

Findings and Report Community Consultations

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Centre for Study and Research

Stewarts House, Kingsway East, Dundee DD4 7RE
www.centreforstudyandresearch.com & www.cfsr-uk.com

Community Consultations: Findings and Report

Contemporary Scottish society is now striving for a dynamic inclusive community where a stable classificatory system will play a significantly important role in social divisions and communities will become stronger more vibrant by embracing positively the diversity of background, culture, and faiths with equality of opportunity. Dynamic inclusive community is therefore about changing the simple belief that why a community must exclude somebody or something and building a wider community in which everyone has better chances in life, is able to work together to fight against inequalities and feels he /she has a sense of belonging . The requirement to have a strong sense of loyalty and belonging to the wider community needs to mean something, and needs to be supplemented by an intellectual stimulation of what it means to live in a democratic civic society like Britain.

It is important that we encourage members of the wider community to participate in a wide assortment of community activities to help them reduce their isolation within their own community and develop relationships outside the community. To encourage one's contribution to own culture and to respect other cultures, religious faiths, customs, and traditional values is the path to community integration.

It is of paramount importance that we develop strong community links and consult our community people in order to find out why ethnic minorities and the white majority population need to play a more active economic and political role in Scottish or British society.

The rationale behind the idea of developing links and undertaking consultation with members of the Scottish communities is a desire to ensure full and active engagement between our communities and the wider society. We underpin this by developing a dynamic inclusive community and a strong and positive relationship between people from different backgrounds, communities, and institutions. When we say dynamic inclusive community, we mean an integrated society. When we say

integration, we mean equal opportunities. The fact remains that unless people are integrated, they can never be truly equal, and if they are not equal, they will never have full access to the best services that a community can offer. There can be no true integration without true equality and there can be no true equality without true integration. By developing community links and meeting people of different culture and backgrounds we aim to send this message across a wider community.

Every society has its arbitrary barriers of race, caste, class, gender, fears, and prejudice, disability, age and sexual orientation. These barriers could easily destroy the opportunities, hope, aspiration, income, civic rights, and overall well-being of an individual. CFSR wants to make strong community links in order to find out about all forms of discrimination and inequalities in accessing services and better ways to implement equal opportunities idea. Through community links and community consultation it is possible to raise awareness of the need and aspiration of members of the wider community. The outcome is a wakeup call for the vast majority of ethnic minority to understand what it means to have equal rights and opportunities and how it affects their participation and engagement in civic life.

Through community consultation and other programmes and activities CFSR wants to encourage the old and new arrivals not to be isolated from the mainstream approach of the wider society. It does not mean that they have to lose their own identity, national characteristics and culture.

Below you will find a list of some of the most important questions and issues that our community consultants have focussed on:

1. What does it mean to live in a civil democratic society?
2. Why have people chosen to live, work or study in Scotland or Britain?
3. Do people generally have a sense of belonging to the wider community?
4. Are certain segments of the immigrant population unwilling to be assimilated and integrated? If so, why?

5. Do certain segments of the white population exhibit their ignorance and none-acceptance in their treatment of non whites? If so, why?
6. Are there any problems with the integration of new arrivals from countries throughout Europe, Russia, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the new Commonwealth into British or Scottish culture? If so, what are they?
7. Do ethnic minorities face any problems at work, their place of study or in the wider community? If so, what are they?
8. How could those problems be solved?
9. How can people contribute to the community they are living in?
10. How can they make this country a safer and more dynamic community for all?

As the greater entirety of our community consultation has already revealed many interesting findings relating to the concepts of 'inclusive community, integration and cohesion and equal opportunities', below you will find only a brief findings and report from our community consultants. Based on the above questions and findings from community consultation, our consultants are able to draw the following conclusions:

- Living in a civil democratic society means we have freedom of speech/opinion, freedom of religious/cultural practice, access to free, unbiased schooling for children, access to free medical care, good sanitation, access to good (and possibly also free) housing, the opportunity to become successful and the opportunity to find financial/material security
- People choose to leave and study in this country because England or \ Scotland are said to adhere to the above principles. Any qualifications earned in the UK are accepted throughout the world, and also the salaries are good.
- Most people choose to live, work or study in Scotland or Britain mainly because of the economic benefits they can obtain from this country.

About 80% of immigrants come to Scotland to improve their life materially and because they see more opportunities for young people here, compared to those in their own countries. They feel that they are able to earn higher salaries in the UK for the same kind of jobs and they can therefore afford to pay for sports and other recreational activities. Many people get used to living in the U.K and think that they will be able to achieve an increased level of comfort in the future and also obtain additional skills, such as increased language ability, knowledge of U.K. laws, driving skills, etc.

- Many immigrants like the U.K better than their own countries as they consider it to be superior to most other countries, both economically and socially, and this has made Scotland and the United Kingdom a more popular place to live and study; not forgetting, of course, the historical value of this country. Because the UK is such a popular place, it has attracted numerous immigrants from different countries and societies. Most people that come to the U.K feel excited when they experience, for the first time, the high standard of life in this

country (when they see luxury cars, good food, free medical help, fair treatment of pensioners and so on).

- On arrival in the U.K., all newcomers and immigrants try to become part of the local immigrant community. Only those who don't have contact with such communities try to integrate into Scottish community life and make new friends among British people.
- Those who have lived in the U.K for less than 5 years and who don't belong to any particular local immigrant community (based on criteria such as religion, language or ethnicity, etc.) have found it difficult to establish good friendships among British people.
- Few immigrants from Eastern Europe are interested in British politics or the economics, they often don't know what democracy actually

means and some people only know the Queen's name through reading it on banknotes.

- Immigrant populations feel they should have a sense of belonging despite the fact that some communities and people are unwilling to adapt to a new community and culture and want to maintain the lifestyle that they used to have 'back home'. These people generally have a strong sense of religious and cultural identity. Certain segments of the immigrant population don't want to risk having to change or give up the customs and traditions that they are familiar with.
- The feeling of community is very weak in Scotland and the UK today. About 50% of young immigrants don't value or respect Scottish cultural traditions. They are not convinced that all smiles are genuine. They don't understand the kinds of hobbies that young Scottish people have. There are many different reasons for this. As for the country as a whole, the majority of immigrants say that they "will be treated as immigrants" or "second class citizens" for a long time.
- The pre-conception of many new immigrants is that Scottish people, in general, are very friendly, polite and helpful.
- Immigrants from many different countries believe that they will be welcomed and accepted by most people from the host community. However, many people from the white majority *are* willing to learn about these new cultures and the backgrounds of the many different minority ethnic groups. Despite this fact, a certain segment of the white majority still hold a grudge and feel threatened as if their own sovereignty could be lost due to the presence of the ever-increasing and expanding immigrant population in this country.
- Among the hundreds of thousands of immigrants that have arrived in the UK, at least a quarter of them have faced racial abuse and/or negative comments on a number of occasions. Racial abuse has now become a chronic feature in of life for immigrants in the greater London area. Many British nationals whose families originally

migrated from other countries were not given the same opportunity to progress in their jobs even though they truly deserved it. This evidence can still be seen in many cities and work places in Scotland and England.

- The greatest problem is the absence of communication on an intimate level due to linguistic or religious barriers. Skin colour is less of an issue, although it is often used as an excuse not to enter into communication.
- Problems vary significantly from one group to the next but almost all groups have some basic problems in common:
 - a. Language difficulties
 - b. Financial difficulties
 - c. Housing problems
 - d. Feeling like they don't belong
- In a recent survey, approximately 80% of British nationals with different ethnic backgrounds who were interviewed about their jobs expressed their concern that their skin colour had been a factor in preventing their promotion or their rise in salary. The survey respondents commented that, even though racial comments are not as overt and direct nowadays, there still seems to be a hint of racism in the attitudes and behaviour of some of their colleagues.
- Problems of the above nature could be solved by understanding and accepting people's differences, allowing them to freely choose which religion they might wish to adhere to and being permitted to practise it in school, at college or university and in the workplace, rather than being forced to give it up altogether in favour of the non-religious, secular value system that is being encouraged across the UK today. Is that not discrimination; and does such discrimination actually encourage 'cultural integration'? Does 'social integration' mean giving

up one's rights and becoming like everyone else, captive to their own ignorance?

- By working together to build a community based on mutual acceptance, understanding, responsibility and co-operation. It is this that gives people a sense of 'belonging', no matter where they might originate from.
- By truly caring about each other as fellow human beings!
- These problems could also be solved through a strong sense of integration and knowledge. These differences could be solved over time if a new breed of people were to take over the leadership of Britain, adopting a new outlook and new approach. Through acceptance and tolerance people would welcome both old and new arrivals and love all humans without being racially prejudiced.

The following emerged as the prerequisites of a dynamic inclusive community which are supportive of community cohesion and integration, equal opportunities.

Harmony through Dialogue

Strong sense of equality and fairness

Identity

Language Sensitivity

Increased participation and representation

Positive action for intrusive behaviour towards minority ethnic communities

Freedom of speech

Building bridges

Role of Media

Observing Gender Equality Duty (GED)

Maintaining community

**** To find out more about this report please read our recently published book "Breaking Down the barriers - harmony, integration and equal opportunities" (enclosed herewith)**