Race Equality Framework for Scotland

Action Forum on Community Cohesion and Safety

Workshop Summary

Introduction

The Scottish Government hosted an Action Forum on Community Cohesion and Safety on 29th July 2015 in Glasgow. This was the first of four themed Action Forums designed to involve key stakeholders in the development of a new race equality framework for Scotland. The framework is intended to tackle racism and promote equality. It will be in place from 2016 to 2030.

More information about this work, which is being carried out in partnership by the Scottish Government and CRER, is available at the CRER website.

This Action Forum on Community Cohesion and Safety was planned with assistance from a Reference Planning Group comprised of people with expertise in relevant fields from Government, the public sector, race equality organisations and the wider voluntary sector. The Reference Planning Group identified key issues and evidence, and suggested potential Action Forum invitees whose skills and experience would be valuable to the policy development process.

Following discussions with the Reference Planning Group, a wide range of participants were invited to take part in the Action Forum based on their professional expertise. They included people working at both strategic and operational levels from both the public sector and voluntary sector in Scotland. To aid discussion, participants were provided with an interim evidence paper and information on the format of the Action Forum in advance.

This Action Forum was co-hosted by CEMVO Scotland, who also assisted in preparing an interim evidence paper for attendees.

Strategic Action Forum

The agenda for the first part of the day was aimed at providing context and focus to inspire the workshop sessions. This was delivered through the following presentations:

- Welcome and introduction – Colin Lee, CEMVO Scotland
- Scottish Government's Approach to Race Equality – Lesley Irving, Scottish Government Equality Unit (SGEU)
- Setting the Scene - Lesley Musa, SGEU and Carol Young, CRER
- Keynote Speech - DCC Stephen Allen, Police Scotland / Scottish Government

The workshop sessions drew participants together into groups, each focussing on one of three topics related to the wider theme:

- Building good race relations and community cohesion
- Reducing racism, discrimination and prejudice
- Improving access to justice and safety

With assistance from a facilitator, these groups completed an interactive workshop split into three sessions. This was designed to seek effective solutions and ideas for action. Facilitators recorded the agreed feedback from each group in workbooks which were specially designed for use within the policy development process.

Each session progressed discussion towards solution focussed outcomes:

- Workshop 1: Setting and prioritising our goals
- Workshop 2: Opportunities, challenges and responsibilities
- Workshop 3: Reaching our goals: potential solutions

The following workshop summary draws together a brief overview of the collated results from the three workshop sessions.

There was much cross-over in the issues and priorities identified by groups looking at the three topics. To avoid duplication, this paper provides a summary of views rather than a full record of workshop results; this also means that in some cases, issues raised by workshops may appear under a different topic heading than originally intended. Whilst goals and solutions are detailed for each topic, the wider context of discussion throughout the three sessions (particularly the second session) has been summarised into a brief description of participants' views.

Workshop summary

A total of 40 participants took part in the workshop sessions. Appendix 1 lists the organisations taking part. This includes only those who were able to attend on the day, and is not reflective of the full list of organisations invited to participate.

Participants were grouped according to their area of work into workshop tables looking at the three topics. In total, there were five tables:

- Building good race relations and community cohesion (one workshop table)
- Reducing racism, prejudice and discrimination (two workshop tables)
- Access to justice and safety (two workshop tables)

Participants on each table agreed feedback to be recorded by the facilitator in a workbook. The results of these workbooks are summarised below by topic heading, with an additional heading to cover issues of overarching or strategic significance which were identified by the groups.

It should be noted that the feedback collated here represents the views of participants; these views have not been subject to fact checking or other scrutiny. Although each group agreed on the content to be recorded in their own workbook, the collated feedback reflects the views of the individuals participating in the workshops and cannot be seen to reflect the views of all present at this Action Forum. The contents of this paper do not represent Scottish Government's views or position.

Overarching strategy and policy

A number of policy areas and strategic areas were identified as important to improving community cohesion and safety. In many cases, discussion about strategy and policy issues hinged on the importance of the interactions between Scotland's institutions and minority ethnic communities and individuals (particularly in terms of representation within these institutions and the experience of accessing services). Another area of interaction raised by participants was funding relationships between Government and minority ethnic organisations undertaking community cohesion work. The collection and use of equality monitoring data was also seen to be of key importance.

General issues in terms of strategic approaches included:

- Representation and participation of minority ethnic individuals and communities within public sector and Government
    o Lack of representation of minority ethnic people within the workforce of institutions is a barrier and is seen to demonstrate a disconnect between those institutions and the communities they serve
    o Positive action within both employment and service provision is key, but rarely used and poorly understood
- Wider issues around race equality and service provision
    o Cuts and reductions in service may disproportionately impact people from minority ethnic communities; also, the financial climate is used as an excuse to avoid action to improve service provision or to tackle racism
    o For those with language barriers, ESOL provision is essential but very under-resourced and sometimes inaccessible
- Funding relationships between Government / public sector and voluntary sector
    o Funding processes should be more responsive to community needs and reality of organisations (e.g. core costs, burden of administration)
    o Funding reporting processes need to be more concerned with the impact on people's lives and less concerned with box ticking / administrative aspects
    o Funding for community based projects is often channelled to communities of place, which disadvantages communities of interest (including minority ethnic communities)
- The importance of effective use and gathering of evidence (e.g. equality monitoring and disaggregated statistics) throughout Scotland's institutions
- Concern that race equality has been subsumed by 'mainstreaming', a concept which is poorly understood within Scotland's institutions (used as an excuse to do less rather than an imperative to do better)

Specific policy areas identified as important included:

- The review of Scotland's national anti-bullying strategy
- EHRC Scotland's recent work on prejudice based bullying in schools[1]
- Scotland's national outcomes, particularly 'We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity'.
- The Scottish Specific Public Sector Equality Duties[2] (it was felt that these have not yet created change in fostering good relations, and are not enforced or scrutinised well enough to ensure compliance)
- New community empowerment legislation[3]
- Curriculum for Excellence[4]
- Political and governance structures at local levels including community councils and community planning partnerships

Example goals:

'Communities have trust in and are represented within their institutions'

'Where language is an issue, resources are available to enable communication and access services'

Potential solutions:

- Clarify and strengthen monitoring / enforcement of the Public Sector Equality Duties
- Programme of work led by Scottish Government to engage all public bodies in improving strategic approaches to race equality
- Every employee within Scotland's institutions should know about the importance of race equality as it relates to their work
- Reviews within institutions and departments regarding the promotion of race equality in services and workforce
- Capacity building programme for the public sector on positive action and how to use it

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[1] Prejudice-based bullying in Scottish schools: a research report, published 2015
[2] The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012
[3] The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
[4] See Education Scotland – The Curriculum in Scotland

Reducing racism, prejudice and discrimination

Participants felt that, Scotland's majority ethnic community still has significant problems with racism. This was connected not just to direct racism, but also to a lack of understanding of what racism and prejudice really are and how they impact people's lives. This was seen to result in a tendency towards knee-jerk denials of racism and/or deflecting attention away from racism. As well as on a personal level, participants identified this as being a problem in tackling institutional racism; this was primarily discussed in terms of how it manifests in poor service provision.

Issues raised included:

- Activities are needed across the board to increase understanding of racism in both personal and structural contexts; this includes activities within the public sector as bodies required to comply with public sector equality duties often misunderstand the nature of racism
- Reluctance to recognise and talk about racism within Scotland's institutions and society is a serious barrier to community cohesion
  - An environment needs to be created where people are confident to challenge and to be challenged regarding racism, comfortable to ask questions and to engage in dialogue without a 'blame culture' (with conflict resolution / reconciliation where needed)
- To reduce racism, campaigns should emphasise what we share as humans (i.e. using intercultural approaches)
- The media has a pernicious influence, creating and reinforcing myths and stereotypes; aligned to this, right wing extremist views in society are seen to be increasing in prominence
- Schools and youth work are two key areas where more opportunities for anti-racist education can be found – especially in terms of how racism is discussed as part of 'citizenship' learning
- Concerns were raised around experiences of service use which suggest institutional racism is still a problem within many institutions
  - Institutions should provide effective and fair services for all, but are often seen as being far removed from the minority ethnic people they serve, both in terms of attitude and in providing effective services

- In some instances, it was felt that individual staff in some public sector bodies had misused their power or otherwise mistreated minority ethnic service users
- Service providers' reluctance to deal effectively with 'difficult' cases is a serious problem which is worsened for service users from minority ethnic communities by racial stereotyping and service providers' fear of being challenged about racism or perceived as racist (this was interpreted as being connected to a broader refusal to accept criticism or to acknowledge weaknesses amongst Scotland's public bodies)
- Processes to challenge or influence bodies which are not inclusive or demonstrate bad practice (without resorting to legal measures, e.g. claims under the Equality Act 2010) are not clear enough / should be better publicised

Example goals:

'Increasing acceptance that racism exists in Scotland'

'People understand what is racism and what is prejudice'

'Permanent critical reflection on race and power relations and race equality at all levels of public life'

Potential solutions:

- Reviewing and improving Curriculum for Excellence's approach to equality to ensure that the curriculum is actively creating community cohesion and is responsive to local contexts / demographics
- Embedding race equality into Scotland's revised anti-bullying strategy
- Language education within schools could better reflect the diverse communities in Scotland by offering more non-European languages from Primary level onwards for all, including majority ethnic pupils (benefits in terms of cohesion but also peer support and wider educational benefits)
- Strengthening referral practices to support people who have faced racism between public and voluntary sector (including developing online resources / practices)

Building good race relations and community cohesion

Participants felt there is currently a mixed picture with regards to race relations and community cohesion in Scotland. Much of the discussion around this centred on the importance of belonging and identity. The importance of this at a strategic level was linked to the Scottish National Outcome 'We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity'.

Issued raised included:

- There is a lack of understanding of community cohesion, what it means and the benefits it brings
- Concern that popular views about integration and community cohesion are actually aiming towards assimilation, and that this may contribute to racist attitudes
- The erroneous image of 'Scottish' society as mono-cultural is a barrier to belonging; it is vital to recognise and value diversity and plurality of identity
- Minority ethnic communities are often seen as homogenous when in fact needs and priorities are very different; this hampers good race relations and community cohesion (it was felt that community organisations need to challenge this, which can be difficult when many do represent one particular community)
- As well as feeling valued and respected, having equality in opportunity and quality of life is essential in order to achieve community cohesion
- The popular notion that dislike or hatred for England/English people is part of Scottish identity; even in jest, this causes distress for many minority ethnic people who were born in England or have other close connections there
- The global context makes it important for Scotland to evolve a more flexible national identity
- Heritage industry activities, marketing and promotion have a role to play in creating a sense of belonging and community cohesion (getting away from a mono-cultural view of Scotland)
- Language and terminology about identity (in terms of national identity, self-defined ethnicity and broader collective and political identities for minority ethnic communities) continues to be a sticking point between community organisations and groups; there is no one solution to this as there are political and social factors underlying each point of view

- Participation and representation in decision making structures and policy processes within Scotland's institutions were felt to be of vital importance; Scotland cannot be inclusive unless its institutions are (these issues will be explored in more detail in our second Strategic Action Forum on the theme of participation and representation).
    o The way public communications are handled by institutions (for example public health messages, awareness campaigns, marketing) is generally not inclusive and can make minority ethnic individuals feel ostracised
    o Informal networks and community connections could be better utilised to encourage participation and representation
    o Current approaches to community engagement are generally ineffective; minority ethnic communities' participation is seen as an 'add on' rather than a central part of the process, action or improvement rarely results from engagement, and often relies on the 'usual suspects'
    o Lack of time, resources and capacity within community organisations are barriers to participation in engagement activity, especially at strategic levels (community planning structures seen as particularly problematic)
- In terms of the work that goes on to build good race relations and community cohesion in the voluntary and public sectors, better sharing of practice, evaluation of outcomes and partnership working is needed

Example goals:

'Making the most of community cohesion work'

'Scotland is a country where everyone values and works to experience community cohesion and there are the resources to do this'

'People in Scotland will always be creating new and beautiful ways of celebrating cultural diversity and supporting it to flourish'

'Scotland has an inclusive, diverse national identity for the entire population'

'Minority ethnic people have a stake in society'

'Everyone feels empowered to exercise their rights'

'Everyone is aware of Scottish citizens' rights, e.g. Third Party Reporting, domestic abuse'

'Meaningful representation of minority ethnic communities at all levels of public life'

'An inclusive, diverse national identity for the entire population'

Potential solutions:

- Use Curriculum for Excellence to educate about rights and responsibilities in relation to race relations and community cohesion
- A structured, collaborative approach to partnership working and practice sharing across public and voluntary sectors
- Develop funding streams for community cohesion work based on needs and priorities within communities
- Use arts based approaches to bring people together and tell their stories
- Neighbourhood approaches are needed to make access to community facilities and assets easier for minority ethnic communities (e.g. using school campuses for community activities, access to playgrounds with volunteers from police or other services on hand as 'wardens'); barriers to accessing these facilities and assets hamper community cohesion
- More inclusive approaches to planning and marketing national celebrations, days and events, with evaluation of their impact on community cohesion
- Inclusive strategies and work planning within bodies whose work connects to national identity, e.g. Historic Scotland, Creative Scotland, Visit Scotland (again, with appropriate evaluation of impact)
- Strengthen approaches to positive action to increase representation of minority ethnic communities within the public sector and its decision making structures
    - o Building this into the Public Sector Equality Duties (to clarify the limited approach taken within the Equality Act 2010 and encourage use of those available powers)
    - o Research why minority ethnic people are not being recruited
    - o Creating a guaranteed interview scheme (this would require a change in the law to extend further positive action powers)
    - o Diversity on interview panels

- o Create a representative organisation for minority ethnic people working within the public sector as a whole
  - o Provide support and capacity building to identify routes into public appointments for minority ethnic people (there are differing views on the suitability of targets or quotas as part of this activity)
- Improving the way communities are involved and engaged with by Government and public sector
  - o Training and capacity building for those who undertake community engagement work
  - o Holistic support and resourcing for grassroots community organisations to influence decision making (combined with changes in approach to decision making and engagement)

Improving access to justice and safety

It was felt that racist incidents are still heavily under-reported, including in terms of reporting to police and within schools.

Issues raised included:

- The importance of dealing effectively with racist incidents in schools, including effective reporting and recording, was stressed
- Some participants felt that relationships with community policing teams have fallen away in recent years, and felt that more communication and contact would be beneficial
- Reporting and tackling low level racist incidents is vital, as these have cumulative impacts but also can lead to serious incidents
- The Third Party Reporting System could benefit from further development to improve its potential impact
- Despite some attempts at marketing, the Third Party Reporting system is still poorly understood within communities; a more co-ordinated approach is needed
- A more holistic approach is needed to collecting and publishing data on racist incidents; a lot of different bodies and teams within them have access to data or need to use data, and those responsible must work together

- Racist incident reports do not always proceed to a racially aggravated charge; more needs to be known about why this is, and whether there are differences in effectiveness between the approach in Scotland (where Crown Office guidance states prosecutors should always be made aware of a racist incident report in relation to a case) and in England and Wales (where, as well as guidance, there is an agreement between the Crown Prosecution Service and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) that the police will do this whenever a report meets the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry definition of a racist incident[5]).

Example goals:

'Everyone working within Police Scotland to understand equality and diversity is part of their role – delivering to all communities'

'People feel that an appropriate response is given in a timely fashion to a reported incident, with language not being a barrier'

'Evidence at a localised level in order to deliver better service and address access to justice and safety'

Potential solutions:

- A centralised database to allow more detailed recording and disaggregation of information on racist incidents (including a wide range of data from third party reporting centres, police, housing, health and social care etc.)
- A new national approach to recording and dealing with racist incidents in schools
- Third Party Reporting should be better designed, resourced, maintained, supported, advertised and promoted
- Police Scotland performance on responding to incident reports should be evaluated through qualitative monitoring of the experience of people reporting incidents, and resulting information used to improve practice

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[5] "A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person."

Next steps

This summary will be shared by email with the participants who took part in this Action Forum. In the longer term, all four Action Forum summaries will be available to view online. All participants will receive an email with a link to access these.

The results from the four Action Forums will be included in the overall evidence base for development of the race equality framework for Scotland, alongside desk based research and evidence from other engagement activities (including the Community Ambassadors Programme which links grassroots community organisations into the policy development process).

For more information about this Action Forum Workshop Summary, please contact:

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Appendix 1: List of organisations participating in workshop sessions

Aberdeenshire Council
Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre
BEMIS
Central Scotland Regional Equality Council
CEMVO Scotland
Govanhill Housing Association
Community Safety Glasgow
COPFS
CRER
Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Council
Grampian Regional Equality Council
Interfaith Scotland
Maryhill Citizens Advice Bureau Equality Project
Pilton Community Health Project
PKAVS Minority Communities Hub
Poverty Alliance
Queens Cross Housing Association
Roshni
Saheliya
SCOREscotland
Scottish Centre for Research on Social Justice
Scottish Council of Jewish Communities
Scottish Government
Scottish Refugee Council
Shakti Womens Aid
Show Racism the Red Card
University of Glasgow
West of Scotland Regional Equality Council