

Social Justice and Social Security Committee 29/09/22

BEMIS Scotland

BEMIS is the national Ethnic Minorities led umbrella body supporting the development of the Ethnic Minorities Voluntary Sector in Scotland and the communities that this sector represents.

As a strategic national infrastructure organisation, BEMIS aims to empower the diverse Ethnic Minority third sector. We are committed to promoting inclusion, democratic active citizenship, recognition of diversity, human rights education, and wider representation, as well as effecting a proactive role in maintaining and enhancing pathways to influence government policy regarding equality and human rights at local, Scottish, UK and Council of Europe levels.

In response to the Pandemic, BEMIS initiated the Ethnic Minority National Resilience Network. The Network is a union of over 100 ethnic minority 3rd sector, academic and community experts working to mitigate social, economic and health challenges in our communities including the cost of living crisis.

September 2022 circumstances on Race, Equality and Human Rights Budgeting in relation to the RSR and 23/24 Budget

Context:

- The social and economic impacts of the pandemic have been profound and have exacerbated significant inequalities for minority ethnic communities that pre-existed the international health crisis.
- The higher rate of hospitalisation and morbidity within the Pakistani community in Scotland is an indication that different ethnic groups experience inequality in disproportionate ways.
- It is highly likely that the impacts of the cost-of-living challenges will mirror inequalities that pre-existed and were exacerbated by the Pandemic.
- In Scotland our best estimate of the current minority ethnic population of Scotland is between 10 – 15%.
- These populations are not equally distributed across the country. Cities like Glasgow or Edinburgh have above average minority ethnic populations (16 – 25%) however minority ethnic people reside across the entire nation.
- For the purposes of human rights budgeting, data aggregation / disaggregation to inform policy development and budget allocation ethnic minority communities are recognised under the protected racial provisions of Colour, Nationality,

Ethnic or National Origin. This definition is derived from Article 1 of The International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination and is contained as a positive equality duty with the Equality Act 2010.

- In the process of budget decisions and allocation the Scottish Government must consider the impact of budgeting on these protected provisions of colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin.

Positive Contributions of the RSR

The RSR contains a series of recognitions of the disproportionate impacts in relation to Race and child poverty, employment, mental health, and pandemic impacts.

Specific Race mitigations identified include

- translation services
- pay disparity analysis
- investment in mental health provision
- ethnic specific disease prevention
- development of equalities evidence strategy

Generalised mitigations that will include some racial minority communities

- Increase in child payment
- Increase in social security budgets

Challenges / Solution to the implementation of the RSR

- People are not aware of what support is available
- Those subject to NRPF are at significant threat of socio / economic hardship
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Challenge	Solution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many ethnic minority communities are unaware of how to access new devolved benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Security Scotland implements a strategic engagement plan with Race Equality organisations and grassroots communities to share information. <p>For example: BEMIS (EMNRN) + SG Race Equality unit are host a cost-of-living crisis information session with UK Gov, Scot Gov and 3rd Sector organisations to identify all available support</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do not have clear, accessible, and accurate data on those 	<p>In 2016 BEMIS published to position paper on the future of devolved social</p>

<p>subjected to immigration designations that stipulate people have 'No Recourse to Public Funds'.</p>	<p>security in Scotland. The challenges outlined by the paper remain relevant</p> <p>https://bemis.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/SOCIAL-SECURITY-Fulfilling-Scotlands-Potential-BEMIS.pdf</p> <p>Short Term Nov – March 2023: Social Security Scotland and DWP outline and share info on what financial support is available especially to children and young people. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the parents with NRPF designations are unaware their children can still access some state support.</p> <p>Medium term March 2023 – Sept 2023: Accurate data is available on the immigration designations of people subjected to NRPF, young people, families, and children. Devolved benefits system is utilised as per BEMIS position paper to offer ongoing state support in areas of devolved governance.</p> <p>Longer Term - Ongoing: NRPF is abolished as a policy as a minimum for those with children and young families who are integrated into mainstream state support while resident in the UK / Scotland.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equality Evidence Data (EEvD) is incomplete and not disaggregated as core policy 	<p>Equality evidence finder will be key to future budget assessment and targeted spending to alleviate long term and systemic inequalities.</p> <p>It is critical that the EEvD is disaggregated in a manner that is compatible with Governments obligations and citizens human rights. This means disaggregating data based upon census codes and not aggregating data into racial classifications like White, Black, Asian, Other.</p>

	Vaccination uptake data indicated that the lowest uptakes of CV19 Vaccine were in Polish, African, Caribbean and Black communities and that specific interventions were required for each ethnic group.
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Building Towards the Future – Radical opportunities for Race, Equality and Human Rights Budgeting.

The total Equalities and Human Rights budget for the Scottish Government in 2020/21 is £30.4 million. This represents less than 0.01% of the Scottish Governments annual budget of “nearly 50 billion pounds”.

The budget was developed in a pre-Covid Scotland and published in February 2020.7

The investment into the “Race Sector” via intermediary or organisational funding represents a key function of human rights-based approach that enables representation and independent analysis but this investment in and of itself does not represent a strategic comprehensive response to Scotland’s enduring systematic issues in regards race equality and it will not on its own secure it.

Likewise, the Race Equality Framework and Action Plans are a necessary scaffolding to bring some coordination to our shared objectives but they and their administrative functions such as the REAP Programme Board will not be capable of effecting standalone systemic change.

The Race Equality Action Plan 17-21 included over 80 action points across 6 key policy themes

- The current budgetary allocations at both a national and local level are not compatible with the Scottish Government Race Equality Framework and Action Plans. If we continue on the current path and trajectory, we will observe small non impactful symbolic gains while austerity and recession enhanced and exacerbated by COVID will weld a generation of EM youth and communities to further systemic inequalities.

Recommendation: To protect the progression of the Race Equality Framework and Action Plans the Scottish Government must instigate a bespoke Race Equality Transformation Investment scheme that is open only to local authorities and statutory services.

This fund is not for EM communities to compete for in the third sector but for statutory bodies and duty bearers to partner with local BME communities and organisations to progress fundamental actions to respond to key race equality and poverty priorities in their areas.

The wording, scope and progression of the Race Equality Transformation Investment Scheme will reflect previous measures that have been in Scottish budgets in respect of Agriculture and other political priorities.⁸

The objective of the scheme will be for statutory services and duty bearers to enact radical and systemic change across key policy areas identified by SG / Reap / 3rd sector partners.

For Example: An initial £40 million investment in the Race Equality Transformation Investment Scheme will support local authorities and statutory services to deliver the Scottish Government's objectives inherent in the Race Equality Framework 16-30.