

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE**  
**PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**  
**SUBMISSION FROM BEMIS**

**Background to BEMIS**

BEMIS is the national Ethnic Minorities led umbrella body supporting the development of the Ethnic Minorities Voluntary Sector in Scotland. BEMIS was established in 2002 to promote the interest of minority ethnic voluntary organisations, to develop capacity and support inclusion and integration of ethnic minorities' communities. It is a member-led and managed organisation with an elected board of directors.

As a strategic national infrastructure organisation, BEMIS aims to empower the diverse range of Ethnic Minority communities in Scotland by promoting inclusion, equality, human rights education and democratic active citizenship.

As such, Bemis works to ensure that ethnic minority communities are fully recognised and supported as a valued part of the Scottish multicultural civic society.

BEMIS welcomes this opportunity to respond to the ongoing development of public sector and local government reforms.

**Strand 1 – Partnerships and outcomes**

- How could councils better integrate their partners into the process? How could the degree of commitment to the process amongst other community planning partners be improved? How can any legislative or administrative barriers that make partnership working more difficult be overcome?

Despite the emphasis that both the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament have placed on consultation and engagement with civic society, there still appears to be a lack of both consultation and engagement by the public sector of members of diverse ethnic minorities.

Effective partnership working requires an equitable approach to both consultation and planning. Evidence from BEMIS<sup>1</sup> 2009 Report on Poverty and Community Planning Survey for Ethnic Minority Communities clearly shows that race discrimination is still an issue in service delivery and may not be adequately addressed by CPPs through their Single Outcome Agreements with the Scottish Government e.g. in terms of support for women and young people, within education and training or employment services, within work with employers or service providers, in supporting entitlements to welfare benefits, health services, and the procedures around support for asylum seekers.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.bemis.org.uk/publications](http://www.bemis.org.uk/publications)

The experience of respondents to this particular survey was that within diverse ethnic minority communities this discrimination is being manifested particularly within access to employment - lack of support in getting into employment, discrimination within the workplace, and low wages. Therefore the initiatives which were felt would be most effective among members of diverse ethnic minority communities were: training for people to get into employment; child care; and tackling discrimination. One way to improve this would be through an analysis of evidence collected through Equality Impact Assessments.

In addition to discrimination lack of information on rights may be one contributing factor – lack of awareness of rights as laid down in EU directives which the UK Government and Scottish Parliament have signed up to e.g. United Nations World Programme for Human Rights Education (UNWPHRE)

BEMIS recommends that:

- Councils ensure that all staff and partners that they work with are fully informed of their duties under the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) and the Equality Act (2010). This will require regular training and update sessions.
  - Councils should establish standards of behaviour and an ethos of respect, reflecting shared values and promoting racial equality among staff and make provisions for any cultural needs staff or community members might have.
  - Councils should make public their commitment to combat and eliminate racism (and other forms of discrimination), and put this commitment into practice.
  - They should improve their responses to racism and racial harassment and provide advice and support for victims
  - Councils should organize and support events that promote diversity and understanding between communities.
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- How can local authorities and their partners move further towards real, integrated working?

If the SOA, between a CPP and the Scottish Government, sets out how each will work towards improving outcomes for their local communities then these local communities should be consulted with in a variety of ways to ensure inclusivity and at each stage of the process from consultation, planning and implementation right through to the evaluation and review stages.

All partners in the CP process should have access to good quality training. We would suggest that training around cultural awareness, while useful, will not address equality issues and would recommend that training around the Equality Act 2010 should be delivered.

Councils should conduct research (Equality Impact Assessments could contribute to this) to ascertain the level of engagement from ethnic minority communities, identify the

reasons and barriers around lack of engagement and make recommendations that will instigate change.

Integrated working can be further developed through joint training sessions for all involved in the CPP process - using expertise within and outwith the partnerships; use of World Café style for inter-agency training and informal learning sessions; develop shared visions and objectives; job shadowing and secondment opportunities between sectors and agencies; information sharing

- How can the partners further improve on the progress that has been made and overcome the remaining challenges on engaging communities and voluntary sector organisations in the process?

With regards to community planning there is still much work to be done to further improve the engagement of the diverse range of BME communities.

BEMIS recommends that the diversity of BME communities is recognised and that particular groups are not homogenized e.g. there will be a huge range of skills and experiences and beliefs within the A8 migrant community or within the Scottish/Asian community. Assumptions should not be made based on stereotyping and inaccurate media reporting.

Attempts should be made to ensure community engagement and representation. In doing so, you may wish to consider the following questions. Are the same people being selected over and over again? Are these people in touch with and able to represent the local community? Does each group have the necessary, up to date skills and knowledge within it to act as gatekeepers? Does this group have a clear and distinct remit?

- How can the community planning arrangements be adapted and developed to promote outcomes-based and preventative approaches?

It is unclear what is meant by 'preventative approaches'. Will these approaches involve interventions and positive action strategies? The role of CPP requires to be further explored in order to ensure that it is outcome focused. BEMIS has found that communities tend to disengage and under invest their commitment to civic participation roles when:

- They feel excluded
- Their issues and voices are not addressed according to their needs, or
- When their voice is replaced by proclaimed representatives and detached consultations.

BEMIS recommends that in order to promote outcomes – based community planning arrangements consideration should be given to:

- Investing and enhancing inter – agency working and training on outcome focused planning

- Investing in similar training for ethnic minority communities and for community groups in general
- The role of CPP should be explored in relation to issues of poverty and discrimination amongst the ethnic minority communities
- Raise awareness of Human Rights Education and Democratic Active Citizenship and utilize this as a core component in community cohesion and engagement

## Strand 2 – Benchmarking and performance measurement

Given BEMIS' unique position within the BEM and cultural community sector our focus in replying to the various aspects of this consultation will inevitably focus on those communities' experiences in relation to engagement by, and with, public local authorities. Whilst recognising that there is a genuine commitment on the part of public bodies to the concept of Equality BEMIS is of the opinion that it is clear from the experiences of the minorities' community that this is not always reflected in either the monitoring or practice in a consistent way.

- What are the main challenges (cultural, technical, geographical or other) in developing performance measurement and benchmarking systems for local authorities across Scotland?

Recent research work by BEMIS has resulted in the gathering of evidence that there is good practice by upwards of a third of public sector agencies across Scotland in terms of strategic planning frameworks geared to meeting the duty "to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good race relations between people of different racial groups." An assessment of evidence given of good practice across all indicators of engagement identified seven local authorities and three police forces in particular.

- To what extent has the work undertaken over the last two years by the Improvement Service, SOLACE and others contributed to developing a common approach to benchmarking across Scotland's local authorities?

In general, the police forces across Scotland provided evidence of consistency in terms of established and transparent frameworks with clear systems for monitoring, evaluating and review. There was a broader variation among Local Authorities, and within different departments within local authorities and the level of informed knowledge and quality of engagement varied considerably. There was in some cases evidence that, where one service department was leading effectively on this area of work, staff in other departments or at a corporate level might be less informed because they were less involved.

Unfortunately given that only two health boards responded it is difficult to make any assessment of standards of engagement by health boards across Scotland. Both these health boards serve primarily rural populations and both provide evidence of partnership working across public sector agencies in rural communities.

Community Profiling Indicator: Area profile of ethnic minority population; list of voluntary sector organisations; list of ethnic minority community venues; workforce profile; profile of service users

10 local authorities and 3 police forces had access to all five types of community profile data. Current profiles of service users by ethnicity are good indicators of use of profile data for monitoring engagement of service users. 20 reported collecting data on service users by ethnicity - 15 local authorities of which 4 are rural authorities.

BEMIS believes that having access to this type of information however does not necessarily result in a broader range of engagement with ethnic minority communities than agencies with access to less detailed profile data. However it does suggest that access to good quality information can contribute to targeting of initiatives. Agencies in rural Scotland are disadvantaged by restrictions on release of census data at a local level, but there may also be a reluctance to collect such information for reasons of confidentiality. A current concern, particularly in rural areas, is the need to accurately estimate the size and trends in the migrant worker population from Eastern Europe and how that may influence CPPs and SOAs.

- What technical or other resources are needed to continue and complete the development of recent work on benchmarking? How can the development of benchmarking help improve the performance of local authorities in Scotland?

BEMIS acknowledges that there may well be a dichotomy between the NPF and SOAs in terms of measurement and benchmarking, if not in objectives and outcomes but in methodology, because of the National/Local differences in approach and this may well extend to the ways in which the partner organisations in any given CPP work. BEMIS believes that there is considerable potential in exploring the development of a national "Impact Assessment tool kit", similar in purpose to the EQIA tool(s) as a universally useable 'benchmarking assessment'. The model used in developing the EQIAs, involving relevant partner organisations would perhaps be the best way forward in relation to benchmarking.

- Should the Scottish Government have a role in providing national impetus to the development of benchmarking and performance measurement?

BEMIS believes that if some uniformity is to be introduced to CPPs in terms of benchmarking there has to be a nationally driven impetus to developing a benchmarking impact assessment toolkit. Perhaps, following on from the EQIA partnership model, Government could take the lead, working in partnership with SOLAS, CoSLA, business and the Third Sector.

- To what extent can the developing work on benchmarking be extended across community planning partnerships?

BEMIS is supportive of the localism agenda in relation to CPPs but believes that if their success is to be assessed effectively there has to be a nationally agreed tool used to measure progress. Using one nationally agreed toolkit could provide that uniform measurement tool.

How can data derived from benchmarking influence the future direction of community planning and the contents of future SOAs?

BEMIS believes that, as with most datasets, it could be used to inform and improve practice at both local and national levels.

### Strand 3 – Developing new ways of delivering services

To examine progress in relation to the development of shared services and other innovative ways of achieving economies of scale and harnessing the strengths and skills of key public sector partners to deliver the best possible quality services in local areas.

Key questions for this strand of the inquiry:

- How can cultural and organisational change be promoted to ensure that local authorities and community planning partners are able to work together to develop the kind of integrated services that are aspired to by local communities?

All aspects of Community Planning should be collaborative- consultation, planning, implementation, evaluation, review....etc. and this should be done in an equitable and respectful way ensuring that there is no hierarchy and all partners have an equal stake in the planned work. This may require a cultural shift in the way that Local Authorities and CP partners work. If the balance of power is seen to lie with one partner then this will affect the partnership – it will not be equal.

Partnership goals through the SOA are likely to have a positive impact for all communities.

Opportunities should be created for Inter Agency working where LA staff and other agencies share knowledge and practice. True collaborative working will work best when those involved have built good working relationships and have a respect for each other's organisation.

- How can the tensions between shared services creating savings through potential reductions in the number of staff involved and the economic impact brought about by any resulting job losses be resolved?

It is unfortunate that this model of working is being introduced at this time of austerity measures and within a general climate of fear. The model of working is likely to be associated with rationalization rather than with delivering the best outcomes for the community. All stakeholders have a responsibility to work together to change the culture, eliminate the 'fear' culture and ensure adequate measures of the impact of their work are in place and used to inform the process.

- How can any legislative or institutional barriers to developing shared and innovative service delivery models to their full potential be overcome?

Firstly you should investigate whether the barriers are actual or perceived. The main barriers are likely to be around issues of discrimination, child protection, confidentiality and work roles and remits. All staff will have to comply with the law and with policies. That's a good starting point – is everyone aware of their duties and responsibilities? Is there a shared vision of where the CPP is going and of the SOA?

- What can be learned from elsewhere, for example from initiatives such as the Nottingham Early Intervention City or the Birmingham total place pilot?

In 2009 BEMIS wrote a report on their <sup>2</sup>Poverty and Community Planning Survey for Ethnic Minority Communities. In order to explore engagement with the community planning process and with community planning partners, respondents were asked a number of questions around their awareness, level of engagement and support for tackling locally some of the root causes of poverty and inequalities. Almost three quarters said that the main barrier to engagement by diverse ethnic minority communities was "not knowing enough about community planning." Examples of barriers were lack of dedicated support for engagement of ethnic minorities, lack of openness to new views and lack of time amongst those employed.

BEMIS would like to suggest that the recommendations in this report be taken forward in order to enhance the CPP experience for ethnic minority communities.

BEMIS  
February 2012

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<sup>2</sup> [www.bemis.org.uk/publications](http://www.bemis.org.uk/publications)