

ALL PARTY GROUP ON ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Date: Tuesday 8 April 2014

Venue: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Time: 3.30 pm

In Attendance

Political representatives

Anna Lo (Alliance, Chair), Steven Agnew (Green, Vice-Chair), Danny Kinahan (UUP), David McIlveen (DUP), Colum Eastwood (SDLP), Chris Lyttle (Alliance) Caoimhe McElduff (Chris Lyttle's office)

BME sector representatives

Patrick Yu (NICEM-Secretariat), Elizabeth Nelson (NICEM-Secretariat), Mark Caffrey (NICEM), Paul McGlinchey (NICEM), Rafitz Khamis (Belfast Migrant Centre), James Holmlund (Bahai'i NI), Donna Kernaghan (Barnardo's NI), Nick Cassidy (Omagh Ethnic Community Support Group), Joan McGovern (Barnardo's Tuar Ceatha), Justin Kouame (NICRAS), Joseph Ricketts (ACSONI), Franklin Ho (CWA, Chinese Chamber of Commerce)

Apologies

Political representatives

BME sector representatives

Frances Wong (Oi Yin Women's Group), Phoebe Wong (Oi Yin Women's Group), Bobby Rao (Strabane Ethnic Community Association), Eddis Nicholl (NICRAS/NICEM), Maria Lourenco (World Wide Women @ North Down), Kristyene Boreland (World Wide Women @ North Down)

The Chair opened by sending the APG's condolences to Margaret Donaghy's friends and families as she passed a few weeks ago. She worked with the One Stop Shop project at

1. Racial Equality Strategy briefing at OFMDFM Committee

Chair explained that Chris Lyttle was acting Chair during the briefing and there were issues that arose during the meeting. Some dissatisfaction regarding some of the comments made by the officials [referred to page 8]. Chair suggested some of the comments were perhaps unintended as stated.

- Chair asked for input from Members. David McIlveen stated he wasn't there and couldn't speak to context. Colum Eastwood suggested comments weren't intended

negatively. Danny Kinahan suggested the important issues were on the lightness of the content of the Racial Equality Strategy.

- CE suggested the issues are bigger and are more around responses to come to the OFMDFM Committee and delays and things falling through the cracks. Wide remit. Chair agreed that it's taking far too long. Need to press them to produce draft strategy.

- DK asked if APG should be writing to COFMDFM regarding our concerns with the RES

- Patrick Yu suggested there may be some issues around the concept of integration as currently laid out. Chair suggested that without seeing the draft strategy it was difficult to comment. PY suggested there were also issues with the substantive answers given to certain questions asked at the Committee meeting.

- Chair mentioned there are some concerns over a lack of evidence base in the draft RES and lack of mention of key pieces of research. PY explained that a chapter of evidence was removed from the draft and at a recent Racial Equality Panel was agreed to put it back.

- DK asked whether there was an issue of under-resourcing. CE suggested writing to OFMDFM to find out. DMcI explained that this is something that the official has been working on for some time. Question should be around the confidence regarding how long the RES has been delayed – do we have confidence in official to deliver this. Should perhaps get the official to the APG at a later stage.

- CE stated that the issue is bigger than one person; responsibility of the Department, and the Department needs to focus on delivering this Strategy. Commitment made by the Ministers to deliver this.

- Chair need to push for it to see the light of day ASAP, and will comment on content when we see. Chair suggested writing a letter to the Committee to ask for reasons for the delay and when we will see it.

- DMcII reiterated that sometimes difficult to get exact sentiments across in Committee meeting. Suggested that particular session not indicative of entire debate; focus on getting to the next stage.

- PY there was a suggestion that the APG organize a Roundtable or stakeholder event on the Racial Equality Strategy; Chair reiterated it should be after the RES consultation goes live. DMcII suggested possibility of BME representatives and officials going before the Committee at the same time. May be some merit in Chair writing to clerk of OFMDFM Committee regarding a joint evidence session; there is a precedent for this.

- Chair - external stakeholders granted speaking rights at Environment Committee. Suggestion that APG stakeholders give evidence to OFMDFM Committee

- PY discussed the format of the APG roundtable on the RES to include representation from NIHRC and ECNI

- Justin Kouame (NICRAS) – question over neglect of evidence base on racial inequalities in the RES. Critical issues faced by BME communities not reflected in official's comments to the OFMDFM Committee which focused unduly on language barriers and occupational segregation (i.e. should have cited high visibility, priority issues such as racist hate crime). No reference to BME led groups (e.g. ACSONI, NICRAS in the evidence session)

- OFMDFM needs to release RES for public consultation as a key priority
- DK suggested a cross-departmental initiative also important to speak to health and other departments; rolling mechanism of targeting every issue that needs to be dealt with.
- Joan McGovern suggested there is a lack of knowledge within many Departments despite best efforts of those in the sector; not always a priority for them; Chair agreed.
- Chair reiterated writing to the Committee **APG**

2. Approval of the minutes of the last meeting - Approved

3. Matters arising

a. Immigration Bill

Elizabeth Nelson (NICEM-Secretariat) explained the actions taken by the APG since the last meeting, including writing to NI Peers on the Immigration Bill, had had an impact. There was a direct response to the letter from Lord Eames who supported all the amendments we suggested. Some changes have been made in the Lords though the Bill is still unfortunately very negative toward migrants. However it shows the effect the APG can have when getting involved in this way.

4. APG Terms of Reference

- Chair drew attention to Terms of Reference which had been sent to Paul Gill in the Standards and Privileges Office, to deal with any outstanding issues around memberships. Reiterates that membership of the APG are MLAs, and invitees are groups and individuals representing ethnic minority communities or working with ethnic minority communities; receive information and can attend meetings. There is a line which indicates MLAs that want to invite a group that is not currently attending they are able to do that. Paul McGlinchey (NICEM) pointed out that the Race Forum has been replaced by the Race Panel; wording would be amended to reflect this.
- DK asked if there was something that could be reflected to provide more structure around liaising with the OFMDFM Committee; ‘mechanism to liaise with OFMDFM Committee on racial issues.’
- ToR subsequently approved

5. Believe in Childcare? Presentation on research by NICEM and Barnardo’s NI (Dr. Donna Kernaghan and Mark Caffrey)

Dr. Donna Kernaghan

- Thanks for having us; Intend to outline key findings; childcare needs of BME in Southern Trust area
- Survey with 308 participants; thanks to NICEM expertise survey translated into 10 different languages. Issues arising in quantitative survey were followed up in focus groups with adults and children.
- Polish cohort largest, followed by Lithuanian; wide range of backgrounds

- 610 children involved
- Over half participants didn't have family in NI who could look after children for them. Information, accessibility, financial (vouchers, working tax credits, flexible working hours) Working parents, childcare arrangements, access to info will be highlighted here
- Majority came from food service and manufacturing and worked traditional hours. However 28% worked different shift patterns (significant number); 1/5 worked evenings and weekends
 - o Shift work patterns very difficult to arrange childcare outside of normal hours. Particularly difficult if partner also worked shifts or were single parents
 - o Zero-hours contracts and opportunity to work at short notice problematic; couldn't taken on additional hours if given opportunity. Also issue for wider population but particularly because of sectors BME individuals work in
 - o Emergencies and illnesses; short notice childcare difficult without family to fall back on; people sometimes felt they had to return to work more quickly than they were able to
- No easy solution; parents aware that other parents face these issues, but lack of family network in this situation particularly difficult
- 68% used some form of informal/formal childcare; 1/3 didn't use any and tended not to be employed; also issue in terms of childcare being barrier to employment
 - o Friends, then family members largest area of childcare (informal)
- Barriers to formal childcare: lack of knowledge, awareness on where to access.
 - o Cost came up as issue in every focus group; issue for every community
 - o Rural childcare places and availability also an issue
 - o Specific issues for BME parents include information around types, providers, costs, how to get children there, etc.
 - o Language barrier for some, but for some just lack of information
 - o Mistrust; not happy with idea of leaving children with people they didn't know (re: accessing formal childcare)
 - o Formal childcare doesn't suit needs when on shift patterns or zero-hour contracts
 - o Could see benefits of accessing formal childcare for children; providing social interaction and help with language, learning development, independence, preparation for school
 - o Children enthusiastic; enjoyed being with friends, fun, etc
- Access to information
 - o Often knew what they wanted to ask but didn't know who to ask. Websites translated through Google don't provide opportunity to ask specific questions; doesn't meet needs
 - o Tend to get information from friends, doctor's surgeries, local community groups, SureStart – all face-to-face contact methods

- Didn't get info from websites and Job Centres; important to feed this into Bright Start Strategy; not just a case of translating a leaflet because that's not where they get their information
- Welfare and benefits
 - 20% had requested flexible working hours; 10% said would be afraid to ask employer for flexible hours which is working; many also unaware of possibility
 - 37% weren't aware of eligibility for free childcare place
 - 70% unaware of childcare vouchers
- Recommendations set out on back of the briefing paper; focusing on cost, availability, infrastructure and solution to atypical working hours – not just BME but different economy with people working longer and childcare hasn't caught up; accountability and transparency; raise awareness of rights and benefits among BME parents
- Southern Trust agreed to develop action plan based on last recommendation. We have also met with OFMDFM as well on Bright Start
- Chair thanked Donna; issues are still the same one as women faced many years ago; haven't got structure. Need to raise awareness as well but need structure to do so. Many newcomers don't think to ask because same systems don't exist in home country. Asked if it would be disseminated through Boards and Trusts. DKern replied that they are working to do so with NICEM; working to feed into childcare strategy. Chair asked if Trust is willing to work with them; DKern replied they are.
- Mark Caffrey explained work is ongoing to disseminated findings of the report. Working closely with parents. Also feeding issues into the BME Parliament on childcare issues; workshop held in Craigavon and 3 questions and 3 supplementary questions will be asked by BME parents at the BME Parliament on 30 April; highlight issues from recommendations and report. Will continue to work with parents
- Chair asked if there are potentials to work with BME communities to form cooperatives or social economy model to share childcare. PY explained they are looking at that potential; also want to fit into Bright Start as there are resources available there to possibility develop those social enterprise opportunities; incorporating training. Must reiterate not just a Southern Trust issue; will seek to present to other Trusts on these issues. Important issues around shift work, etc in meat processing industries, etc. Zero-contracts still a big issue; agency worker issue as well. Shift work is a problem for many communities.
- Chair reiterated that lack of extended family network to rely on is a problem
- Steven Agnew asked if research looked at research from Employers for Childcare to try and distinguish between general issues and specific BME issues; for example around extended family networks. DKern replied that parents in the study tended to use informal childcare more than general population (30% compared to 15%); area for further research; SA agreed and also raised question of whether it's positive or negative. DKern

continued that early mornings and late evenings can be the problems for those without extended family networks. SA stated it's surprising someone hasn't identified a gap for develop childcare services in those atypical hours. Chair stated there had been some work done to try and recruit workers for those childcare hours but the cost is prohibitive.

Chair thanked the presenters.

- Chair returned to Racial Equality Strategy issues as Chris Lyttle had joined the meeting. Gave overview of conversation of APG and decision to focus on content of APG and timeline as well as writing to Committee; concern over lack of content in Racial Equality Strategy.

- Chris Lyttle apologized for lateness. Stated that evidence session at COFMDFM alerted him to the considerable amount of work to be done by the Department to - progress it to a level acceptable to MLAs and the APG. Highlighted questions raised by Committee members; particularly regarding lack of use of Joseph Rowntree Foundation research on poverty and ethnicity, and whether Department was using that research to further their own knowledge; not a detailed response to this. Fairly intensive questioning from Committee on this occasion. Hope this demonstrated to officials leading on RES that Committee has not done work up to the standard expected. Lead official did make commitments about being open to robust consultation; however would suggest that there may be too much reliance on consultation. Suggest to APG that a Roundtable to fully develop these issues, inviting Department and perhaps others outside to discuss and officials to listen. Clear that if we don't take a lead in driving strategy forward the content may fall short of what we require. Last RES ran out in 2010; recent issues in relation to racial equality and anti-discrimination show this is a key priority.

- Chair suggested it might perhaps be for Committee to hold Stakeholder event. CL stated that timeline for release given at Committee suggested 1 April; no confirmation on date of commencement at this stage. Any event that could contribute to consultation process may be beneficial; open to make proposals at APG or at Committee. Need to be proactive on influencing content of RES. Happy to take views of APG on this. There was a discussion on what a consultation event might look like and who would have responsibility, and when.

- Chair suggested next meeting of APG after publication of RES could devote itself to examining the draft RES.

- PY explained that for the previous RES many consultations were run by community groups in the sector and the Department may be relying on this again. Need to ensure the final RES is strong. Would it be possible for Committee to take evidence from community groups, etc, as an option. Suggest it's also important for APG take the lead and support Roundtable that would include the sector, Commissions, Department, etc. Suggest as well possibility of sponsoring motion debate on the issues.

- Chair suggested that many MLAs would not have the knowledge of racial issues and therefore motion debate may not be effective. CL agreed and reiterated that an engagement event may be most appropriate to explore issues and content; suggest

perhaps pursue a motion after solid engagement, on cross-party basis in order to get support and raise awareness amongst MLAs. There was a discussion on this.

- PY raised issue of report on inequalities that could be useful for MLAs in terms of knowledge. A lot of research done over last ten years to fill the gap.

- CL suggested a high-profile Assembly debate could be helpful to raise awareness of this issue.

- DK reiterated potential of appearing before Committees to enhance knowledge of issues; rolling basis.

AOB

Justin Kouame highlighted issues around racist attacks from NICRAS point of view; areas where refugees are being placed are being subject to attacks, and are still being used by authorities to use. APG agreed this is a vital issue and must be addressed. Racist attacks are increasing. The issue of the posters on jobs was also raised. There was discussion on these issues.