to everything else that we do.

Stuart McMillan: With regard to disability, what work has been done with VisitScotland to promote accessible tourism?

Susan Grasekamp: Although the situation has improved and there has been progress, we are still discussing the matter. It remains to be seen what will happen. We could do with more in the budget to be able to roll out what we have discussed.

Stuart McMillan: I ask that question as a member of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, which, as I recall, will be taking evidence from relevant witnesses tomorrow.

Susan Grasekamp: Some positive things have happened.

Stuart McMillan: The issue has certainly been raised with the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee in this and the previous session. Could you send this committee some more information about this issue?

Susan Grasekamp: Certainly.

Stuart McMillan: I am also keen to find out what our witnesses think of the concessionary travel scheme and the commitment to maintaining it for various strands in Scotland. Has it been beneficial to the groups that you represent?

The Convener: Does anyone wish to comment on the concessionary travel scheme?

Stuart McMillan: Convener, I have a similar question about health and also want to ask about jobs and education.

The Convener: Perhaps you could ask those questions now, because I want to draw things to a close by about 20 to 4. However, I remind witnesses that they will have a chance to feed in written evidence in the same way that Stuart McMillan asked Susan Grasekamp to provide information on certain issues.

15:30

Stuart McMillan: My second question is about protecting the health budgets. An issue that has been raised with this committee and its predecessor committees is that people in the black and ethnic minority communities sometimes find

that it is not easy to access healthcare provision. Is that an accurate picture and, if so, what could be done to improve the situation? Is protecting the healthcare budgets—given the moneys coming to Scotland—the right thing to do?

My final question is about jobs and education. Jatin Haria talked about modern apprenticeships earlier. It would be interesting to explore that issue further to get more information. I am also keen to understand an issue regarding the education maintenance allowance. The Scottish Government has said that it will keep the EMA; I do not know whether that is welcomed or whether people think that the moneys could be allocated elsewhere.

The Convener: It would be great if we could extend the time for the meeting, but the young people are waiting to give their performance. People will be able to submit further comments on the points that Stuart McMillan has raised or others. Douglas Thornton tells me that that should be done by next Tuesday. Are there any particular comments on health, jobs and employment or the education maintenance allowance?

Stuart McMillan: The other issue was transport and the concessionary travel scheme.

The Convener: Claire Monaghan is waiting patiently. Do others round the table want to come in on the issues that Stuart McMillan raised?

Pauline Craig: Yes. I will write in about the detail of this, but a recent survey of Scottish in-patients through better together, which is a Scottish Government programme, looked at the experience of different groups and did an equality analysis. Some of the data was perhaps a bit small scale and might not tell you a huge amount, but it might give you an indication of different experiences. I will send in some information about that.

The Convener: That is helpful. Thank you. Does anyone else want to come in on Stuart McMillan's point?

John Finnie: Like you, convener, I represent a largely rural area. There are some particular dimensions in rural areas, not the least of which is numbers. There is also social exclusion there; research has been done that shows that the experience of people who have suffered racial harassment in rural areas is often compounded because they are removed from their extended family and so on.

I have forgotten what my second point was, because I went off on a tangent.

The Convener: The rural dimension is important, across all the—

John Finnie: Thank you for bailing me out; I now recall that my second point was about the collation of information.

We must respect the fact that some people do not want to provide information. We have to understand why that is the case. I remember grimacing in pain once at a casualty department and being confused as to why the staff wanted to know my religion—I thought that I had a minor leg injury. Knowing my religion did not seem to be important at that time. There are people, perhaps particularly from eastern Europe, who are reluctant to share information with the authorities, given where they have come from. It is about encouraging people to understand why the information is sought, which might in itself be challenging.

I want to make another point about an issue that has been raised consistently: the relationship between the Scottish Government's position on maintaining a no-compulsory-redundancy policy in the areas for which the Scottish Government has responsibility, which involves about 30,000 staff, the encouragement to local authorities to do likewise and the threat that the third sector perceives from that. If the outcome agreement is working right and everyone is working to the same goal, there should be no disproportionate impact. That is the theory and I hope that it is the practice.

Dr Monaghan: The committee is looking for possible areas of questions for the cabinet secretary. I am struck that many of the items in the section on local government in the equality statement are delivered through community planning partnerships. Reference was made earlier to how we ensure that CPPs are aware of their responsibilities in relation to these matters, beyond the talk of early intervention and prevention. The committee could discuss with the cabinet secretary how to build the equality outcomes into the community planning framework and perhaps how to factor in the role of best value, which in my view is part of the answer.

Antony Clark: I will briefly endorse Claire Monaghan's position. If community planning partnerships and single outcome agreements are the way forward as part of a main strand of driving forward public sector and public service reform, it would seem important to have some clarity about how equalities are built into the planning apparatus and the performance expectations for SOAs. I accept Tallulah Lines's point that the governance and accountability framework for CPPs is a bit uncertain in some areas but, nonetheless, they are definitely a vehicle for moving forward. That is an important question to ask.

Rami Ousta: My contribution would have been better if it had come at the right time in the

discussion, but I would like to put a couple of points on the record.

On the concept of capacity building, in the past three years we have witnessed the steady growth of diverse ethnic minority groups functioning and delivering services in local areas. Recently, we have witnessed a fear among those groups that they will disappear. Their needs relate to capacity building, for which they depend on organisations such as ourselves and other main stakeholders. That work needs to be sustained, rather than having those groups dissolve or disappear, especially given their diversity. There are groups that deal with Gypsy Travellers, the Arab community and the African community and they have recently progressed to become active participants in civic society.

I notice that most of the discussion has diverted a bit from the race equality context that we hoped to discuss. At the same time, most of the discussion is reactive to the budget rather than seeing the budget itself as having a proactive role or allowing race equality groups to have a proactive role. I am not interested in seeing myself as an ethnic minority for whom the local authority has to do something or as a victim for whom something has to be done to make me equal. The budget should include something about enabling race equality groups to transfer ethnic minorities from being subjects into being citizens. That is missing, which is what I mean by active citizenship and human rights education. When I mention human rights education, I do not mean the United Nations convention on human rights but a human rights education in itself.

The budget should include some motivation or stimulation for the third sector or other stakeholders and public bodies to take the matter forward, but that is missing. Rather than having a reactive role, we should allow the third sector and other service providers to take a proactive role. That is missing from the discussion.

The Convener: We will take note of that point. Thank you very much. Your comments are helpful.

Dr Gina Netto, Dennis Robertson and Jon Harris can comment, and I ask Colin Lee to comment, if he wants to, before we close.

Dr Netto: I want to make a correction in respect of the last section and I will speak about intersectionality.

On ethnicity, there is something that is misleading in saying—

The Convener: Are you referring to the equality statement in the draft budget?

Dr Netto: Yes. I am referring to page 97, in the last chapter of the equality statement. It says that minority ethnic groups are highly represented in

Scottish universities. Recent analysis that we have done shows that that is misleading because, although many ethnic groups are in universities, a number of those people come from abroad and are not Scotland-domiciled minority ethnic people. That seems to be at odds with the fact that, at school-leaving age, their attainment levels are very high. That is a point of correction.

I will make two points about intersectionality. First, the gender pay gap is still 12 per cent. The statement says that there is a swing and that that will be corrected, but it does not say how. It is very vague about how that will happen. I would like John Swinney to be questioned more precisely on how he sees the gap closing, because it is a persistent one.

The Convener: Will you give us a page number for that reference?

Dr Netto: Sure—it is page 91.

The Convener: I do not seem to have page numbers in my copy.

Dr Netto: I know that specialist input on learning disability has been asked for, but no mention of mental health has been made. Given the high incidence of mental ill health in the population at large and among minority groups, mental health emerges as a great concern. That should be raised in the context of today's meeting and more generally.

The Convener: Thank you for highlighting that important issue. As people will know, the mental health strategy was debated in Parliament last week. All committee members are aware of that challenging issue.

We will go to Dennis Robertson and Jon Harris, squeeze in John Finnie and then hear from Colin Lee.

John Finnie: I was not asking to speak.

The Convener: Were you not asking? We will force you to speak. [*Laughter.*]

Dennis Robertson: What Pauline Craig said prompted me to think about an aspect of collecting information. I am conscious that, in the NHS, collecting information when English is not a patient's first language can have a negative outcome, because questions are sometimes not understood. Does that have a financial impact on the NHS?

If English is not the patient's first language—they might speak Russian, Chinese, British Sign Language or any other language—interpreters might have to be brought in. In collating patient information, can staff say that complete information could not be obtained because English was not the person's first language? When John Finnie went to hospital with his wounded leg—

poor John—it was probably not important if he did not mention his religion, but collecting facts is important in relation to ethnic minorities.

Pat Armstrong talked about integration and people coming together. Much work is being done, but we probably need to re-emphasise to our community health partnerships and our joint futures groups in every area the need to have equality high on their agendas. That needs to be mainstreamed in every joint futures partnership and every CHP. It is well worth reminding those groups of that; we can probably be proactive in that regard.

Jon Harris: I say for the record that we do not rule out compulsory redundancy. Another relevant issue is that the third sector will be key in the transition from crisis intervention to early intervention.

The Convener: Does Colin Lee have closing comments? Perhaps that is the wrong phrase to use, because we would encourage people to provide additional comments by next Tuesday. If Colin Lee wanted to highlight anything, that would be helpful.

Colin Lee: The discussion was really useful and interesting. The committee will have noted much of what has been said.

SOAs and community planning partnerships are a big area that needs to be looked into. The committee might want to discuss whether to explore data collection in relation to HEAT targets.

Interesting comments were made on housing, which has been missed out—there is a lack of data about it. I used to work in the housing sector; it is right to say that registered social landlords do not record much about the ethnicity of tenants. The Scottish Housing Regulator has emphasised grading on equalities, but perhaps that needs to be beefed up a wee bit.

An issue that has perhaps been missed is the impact on new builds of cutting the housing budget. Statistics show that many ethnic minority families have larger households that do not have access to housing stock that is appropriate for their needs, so they are pushed into the private sector. If anybody wanted to write to the committee to raise that point, that would be useful.

15:45

How EqlAs are improved is important; that will be integral to how mainstreaming can be improved and measured. That is about accountability and how decisions are made, and a discussion around that would be useful.

The committee is interested in receiving written views on the shift of £200 million from revenue

spend to capital spend and whether that will have any impact. We might need to ask the cabinet secretary whether EqlAs have been done on that.

The Convener: I thank everyone for coming. I am sure that the committee members will agree that we have been given a great deal to think about carefully. Given the number of questions that we could formulate as a result of today's discussions, we might well have to keep the cabinet secretary until 10 o'clock at night on 25 October. Of course, that will not be possible, but we will certainly take on board everyone's advice, guidance and the questions that we have been asked to put to Mr Swinney. I hope that our guests feel that the meeting has been useful; it has certainly been useful for the committee.

As our clerk, Douglas Thornton, has stressed, it would be good for the witnesses—and people the witnesses know of from whom they think it would be helpful for us to hear—to send in more points before next Tuesday.

I remind everyone that we will now have a theatre performance by students from Broughton high school. Those present are most welcome to join us.

Our next meeting will be held in this room on Tuesday 25 October, with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth present. We will be asking him some rigorous equality questions—thanks to the efforts of many of our witnesses today.

Meeting closed at 15:47.

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