

Cross Party Group on Racial Equality

Wednesday 24th February 2021

18:00 – 19:30

(via Zoom)

Attendees (27)

Fulton MacGregor	Member of the Scottish Parliament (Convener)	Iona Soper	Secure Scotland
Martin Hayward	Equality Human Rights Commission (Speaker)	Jatin Haria	CRER
Mohammed Razaq	West of Scotland Regional Equality Council (Secretariat)	Linda Alexander	Children's Health Scotland
Ashleigh Alexander	West of Scotland Regional Equality Council (Secretariat)	Mary Osei-Oppong	Individual
Alexander Hedlund	Heriot-Watt University Student Union	Milind Kolhatkar	Score Scotland
Amy Allard-Dunbar	Intercultural Youth Scotland	Mukami McCrum	Individual
Anita Shelton	Individual	Naseem Anwar	Network Rail
Chris Campbell	Standard Life - MOSAIC	Nasim Azad	Edinburgh Interfaith Association
Faten Hameed	Scottish Iraqi Society	Nikhath Yusaf	City of Edinburgh Council
Harriette Campbell	African Caribbean Women's Association	Oluwatoyin Opeloyeru	Individual
Ima Jackson	Glasgow Caledonian University	Oudwin Griffith	Individual
		Ruth Ann McCalla	Individual
		Traci Kirkland	Govan Community Project
		Trishna Singh	Sikh Sanjog
		Yasmin Luqman	CRER
		Zahra Hussain	Individual

Apologies (5)

Jeremy Balfour	Member of the Scottish Parliament	Raza Sadiq	Active Life Club
Kash Taank	Glasgow Life	Rohini Sharma Joshi	Trust Housing Association
Mohammed Afzal Chaudhrey	Individual		

1 Welcome & Housekeeping

Convener Fulton MacGregor called the meeting to order at 18:00, welcomed members to the last CPG's meeting of this parliamentary session, and then went on to introduce himself to the group

The Convener dismissed with introductions because attendee names were displayed on screen, but asked those who spoke to introduce themselves. The Convener went on to ask attendees to keep their microphones off during the meeting, unless they were invited to speak, in order to ensure that there was no background noise interference. However, he noted that camera visibility could either be turned on or off, depending on the individual's preference.

As the meeting took place via Zoom, and not all attendees could be seen on screen, the Convener asked attendees to put an 'R' in the chat if they wished to speak.

2 Apologies

The Secretariat (Ashleigh Alexander) proposed that, to save time, the apologies should just be circulated in the minutes – this was agreed by the Convener and the other group members.

3 Ratifying Decisions from Previous Meeting

The Convener introduced this agenda item and then passed over to the Secretariat (Mohammed Razaq) to take the group through this item.

The Secretariat (Mohammed Razaq) introduced and confirmed the completion of the two main action points from the previous meeting as follows:

- Invite Christina McKelvie, Minister for Older People and Equalities, as guest speaker at next CPG on Racial Equality meeting
- Circulate EHRC enquiry information, provided by Martin Hayward, to CPG group members

Following this, the Convener went on to inform the group that, unfortunately, Christina McKelvie, Minister for Older People and Equalities was unable to attend the meeting due to the last minute change of meeting time. However, the Convener suggested keeping the Covid 19 agenda item and using it for group discussion, which was agreed by the group.

The Convener also suggested switching the scheduled order of the 2 main agenda items, allowing Martin Hayward to present first and leaving the Covid 19 discussion to last. This was also agreed by the group.

4 EHRC Enquiry by Martin Hayward

The Convener introduced this agenda item and then passed over to Martin Hayward from the Equality and Human Rights Commission to give his presentation on a recent enquiry they have launched.

Martin thanked the Chair and the group for the opportunity to speak and went on to provide some background information about the EHRC and the enquiry they are running at the moment, in response to the pandemic.

Martin clarified that an enquiry is one of the EHRC's statutory powers. When they conduct an enquiry, they can publish recommendations for government, public bodies, and other bodies that are within the scope of the enquiry. These recommendations do not need to be carried out, however if they are not, the body must provide an explanation as to why they have not carried them out.

Martin went on to explain that the enquiry is looking into the treatment and experience of lower paid ethnic minority workers in the health and adult social care sectors, across England, Scotland and Wales. The enquiry was announced and launched at the end of last year, and was developed in the months preceding that in conjunction with race stakeholders. The enquiry will be looking at roles such as care assistants, care workers, porters, cleaners, nursing assistants and so on - workers in the more precarious sectors of employment. Where there is no guaranteed hours, zero hour contracts and insecure employment - work that's temporary or agency or bank work. The enquiry will consider how worker's treatment and experience was influenced by their race, employment status, immigration status and working conditions. While this is in the context of the pandemic, evidence will not be limited to that period - many of the situations being looking at existed before the pandemic and were maybe just highlighted by the pandemic.

Martin went on to describe the experienced team working on the enquiry, drawn from the various areas of the EHRC's work - policy research, communications, compliance, legal - and guided by an expert advisory panel. The advisory panel will guide and steer the work and is made up of various health and social care specialists, academics, trade unionists, business experts, race experts, and includes the following individuals:

- Jabeer Butt of the Race Equality Foundation
- Charmaine Blaze of Unison Black Workers Committee
- Nasar Meer, Professor of Race, Identity and Citizenship at the University of Edinburgh

Martin explained that the research consists of six elements:

- (1) **A review of the existing academic literature** across the nations, which is being conducted out by Professor Shereen Hussein at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. This is due to be finished by the end of March. It may be worth saying that there's relatively little data available for Scotland and Wales in this evidence review.
- (2) **A qualitative element** to the evidence which is being conducted by the University of Greenwich. This is due to be completed in April. They are **conducting case studies** across the nations and interviews with workers and focus groups.
- (3) **A quantitative analysis**, which is being conducted by Cambridge Econometrics. This is **looking at data such as the annual population survey, employment hours and patterns and differences**, and analysing NHS England and Skills for Care England. The contract also involves exploring access to NHS Scotland and Wales data, but this is expected to be less available based on what the EHRC has seen so far. This is due to be finalised this financial year.
- (4) **Focus groups** that will be used to **supplement the data analysis** and try to bring voices to life within the evidence gathered. The focus groups in Wales and Scotland are underway.
- (5) **More than 60 interviews across** Great Britain with key race, health and social care stakeholders. This is aimed to be complete by the end of March in Scotland. So far, the EHRC has talked to:
 - The Royal College of Nursing
 - The Care Inspectorate
 - The Scotland Social Services Council,
 - COSLA
 - Scottish Care
 - The Unions Black Workers Committee
 - NHS representatives
 - Scottish government representatives
- (6) **A call for evidence** which was launched last year and will run until the end of March. This includes a number of surveys aimed at different audiences, including:
 - Low paid ethnic minority workers
 - Colleagues - people who may have witnessed relevant treatment that they want to tell the enquiry about
 - Service providers
 - Other organisations - for example, trade unions and the bodies referred to earlier (5), who have submitted written evidence

Martin explained that the EHRC are, for various reasons, getting a lower return rate for the workers survey than expected, based on their previous enquiry experience. However, they are confident that a low survey return will not detract from the enquiry as they have multiple sources of evidence which will create a compelling picture of the situation, which they are aiming to publish this Summer.

Martin went on to ask the group to encourage any contacts relevant to this work to complete the survey or to get in touch with the enquiry if they would like to contribute evidence in another way. He then opened up to questions from the group.

The Convener thanked Martin for his presentation and then opened up to questions from the group, which included the following:

- Does the working panel have any student representation, particularly with work experience and career specialists? As there is evidence that BME graduates are losing out in the job market.
- Can you confirm whether or not your various studies have been able to identify accurately a substantial or an adequate number of workers, relevant workers for this particular study? Because there are concerns about the collection of demographic information about the workforce in the NHS.
- Are there any incentives you give to these people to come out and give you their data or their information?
- Have you had any contact with the home helps, like Cordia in Glasgow, that provide at home help and support for individuals?
- Is the Scottish gypsy traveller community included in the enquiry?

Once the group's questions were answered, Martin included his email address in the chat for members to get in touch if they think of any other questions.

5 Covid 19 and Equality Communities

The Convener introduced this item and reiterated that it would be used for group discussion, with key queries arising from being used to formulate written questions that would be lodged with the Chamber Desk. This was agreed by the group.

The group's discussion circled around the following areas:

(1) Vaccines and overcoming vaccine hesitancy

- Whether the Scottish Government are going to launch a campaign (similar to the one by the UK Government), with high profile individuals talking about and endorsing the vaccine, to ease fears and encourage other to take the vaccines.
- A survey created by BEMIS to identify information that is important to BME citizens to encourage vaccine uptake and to identify any additional questions that need to be addressed.

- Having staff members from NHS came out to groups to talk about the vaccines in order to allay fears and hesitancy.
- If Covid is impacting BME communities more than majority communities, why is the Scottish Government not focusing on communicating with these communities?
 - E.g. a couple of minutes of news / information on the TV with different community languages .
 - Has the Government given any thought as to how to ensure undocumented people get vaccinated?
- How the lack of engagement with BME communities throughout the pandemic may result in those communities not responding or engaging when it comes to getting the vaccine.

(2) The need for mental health provisions during and after the pandemic

- Make sure there is an immediate solution when it comes to mental health support for the BME young people and communities in general.
- These provisions need to be continued after the pandemic, to be permanently in place.

(3) Quarantine hotel fees

- If the Government will look favourably or provide funding support for people who had to travel before the hotel quarantine regulation was put in place, particularly if they had to leave for an emergency.

6 Date of Next Meeting / Any Other Business

The Convener explained how this would be the last meeting of the Cross Party Group on Racial Equality, as it will naturally dissolve at the end of this parliamentary session. He noted that the group can be restarted in the next parliamentary session, with the newly elected or re-elected MSPs.

The Convener went on to thank the current and previous Secretariat, as well as all members - current, past, and previous - who have attended the CPG meetings over the past 5 years. Group members, both in chat and over video, thanked the Convener for chairing the group.