

Cross Party Group on Tackling Islamophobia

Committee Room 5, Scottish Parliament

29th January 2020 6pm

Attendance

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| Omar Afzal | Muslim Council of Scotland |
| Kausar Ahmad | SABS |
| Ghizala Avan | Amina MWRC |
| Nasim Azad | CBPS/SACRO |
| Julia Davidson | SACC |
| Richard Haley | SACC |
| Peter Hopkins (Secretary) | Newcastle University |
| Ishrat Hussnain | SABS |
| Isobel Ingham-Barrow | MEND |
| Ahmad Jomaa | Ahl Al Bait Society |
| Roisin King | Action for Children |
| Azzam Mohamad | MCS |
| Zara Mohammed | MCS |
| Rania Qussasi | Action for Children |
| Anas Sarwar (Chair) | MSP |
| Annie Wells | MSP |

Introduction

Anas Sarwar welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Election of office bearers

Anas Sarwar was proposed and seconded to remain as the Chair of the group.

Fulton McGregor, Alex Cole-Hamilton and Annie Wells were each proposed and seconded to remain as Vice-Chairs of the group.

Peter Hopkins was proposed and second to remain as the Secretary for the Group.

Those attending the meeting introduced themselves to the group

Update on public inquiry

Peter Hopkins provided a summary of emerging findings from the inquiry about Islamophobia. 435 valid responses have been received to the online survey with 13 written responses. Survey respondents included 42.8% female and 55.6% male, with ages ranging from 13 to 87. 79.1% of respondents identified as Muslim. Most respondents are from Glasgow (267) with others from Edinburgh Aberdeen, Dundee, Falkirk, Kirkcaldy and Motherwell. 33% of all respondents say Islamophobia is an everyday issue and 40% a regular issue (this was 35% and 41% for Muslim respondents). 74.9% of all respondents say Islamophobia is getting worse (78.8% for Muslim respondents).

Key emerging themes include employment/workplace; education; friendships and isolation; health and well-being; housing; politics; media; concerns about the police; fear of violence; and isolation.

Anas Sarwar proposed a series of round tables focusing on: (1) isolation, fear and the police; (2) employment; (3) education; and (4) public services. Issues of politics and gender would sit across all four themes and be embedded within these. There would also be a discussion about the consultation of the APPG definition of Islamophobia.

Points raised in the discussion:

- How Muslims can challenge Islamophobia?
- A lack of understanding about Islam and the role this plays
- A focus on anti-discriminatory practice to help challenge Islamophobia
- Scottish Government and their approach to addressing the issues raised in the inquiry
- Employment as key site of Islamophobia, especially for women
- Importance of engaging with schoolteachers and head teachers
- Need for action on specific issues
- Limited uptake from schools on faith issues (better in some places compared to others)
- Engaging with parents as well as school pupils
- Lessons from other groups such as those working to challenge sectarianism
- Issue of recording incidents accurately
- The issue of social media
- The interrelated nature of the themes identified above
- Connecting with diverse Muslim communities such as African or Middle Eastern Muslims and Muslims who have recently arrived in Scotland.

Media guidelines

Anas Sarwar reported that the media guidelines produced by Uzma Mir and Peter Hopkins have been disseminated widely and a diverse range of organisations are looking into getting these adopted. The CPG will continue to keep the membership up-to-date with progress on this.

Omar Afzal thanked all of those involved in the CPG for the achievements over the last couple of years and noted that significant progress had been made over the last couple of years.