

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY COMMITTEE**MINUTES****Date:** 16 January 2003**Time:** 9.30 am**Venue:** Committee Rooms 3 and 4, National Assembly Building**Attendance:**

Members	Ann Jones (Chair)	Vale of Clwyd
	David Melding	South Wales Central
	Lorraine Barrett	Cardiff South and Penarth
	Eleanor Burnham	North Wales
	Carwyn Jones	Bridgend
	Helen Mary Jones	Llanelli
	Huw Lewis	Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney
	Val Lloyd	Swansea East
	Owen John Thomas	South Wales Central
Officials	Peter Gregory	Personnel & Accommodation Services Group
	Nigel Carter	Equality Policy Unit
	Christine Morgan	Equality Policy Unit
Standing Invitees	Alun Thomas	Disability Rights Commission (DRC)
	Kate Bennett	Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)
	Derek Walker	LGB Forum Cymru
Invitees	Rashpal Kaur Singh	A T Kearney Consultants
	Anne Crowley	SCF UK
	Anne Crowley accompanied a group of young people from the Gypsy and Traveller community and their support workers (Item 6).	
	Christine Morgan of the Equality Policy Unit accompanied a group of young people with disabilities (Item 7)	
Secretariat	Claire Bennett	Committee Clerk
	Lara Date	Deputy Committee Clerk

9.30 - 9.32 am

Item 1

Introduction, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Janet Ryder AM, Peter Rogers AM and Dharmendra Kanani of the Commission for Racial Equality. Alun Thomas was representing Will Bee from the Disability Rights Commission

9.32 - 9.36 am

Item 2

Minister's Report

Paper: EOC-01-03(p1)

1. There were no oral additions to the Minister's written report.
2. It was noted that members of the 'right to vote' campaign had written to the Minister for Open Government requesting a meeting to look at ways to encourage members of the black and minority ethnic community to vote. The Minister had replied to their letter and would inform the committee of future developments.
3. It was noted that the creation of a Single Equality Body would dramatically change the way the equality agenda was advanced, and that the Health and Social Services Committee on one occasion had taken evidence from key people before making its formal response to a consultation. The Committee agreed to consider making a formal response to the consultation in question.

Action point

- A paper on the Single Equality Body would be prepared for the February meeting.

9.36 – 10.05

Item 3

Implementing the recommendations of 'An Absolute Duty'

Paper: EOC-01-03(p2) – Implementation of 'An Absolute Duty'

1. The committee acknowledged that Professor Teresa Rees, who had been instrumental in the production of 'An Absolute Duty', had been awarded Commander of the Order of the British Empire in the New Year's Honours list, for her services to higher education and to equal opportunities. A letter of congratulations had been sent to Professor Rees on the well-deserved honour.
2. The committee considered the proposed implementation of each recommendation. The main points were:
 - Rec.1 and 2: The statutory equality duty was one of the good things about the Welsh Assembly model of devolution and should be shared with the UK Parliament and Scottish and Northern Irish devolved governments. The Minister agreed that it was important to share good practice and he would report back to the committee on this issue.
 - Rec. 3 and 4: There was a consensus that consideration of equality of opportunity implications by subject committees needed to be formalised to embed the equality duty in the work of the Assembly. The Committee endorsed making formal changes to standing orders to require this consideration, although it was recognised that this would be a lengthy process. The committee therefore also endorsed action in the short term, for example committee papers should include consideration the implications for equality of opportunity and the other statutory duties and the Equality of Opportunity committee should be given the opportunity to comment on draft work programmes of subject committees. The first step would be a note to the Panel of Chairs informing them of the committee's view.
 - Rec. 5: LGB Forum noted concerns about its lack of formal status or permanent funds. The committee was supportive of LGB Forum's and the statutory Commissions' desire to see their relationship with the committee formalised in order to ensure their continued access to the work of the committee. It was also agreed that quarterly reports they made to the Assembly should be tabled as papers to note in the committee.
 - Rec. 7: There was concern over the reference to 'minimum standards' in consultation as it was hoped that the consultation process would always go beyond the 'minimum'. 'Guaranteed standard' was suggested as an alternative. The creation of a consultation website was seen as a positive step. It was important to monitor consultation to ensure standards were consistent. It was noted that the voluntary sector partnership council, and the officials supporting it, could share their expertise on effective consultation with those implementing the recommendations of 'An Absolute Duty'. A balance must be drawn between providing a real opportunity to comment and moving forward with policy development. DRC noted that there were specific issues relating to consultation with disabled groups, but if the consultation mechanism is explained people can appreciate the time scales involved. It was important to 'think outside the box' for example in using the media to raise awareness of issues coming up for consultation. Feedback was important to small organisations that put a lot of effort into meeting consultation deadlines. There should be a review of how this feedback might be given and the Assembly may wish to provide assistance to some organisations in how they are consulted.

Action points

- The Minister would report back to the committee on how the Welsh model of a statutory equality duty could be shared as best practice with UK Government and the devolved parliaments, with a view to them applying the same principles.
- The committee would be informed when the Panel of Chairs would be considering formal mechanisms for committees to meet their statutory equality duty, and the Chair of the Equality of Opportunity committee would attend in an informal capacity to pursue those issues.
- The quarterly reports of consultative bodies would be provided to the committee for its consideration as papers to note.
- Assembly officials and the committee's special advisers would meet to discuss how they might improve the process of consultation.

10.05 – 10.35

Item 4

Update on Assembly Recruitment

Paper: EOC-01-03(p3)

1. The committee considered a paper on Assembly recruitment and selection. The paper included annexes on the approach to recruiting a new head of the Equality Policy Unit, details of the Assembly's planned outreach programme to encourage recruitment from minority ethnic groups, and figures showing a diversity breakdown from recent recruitment exercises. No diversity breakdown was available for internal staff movements because that data had not been collected in the past, but a new human resources system was being developed that would allow this data to be collated in the future.
2. The committee welcomed the outreach strategy, noting in particular the intention to evaluate its success. It would be useful for the committee to receive an annual report on the outreach strategy as a future paper to note.
3. The Swansea Bay Racial Equality Council had started a community development scheme to provide placements for young people and there might be opportunities for the Assembly's outreach programme to tie into such projects. It was important for the programme to reach smaller, less vocal community groups including those in rural areas, and not just to deal with known groups with higher profiles.
4. There was no measure of the number of Welsh speakers in the Assembly workforce as a whole and better ways of monitoring this were being sought. It was noted that some Welsh speakers might not want to state this skill if they were unwilling to be expected to use it in the workplace. It was also noted that the Welsh Language Scheme had more wide-ranging functions than just to promote the language in the Assembly and assist in managing translation services, as stated in the paper.

5. There were particular sensitivities in monitoring sexual orientation. The Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Forum (LGB Forum) indicated that organisational culture and attitudes should be seen to change first, before asking people to self-identify. Until there was legal protection in the workplace for lesbian, gay and bisexual people it was difficult to ask people about their sexual orientation, but information could be gained on a voluntary basis. The relevant legislation would be in place from December 2003, so now was the time for organisations to consider the issue.
6. The committee discussed how perceptions of ageism might affect older people seeking promotion. Ageism was not included in the current papers under discussion, which focused on working with under-represented groups.
7. The committee still had concerns about parts of the process used to recruit the head of the Equality Policy Unit, including the use of executive search and its cost, differences between the advertised candidate profile and the person specification used later in the process, and the use of CVs and psychometric testing in selection.
8. DRC pointed out that using psychometric testing and CVs, rather than assessing core competencies, could discriminate against those with disabilities or with skills acquired outside the traditional work setting.
9. It was also noted that the job description did not mention the important relationship between the Equality Policy Unit and the Committee.
10. The Minister agreed with the approach taken in the paper in not revealing a breakdown of the executive search consultancy fees due to commercial confidentiality. Revealing cost breakdowns could discourage companies from tendering competitive bids in the future.
11. The chair asked the Minister to note the committee's concerns in designing future recruitment exercises and one member of the committee would be raising detailed concerns in a letter to the Minister.

Action points

- The Committee would receive an annual evaluation report of the outreach programme.
- Peter Gregory would meet with the LGB Forum to discuss the implications of the new legislation to protect against discrimination in the workplace due to sexual orientation.
- **The committee agreed to break from 10.35 – 10.52**

10.52 – 11.40

Item 5

Gypsy Traveller Review – Report back on site visits

Paper: EOC-01-03(p4) – Site Visit Reports

1. Members of the Committee and the Clerk presented reports of their visits to Gypsy

Traveller sites in North, West, Mid and South Wales, to feedback the views of site residents.

2. Lorraine Barrett AM said that the site in Shepherd's Hill, Pontypool, seemed to be a good model of how a site can be managed properly and the Gypsy Council site manager had been open and helpful. Residents had not reported any problems with accessing doctors, hospitals and schools, although there were some children on the site who looked as if they were of school age. The site manager had felt that it would not be difficult to manager temporary stopping places for Gypsy Travellers in the area and it was worth considering his expertise as a site manager.
3. Helen Mary Jones AM noted that like Shepherd's Hill, the site at Pen-y-Bryn , Llanelli, was also a well-established permanent site and residents had not reported any problems accessing GPs, although residents were selecting which doctors to visit, which could involved travelling a significant distance. Due to the isolated site location children were unable to walk to and from school, so the local school had bought a minibus and a teacher picked the children up. Utility costs on the site were extremely high and that needed to be looked at. Residents who had lived in houses were aware that on the site they lacked freedom of choice for the provision of utilities. Receiving post was also a problem. On a council estate it would be unacceptable for the postal service to refuse to deliver to all the houses because of a dog guarding a particular property, as was the case at Pen-y-Bryn. All post was delivered centrally to the site manager's office, and some residents had missed important appointments because they had not received letters as a result.
4. Tim Wilson, one of the expert advisers to the Gypsy Traveller Review, pointed out that the Builth Wells site had also been self-regulated and families had liaised with the council to arrange rubbish collection etc. It was very important to work with the residents living on the sites.
5. The Clerk noted that there was not much to add to the paper before the committee on the visit to Ruthin Road in Wrexham, and in common with the previous reports many of the residents had lived on the site for a time and had established access to health and education services.

11.40 12.03-

Item 6

Gypsy Traveller Review – Presentation from young Gypsy Travellers

1. Anne Crowley of Save the Children UK was the convener of the All-Wales Group Traveller Education Group. The Group had arranged for a group of young people from all over Wales to say what issues were important to them as Gypsy Travellers. Their presentations would focus on accommodation, education and discrimination. The main points of the discussion between the members and the young people were:

- Anne Josephine and Barbara McDonagh were 14-year-old roadside travellers who had been constantly evicted all their lives. Their support worker, Sue Highfield, explained that they had received an eviction notice that morning and another one the previous evening and she did not even know where she would be taking them home to that day. Anne Josephine explained that their mother and father both had health problems and there were 15 children and grandchildren in the family and they wanted to stay together. Other family members could not visit because they were always being moved on, and the young women had not received any education because of being constantly evicted. The family also only received medical treatment as temporary patients with different doctors because of being moved on all the time. They travelled in the Swansea area where there was one permanent site, with only seven pitches, that was always full. The family wanted a place of their own, where they they could stay together and was fearful of being on a site with other families. They only needed space for two pitches.
- Stacey McDonagh had previously lived in the Swansea area but was living and going to high school in Pembroke. The management of the site in Pembroke had not carried out repairs as promised. On the site there were condemned slabs, broken glass and rubbish, which made it dangerous for children to play. For two years there had been plans to make a park next to the site but this had still not been done.
- Helen Connors lived on the Shire Newton site in Cardiff and spoke to the committee about education. She received home education in mathematics, English and history, with support from an education liaison officer, but would have preferred to go to secondary school. She had lost contact with friends from primary school who had gone on to secondary education. Her mother did not want her to go to school because of fear of prejudice against her because she was a traveller. Two of Helen's brothers had gone to secondary school but she didn't think they had finished, one of her sisters was at primary school and two brothers were home educated with her. It could be boring on site with not enough for young people to do, and residents would have to walk some distance to reach shops and services - transport was a problem.
- Tom and Waltie, two 12-year-old cousins from Cardiff, also spoke to the committee. Both had been home educated since leaving primary school and Waltie particularly enjoyed mathematics, neither had gone to secondary school. Tom explained that primary school was OK, but he did not want to go through the whole of secondary school to age 16 as he had already learnt to read and that was what he needed from school. They had spoken to support worker Val Hawksworth about going on to secondary school, who normally took children to visit the secondary school before the time they would be leaving primary school, to see what it was like. Tom and Waltie may have left primary education before that time. Val Hawksworth explained that there was now a Traveller achievement project to extend the lead-in to preparing for secondary school, focusing on years 5,6 and 7. Both boys were clear that they had taken part in the decision to be home educated and that the decision was supported by their parents. Tom and Waltie said they thought that on their site more girls than boys went on to secondary education. At home, as well as school work, they would play football and take their dogs out and if it rained they played on the computer. They had used computers to learn to read. Their fathers did contracting but they

didn't particularly want to do that when they were older.

- Johnny Doran and Paddy Berry, 14 year olds from Wrexham, then spoke to the committee about education and discrimination. Paddy said he thought education was important as travellers received less education and were getting left behind. It would be good if they could become solicitors, plumbers, businessmen or teachers if they wanted to. Then if they wanted to stop travelling or times got bad they could settle down. If Travellers had a good education they could understand the notices the police gave them and be able to understand their rights. When he lived in Wolverhampton he had not been accepted into school, with no reason provided except that it was full, but he knew it was not and heard a lady say 'we better not let these in'. Paddy found learning languages at school difficult, lessons dragged and there was too much homework. His Dad could read but not well and so it was difficult for him to help him with his homework. Last summer he had gone travelling in Sweden with his Uncle and his family which had been good but he had missed out on a lot of school.
- Johnny later made the point that settled young people might not get the same chances to do things like Paddy's visit to Sweden, and that travellers had chances early in life to learn about life and passed on what they knew to the young children, like an old story.
- Johnny talked about discrimination. For example when walking in the local area or going into shops to buy things for their parents they would be told to get out. It made him feel angry. Equal opportunities were important for travellers. For example there was little chance for them to do sport outside school. The Government housed asylum seekers in days whereas for travellers it could be months. They should have more support in getting houses and be told in advance when housing became available and in what area.
- Johnny's school, St Joseph's, was very supportive of what travellers do, for example with his boxing and playing football. Johnny had boxed for Wales and he was trialling for a football club. His family was very supportive. His mother took him to training clubs and enabled him to be involved in extra-curricular activities. People at his current football club treated him as normal, and there was no prejudice. If those things didn't work out he was doing Saturday apprenticeship work to learn to be a contractor. Everyone should have that chance – 'you've got to try things to see what you like'. Paddy's father was a building contractor and he would like to follow that line of work. Travellers didn't have the same chance to do the certain types of jobs because of their travelling.
- The committee asked if they had considered college but Johnny said he wouldn't because as soon as boys were 14 or 15 they were old enough to leave school and start work and starting school at 16 or 17 would mean being teased by other travellers. It would help Johnny if he was able to go to school on a more flexible basis, maybe 3 days a week to get some basic education rather than every day, as he said school life was very boring.
- Johnny had had problems with the warden on his site after he had asked him to clean the site. Over the Christmas and New Year period the rubbish had not been collected and eventually a site resident had taken all the rubbish to the local tip. There should have been a skip on site and a road-sweeper round to clean the site.
- On the Wrexham site more boys than girls went to school, the women tended to stay at home to cook and clean and help their mothers. Today was the first time he had heard

about home education. When young people got bored on site that was when they went into town and got stared at. Some travellers might steal but not every traveller, but they were followed around and intimidated. On the site there was a CCTV camera looking in on them all the time so there was no privacy. The site was in the middle of a wood but surrounded by a high fence like a prison fence.

- Paddy lived in a house. He was not happy on the site, because at night you could hear rats outside. He was happier in a house because it was cleaner.
 - Johnny wouldn't want to live in a house because he would be isolated from the rest of his community. He had relatives who lived in houses but they all lived close to one another. If Johnny decided to join a football club he would need to be settled and that would be a big decision for him to discuss with family. His family had given him the choice to stand out from others and be somebody, to play football, which he had always wanted to do, and to stay at school if he wanted. He had friends who did not go to school and he tried to encourage them to go to school.
 - Johnny said that he didn't feel right living in a house, but in five years time he thought travellers wouldn't be travelling anymore but would be living in houses. Committee members said they hoped that would not be the case and their lifestyle would remain.
1. A bigger survey of young Gypsy Travellers was being carried out by Save the Children UK to ask them what was good about being a Gypsy Traveller and what they wanted changed, and this would be sent to the Committee.
 2. The committee thanked the young people for coming to speak to them, and wished them all well for the future. All their views and comments would be taken into consideration for inclusion in the report and recommendations of the Gypsy Traveller Review.

Action points:

- SCF UK would send the results of its full survey of young gypsy traveller's views, together with any other comments the presenters wanted to provide, to the committee.
- All views and comments would be taken into consideration for inclusion in the report and recommendations of the Gypsy Traveller Review

12.03 – 12.24

Item 7

Presentation by young people to mark International Day of Disabled People and European Year of Disabled People 2003.

Paper: EOC-01-03(p5)

1. Christine Morgan of the Equality Policy Unit introduced David, Stephen and John, three

young people with disabilities who were standing in for others who had been unable to attend the presentation.

2. To mark International Day of Disabled People in 2002 a mock plenary session had been held in the Assembly. It had been a powerful event that raised many issues that were important to young disabled people. Many issues were the same as for other disabled people, such as access to leisure and social events and transport, and generally to have the same chances as everyone else.
3. Members had been given a draft version of a booklet put together by the young people that contained images of their life in Wales, showing the good and the bad. The professional illustrations were based on their own drawings and the words were theirs.
4. For the 2003 European Year of Disabled People the booklet could be used to look back and see how they felt, and would act as a benchmark to see how things could be changed in the future.
5. The committee members were asked to put their comments on the back of the booklet and these will be included in the final version along with the credits for all those involved. The members said that the booklet was excellent and very easy-to-read.
6. The following points were raised in discussion with the young people:
 - Stephen and John were at Ystrad Mynach college and enjoyed music. Stephen wanted to leave college and get a real job, maybe in a nightclub, rather than a job in a day centre. When he left home John also said he wanted to work in a pub or in the music industry. Chris Morgan explained that under 'job centre plus' there were moves to open up more opportunities for young disabled people to try real jobs with real pay. The Disability Rights Commission thanked all the young people for coming in, and welcomed this initiative. He noted that there were still serious cases being reported of people with disabilities being exploited in the workplace.
 - David from Neath used a wheelchair with special adaptations and could not get into town without his mother because buses were not accessible for him. He wanted to see better bus transport provision for people like him. Alun Thomas of DRC pointed out that inaccessible buses being used in London today would eventually find their way to the rural parts of Wales and that it would take time for things to change. The attitude of drivers was often a problem when they were unwilling to prioritise the needs of disabled people. More accessible buses were only a good thing if the routes and bus stops were also made accessible, which was a problem around Wales. Across Wales, local authorities, transport companies and the Assembly needed to work together on this.
 - The Assembly should take a lead in changing the things that were problems for disabled people. It was suggested that the Chair of every Assembly subject committee and Assembly Ministers were all sent a copy of the booklet and asked to say what they are doing to put right the bad things, for example encouraging bus companies to introduce more accessible buses, and if there are things that they can't do to also say what those were and explain why not.

Action points:

- The committee members would add their comments to the back of the booklet and return it to Christine Morgan in the Equality Policy Unit.
- The group would also send their booklet to every subject committee chair and Assembly Minister and ask them to reply with what they are doing to put right the bad things, and an explanation of things that they did not feel they could change.

12.24 –12.30

Item 8

Minutes of the previous meeting and paper to note

Papers: EOC-08-02(min)

: EOC-01-03(p5) – Letter from Commission for Racial Equality

1. The minutes were agreed with an amendment to show that Helen Mary Jones had not been present at the last meeting.
2. The Welsh Local Government Association would be providing a response to the committee commenting on the paper to note from the Commission for Racial Equality, on the take up of advice about the Race Relations Amendment Act by local authorities.

The meeting closed at 12.30pm.