Cross Party Group on Racial Equality in Scotland

Minutes of the Meeting held on 9th March

Attendance

Present:

Hanzala Malik MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament (Deputy Convener)
Christian Allard MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament
Jatin Haria	Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (Secretariat)
Rebecca Marek	Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (Secretariat)
Peter Hopkins	University of Newcastle
Martin Hayward	Equality and Human Rights Commission
Shaben Begum	Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance
Sarah Masson	Scottish Parliament
Gozie Joe Adigwe	STUC Black Workers Committee
Peter Hughes	Skills Development Scotland
Jordan Gorevan	Skills Development Scotland
Davidson Chademana	University and College Union
Mohammed Razaq	West of Scotland Regional Equality Council
Harriette Campbell	WSREC / African Caribbean Women's Association
Anita Shelton	Trade Union and Community Activist

Apologies:

Bob Doris MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament (Convener)
Jamie McGrigor MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament
Jackie Baillie MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament
Anne McTaggart MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament
Arun Gopinath	Central Scotland Regional Equality Council
Nila Joshi	Edinburgh Interfaith Women's Group
Elisabetta Spano	Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Council
Jock Morris	Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees
Kash Taank	Glasgow Life
Diana Rix	Refugee Survival Trust
Faten Hameed	Roshni / Scottish Iraqi Society
Trishna Singh	Sikh Sanjog
Meg de Amasi	Stirling Multicultural Partnership
Rohini Sharma Joshi	Trust Housing Association
Naseem Anwar	University of Strathclyde
Khalida Hussain	Voluntary Action Fund
Mahmud Al-Gailani	VOX project/ Mental Health Foundation

Welcome and Introductions

Vice Convener Hanzala Malik MSP called the meeting to order at 13:00, and welcomed attendees to the meeting.

Attendees introduced themselves in turn.

Presentation and Discussion: Dr. Peter Hopkins, Newcastle University – Faith, ethnicity, and place: Young people's everyday geopolitics in Scotland

Peter Hopkins provided an overview of a recent research project led by Newcastle University, the University of Edinburgh, and the University of St Andrews on the experiences of minority ethnic and religious minority young people. His presentation addressed the following topics:

- The experiences of young people growing up in urban, suburban and rural Scotland, focusing on everyday geopolitics and patterns of Islamophobia among ethnic and religious minority young people.
- The research involved 382 young people from a Muslim, non-Muslim South Asian, asylum-seeker or refugee, Central and Eastern European migrant, and white Scottish background, and was done through focus groups and interviews.
- The report was grouped on the following subjects: politics and participation, national identity and Scottishness, interactions and encounters, migration and mobility, racism and discrimination, being mistaken for a Muslim, and Islamophobia.
- Politics and participation:
  - Young people engaged in politics through various media platforms, but were not always clear on how to access politics and influence change. Their political engagement was often influenced by both parents and friends.
  - Young people voiced mistrust of politicians and political parties and recognised the policy differences between Holyrood and Westminster.
  - Although young people had low levels of membership of political parties, many were interested in issue-based politics.
  - Young people were politicised by the Independence Referendum and by the opening up of the vote to those aged 16 and 17.
- National identity and Scottishness:
  - The independence debate acted as a catalyst for young people to reflect on what it meant to them to be Scottish; many felt that Scotland was a fair society that was diverse and friendly.
  - Young people affiliated themselves to Scotland and Scottishness, irrespective of their ethnic and religious heritage; however, experiences of racism in public spaces sometimes eroded this and made them feel excluded and alienated.
  - Young people often pointed out that national identity is only one aspect of their identity, with faith, ethnicity, and cultural heritage also being important. Many young people also reflected on their transnational and hybrid identities.
  - Young people talked about important locations that nurtured a sense of Scottishness, including urban areas and educational sites.
- Interactions and encounters:
  - Most young people were highly positive about diversity in Scotland and many engaged in inter-religious and multi-ethnic friendship groups at school or university.
  - There was some evidence that specific religious and minority ethnic groups were more segregated than other young people. In Glasgow, young people tended to identify Slovakian, Romanian, and Czech young people as the most isolated minority groups, and some participants felt that Muslim students were the most segregated at university.

- There was evidence of sexism and homophobia amongst participants, as well as personal experiences of these forms of prejudice.
- Migration and mobility:
  - Young people's experiences of migration have led to multiple understandings of home.
  - Language is a key barrier for migrant young people, including for their parent's generation.
  - Migration heritages are important to young people's sense of identity and experience.
  - Many young people talked positively about immigration and supported pro-migration policies in Scotland, however they also recognise the negative impact of the media on immigration discourse and have personal experience of securitisation.
- Racism and discrimination:
  - Young people felt it was important to talk about racism and referred to racist incidents on the basis of accent, skin colour, faith, dress, nationality, and ethnicity.
  - Young people explained that racist incidents tended to be triggered by media stereotypes and people who were under the influence of drugs/alcohol.
  - Young people understand that racism can be covert and overt. Encountering and responding to racism was context dependent, based on the intersection of place, community size, peer and intergenerational relations, and personal identities.
  - Many young people demonstrated resilience to everyday racism and felt able to manage and respond to it.
- Being mistaken for a Muslim:
  - Young people from a non-Muslim South Asian, African, and some Central and Eastern European background experienced being taken as a Muslim.
  - Young people with South Asian backgrounds were most commonly recognised as Muslim. They claimed this was a result of their skin colour, hair style, and facial features.
  - Young people explained that negative media representation, homogenisation of the Asian community, the small size of some ethnic and religious minority groups, and low levels of public awareness of religious were why they were sometimes mistaken for Muslims.
- Islamophobia:
  - Young Muslims questioned the usefulness of the term Islamophobia. The term is seen to be 'othering,' reinforcing difference, which in turn further marginalises Muslims.
  - Young people preferred the term 'racism' to 'Islamophobia. The media, including social media, are catalysts of anti-Muslim sentiment.
  - If Islamophobia is narrowly defined as anti-Muslim sentiment, there are clear incidents of discrimination and prejudice against Muslims, which is often gendered and determined by where people live.

The Chair thanked Peter Hopkins for his presentation. Peter Hopkins distributed copies of the report, which is available at: https://research.ncl.ac.uk/youngpeople/

Presentation and Discussion: Christian Allard MSP – The Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee's inquiry into race, ethnicity, and employment

Christian Allard Ms spoke to the group about the Equal Opportunities Committee's inquiry into race, ethnicity, and employment His presentation touched on the following topics:

- The continued disadvantaged experienced by minority ethnic groups in the labour market, even 40 years on from the Race Relations Act 1976.

- The process by which the Committee gathered evidence for the inquiry, including a call for written submission, oral evidence sessions, and site visits.
- The difficulty with gathered data, as changes in migration and national identity as made it difficult for minority ethnic groups to classify themselves, and for research to be clear about whom it is addressing (e.g., does "minority ethnic" mean all minority groups, including, white minority groups, or does it only include non-white minority ethnic groups?).
- The disconnect between education and employment, with minority ethnic groups often better educated, but more likely to be unemployed, in low paying jobs, or passed over for promotions.
- The impact of institutional racism and discrimination on this, and the need for honest conversation and action.
- Occupational segregation and discrimination, particularly among young people in education (e.g. teachers steering them towards certain careers and qualifications based on their ethnicity).
- The need to stop promoting "unconscious bias" training, as bias is not an excuse, but is simply racism.
- The site visit to NHS Lothian, and discussions had with minority ethnic nurses about employment difficulties.
- The need to stop promoting English lessons as the solution to under-employment for minority ethnic groups.
- The oral evidence session with private sector companies and the similarities between issues within the public sector and the private sector.
- The conclusions and recommendations of the inquiry, which have been submitted to the Scottish Government and have received a response from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities, and Pensioners' Rights. It will also feature in the Committee's legacy report.

The Chair thanked Christian Allard MSP for his presentation. A copy of the report is available on the website of the Equal Opportunities Committee.

The group then discussed the future of the inquiry, and the need for action from the Scottish Government on the conclusions and recommendations. If not, the group believed it would become like other pieces of research that do not receive follow-up, and are repeated years later. It was noted that racism has been in Scotland for decades, and something different must be done to address this; producing reports is not enough. The group expressed belief that society must be changed, and education – beginning with children and young people – must take place.

It was suggested that if the CPG is reformed that the new CPG keep a focus on the implications of the recommendations and write to the Scottish Government.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Close

The Chair brought the meeting to a close, and thanked the Convener Bob Doris MSP and the group for their work and attendance since the beginning of the CPG. The CPG also thanked the Deputy Convener Hanzala Malik MSP, for his work and commitment.

The CPG will be dissolved at the end of the parliamentary session, with the possibly of reformation in the new session of the Scottish Parliament.