

Cross Party Group on Racial Equality in Scotland

Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th November

Attendance

Present:

Fulton MacGregor MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament (Convener)
Bob Doris MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament (Vice Convener)
Richard Lyle MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament
Adam Tomkins MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament (Vice Convener)
Jatin Haria	Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (Secretariat)
Rebecca Marek	Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights
Harriette Campbell	African Caribbean Women's Association/WSREC
Arun Gopinath	Central Scotland Regional Equality Council
Chris Oswald	Equality and Human Rights Commission
Kash Taank	Glasgow Life
Carol Young	Glasgow Voluntary Sector Race Equality Network
Ephraim Borowski	Scottish Council of Jewish Communities
Leah	Scottish Council of Jewish Communities
Faten Hameed	Scottish Iraqi Society
Sandra Deslandes-Clark	SEMPERscotland
Nicola Hay	Show Racism the Red Card
Davidson Chademana	STUC Black Workers' Committee / University and College Union /
Sukhi Bains	University of St. Andrews
Naseem Anwar	University of Strathclyde
Mohammed Razaq	West of Scotland Regional Equality Council
Anita Shelton	Individual
Baher Ibrahim	Individual
Suzanne Marshall	Individual
Terence Rustia	Individual
Zahira Hassan	Individual
Apologies:	
Jackie Baillie MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament
Jeremy Balfour MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament
Pauline McNeill MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament
Anas Sarwar MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament (Vice Convener)
Nila Joshi	Edinburgh Interfaith Women's Group
Elisabetta Spano	Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Council
Foysol Choundhury	Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Council
Naren Sood	Ethnic Minority Civic Congress
Zoe Holliday	Refugee Survival Trust
Trishna Singh	Sikh Sanjog
Rohini Sharma Joshi	Trust Housing Association
Mahmud Al-Gailani	VOX project/ Mental Health Foundation
Audrey Coltart	Individual

Welcome and Introductions

Convener Fulton MacGregor MSP called the meeting to order at 18.25 and expressed happiness at being elected Convener of the Cross Party Group. He then welcomed attendees to the meeting.

Attendees introduced themselves in turn.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th September were approved by the group.

Election of Vice Conveners and Secretariat

Adam Tomkins MSP and Anas Sarwar MSP were nominated as Vice Conveners of the CPG and Jatin Haria (CRER) was nominated as Secretariat of the CPG. The group agreed to the nominations.

Presentation and Discussion: Chris Oswald, Equality and Human Rights Commission – Is Scotland Fairer?

Chris Oswald provided an overview of '[Is Scotland Fairer?](#)' a Scottish summary of a British five yearly 'state of the nation' statutory report which compiles data across ten domains. The report seeks to examine the degree to which change has occurred, the proportion of the population affected by change, and the scale of the impact on life chances.

The report identified seven challenges for Scotland, including:

1. Improving the evidence base
2. Closing the attainment gap in education
3. Encouraging fair employment
4. Supporting improved living conditions / community cohesion
5. Encouraging participation and access to justice
6. Ensuring access to healthcare for all
7. Tackling harassment and abuse

'Is Scotland Fairer?' also noted progress in Scotland, including:

- Homicide rate is dropping
- Suicide rate is dropping
- Attainment gap is closing
- Poverty rate is dropping and becoming more concentrated
- Housing quality is improving

The presentation also addresses areas of inequality in Scotland, including:

- Employment rate gaps for women, disabled people, and minority ethnic groups
- Pay gaps for women, disabled people, and those under 25
- Occupational segregation for minority ethnic groups
- Poverty rates for children, disabled people, minority ethnic groups, and those aged 16-24
- Under-representation in Modern Apprenticeships for disabled people and minority ethnic people

- Attainment gaps for those from a low socio-economic background, those with additional support needs, Gypsy/Traveller groups, and looked after children and young people
- Housing for minority ethnic groups

Overall, it was found that while the direction for government policy was good, the 'devil is in the detail' and consideration is needed to ensure policies work for those groups in the most need.

Chris Oswald's presentation also addressed the [Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2015](#), a 4-yearly statistically significant survey focused on 'prejudiced attitudes and attitudes towards equality'. The same questions are used each time to track changes. Areas discussed included:

- General attitudes towards prejudice
- Preference for living in an area with lots of different people or people similar to you
- Contact with different groups of people
- Concern about impacts of immigration on Scottish identity
- Personal relationships with members of different groups
- Attitudes about close relatives forming relationships with certain groups
- Equity and participation in the labour market
- Groups thought to be suitable as primary teachers
- Religious dress and symbols
- Attitudes towards promoting equal opportunities for different groups

The survey found that the groups with the most prejudice against them were Gypsy/Travellers, Muslims, transgender individuals, and people with mental health issues.

Chris Oswald stated that prejudice can often be traced to either a lack of contact or to conflict, as those who had contact with groups were less likely to feel prejudice towards them and as situations in which groups feel in conflict or competition can increase prejudiced attitudes.

Chris Oswald then issued a challenge regarding the Scottish Government's commitment to build 50,000 affordable homes. He proposed that, as minority ethnic groups are more likely to be overcrowded, measures be taken to address this through this commitment. Purposeful action should be taken to increase employment and income and quality housing levels for minority ethnic groups.

The Convener thanked Chris Oswald for his presentation. A question and answer session then followed. Topics discussed included:

- Similar experiences of housing projects in Leicester which could be considered
- Employment gaps in Scotland versus the rest of the UK
- Whether or not Scotland was indeed fairer for minority ethnic groups
- Disparity between the education attainment of minority ethnic groups and employment rates
- Issues of conflict and hate crimes and racial incidents
- The young age of perpetrators of hate crimes
- Inequality in Modern Apprenticeships for minority ethnic groups, both as apprentices and as employers
- Housing allocation policy
- The role of self-interest in conflict and prejudice
- The role of racism in inequalities and the fairness of Scotland
- The overtness of racism since 9/11
- The importance of collection data and information and using it
- The importance of holding the public sector to account

- Prejudice in rural areas versus urban areas
- The role of education and exposure in decreasing racism
- Racism in universities
- The possibility of placing conditionality agreement on public funds to use procurement and financial aid to address inequalities, such as in city deals
- Racist incidents in Scotland post-Brexit than in the rest of the UK

Discussion: Potential Priority Discussion Areas for the Coming Term

The Convener then opened the floor to a discussion on potential areas of discussion for the CPG during the new term.

Rebecca Marek read aloud areas which had already been proposed, including:

- Under-reporting of hate crime
- The Independent Advisory Group's report on hate crime, prejudice, and community cohesion
- Statutory blind marking in the education system
- Mental health in minority ethnic communities, including issues for mixed race children
- Welcoming refugees
- Consideration of national identity bullying in schools, including the effects of independence referenda
- Review of the Scottish Government's strategic race equality partners

Other suggestions offered were:

- The role of 3rd party reporting centres in addressing the under-reporting of hate crime
- The effect of the Brexit vote in Scotland on race equality and racism
- The effect of the American presidential election on race equality and racism
- Everyday racism, including in schools (e.g. post-Brexit hate speech and abuse)
- Prejudice based bullying (although it was noted that the Equalities and Human Rights Committee will be carrying forward work on the issue)
- Racism in universities
- Mental health services for young minority ethnic people
- Investment in mental health services, CAHMS referral by ethnic group, detention rates for ethnic group, and early intervention for minority ethnic groups
- City deals and procurement, especially those projects which receive funds from the Scottish Government

Jatin Haria (Secretariat) noted that it was important that the CPG not become just a talking shop. It was agreed that CRER should work with the Convener to obtain data and research on these issues and then call in relevant parties for discussion with the CPG.

Close

The Convener brought the meeting to a close at 19.30 and thanked everyone for their attendance.

The next meeting will be announced in due course.