

Local Authority Workforce Planning and Equality: Evidence Submission from the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights



The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) is a strategic anti-racism organisation which works to eliminate racial discrimination and promote racial justice across Scotland. Our primary concern in relation to the committee's budget scrutiny in light of workforce planning for local government is the significant underrepresentation of Black and minority ethnic (BME) employees and its effect on response to local needs.

Given our particular knowledge as a race equality organisation, we have focused our submission on one question posed by the committee: *How has the reduction in council workforces impacted the gender pay gap, living wage, and diversity of council workforces, and how might future budget allocations to local government impact on these areas.*

Overall, our overriding impression of BME workforce planning in local authorities is that it is seldom done and is rarely, if ever, effective.

Local Authority Workforce Data

BME groups are significantly underrepresented in local authorities, most notably in those areas which are most ethnically diverse. According to the 2017 reporting round for the Scottish Specific Public Sector Equality Duties:

| Council | BME Population ¹ | BME Employees (%) | White Employees (%) | Unknown Ethnicity (%) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Glasgow City Council | 11.6% | 2.2% | 72.0% | 25.8% |
| City of Edinburgh Council | 8.3% | 3.1% | Figure not reported | Figure not reported |
| Aberdeen City Council | 8.1% | 2.2% | 64.2% | 21.6% |
| Dundee City Council | 6.0% | 0.85% | 85.4% | 13.7% |
| East Renfrewshire Council | 5.9% | 1.2% | 80.0% | 17.2% |
| East Dunbartonshire Council | 4.2% | 2.0% | 45.6% | 57.9% |

The clearly emerging issues of this dataset are:

- In all of the local authorities with the largest BME population, BME groups are underrepresented in the council workforce by more than half.
- The most significant discrepancies occur in the councils with the highest BME population: Glasgow and Edinburgh. In Glasgow, BME individuals are underrepresented in the council workforce by 9.4% of the workforce, and in Edinburgh, by 5.2% of the workforce.
- Understanding the full picture of the ethnicity of council workforces is complicated by the high percentage of unknown ethnicities reported by councils. The ethnic background of a staggering

¹ Scottish Census 2011.

57.9% of East Dunbartonshire Council employees is unknown, with East Renfrewshire Council reporting 13.7%.

This trend remains the same in regards of BME teachers. According to Scottish Government's Teacher's Census 2016²:

| Education Authority | BME Population ³ | BME Teachers (%) | White Teachers (%) | Unknown Ethnicity (%) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Glasgow City Council | 11.6% | 3.4% | 83.2% | 13.4% |
| City of Edinburgh Council | 8.3% | 1.5% | 96.1% | 2.4% |
| Aberdeen City Council | 8.1% | 2.2% | 86.6% | 11.2% |
| Dundee City Council | 6.0% | 1.6% | 95.8% | 2.6% |
| East Renfrewshire Council | 5.9% | 1.5% | 96.1% | 2.3% |
| East Dunbartonshire Council | 4.2% | 1.4% | 96.1% | 2.5% |

In none of the six councils with a BME population over the Scottish average (4.0%) are BME teachers adequately represented; none of the councils even have a BME teacher rate equivalent to the Scottish average.

It is clear that local authorities have a pernicious problem in adequately representing BME groups in their workforces.

Recurring Workforce Issues

Evidence suggests that positive interaction between people from different ethnic backgrounds can help decrease prejudicial attitudes and build community cohesion; interactions can take place in neighbourhoods and communities, social and cultural arenas, and employment. Achieving integration in the workplace should be the most attainable, and yet we find that despite having markedly higher educational attainment (at school) and a higher participation rate in higher and further education, BME groups aged 25-49 have a significantly lower employment rate (55.2%) than their white counterparts (72.0%) and a higher unemployment rate (7.9% compared to 5.5%).⁴

While this is a Scotland-wide issue, local authorities are not exempt from the problem. 2011/12 data collected by CRER through Freedom of Information requests⁵ demonstrated that BME applicants for local authority jobs were nearly on par with the population – 3.8% compared to 4.0%. While 21.3% of white applicants were shortlisted, only 14.4% of BME applicants were. This discrepancy increased at the appointment stage, where it would be reasonable to assume that candidates who have been shortlisted have met the minimum requirements of the person specification for advertised post and thus do not lack the required experience or qualifications. While 31.3% of white British/Scottish and 51.0% of other white

² Scottish Government (2017). [Teachers Census 2016](#).

³ Scottish Census 2011.

⁴ Scottish Parliament Information Centre (2015). [Ethnicity and Employment](#).

⁵ Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (2015). [State of the Nation: Employment](#).

shortlisted applicants were appointed (averaging 31.9% for all white applicants), only 17.7% of BME applicants were. Overall, white applicants are almost three times more likely to be successful in securing a post than BME applicants – 6.1% compared to 2.1%.

The issue is not in upskilling BME communities. While newer migrants, regardless of ethnicity, may have issues relating to ESOL provision, recognition of overseas qualifications, or lack of UK-based work experience, this affects only a minority of people from BME communities in Scotland.⁶

Rather, existing recruitment and employment practices must be changed, as current methods are resulting in significant disparity for BME groups. Measures which would help improve BME employment rates include⁷:

- Having a BME person on the interview panel
- Setting public BME employment targets to which organisations are held to account
- Always openly recruiting (rather than utilising word of mouth or sub-contracting to employment agencies)
- Including a greater number of BME peoples within internship and work experience schemes
- Providing detailed feedback to applicants who are not selected for post
- (Re)-establishing BME employment forums

The Scottish Government's Race Equality Action Plan 2017-2021⁸ committed to using the data from the Public Sector Equality Duty reporting round to influence the dialogue with delivery agencies and other key stakeholders to map activities to improve employment and progression for BME communities, and to engaging a wide range of public sector employers in a discussion about what positive actions can be taken to improve employment and progression for BME groups.

Local Authority Planning

In relation to workforce planning in local councils, CRER asserts that a workforce which is not representative of the local population is not best placed to meet local needs. Local authorities should serve as exemplars of equality for local public, private, and third sector bodies, and currently they are falling far short of even adequacy in terms of BME employment.

From a public sector employment analysis conducted by CRER, we know that there is around a 10% turnover in staff, meaning that despite hiring freezes and reduction in council budgets, there is still room to enact change in terms of representation.

Despite knowledge of the underrepresentation of BME groups within their organisations, local authorities do not seem to be taking action to address this. Of the six local authorities with the highest BME population, none set an equality outcome within in the 2017 Scottish Specific Public Sector Equality Duties reports focused on BME employment. Two put forward outcomes aiming to recruit a more representative workforce and four did not address the diversity of their workforce at all. None produced action plans to improve diversity in their workforce.

⁶ Haria, Jatin (2018). No Problem Here: Understanding Racism in Scotland. 'Race, Ethnicity, and Employment in Scotland.'

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Scottish Government (2017). [Race Equality Action Plan 2017-2021](#).

If local authorities are not planning to take action to address this underrepresentation, how will change happen?

Conclusion

CRER would ask that the committee raise these issues with local authority representatives in their scrutiny of workforce planning for local government. We must ensure that the issue of equal representation for BME communities in local councils does not fall by the wayside in consideration of this matter, and must endeavour to better hold local authorities to account.

For further information on this issue, please contact:

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