

There was concern in Inverness about creating enemies of government officials. An example was nervousness about the danger of being too assertive in making demands for a multi-cultural centre. There was also concern about reprisals. One example was of a planning application which was approved by appealing to the Scottish Government, but the conditions imposed by the local authority were felt to be excessive in retaliation for appealing.

The consensus in Dumfrieshire was that there is no consideration being given to new communities who are now living in the region. They are not considered as locals till they have stayed for a minimum of three years.

In conclusion, there was a sense that individual members of diverse ethnic minority communities had to accept on occasion what were perceived to be inadequate services and in some cases discriminatory provision of services, that it was a waste of time complaining about anything as no action would be taken.

For access the full report, please check the following link to BEMIS website:  
[http://www.bemis.org.uk/documents/Report\\_Consultation\\_final\\_000.pdf](http://www.bemis.org.uk/documents/Report_Consultation_final_000.pdf)

### Background to equal opportunities in the Scottish Parliament

The Consultative Steering Group (CSG), which was set up by the Secretary of State for Scotland in November 1997 to bring together views on and consider the operational needs and working methods of the Scottish Parliament, adopted four key principles to guide its work. One of these key principles was that:

**“the Scottish Parliament in its operation and its appointments should recognise the need to promote equal opportunities for all.”**

Following the CSG’s report, Standing Orders (the rules of the Parliament) state that an Equal Opportunities Committee must be put in place by each Parliament.

### Remit of the Equal Opportunities Committee

The remit of the Equal Opportunities Committee, as laid out in Standing Orders, is to consider and report on:

**matters relating to equal opportunities; and the observance of equal opportunities within the Scottish Parliament.**

**The Committee, therefore, has both an external and internal focus in its work.**

The definition of equal opportunities used by the Committee is contained in Schedule 5 of the Scotland Act 1998 and the scope of this definition is much wider than the six equality strands for which there is currently anti-discrimination legislation in place.

### The Committee’s work

#### External focus

The main role of the Committee is to investigate equal opportunities issues in Scotland and the Committee does this in three main ways:

#### 1. Inquiries

The Committee can carry out inquiries into topics that fall within its remit. For example, in the first session of the Parliament (1999-2003) the Committee examined the experiences of Scotland’s Gypsy/Travellers in accessing public services. In the second session (2003 - 2007), the Committee carried out a review of whether action was being taken to meet the recommendations it made in its report of the inquiry.

Also in the second session, the Committee carried out a major inquiry into the barriers faced by disabled people in accessing work, further and higher education and leisure services. It also reviewed equality in Scotland since the establishment of the Scottish Parliament and, as part of that review, held a consultation event in the Parliament’s chamber with interested parties from across Scotland and across equality strands.

In the current session of the Scottish Parliament, the Committee has decided to question the Scottish Government on how it is implementing the recommendations the Committee made in its disability inquiry report.

#### 2. Scrutinising the work of the Scottish Government

The Committee examines the work of the Scottish Government, including any legislation (although this is rare as equal opportunities legislation is reserved to the UK Parliament).

The Committee also investigates the Scottish Government’s equal opportunities policies, such as its approach to race equality, and considers other activities and policies from an equal opportunities perspective, including the Scottish Government’s Budget.

#### 3. Reporter system

The Committee operates a reporter system whereby six members of the Committee each take responsibility for a specific equality strand, liaise with relevant stakeholders and ensure that issues relevant to those stakeholders are brought to the Committee’s attention as appropriate.

#### Internal focus

The Committee’s other role is the observance of equal opportunities within the Scottish Parliament and the Committee does this, for example, by examining the work of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body both as an employer and as a service provider. This includes investigating how the Parliament complies with the public sector duties.

The Committee has also carried out an inquiry into mainstreaming equal opportunities in the work of the Parliament’s committees and encourages all committees to include equal opportunities considerations in their work.

#### Key benefits

The Scottish Parliament’s Equal Opportunities Committee works hard to ensure that it is accessible to communities, organisations and individuals across Scotland. The Committee achieves its high level of accessibility partly through its willingness to travel throughout the country to meet people as well as inviting them to come to the Parliament in Edinburgh. Having dedicated reporters for each of the key equality strands provides an additional level of accessibility.

A great deal of the Committee’s work involves listening to individuals, groups and communities and bringing the issues they raise to the attention of the Scottish Government and any other relevant organisations. In its selection of witnesses, the Committee endeavours to be as representative as possible of the different communities who live and work in Scotland. In this way, the Committee helps people across Scotland to make their voices heard by Scotland’s decision makers. For example, when it carried out its disability inquiry, the Committee made sure that it consulted with disabled people from across Scotland about what the Committee’s remit should be.

Through its encouragement of mainstreaming, the Committee also continues to work towards embedding equality principles in the work of all of the Parliament’s committees.

# Black and Ethnic Minorities Infrastructure in Scotland

# bemis update

June 08 ISSUE

PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY IN SCOTLAND

## BEMIS : A sector leading organisation

In July 2007, the Scottish Government (SG) commissioned HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) to undertake a review of Black and Ethnic Minorities Infrastructure in Scotland (BEMIS). HMIE and SG agreed the quality and performance indicators to be used in the review from the framework of indicators within the HMIE publication How Good Is Our Community Learning and Development?2 (HGIOCLD?2). Report Published on 18th December 2007.

### OUTLINE summary of the Review:

BEMIS is the national Ethnic Minorities led umbrella body supporting the development of the Ethnic Minorities Voluntary Sector in Scotland. BEMIS was established in 2002 to promote the interest of minority ethnic voluntary organisations, develop capacity and support inclusion and integration of ethnic minorities communities. It is a member-led and managed organisation with an elected board of directors.

The major aims and objectives of BEMIS are to represent and support the development of the ethnic minority voluntary sector across Scotland, and, to support the diverse communities and individuals that this sector represents, especially those who are under-represented and disadvantaged. BEMIS aims to address inequalities by empowering communities, working towards an inclusive society by establishing structures which recognise diversity and empowers ethnic minorities, and ensuring that ethnic minorities are fully recognised and supported as a valued part of civic society and a multicultural Scotland.

### Key aims and objectives:

- To strengthen the capacity of the ethnic minorities voluntary sector.
- Raise the profile of the ethnic minorities voluntary sector and its needs at strategic, local and national levels.
- Have a coordinating role for the voice of the ethnic minorities voluntary sector, ensuring pertinent issues are raised with the relevant bodies.
- To take a lead on policy issues and debate which are of concern to minority ethnic communities at both local and national levels.
- Work in partnership with all stakeholders and the diverse black and minority ethnic (BME) communities in support of equality and a multicultural Scotland.

BEMIS is the only black led national umbrella and intermediary body representing and supporting the development of the black and ethnic minorities voluntary sector across Scotland, and supporting the diverse communities and individuals that this sector represents especially those under-represented and disadvantaged.

BEMIS recognises that we work in a context of inequality. It aims to redress these inequalities by empowering communities. BEMIS works towards an inclusive society by establishing structures that recognise and promote diversity and empowers the black and ethnic minorities communities and sector across Scotland.



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SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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## Key strengths

The review of BEMIS identified the following as some of the key strengths:

- a highly committed board of directors who brought with them a good range of professional skills and a clear understanding of their responsibilities;
- managers and staff were highly committed and motivated; the organisation had been successful in uniting a diverse range of stakeholders;
- BEMIS was highly valued by stakeholders and was making a positive impact on individuals, organisations and communities;
- strong commitment to inclusion and diversity; and strong commitment to ensuring grass roots organisations have a voice rather than acting as a spokesperson for EM communities.

## The following reflects some comments made by HMIE in their review:

A sector leading organisation/ excellent rating.

BEMIS made a significant difference in local communities and to the organisations it supported. 93.6 % of questionnaire respondents rated the overall service provided by BEMIS as good to excellent

Active involvement in research work with other organisations ...'which'.. enhanced understanding and removed barriers to BME involvement in local and national democracy

Organisational efficiency and effectiveness for stakeholder organisations had been improved

BEMIS gives grass roots a voice rather than acting as mouthpiece for EM communities

BEMIS had been instrumental in securing a significant increase in the EM responses to consultation processes making effective use of its network both nationally and across a diverse range of ethnic communities/

BEMIS was making a positive contribution to policy development and had been instrumental in ensuring ..'engagement'.. directly with BME organisations/

BEMIS had a strong track record of consulting its target communities, identifying needs and responding quickly with programmes and projects.

Their commitment to capacity building ensured that local projects were self sustaining and no longer required significant support from BEMIS staff

The comprehensive range of accredited training opportunities offered including a BA in community regeneration and HNC working in communities ensured EM people in local communities had the skills to better engage with local structures and partnerships

Managers and staff at BEMIS were highly motivated, energetic and committed to the purpose of their work. They worked very effectively as a team, providing high levels of mutual support.

The very strong commitment of BEMIS to diversity and inclusion was reflected in its diverse membership. Participants in the professional development courses came from a range of ethnic backgrounds

The organisation had made very good efforts to target specific communities with its work, and to involve them in its management

the organisation was not fully capitalising on its excellent work. It should develop better means to communicate and celebrate its successes so as to raise its profile.

There is a strong commitment at both board and staff level to ensure that the diverse voluntary sector and communities this sector represents are fully recognised and supported as a valued part of civic society and a multicultural Scotland

To see the full report; check the following link:

<http://www.bemis.org.uk/HMIE%20Report.pdf>

## SUPPORTING REPRESENTATION FROM EM VOLUNTARY SECTOR GROUPS AT THE GATHERING:

### The Gathering – Scotland's voluntary sector fair 19-20 June 2008, SECC, Glasgow

Black and Ethnic minority Infrastructure in Scotland (BEMIS) is working to ensure representation of EM groups at this year's Gathering event.

We are able now to invite EM groups to take part in the Gathering and have free stalls promoting their projects at this important event. Stalls costs will be paid for by BEMIS, but there are limited places and priority would be given to under-represented and under-funded projects.

The countdown to this year's Gathering has begun and Scotland's voluntary sector will come together again to learn, exchange ideas and also hopefully have some fun.

With around 160 exhibitors, 60 events taking place, stress busting sessions, music, entertainment and interactive sessions.

This year's event starts on June 19th for two days and will run concurrently with the CIVICUS World Assembly – one of the world's largest civil society events. The venue will be the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre and already black and ethnic minority zone (enabled by BEMIS) are starting to fill up and exhibition space is at a premium.

If your group is interested, please email us [mail@bemis.org.uk](mailto:mail@bemis.org.uk) or Tel 0141 548 8047.

## CONSULTATION WITH DIVERSE ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH OF SCOTLAND

### INTRODUCTION

Since 2001 BEMIS (Black and Ethnic Minorities Infrastructure in Scotland) has been addressing the under-representation of diverse Ethnic Minority Communities in rural Scotland in terms of decision-making forums at local and central government levels. It staff have been supporting the development of rural Ethnic Minority groups. These groups are now demanding greater involvement in service planning both in relation to services and support.

To this end BEMIS has initiated a consultation with members of these communities within the north and south of Scotland on:-

- perceptions of services
- service needs
- Attitudes to engagement in service planning.

### Approach to Consultation Process

Members of ethnic minority groups including members of the polish and other East European communities now living in Inverness and adjacent areas were invited to take part in a focus group in October 2007. This was followed by a second focus group in December 2007 for ethnic minority groups in Dumfries for local diverse ethnic minority communities in Dumfreisshire.

The focus group in Inverness was facilitated by an external consultant and the Director of National Development, coordinated by the Rural Development Officer, and involved the National BME Community Health Development Officer (REACH Community Health Project). The focus group in Dumfries was facilitated by the Director of National Development.

Both focus groups explored the following themes:

- Mapping of services which BME communities wish to engage with
- Mapping of their individual or group representation on service involvement or planning forums
- Ranking of services in terms of perceived quality
- Proposals for services that BME communities in Inverness wish to engage with.

### Profile of participants

The focus groups were attended by a cross-section of workers and volunteers with varying cultural and religious backgrounds.

#### Dumfreisshire

Most were community activists working on a voluntary basis providing support such as advocacy and interpreting e.g. by accompanying people to solicitors (committee chair, volunteer, members of Dumfries and Galloway International Women's group) or were employees of voluntary organisations (development officer, polish interpreter, youth worker).

#### Highlands

The majority were aged between 35 and 55 year olds - two retired and one under 35. All had been over 5 years in the UK and spoke English fluently. Occupations varied from taxi drivers, men in the catering industry, a private care home owner, adult education tutor, and unemployed women including a doctor taking time out to care for children. They were involved in delivering on a voluntary basis a range of services such as: Islamic education, Arabic and languages for young people, ladies educational and social activities, information services, as well as organising festivals, musical and fundraising events.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Participants were invited to identify the main services which were important to them and in which they would like to have a say in terms of design of services. Health (community and hospital based services), Education, Housing and Prison Services, were the top four service areas in both the Highlands and Dumfreisshire. Planning, Environmental Health, the Police, Transport and Employment services were also identified. The lack of interpreting provision, cultural awareness, and responses to racist incidents, were seen as evidence that these services were not addressing the needs of diverse ethnic communities resident in rural areas of Scotland.

There was evidence of frustration in terms of getting criticisms addressed and perceived lack of opportunities to engage in service decision-making. Except for one participant who was a local employer and had been previously active in local government none had direct experience of input to service delivery planning forums such as community planning, tenants associations. One reason given for this was lack of information –

*"This is the first time (in relation to NHS Highland consultation on diabetes services) we received information. Whether its education or anything we get very little information from the council. I'm not aware of any one being on the school board or PTA."*

While all of the participants were involved in some way or other in different voluntary organisations and activities these were closely linked to their specific cultural and religious communities or to international groupings. There was no overlap between these groupings and formal representational structures.

As a result some participants were confused about which services were run by which agencies, such as the differences between Holyrood and Westminster, and also split responsibilities between transport providers and local government transport planners. This added to the challenge of getting engaged in service planning debates.

Participants were asked to identify what would help them as individuals to engage in service planning. They highlighted specific information needs which they had and without which they were not in a position to begin to engage with service planners around service improvements.

- "We don't know where to go for support if we want to raise a concern about a particular service.
- We don't know what authorities can do - What actions are they able to take and what are their responsibilities in relation to other agencies?
- We don't know what can be done about specific problems – What are the options open to those planning and delivering services?"

A key service improvement addressed was in relation to tackling racial incidents within and out with schools. Participants felt it was the responsibility of education authorities including teachers to say what behavior was unacceptable and to demonstrate by example. Another example was the response by Police in Inverness to racist letters which were not acted on because the threatened action hadn't happened.

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## Islamic Group Leading the Way

The Scottish-Islamic Foundation has been in development for over a year and we are really excited to have now launched.

We believe this marks an exciting new civic engagement for Scottish Muslims. The drivers behind Foundation are younger Muslims who have been involved in Islamic activities for a few years now and the organisation is a natural culmination of that.

Our view is that it is possible to be progressive in the Islamic faith without having to discard our essential teachings. Indeed, basic tenets of democracy for example, are to be found within the practices of the early Muslims 1400 years ago. Our aims therefore are rooted firmly within the Islamic tradition, but which may surprise some:

1. Freedom
2. Respect
3. Education
4. Families
5. Justice

Even before our launch we have completed a body of work towards these goals. A key priority for us is the development of young people. Our Muslim Leadership Training programme has already organised two residential and two day-events, all of which have been oversubscribed. These programmes teach the participants how to be good Muslims and good citizens, and in fact that the former demands the latter.

We hope to bring flair and creativity to the Islamic scene. For example, after the festival of Eid-ul-Adha, we arranged for meat to be distributed amongst Glasgow's homeless people and refugee community rather than just focus on sending the money abroad as is the norm.

The Foundation's members were responsible for organising the demonstration against the Glasgow Airport attack one week after the atrocity took place. The George Square event was we believe the first of its kind organised by Muslims anywhere in the world.

BEMIS have been of invaluable help in getting us set up, and we are extremely grateful for how their chief executive and the team have gone above and beyond the call of duty with advice, contacts and support.

We believe firmly in the importance in partnership working, and would also extend this to our fellow BEMIS members. If we can ever be of assistance to you, please do not hesitate to pick up the phone or pop us an email.

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### SIF's aims

Our aims are come under the following five categories, which all have strong roots within the Islamic tradition:

1. **Freedom**
  - Promote human rights and civil liberties
  - Support freedom of expression and religious practice
  - Advocate a just foreign policy that helps create and maintain freedom and democracy
2. **Protection of life & respect of people**
  - Facilitate understanding, cohesion and dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims
  - Promote peace
  - Tackle all forms of discrimination and abuse with particular attention to religion, race, and gender
  - Improve health
  - Protect the environment
3. **Education**
  - Empower Muslims, particularly young Muslims, in civic participation and their contribution to Scotland
  - Support the practice of Islam as something that deepens citizenship
  - Promote the gaining of knowledge and creativity in all fields, improving educational attainment
  - Clarify and explain Islamic beliefs and way of life
4. **Strong families and communities**
  - Support Muslim families in the issues that face them, including marriage and parenting
  - Build capacity among Muslim community organisations and institutions
5. **Justice**
  - Tackle poverty
  - Support equality of opportunity
  - Promote Islamic and just financial models

Our work on the above is channelled through six working groups:

1. Public Affairs
2. Media & Marketing
3. Muslim Leadership Training
4. Youth
5. Dialogue
6. Fundraising

## Glasgow Works BME Sub-Group

### Glasgow Works BME Sub-Group

In Scotland, Glasgow has the largest ethnic minority population. It is seen as a key area where action can be taken as the majority of Scotland's black and ethnic minority population lives in Glasgow. For this reason, since June 2007, the Scottish Government has been working with the Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) sub-group of Glasgow Works, the Glasgow City Strategy Consortium, to agree a strategy for engaging, recruiting and progressing ethnic minorities in the labour market.

A range of strategic BME and mainstream agencies are represented on the sub-group. These include Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland (BEMIS), Careers Scotland, Glasgow Anti Racist alliance (GARA), Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Community Planning Ltd, Jobcentre Plus, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, Scottish Enterprise and the Scottish Government. The BME sub-group had been action focused and not research orientated. However, by learning from various previous research reports on race and employment, it formulated a way forward that, in its view, will bring about a change for BMEs. The sub-group has now agreed an action plan around engagement and progression. It will work with other Glasgow Works sub-groups on employer engagement and progression/retention of ethnic minorities once in the workplace.

## Funding

### Community Food and Health Small Grant Scheme 2008

Groups or agencies working with low-income groups in Scotland are welcome to apply for between £500 and £3000 to tackle one or more of the barriers to healthy eating that many people face on low income experience. Last year 56 applications were successful out of the total of 210 and a total of just over £90,000 was given out.

To find out more about the small grant scheme call Kim Newstead on 0141 226 5261 or email [cfh@scotconsumer.org.uk](mailto:cfh@scotconsumer.org.uk). Alternatively you can download an application pack from [www.communityfoodhealth.org.uk](http://www.communityfoodhealth.org.uk).

The closing date for applications is Friday 27 June at 5pm

### Heritage Lottery Fund Procurement

The Heritage Lottery Fund distribute money raised by the United Kingdom's Lottery to projects which conserve our diverse heritage

## Partnership in Equality

Engender in partnership with BEMIS (with Funding from EHRC) will be setting up a 'Women Thinking Equality Group' for women to develop their understanding of the different discrimination and injustices people face in Scotland, and how these forms of discrimination overlap and interlink.

We would like to form a pro active group to have your input into the experiences, and implications for individuals and Scotland's social, political and economic development due to discrimination injustices. In addition, we would like to have your input into how and what can be done to change in order to support an equal multicultural Scotland and quality of equality for all.

We are keen to work with a group of 20 women of diverse backgrounds and status to seek input from their perspectives

The action plan outlines key steps as to how better partnership working between mainstream and specialist BME organisations can take place as well as developing and implementing positive action schemes. The action plan has a particular focus on women and young people from a BME background as they have low economic activity rates.

Now that the action plan moves towards implementation, the BME sub-group will have a monitoring as well as a supporting role to ensure actions are delivered. As part of that process, the BME sub-group has mechanisms in place to engage with and build on experience of delivery organisations involved in helping BME clients.

To help with the implementation of the action plan, the Scottish Government is providing Glasgow Works with funding for a BME Policy Manager post. This presents the Scottish Government with an opportunity to learn what works and how this can be taken forward in future policy developments.

If you would like further information on the work of the Glasgow Works BME sub-group then please contact Naem Bhatti in the Scottish Government on 0141 242 5899 or by email at [Naem.bhatti@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Naem.bhatti@scotland.gsi.gov.uk).

and help people engage with it. Their definition of heritage includes historic buildings and townscapes; archaeology; museums and rural traditions and community heritage.

Organisations and individuals are invited to formally express their interest by replying to the OJEU notices which can be found on the tenders Electronic Database at [www.ted.europa.eu](http://www.ted.europa.eu) by searching all current notices using "Heritage Lottery Fund".

### Volunteering Scotland Grants Scheme

For projects creating high quality volunteering opportunities involving new volunteers from disadvantaged groups who need additional support to become involved. Small grants of up to £5000 are available to organisations with few, if any paid staff.

Apply at any time at "<http://www.voluntaryactionfund.org.uk>" [www.voluntaryactionfund.org.uk](http://www.voluntaryactionfund.org.uk) or call 01383 620 780

