

**Cross-Party Group on Children and Young People
Tuesday 26 November 2013
13:00-14:30 Committee Room 1**

Attendees

Alison Johnstone MSP (Chair)
Kezia Dugdale MSP
Jennifer Ang, Legal Services Agency Ltd
Anela Anwar, Roshni
Shaista Ashgar, CEMVO
Margaret Barclay, Alliance Scotland
Sara Collier, Children in Scotland
Mo Colvin, RNIB
Laura Forster, SCIS
Rachael Grant, Sense Scotland
Emma Grindulis, Together
Rachel Le Noan, Down's Syndrome Scotland
Cath Logan, Big Lottery Fund
Ruth Kerracher, Article 12 in Scotland
Faiz Khan, CEMVO
Jamie O'Neill, Roshni
Stewart MacLachlan, Legal Services Agency Ltd
Brian Magee, COSCA
Rebecca Marek, Scottish Youth Parliament
Paula Meechan, Skills Development Scotland
Lesley McNab, Children's Hospice Association Scotland
Rebecca Middlemiss, RCPsych in Scotland
Rami Ousta, BEMIS
Tanveer Parnez, BEMIS
Sarah Paterson, YouthLink Scotland
Mandy Powell, Queen Margaret University
Tasnim Rafiq, Beyond the Veil
Pat Salter, The Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments
Barbara Schuler, YouthLink Scotland
Fraser Smith, Scottish Marriage Care
Gabrielle Stewart, College of Occupational Therapists
Ashley Thompson, Shakti Women's Aid
Mridul Wadhwa, Shakti Women's Aid

Apologies

Alison McInnes MSP
Fiona McLeod MSP
Kim Atkinson, Scottish Sports Association
Salena Begley, Family Fund
May Chamberlain, Relationships Scotland

Morag Coleman, Families First St Andrews
Mig Coupe, Mindroom
Gina Freeman
Margot Gillon, City of Edinburgh Council
Natalie Graham, Central Scotland Youth Project
Mark Griffith, Shelter
Alison Hardie, Young Scot
Juliet Harris, Together
Martin Hunt, Tartan Silk
Fiona Jones, Cl@n Childlaw
Brandi Lee Lough Dennell, LGBT Youth Scotland
Robert MacBean, National Autistic Society
Elizabeth May, Action for Sick Children Scotland
Sharon McCluskie, Play Scotland
Garry McGregor, Befriending Networks
Jacquie Morgan, Central Scotland Youth Project
Jenn Mowat, Enable Scotland
Agnes Mullen, Church of Scotland
Virginia Radcliffe, Licketyspit
Morag Rennie, Central Scotland Youth Project
Tracy Rodger, CLIC Sargent
Trishna Singh, Sikh Sanjog
Lisa Ross, Mindroom
Linda Whitmore, Enable

13.10 Alison Johnstone MSP started the meeting by saying this was an important issue and one the CPG had not looked at recently. **Faiz Khan** from **CEMVO** was invited to make the first presentation.

Faiz Khan talked about what needs to change and the importance of better engagement and mentioned that presently mainstream service providers were not geared up to meet the needs of minority ethnic (ME) young people. He said all young people needed to be valued and have the same access to opportunities, it is important their voices are heard. He set out the barriers to young people from this group including: social/cultural issues, honour issues, limitations of involvement in mainstream society and he mentioned in particular barriers for ME young people in enterprise which he feels needs to be developed and encouraged.

Positive action is required to overcome these barriers and parents need to be involved as well. One size does not fit all for those from ME communities. There is a lack of meaningful engagement and research. All communities need to be involved in decision-making processes and civic and democratic engagement.

Jamie O'Neill who deals with youth work development on behalf of Roshni wanted it put on the record that the representatives for this meeting should not just have included ME organisations but should have included other organisations that have involvement. He talked about society as a whole not knowing how to engage with ME young people. He pointed to their work with young people and vulnerable adults and cited examples of work around child abuse and relationship advice. He would like to see more work and listening to ME young people at grassroots level and then taking their views on board as a starting point for service provision. Multiple barriers to the engagement of this group and with new communities forming in Scotland - what hope would they have in engaging in mainstream society and services when we have not learned the lessons from the disengaged ME communities we already have here.

ME young people are more likely to live in poverty, have poor housing and live in overcrowded conditions and have significant problems of educational underachievement and unemployment. On for example LGBT issues, the views and needs of ME young people are not often taken into account when delivering that kind of sex education and advice. Many feel isolated within their communities as they cannot talk openly about being gay or talk about problems with drugs and alcohol – mainstream services are not doing enough to engage them on these issues. Our mainstream services need to learn and adapt so they can engage, it's not just about ticking boxes, not just about translation issues.

Anela Anwar also from Roshni talked about overcoming the cultural barriers.

Mridul Wadhwa, Shakti Women's Aid was next to speak from the panel. She talked about the misunderstanding that forced marriage was an event, she said it was a process and this is a big difference which can lead to serious misunderstanding of this crime. She laid out the different outreach services Shakti provide in Scotland. According to Shakti one of the biggest barriers they face is those in authority who are told of a case of domestic abuse or violence being almost reluctant to treat it the same way as those experiencing this abuse in wider Scotland. She says the reason she feels this happens is a fear of upsetting the wider ME communities.

Mridul explained that ME young people witness domestic abuse against their mothers but also experience 'honour'-based violence themselves. These issues need to be raised and addressed with all children and young people, not just with ME young people. When young people flee domestic abuse, there is a problem for 16-18 year olds in particular as there is a lack of support for this age group. This can lead to them feeling isolated and sometimes leads to the young people going back home and thus returning to an abusive environment. There are specific issues for migrant

families who are classed as 'no recourse to public funds'. Under sections 22 and 25 of the Children (Scotland) Act, children and young people are entitled to support but most councils take a restrictive interpretation of the law and do not deliver services to the young people, despite the fact that children and young people themselves are not subject to 'no recourse to public funds' – although their parents are. Situations can arise where children and young people are subject to fostering or deportation as a result of the parents' immigration status.

Rami Ousta, BEMIS explained that their objectives are: empowering the ME community by building capacity; operating as a strategic partner with the Scottish Government; human rights education and promoting active citizenship. Race equality work over the last 15 years has tended to approach the issue as a product rather than a process. The culture needs to change so that the key concept is citizenship – supporting respect and dignity and ending stereotypical views. What is needed is positive action. This is the approach taken in Scotland (as opposed to positive discrimination, which is the approach taken in the US). E.g. parent councils fail to engage with ME parents, making little or no effort to do so partly due to stereotypical views such as 'not wanting to pay for translators' and 'can't get white parents to engage, let alone 'them''. What is needed is full participation in society and a new culture of equality. Integration can be a 'scary' concept for some ME communities. What's needed is a culture of citizenship and a sense of belonging, rather than victimhood.

13.45 Questions and general debate.

Alison thanked the panel for their contributions and opened up the general debate.

Jennifer Ang, solicitor with Legal Services Agency Ltd, explained that their organisation provided support to refugee and asylum seeking young people. She said there was considerable overlap between her organisation's views and those of Shakti Women's Aid. Young people face both actual and perceived barriers. Although many mainstream services are not linked to immigration status, young people may not be aware of this, and service providers may not be aware either. Families do not know what support they are entitled to and don't access services for this reason.

Jamie O'Neill, Roshni spoke about the Romanian and Slovakian community and the issue of unaccompanied minors, who arrive in Scotland without their families and are totally dependent on social work. However there is a tension here as social work is looking to turn the young people over to the Home Office once they turn 18. It's therefore difficult to get young people to engage, when all they have to look forward to is deportation. Young people have to go through social work in

order to get legal help but social work is working alongside the immigration authorities.

Anela Anwar, Roshni commented that if as a society we can't get it right for 3rd and 4th generation communities, then what chance is there for the newer communities? The barriers that Roshni has highlighted are those that are identified by young people themselves. What's needed is a whole-family approach – there is a need to work with parents, the wider family and the community in order to challenge views.

Ruth Kerracher, Article 12 raised the issue of young people from the Gypsy/Traveller community, who face discrimination in the media.

Rami Ousta commented on the diversity of minority ethnic communities and the issue of 'visible' and 'invisible' minorities. Gypsy/travellers are among the most disadvantaged.

Lesley McNab, Children's Hospice Association Scotland commented on the issues faced by families affected by disability who are subject to immigration control. The Family Fund grant is meant to be for the child, but families can't access it if they don't have permanent leave to remain.

Alison proposed that the Group write to the Minister in relation to the points raised by Shakti Women's Aid, Legal Services Agency Ltd and Children's Hospice Association Scotland about parents' immigration statuses and 'no recourse to public funds' and children and young people's access to services.

Fiaz Khan commented on funding problems and organisations losing staff as a consequence. Mainstream services are needed but also specialist services – a joint approach should be taken.

Tasnim Rafiq, Behind the Veil explained that her organisation works in partnership with Roshni. She raised the issue of Islamophobia and gave the example of an incident that happened at her daughter's school. Her daughter wears the hijab and was asked by a teacher if she was a 'terrorist'. There is a real concern that Islam is being promoted as something negative. Tasnim spoke to the rector of her daughter's school and was very disappointed that the rector attempted to place the blame on her daughter. She felt she had been undermined by the teacher and that this was an example of Islamophobia in addition to racism. No action was taken against the teacher. In this case there was an attempt to challenge the system, but it didn't get anywhere.

Alison suggested that Tasnim contact the Director of Education in her local authority to raise the issue of the teacher's behaviour and the rector's handling of the complaint.

Rami commented that over 75% of teachers have said that they lack knowledge about minority ethnic issues. In addition to the sensitive issue of Islamophobia there have been other problems in schools such as pupils of Irish heritage being banned from holding a St Patrick's Day celebration. The issue was raised with the Director of Education in the relevant local authority. Holding a publicly funded authority responsible is an effective means of promoting equality and tackling discrimination.

Alison asked what positive action could be taken to address these problems. She also mentioned that there had been a business event in parliament the previous week, at which a young black woman had said that it was impossible to get specialist advice. It was noticeable that there was an underrepresentation of ethnic minorities at the business event

Anela Anwar commented that the voluntary sector also needs to be held to account – what is it doing to actively engage with minority ethnic young people? In some cases organisations are not even monitoring ethnicity. If organisations are providing services for a community, it needs to be for the whole of the community, including the ME population. Organisations have said that they don't know how many ME families they work with/are in their area. They have speculated that it is 0%-1% and that they can't engage with ME communities as it is 'too hard'. It is important that when the Scottish Government funds organisations that they ensure steps are taken to engage with ME communities. It should not just be a tick-box exercise. If organisations need to work in partnership with ME organisations to overcome problems with engagement, then so be it.

Fiaz Khan said it was important that organisations gather data otherwise they don't know if they are reaching communities and meeting their needs. It is important that adequate resources are allocated within mainstream services.

Anela Anwar noted that mainstreaming is not always the answer. One-to-one, specialist support is sometimes needed. Minority ethnic organisations have been adversely affected by funding cuts. There are instances where e.g. social services have been unsuccessful in engaging with a family but once Roshni became involved they were able to make a connection and get to the root of the problem very quickly. Some minority ethnic families feel that mainstream services are 'not for them'.

Rami Ousta commented that local authorities sometimes misunderstand mainstreaming and that there needs to be a cultural shift. For example BEMIS had proposed working with the Equality Network to address LGBT issues within minority communities, and as a result had abuse directed at

them from other ME organisations. Now however these same groups were engaging in the LGBT work.

Mridul Wadhwa said that there is a need for specialist support and that there is often a false, or narrow, interpretation of mainstreaming. ME women feel that mainstreaming does not work. In teacher and social work training, there is no discussion of equality issues. For example, Shakti delivered a training session as part of a social work degree course at a university. The only students who turned up to the training were those from ME backgrounds.

Alison commented that training on equality issues should not be seen as optional for teachers and social workers.

Article 12 raised the issue of their peer education work with gypsy/traveller young people. The workshops are delivered by young people and the whole process is young person-led. It is important to engage with young people on their own terms, not just through official channels. It is crucial that young people are involved in planning processes.

Alison said that the group would write to the Minister and also to COSLA to reflect these points, and ask for a response.

Rami commented that we need to stop viewing young people from minority ethnic communities as victims.

Alison questioned why good relationships between different ethnic communities aren't sustained from primary to secondary school.

Jamie O'Neill commented that one reason is that once young people enter secondary school, they are split up and have different teachers and different friends.

Anela Anwar added that society creates racism and discrimination and that as young people grow into adults, they learn prejudice.

Fraser Smith, Scottish Marriage Care explained that their organisation undertakes youth development work and delivers anti-sectarian initiatives. Primary schools celebrate different cultures and hold events to mark different festivals, but secondary schools don't celebrate different cultures, beliefs and languages in the same way. Additionally, as part of the transition into adulthood, young people start to create their own opinions.

Shaista Ashgar, CEMVO noted that prejudice starts prior to primary school. Her son had experienced discrimination at nursery school and she

raised the issue with the head teacher, who didn't know how to deal with the situation. The role of parents is important, as it is parents who teach children to discriminate.

Rami Ousta commented on the Curriculum for Excellence and human rights education, which is not being delivered effectively in primary schools. Ethnicity needs to be viewed in relation to citizenship.

14:25 Alison thanked everyone for their contributions. The next meeting will be on Wednesday 29th January 2014.

Action point: The secretariat will draft a letter on behalf of the CPG to the relevant Minister and COSLA highlighting the key issues raised at today's meeting.

The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) is undertaking research into online hate speech against people from minority ethnic communities. CRER believes that, despite growing awareness of this problem, fairly little advocacy to combat online hate speech has been undertaken in Scotland. As such they would like to gain a better picture of the problem; who it affects and more importantly what can be done about it. They have launched a survey to gauge the impact of online hate speech, and intend to use the results to raise awareness, map the extent of hate speech, support those who are affected and advocate for ways to combat this phenomenon in Scotland. The survey consists of nine quick questions and the deadline to complete the survey is Friday 13th December.

Action point: Details of the CRER survey will be circulated to the Group.