Race Equality Framework for Scotland

Action Forum on Participation and Representation

Workshop Summary

Introduction

The Scottish Government hosted an Action Forum on Participation and Representation on 25th August 2015 in Glasgow. This was the second 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 Participation and Representation 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 the Scottish Refugee Council.

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 – Luska Jerdin, Scottish Government
- Setting the scene - John Wilkes, Scottish Refugee Council
- Keynote Speech - Sanjay Lago, Black Students' Officer, NUS Scotland

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

- Politics, decision making and governance
- Volunteering and community action
- Arts, leisure and heritage

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 of the three sessions 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. The contents of this paper do not represent Scottish Government's views or position.

Workshop summary

A total of 32 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:

- Two tables discussing politics, decision making and governance
- Two tables discussing volunteering and community action
- One table discussing arts, leisure and heritage

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.

Issues raised around activities which do not fit into the theme of participation and representation will be taken into account in the policy development process, but are not recorded in full here. For example, much emphasis was placed on the role of schools and the education system in combatting racism. This will be considered alongside other education related evidence in developing the framework.

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 issues and strategic areas were identified as important to improving participation and representation. In many cases, discussion about strategy and policy issues hinged on the importance of collecting and using evidence effectively. Building race equality more effectively into existing policy areas was also a key point.

General issues in terms of strategic approaches included:

- The importance of effective gathering and use of evidence (e.g. equality monitoring and disaggregated statistics), and whether there is potential to extend reporting duties through Scottish Specific Public Sector Equality Duties in some areas
- The need to define terms used more clearly and to understand what definitions of terminology mean for research and data collection purposes, especially in relation to ethnicity categories (work needed to ensure these reflect identities of those participating in research and monitoring)

Specific policy areas identified as important included:

- The Scottish Specific Public Sector Equality Duties[1]
- Curriculum for Excellence[2]
- Political and governance structures at local levels including community councils and community planning partnerships
- Data collection mechanisms at national level, for example Scotland's Census, Scottish Household Survey and Scottish Health Survey
- Current work around Women on Boards[3]

Politics, decision making and governance

Discussion focussed largely around pathways into participation in politics, decision making and governance and how institutions can encourage and support participation in these.

Issues raised by participants included:

- The need for better and more coherent data collection and use on patterns of political participation by ethnicity
- Institutional and structural racism within the systems of power and decision making as a major barrier to participation (for example marginalisation of the issues prioritised by minority ethnic communities)

---

[1] The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012
[2] See Education Scotland – The Curriculum in Scotland
[3] Including the Scottish Government's 2014 consultation on improving gender diversity: Women on Board responses

- The need for better understanding within some minority ethnic communities of systems of power and decision making and how to become involved
- The importance of better structures for capacity building in the public and third sectors; young people were particularly thought to be in need of support and encouragement, with a possible role for the education system in developing political consciousness
- The responsibility of institutions in taking action to encourage and support participation
- The potential for the Specific Public Sector Equality Duties to be applied more stringently where listed organisations are not taking appropriate action to tackle under-representation / lack of participation
- Conflicting perceptions around ethnicity and party credibility within candidate selection processes (minority ethnic candidates seen as both increasing and decreasing credibility with different groups of voters) and the perception that parties could be more transparent and genuine in their attempts to increase diversity
- The potential for existing politicians to encourage more involvement in politics by speaking out more strongly on race equality issues
- The need to increase accessibility of participation and increase representation in community level political and governance, for example through community councils, parent councils and community planning structures
- The importance of action to recognise and actively tackle racism (and to deal with ignorance of racism within Scotland) in order to promote involvement in politics, governance and decision making (it was felt that it was important to try new approaches and identify what works, and what doesn't work, in order to move forward)
- Drawing on a wide range of resources (Christie Commission findings, National Standards for Community Engagement etc) to continue developing better participatory democracy

Improving the approaches Scotland's institutions take to engaging minority ethnic communities / organisations in policy and decision making. Example goals:

'Increase representation across public appointments to reflect society'

'Proportionate representation across public bodies and third sector boards'

'Link to personal relevance and expand / increase engagement in politics at local level'

Potential solutions:

- Setting a defined, time bound target for increased representation in public appointments
- Improved data collection and use of data to identify gaps and inform action
- Pathways for progression - clear capacity building 'pipeline' to support greater participation and representation in politics, decision making and governance
- Political shadowing schemes
- Paid political internships in Government and political parties
- Ensuring issues of importance to minority ethnic communities are reflected and considered in local community planning
- Collecting, collating and analysing all the necessary data on participation over an ongoing period (longitudinal studies)

Volunteering and community action

Participants expressed a great deal of positivity about the informal and formal participation of minority ethnic communities in volunteering and community action. It was felt that communities and individuals had much to offer and much to gain, but that participation could be encouraged and made more effective with better support from Scotland's institutions in the public and voluntary sector. It was noted that there are still significant barriers to effective participation.

Issues raised included:

- The importance of recognising informal community action and informal volunteering as something which is prevalent in minority ethnic communities and should be valued in its own right
- The role of volunteering and community action in contributing to representation of minority ethnic communities' interests at policy making and political levels (where institutions are willing to act on this)

- The social benefit of innovative approaches to community action, particularly those involving young people or led directly by community members
- Barriers to volunteering and the role of Government and third sector in tackling these
- Concerns that formal volunteering may at times be treated as a substitute for paid work, further deepening minority ethnic labour market inequalities; also that minority ethnic volunteers may be valued primarily for their 'difference' (especially bilingual volunteers) by mainstream organisations rather than being considered equally valuable for the generic contribution they can make alongside majority ethnic volunteers
- The need to support and strengthen Scotland's minority ethnic led voluntary sector
- The potential to draw ideas for effective community action from other movements (e.g. feminist, disability, LGBT equality movements)
- The value of the skills, experience and expert knowledge within Scotland's minority ethnic led voluntary sector, but also the need to acknowledge that its size and capacity has been hit hard by direct and indirect impacts of austerity
- Concerns that current practice sometimes results in tokenism – community activists may be seen as representing all minority ethnic people, so further engagement is not pursued
- The mixed benefits and drawbacks of formalisation of community action; whilst this can bring more resources, it can also bring bureaucratisation and pressure to conform to unsuitable criteria
- Recognising that minority ethnic participation in community action and engagement is informed by the politics of race equality and anti-racism, and that this is a necessary perspective for tackling inequality and promoting equality; also that minority ethnic communities' and individuals' views, experiences and needs are not homogenous
- The need for institutions (e.g. schools, further and higher education, youth work organisations) to work in partnership with community activists to challenge racism

Example goals:

'Informal community action in minority ethnic communities is valued, has a higher profile and is better understood through data collection and community voice'

'(Focus on) assets – not deficit'

'Community action leads to better participation and representation, in order to impact public life from the ground up'

'Formal volunteering is more accessible for minority ethnic communities and individuals who want it'

'We have a strong, influential, representative, respected and well-resourced minority ethnic led voluntary sector'

Potential solutions:

- Build a comprehensive evidence base on informal community action, formal volunteering and barriers to participation including quantitative and qualitative research; use this for action to improve participation
- Invest in and value community engagement (covering expenses and accounting for barriers to enable participative democracy for all)
- Reflect on what we know and improve on current practice in community engagement
- Research to understand pathways from informal community action to greater participation and representation in political and decision making structures
- Improve outreach to minority ethnic communities by mainstream volunteering organisations
- Strengthen minority ethnic tenant participation and influence in the housing sector through the Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Government wide review of funding for the minority ethnic voluntary sector encompassing award criteria, management, scrutiny and evaluation with a representative structure (for example a steering group or advisory panel involving race equality specialists and community organisation representatives) to inform
- Map the existing infrastructure of the minority ethnic led voluntary sector, identify gaps we need to fill to have a varied, diverse and strong

sector which has effective ways of influencing policy and decision making processes through evidence and effective relationships

Arts, leisure and heritage

The discussion took a holistic view of what would be needed to create better participation and representation in arts, leisure and heritage for minority ethnic communities. This spanned a wide range of action, from the role of schools in educating and encouraging young people to activity in institutions to improve their approaches to promoting race equality through representation and participation in each area.

Issues raised included:

- Leadership regarding race equality in the arts, leisure and heritage sectors, and the need for institutions to develop accountable and transparent approaches to this (encouraging participation, taking action, monitoring and evaluating practice)
- The need to improve minority ethnic representation at senior or visible levels in these sectors, for example in coaching, managing and leading
- The role of schools in promoting participation in arts, leisure and heritage, and in encouraging minority ethnic young people to consider careers in these areas
- Improving Scotland's approach to reflecting Black History and the history of minority ethnic communities in Scotland throughout arts, culture and heritage, including within education and within the activities of public bodies responsible for these policy areas
- Understanding and recognising that history, particularly in relation to slavery (e.g. apology debates, reparations) and empire, is not simply about representation but also has continuing emotional and social impacts within communities
- Concerns that current strategic approaches in these sectors may not be effectively tackling barriers and the possibility that there may be structural resistance to this within individual institutions

Example goals:

'Accountability in what is being achieved on equality and diversity through funding (in these sectors)'

'Role models across leisure and creative industries in Scotland to highlight success without being overbearing'

'Making better connections and improving active participation (between minority ethnic communities / organisations and institutions involved in arts, leisure and heritage)'

'Owning up to our past as a society – greater transparency (on issues such as) slavery'

Potential solutions:

- Establishing a baseline to monitor progress on participation and representation in arts, leisure and heritage with five year reviews over the lifetime of the framework for race equality
- Making better use of data collection and research in these areas, for example through the Scottish Household Survey and Scottish Health Survey
- Focussed education and enhanced curriculum to reflect history / take ownership of Scotland's past

Next steps

This summary will be shared by email with the participants of 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 or wider work around developing a race equality framework for Scotland, please contact:

Carol Young
Senior Policy Officer
CRER

Email: carol@crer.org.uk

Appendix 1: List of organisations participating in workshop sessions

Active Life Club
African Caribbean Women's Association / African Caribbean Network
African Council
Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre
BEMIS / Gathered Together
CEMVO Scotland
Office of the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life
COSLA
Creative Scotland
CRER
Esar Consultants
Fife Migrants Forum
KWISA
National Union of Journalists
NUS Scotland
Queens Cross Housing Association
Scottish Government
Scottish Refugee Council
Scottish Youth Parliament
Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance
Sportscotland
STUC Black Workers Committee
University of Edinburgh
University of Strathclyde
Volunteer Scotland
Youthlink Scotland