

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION FROM THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Further to the oral evidence session held with religion and belief groups on 10 November and in response to a question from James Kelly MSP, I offered to provide further information about examples of work that the Church of Scotland is doing both nationally and locally to tackle hate crime, deliver anti-sectarian initiatives, overcome violence against women and to promote intercultural dialogue and refugee integration.

As we said in our written submission to the Committee's call for evidence and as I reiterated in the oral session, legislation is necessary to protect people who are victims of hate crime and it sends an important statement about values, attitudes and behaviours which society agrees should not be tolerated. But the work of changing individual's actions, words and thoughts cannot begin or end with criminal justice legislation. Education, awareness, encounter, dialogue, reflection and common action between people with different backgrounds or characteristics is far more effective and useful.

I think the Church of Scotland is drawn to this view for two reasons: the first is through our shared beliefs and understanding of scripture and the Christian faith, where change-through-encounter, hospitality and welcome are essential aspects of Christianity. The second is the acknowledgement that our history as an institution has often failed to live up to these ideals, particularly the views expressed by the Church of Scotland in the early 20th Century regarding Irish (Catholic) immigration into Scotland, the consequences of which society is still grappling with today. It may be for others to judge, but my personal view is that our present commitment to community development, dialogue and education is a small attempt at working to restore the damage done by the Church of Scotland in terms of past sectarian attitudes, statements and actions. Theologians might call this repentance.

I have summarised below some of the recent activities that we have been delivering. I would of course be happy to hear from any members if there were further questions or suggestions.

David Bradwell
Associate Secretary (Global Justice and Public Witness), Faith Impact Forum
The Church of Scotland
30 November 2020

HATE SPEECH**Youth work training sessions, manual and toolkit (Outside In)**

This was a two year Erasmus programme of which the Church of Scotland represented the issue of faith based discrimination alongside LGBTIQ+, racism, ableism and sexism. In Scotland we trained 120 youth workers in transformative methods in responding to hate speech. We also produced an accompanying manual and toolkit to help youth work develop appropriate workshops and activities to proactively tackle the issues that inform hate speech. For more information: [Outside In – Transforming Hate](#)

Church of Scotland National Youth Assembly focus 2019

With participants from the Outside In programme, we delivered focused workshops and full group discussion on the definition, manifestation and appropriate responses to hate speech and crime at the annual meeting of the National Youth Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 2019. We then facilitated a discussion on how we can incorporate good practice into Church of Scotland settings.

Rwanda visit 2017

This was a pilot project of bringing a Muslim and Christian group of young people to visit one of our partners who promote Muslim-Christian relations across the Sub-Saharan African context ([PROCMURA](#)). The aim was for the group to meet with Muslim & Christian Rwandans, learn about the genocide and how its lessons can relate to the Scottish context. The outcome of the trip was for the young people to collaborate on their return to Scotland through interfaith week and with the Church of Scotland more generally.

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2017/young-scots-visit-rwanda-to-learn-about-peacebuilding>

SECTARIANISM

Acknowledging our past history and responsibility in particular for anti-Catholic sectarianism we are aware of the impact and power of public statements in support of community cohesion and condemning sectarian attitudes and behaviours. An example would be this statement from September 2019 following violence and a subsequent banning of parades.

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2019/statement-sectarian-violence-in-glasgow>

At a policy level we have in recent years engaged with and studied the recommendations of the Scottish Government working group on sectarianism, led by Prof Duncan Morrow.

<https://www.gov.scot/policies/community-safety/sectarianism/>

Locally, church congregations continue to work on ecumenical relations and community development work. One example would be the project run since 1998 by Gorbals Parish Church and Blessed John Duns Scots RC Church, Bridging the Gap <http://bridging-the-gap.org/>

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Side by Side Scotland

Side by Side is a faith based gender justice initiative led by Christian Aid. The aim is to build a coalition to promote gender equality within faith communities and increase understanding of issues faced by women of faith. The focus for 2020/2021 will be on Spiritual Abuse so we can inform violence against women / gender based violence organisations and the Scottish Government on this issue as it is experienced by women in different faith traditions.

Integrity + resources

Integrity is the name of the Church of Scotland's violence against women task group. It supports the Church of Scotland in tackling this pervasive form of violence. Our current aim is to produce a workshop for prevention, gendered approach and safeguarding response to violence against women and girls for congregations to get better informed and equipped in responding to this issue.

16 Days

We engage in the 16 Days of Activism against violence against women campaign through Integrity's social media account every year. Members of integrity also speak at events during this campaign period. @Kirk_Integrity <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2020/Shedding-a-light-on-a-shadow-pandemic-16-Days-of-Activism-Against-Gender-Based-Violence>

#AnyWomanAnywhere

In celebration of International Women's Day 2019, Zero Tolerance, AMINA The Muslim Women's Resource Centre, The Church of Scotland and Summerhall collaborated on a campaign #AnyWomanAnywhere to increase awareness and understanding of violence against women.

From Friday 1 March to Sunday 17 March 2019, we hosted a series of events at Summerhall. Including a photography exhibition, workshops, talks and film screenings. We also took the campaign to the streets with a large-scale animation projected on to a building in Edinburgh each evening over the weekend of Friday 8 March to Sunday 10 March.

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2019/new-festival-launched-to-tackle-violence-against-women-in-scotland>

INTERFAITH AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Ghana visit 2019

This initiative took Muslim and Christian leaders to Ghana where we met with PROCMURA and learned about identity, race, gender justice interfaith relations and the legacy of the slave trade amongst other things. Once home participants are continuing to collaborate on these same themes through interfaith week or specific campaigns (specifically in relation to gender and racial justice).

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2019/trip-to-ghana-will-explore-interfaith-relations>

Refugee Integration

Since 2015 the Church of Scotland has hosted the multi faith refugee co-ordination programme Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees (www.sfar.org.uk). We seek to co-ordinate and promote action by faith communities in Scotland to support asylum seekers and refugees. We are working with Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Interfaith groups. Through our commitment to each other and a sharing of common values of human dignity and protection, we have our own story to tell of hospitality and welcome.

We have contributed to the development and delivery of the Scottish Government's New Scots Refugee Integration Framework <https://www.gov.scot/publications/new-scots-refugee-integration-strategy-2018-2022/>.

Refugee integration is a long-term, two-way process, involving positive change in both individuals and host communities, which leads to cohesive, diverse communities.

With partners in the Scottish Refugee Council, Bridges Programme and WEA Scotland we were successful in receiving an European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) grant for a project from

2018 to 2020, called *the New Scots Integration Programme*. As part of this work we delivered awareness-raising sessions to faith groups and produced information on refugee issues in Scotland (<http://www.sfar.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Sanctuary-in-Scotland-2020-FULL-FINAL-version.pdf>).

We have also developed and delivered refugee integration activities, including our Edinburgh Weekend Club, a monthly social event for refugees and asylum seekers in Edinburgh. We work in partnership with local faith communities to provide a space for people to practise their English, form social connections and get to know their new city. Events have consisted of ceilidhs, trips to Edinburgh Castle and the zoo, baking and Burns Suppers. Each event would have been for between 40-70 people from the refugee community alongside volunteers and guests from local faith groups.

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2020/Refugee-integration-project-takes-families-to-Edinburgh-Zoo>

As part of the New Scots Integration Programme we have also developed a pilot project of New Scots Holidays, allowing refugees in one part of Scotland to have a respite break or holiday in the home of a church family living in another part of the country

EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

The Church of Scotland is about to embark on a systematic and programmatic journey in order to become an organisation that embodies and embraces all aspects of equality and inclusion. In order to do this we are planning to form a permanent equality and inclusion group which will create a whole church strategy for transformation of our culture, policy and practices. This strategy aims to enable us to understand the values of equality and inclusion and embed them into all aspects of our work and outreach.

Racial justice work plans

One of the key priorities of the equality and inclusion group will be to form a working group to find out a) how many BAME people we have engaging with our congregations b) what their experiences have been and c) attitudes towards racial justice amongst white majority churches, members and leaders. This will be a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative research project to help us understand where we have fallen short of being fully welcoming and inclusive towards BAME people and where we have good practice to explore and promote.

