

CPG on Tackling Islamophobia

9th May 2018 6-8pm, Committee Room 4, Scottish Parliament

Present

Omar Afzal	Muslim Council of Scotland
Raja Khalil Ahmad	
Talal Ahmed	Stand up to Racism and University of Edinburgh
Saeed Akbar	
Smina Akhtar	Glasgow University
Safia Ali	CEMVO
Tasneem Ali	Muslim Women's Association of Edinburgh
Naseem Anwar	
Rebecca Bell	Scottish Parliament
Neil Bibby	MSP
Willie Black	Edinburgh North Fights Back
Katherine Bussey	Press Association Scotland
Jackson Carlaw	MSP
Graham Campbell	Glasgow City Council
Alex Cole-Hamilton	MSP
Neil Davidson	University of Glasgow
Jack Deeth	English Scots for Yes
Paul Goldie	University of Glasgow
Peter Hopkins	Newcastle University (Secretary of CPG)
Bill Johnston	Chair, Scottish Seniors Alliance
Mazhar Khan	
Alex Law	Abertay University
Monica Lennon	MSP
Bashir Malik	Annandale Mosque Edinburgh
Fulton McGregor	MSP
Nasar Meer	University of Edinburgh
Khadija Mohammed	University of West of Scotland
Saqib Pirzada	SEPHWA
Nighet Nasim Riaz	University of West of Scotland
Khaleda Noon	Action for Children
Abdul Qadar	
Habibar Rahman	
Mohammed Razaq	WSREC
Mohammed Riaz	
Raza Sadiq	Active Life Club
Anas Sarwar	Scottish Parliament (Chair of CPG)
Ian Wall	
Lesley Warren	

Apologies

Ifty Ali	
Muhammed Adrees	Muslim Council of Scotland
Yasmeen Hussain	University of West of Scotland
Alison Logan	Glasgow City Council
Tunweer Malik	

Introduction

Anas Sarwar introduced the meeting. He summarised the focus of the last meeting which was about engagement with Police Scotland and the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.

The education sub-group had an initial meeting in Glasgow. The focus here is on creating a charter for schools, issues of bullying, and training of staff. The education sub-group will report back to the CPG in September.

It would be confirmed that there is a loose agreement to have the media attend a future meeting.

No problem here: understanding racism in Scotland

The rest of the meeting included presentations from some of the academics involved in editing and writing a new book 'No problem here': understanding racism in Scotland.

Neil Davidson

Neil Davidson noted that there is a general myth that there is no problem in Scotland when it comes to issues of racism. There is a complacency that was evident in relation to the issue of racism in relation to the independence referendum.

Historically, racism takes many forms and is diverse in its nature. There is racism associated with the arrival of new migrants and Scotland is deeply implicated in these issues.

Racism is not just about skin colour but about racialisation.

Davidson outlined four reasons why racism is not seen as an issue:

- Irish migration has not been treated as a question of racism but has been addressed as being about sectarianism;
- When migration from the Indian sub-continent did start, it was smaller in scope and so less visible so it wasn't seen as big an issue as it is in England.
- Emphasis of an apparent cultural difference between Scottish people and English people
- Scottish governments are generally more civilised in terms of how they talk about migration and new arrivals.

Nasar Meer

What does survey data about experiences of racial discrimination tell us?

Would you describe yourself as prejudiced against people of other races – low levels of self-reported prejudice in Scotland, second lowest only to London.

Only 38% of white people in Scotland claim you can be Scottish if you are not white (but 45% in England) – in general, attitudes in Scotland are less inclusive and more racist than in England.

Some surveys suggest that Scotland has more of a problem with racism than England

There is a significant problem about under-reporting

Difference between the salience of race and the racialisation of mainstream political conduct

Difference between elite views and popular understandings of racism

Alex Law

Alex Law discussed the challenge about how sectarianism should be defined.

There has been a recent transformation in the life chances of Irish Catholics in Scotland; this is an equalisation of the situations of those from an Irish Catholic background.

There are problems associated with the defining of sectarianism especially when framed around religion. Alex Law recommends that we should outlaw the term sectarianism – needs to stop being

used in the popular media and elsewhere. Sectarianism is distracting us from the real issues and a new term is needed about football related tensions.

Maureen McBride

Anti-Catholicism in Scotland should usefully be framed through discourses of racism. Irish Catholics were identified as an inferior race upon arrival in Scotland. Anti-Irish racism was interwoven with other forms of discrimination to maintain the marginalisation of the Catholic community. The Irish Catholic community are absent from most discussions of race and racism in the UK. Structural inequalities did exist but have eroded over time. Although structural inequalities may have been eroded, aspects of identity formation and experiences of exclusion may continue to exist. Religion is not seen as important to people but their national and cultural identities were seen as significant. Many Irish Catholics felt they were outsiders and did not necessarily affiliate with Scotland despite being born in Scotland.

Paul Goldie

Paul Goldie discussed the arrival of Eastern European migrants and the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees through the dispersal policy and the possible consequences of this. He conducted 12 interviews about identity, belonging and culture with white Scottish people and focused on the presence or absence of cultural racism. There are multiple forms of racisms – shift from skin colour forms of racism to cultural forms of racism. All participants except one mentioned Asian Muslims as a group who did not necessarily fit comfortably within ideas of Scottishness. A key finding is that the culture associated with Scottish Muslims has been racialized that has created an anti-Muslim racism.

Questions and discussion points

A range of questions and discussion points were then raised from those attending the meeting. Key issues covered included:

- Sample size
- Religion and culture
- Explanations for changes
- Hostility related to poverty
- Parallels between racism and ageism
- Legislation and funding exists but is this not enough?
- Negative role of the Prevent policy
- Issue of transitions beyond university qualifications for young Muslims
- How fair and accessible is higher education?
- Race disparity audit – Scotland not participating in this – missed opportunity?
- Issue of exclusion of BMEs in the public sector
- Issue of assimilation and how to combat racism

Anas Sarwar made a number of observations based on the contributions from the book editors and from the questions: there is a more tolerant chattering class in Scotland compared to elsewhere in the UK; importance of issues of empire; importance of looking at institutional structures; issue of public transport as a location for racism and Islamophobia; issues of employability; people accepting racism and Islamophobia as a feature of their everyday lives; importance of definitions; need for research and everyday experiences to inform the way forward.

Possible recommendations for action included a Race Disparity Audit for Scotland and the need to generate workforce data