



Racial Equality In West Dunbartonshire

**Focus Group on racial equality issues with the West Dunbartonshire
Citizens' Panel and BME Groups**

Report

by

Hexagon Research and Consulting

For further information contact:

Jim Patton

Director

Hexagon Research and Consulting

Suite 401

47 Timber Bush

Edinburgh

EH6 6QH

e-mail: jim@hexagonresearch.co.uk

December 2008

Contents	Page
Summary of Key Findings	3
1. Introduction	5
2. Background and Objectives	6
3. Our Approach	9
4. Living in West Dunbartonshire	10
5. The Council's Role	13
6. Access to Services	16
7. The Voluntary Sector	21
8. The Council's Racial Equality Scheme	23
Appendix 1: Focus Group Discussion Guide	25

Summary of Key Findings

Section 4: Living in West Dunbartonshire

- Issues of community cohesion were participants' main focus, as well as the positive role of the Police force. It was recognised that a significant amount of good work is being done within communities to prevent and ease tensions, and that work the Police in particular are doing, is achieving its aims.
- Focus group participants from ethnic minorities agreed that it is generally members of the business community who suffer most from racial harassment because they are the easiest targets for individuals wanting to antagonise or intimidate ethnic minority communities
- It was generally agreed that negative instances could be attributed to a lack of communication between different communities, and progress is being made by concerted effort to engage with different cultures within community areas

Section 5: The Council's Role

- At the most general level all participants agreed the most important role for the Council is to ensure that all citizens are treated equally and have access to the same services
- A couple of participants with experience of racial problems in the community stated that West Dunbartonshire Council has done good work in resolving harassment incidents, and ensuring that they are permanently stopped
- Participants representing community groups at the discussion felt they were operating 'in sync' with the Council

Section 6: Access to Services

- All participants in the discussion group were overwhelmingly positive about the education their children or grandchildren receive at West Dunbartonshire schools. The services provided by the Police, Social Work and the health service were also widely appreciated
- Specific issues that came up at the discussion group were the standard of translators provided by West Dunbartonshire Council and the attitude of some frontline staff. It

was suggested a higher number of ethnic minority staff should be employed by the Council to ensure that services are available to all citizens in the area

Section 7: The Voluntary Sector

- Voluntary organisations which participants had found particularly useful were the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) and the Clydebank Voluntary Service (CVS). The main benefits cited by participants were advocacy and information services offered by both

Section 8: Racial Equality Scheme

- Some focus group participants had heard of the Council's Race Equality Scheme, but nobody present was aware of its specifics
- It was suggested that the information might be disseminated in a more targeted way to ensure comprehensive packs were delivered to relevant individuals and groups, and all of those present were enthusiastic to be included in future consultation on the Scheme, feeling they could offer added value to it

1. Introduction

The West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership recognises that developing and delivering services which meet local needs requires effective and genuine community engagement. Central to this is the need to ensure that the views of the most disadvantaged communities are heard to help deliver solutions that contribute to the delivery of effective public services.

A key part of this consultation process was the recruitment of a Citizens' Panel. In August 2008, a survey of the Panel included questions on whether Panel members were aware of the Council's Racial Equality Scheme, the availability of key Council documents in a range of community languages and their perceptions of any problems facing Black and Minority Ethnic people in West Dunbartonshire. The survey produced the following findings:

- Awareness of West Dunbartonshire Council's Race Equality Scheme is fairly high (44%) with Panel members most likely to use the Council's website, contacting a local Council office or visiting a library/CE centre to access this type of information
- Almost two thirds of Panel members are aware that the Council offers key documents in a range of community languages
- Relatively few (typically under 10%) are aware of problems facing Black and Minority Ethnic people in West Dunbartonshire such as accessing Council services or finding employment

Panel members were asked if they would be willing to discuss these issues in more detail at a focus group. Section 3 outlines our approach to the recruitment and moderation of the focus group while key findings are presented in Sections 4 to 8. Initially, Section 2 provides some background to the Council's role in promoting racial equality in West Dunbartonshire.

2. Background and Objectives

2.1 The Legislative and Strategic Background

The Race Relations Act 1976 (RRA) as amended in 2000 gives listed public authorities a statutory 'General Duty' to promote race equality. The aim of the duty is to make racial equality central to the way public authorities work, and to put it at the heart of policymaking, service delivery, and employment practice.

Under the general duty, in carrying out their functions, public authorities must, have 'due regard to the need to':

- Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
- Promote equal opportunities; and
- Promote good relations between people from different racial groups.

The general duty is supported by the 'Specific Duties', introduced under the Race Relations Act 1976 (Statutory Duties) Order 2001, and other statutory instruments, to make sure public authorities are in a position to meet the duty to promote race equality. These include duties to produce and maintain a race equality scheme (RES) and to collect and publish employment monitoring data.

The Council developed its first Race Equality Scheme in November 2002, which was published and systems were put in place to implement the Scheme. This was then reviewed in November 2005, providing an opportunity to review progress and publish an updated list of policies and functions and action plan.

West Dunbartonshire Council's Race Equality Scheme for 2008-2011 states that the Council is committed to providing high quality and efficient services to all members of the communities it serves. They strive to ensure access to services for all, to remove any barriers to accessing services, to promote equality of opportunity and work towards eliminating discrimination both as a service provider and employer.

The Council recognises the community is constantly changing, and they have to adapt and develop in order to meet the needs of that community. West Dunbartonshire has a relatively small Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population, as measured by the 2001 census, though there is evidence to suggest that this has increased. However, the Council recognises its

approach should be based on needs, not just numbers.

Equal opportunities for all is also at the heart of the Council's Corporate Plan, and informs how they provide better and more efficient services that meet the needs of all citizens, visitors and employees within West Dunbartonshire.

2.2 The BME Community

The 2001 Census showed that 0.7% of the local population were from black and minority ethnic communities (BME) although this there is evidence that this figure may now have increased due to a range of factors, including in-migration and failure to register for the 2001 Census. There is also a settled Gypsy/Traveller population in West Dunbartonshire, and a number of Gypsy/Traveller families who pass through the area throughout the year. A Gypsy/Traveller Strategy has been produced for 2008-2011 to co-ordinate and plan services to Gypsies/Travellers.

In addition, West Dunbartonshire is adjacent to Glasgow which has a high proportion of established BME communities. West Dunbartonshire's BME population can grow from in migration from adjacent local authority areas and is further enhanced by people within the Travel to Work areas boosting the daily numbers. A number of businesses in West Dunbartonshire are owned by BME business people who travel into the area everyday, and also access Council services.

The BME population in West Dunbartonshire seems to be fairly dispersed throughout the area with clusters in certain locations. This can lead to issues of isolation and makes it difficult to consult with those from BME backgrounds.

2.3 Objectives of the Focus Group

In response to the findings of the survey of Citizen Panel members in August 2008, the Council invited Hexagon Research and Consulting to hold a focus group to probe respondents' views in more detail on five issues:

- Their experience of living in West Dunbartonshire, including their overall views on racial equality
- What they feel should be the Council's role in promoting racial equality

- Their experience of accessing services and whether there are specific problems for members of the BME community
- The role that the Voluntary Sector can play to support BME groups
- Their awareness of the Council's Racial Equality Scheme

A focus group discussion guide was agreed with the Council to cover these issues and a copy is enclosed at Appendix 1.

Before the response of focus group members to these issues is assessed, Section 3 outlines our approach to the recruitment and moderation of the focus group.

3. Our Approach

a. Recruitment

The Citizens' Panel is broadly representative of the area's population by most indicators, including ethnic origin. As indicated in Section 2, under 1% of the population were classified as BME in the 2001 Census. In discussions with the Council, it was agreed that Panel members interested in attending the focus group would be joined by representatives of three local groups:

- The Asian Women's Group
- The Ethnic Minority Association
- Gypsy Travellers' Action Group

Letters of invitation were issued to Panel members and representatives of these three groups in November, culminating in ten respondents being recruited for the focus group as follows:

Respondent Group	Number of Respondents	Number attending on 2/12/08
Citizens' Panel	5	3
The Asian Women's Group	1	4
The Ethnic Minority Association	2	1
Gypsy Travellers' Action Group	2	0

b. The Focus Group Discussion

The focus group was held on Tuesday 2nd December 2008 at the Council's offices at Rosebery Place in Clydebank. All respondents were advised that the discussion was confidential and that the views of individuals would not be identifiable in our report. All focus group members agreed that the discussion could be tape recorded to facilitate the production of direct quotations by respondents and that the recording would be deleted once a transcript had been made.

4. Living in West Dunbartonshire

Initially participants were asked about their general feelings towards living and working in West Dunbartonshire. Issues of community cohesion were participants' main focus, as well as the positive role of the Police force. Access to jobs and Council and health services are discussed more in Section 6: Access to Services.

All of the people attending from ethnic minority groups acknowledged the impact world events had had on the sense of community which they had enjoyed:

'Before September 11th happened things were ok. After that, relations deteriorated but since then they have improved. There was another dip after the Glasgow Airport attack, and that made things worse.'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

'Before 9/11 there weren't any serious problems, the community was very calm, but the reaction from some to world events was bad. A small number took advantage of what was happening in the world to enable their racism. They made it worse for ethnic minorities.'

Male, The Ethnic Minority Association

It was recognised that a significant amount of good work is being done within communities to prevent and ease tensions, and that work the Police in particular are doing is achieving its aims:

'As far as racial equality goes, there are some ups and downs – after September 11th, things have become worse because we were targeted and people thought that everyone from our community was a terrorist. Things have improved since immediately after 9/11 through our working with the Police, and there is now less tension, especially if you go towards Dumbarton, there are fewer problems there.'

Male, The Ethnic Minority Association

'As a member of the MARIM group I get a report on racial harassment from the Police every month. There used to be so many things that happened against our communities, but now the numbers are way way down.'

Male, The Ethnic Minority Association

Focus group participants from ethnic minorities agreed that it is generally members of the business community who suffer most from racial harassment because they are the easiest targets for individuals wanting to antagonise or intimidate ethnic minority communities:

'It is the people with the shops and the carry outs and the restaurants that have more problems than the rest of the ethnic community because they are the ones that have to deal with the public more – the business community have more problems than many of us'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

'They [trouble-makers] do things like going to the shop out of hours and demanding alcohol and if you don't give it to them, they become aggressive and start swearing at you and telling you that you've no right to be here. Ordinary white people don't have an idea what is going on, because it is the minority that make the problems.'

Male, The Ethnic Minority Association

'It is the business community that suffer the most from racial harassment because they are the people that are closest to the trouble-makers because the trouble-makers choose to go into their shops or carry-outs'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

Everybody present at the discussion from ethnic minority groups agreed that it is a minority of trouble makers who cause the majority of race-related problems in West Dunbartonshire:

'It is a small number of people who are taking advantage of excuses to abuse people who are different to them. It is not the whole community.'

Male, The Ethnic Minority Association

A woman from the West Dunbartonshire Citizens' Panel had had no experience of any racially motivated aggression in her area, and was shocked that it has such an impact on other participants' lives'.

'I feel very naïve: I don't know whether it's just where I live in Clydebank, but I have never seen or heard of any racial incidents in this area. We have more and more black people moving into the community and I haven't seen anything. Perhaps I have just been lucky.'

Female Citizens' Panel Member

Other women from The Asian Women's Group stated that in some areas there was a great deal of community cohesion which had actually been strengthened by 9/11 and other world events:

'Around me the community was great when 9/11 happened: I would go out of my house and people would cross the street to tell me not to worry and offer me support, which was fantastic. The community was calm and supportive of me and my family. Even a member of the Council came round to speak to me and offer me support'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

It was generally agreed that negative instances could be attributed to a lack of communication between different communities, and progress is being made by concerted effort to engage with different cultures within community areas:

'I think that it is lack of communication. It used to be that nobody wanted to speak to us because we look different, we are different and we have a different culture. But

recently we have started trying to talk to people more and the neighbours are much nicer. There are fewer problems now because our neighbours realise that we're not here to live for free of live off benefits.'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

'Often it is down to a lack of communication between communities; it's much better when we open up the lines of communication'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

5. The Council's Role

Having established how respondents felt living in West Dunbartonshire, participants were asked about the role they felt West Dunbartonshire Council should play in promoting equal opportunities to all racial groups.

At the most general level all participants agreed the most important role for the Council is to ensure that all citizens are treated equally and have access to the same services:

'I think the Council must make sure that we have as many rights as other citizens. It's important they and the rest of the community recognises that'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

'Ensuring that people know their rights – surely that's the Council's role!'

Female Citizens' Panel Member

A participant from the Asian Women's Group stated that often people from ethnic minorities do not have the same confidence as people from the indigenous population do in demanding services. It was suggested that the Council could ensure that services can be accessed by people more vulnerable to being overlooked because of their cultural background:

'I think that sometimes people from ethnic minorities do not fight back against things that they might know are wrong. They don't know how to access the right help or how to find people to advocate for them. This is something that the Council could help with.'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

A couple of participants with experience of racial problems in the community stated that West Dunbartonshire Council has done good work in resolving harassment incidents, and ensuring that they are permanently stopped. Another participant also praised the work of elected members at the Council:

'People from the Council have come along to various meetings with me to help sort out problems in the community, and they have done a good job. There were various harassment problems and the Council went to the perpetrators and told them to stop otherwise action would be taken against them. That was the end of the matter.'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

'I have spoken to my local Councillor and he has sorted out many of the problems I went to him with regarding the business community.'

Male, The Ethnic Minority Association

All participants were aware of the lack of understanding among different cultures within the same community area, and it was felt that improving understanding between cultures would

bring benefits. One suggestion that was warmly received was based on an initiative in Sighthill:

'I think Sighthill Community Council started inviting ethnic minorities to come and put on an evening which everybody from the community was invited to. You heard about the culture and met people from the area and ate the food of the particular minority who were hosting the evening. That made a lot of people understand more and make friends and communicate better'

Male Citizens' Panel Member

'Some people think that we're all terrorists and bad people; by bringing the community together I think that people would understand each other more. An evening like that sounds like a good idea'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

Participants representing community groups at the discussion felt they were operating 'in sync' with the Council: the Asian's Women's Group, for example, is campaigning harder while the Council is increasingly open to suggestions:

'It is a two-way thing because we set up the group and we campaign more and more, and at the same time West Dunbartonshire Council is becoming more interested in our work and recognising that we can help them and they can help us.'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

'Since our group started things have greatly improved because you know you have people to support you, which means you have more confidence to ask for what you need. When I first arrived sometimes you'd want to cry because no one is listening to you and no one understands what you want. It's much better now.'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

Specific issues that came up at the discussion group were the standard of translators provided by West Dunbartonshire Council and the attitude of some frontline staff.

While it is greatly appreciated that the Council supplies translators where and when they are required, women from the Asian Women's Group stated that the translators provided often had a poor standard of English:

'The Council do supply translators, but the translators usually speak less English than we do. The last one - we had to translate for her!'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

Because of the poor standard the Asian Women Group had elected to work without translators altogether, meaning the service is hardly used:

'The translating services are really not very good: I know that they're meant to translate everything, and it is an essential service, but many people have just given up on it because it is so poor'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

One suggestion was that a small number of translated Council leaflets should be sent to ethnic minority groups for dissemination to their members, as well as having a few words on the back telling people in their own language that the rest of the document can be translated if they want it. This would ensure regular communication between the Council and ethnic minority groups:

'I think they should have leaflets in all the languages – I know that at the back they often say you can ask for a leaflet in that language, but if it's English at the front, you don't pick it up. And even if you see it on the back, if you can't speak English, how do you get people to understand what you want?'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

'They could send out a specific amount to the ethnic minority groups and we could distribute them and ask for more if they're needed. They could even just email them to us and we could distribute them to our members.'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

'That would help them maintain contact with the community groups and would encourage communication.'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

Members of ethnic minority groups present queried whether Council staff on the frontline received any racial equality training. There were various stories cited (see Section 6) about the behaviour of some reception staff in some Council buildings, and anxiety about the negative impact this might have on people from ethnic minorities being able to access Council services:

'The problem is that when you come to find out information the first person you speak to is the person on the front desk and if they are not helpful it makes it very difficult to get past them: that impedes the success of all Council services.'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

'It's possible that all the people who work upstairs in the Council are happy to help, but they never get the chance. Perhaps ethnic minority people should complain more and demand more, but many of them do not have the confidence to do so, or are not used to this way of behaving.'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

6. Access to Services

This section of the discussion focussed on the ease with which members of the focus group had accessed Council services, and the standard of the service they received. The services particularly focussed on by participants were education, health and well-being services, social work, the Police and access to jobs. Generally the services were greatly appreciated, although, as mentioned in Section 5, concerns were raised regarding the training frontline staff received and the impact these staff members can have upon community relations.

6.1 Education Services

All participants in the discussion group were overwhelmingly positive about the education their children or grandchildren receive at West Dunbartonshire schools. Everybody at the focus group was aware that schools now teach Religious Studies from primary school level and felt this is essential in ensuring the next generation are culturally aware and inclusive.

'I was dreading sending my two children to Clydebank High School, because they were going to be the only two Asians in their class, but it's been absolutely fine, they're loving school'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

'I really think that the only way to improve things is through educating people. My grandson is at St Andrew's in Clydebank and he has Religious Studies and they study Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism: everything.'

Female Citizens' Panel Member

'The primary school in Goldenhill, they teach it (Religious Studies) all from the beginning as well'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

While participants were positive about the education young people receive through West Dunbartonshire Council, they felt that more could be done so that adults might also benefit from what their children are learning at school:

'The education in schools is great, but the mothers you can see are the ones that don't like us. There is a gap in the grown-up's education. Some educated and good people are happy to speak to us and there are no problems, but other people! You can tell when they are talking that they do not like us.'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

'Education in the school is very good, but older people get over-looked and I think that this is something that the Council could encourage'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

One other suggestion was about the desire for children from ethnic minorities to have the opportunity to study their native language, either at school or for the Council to support schemes (as in Glasgow) for them to learn out of school hours:

‘Our children, who have been born here, no longer speak our language. When we go back and visit India or Pakistan, the children cannot communicate with their grandparents. In Glasgow they have classes where you can do Punjabi or whatever in school time, which I think would be a good idea. It is important to us not to lose our own culture, so perhaps having optional language classes for the children would be good’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

6.2 Health and Well Being

The main issue raised by participants at the focus group in relation to health provision and services was the lack of women-only fitness facilities:

‘We want facilities for ladies only: that is something very basic that the Council could enable and they aren’t bothering.’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

‘We have been trying to organise women only swimming sessions at the local pool, but they have a male lifeguard on, that just defeats the purpose!’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

‘It’s not just for us: I have spoken to lots of Scottish ladies who would appreciate the same thing. We would like a couple of hour slots a week where it is only ladies in the swimming pool, and a female lifeguard’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

‘I am surprised that the Council aren’t already offering that – I’d certainly appreciate it and it doesn’t sound like it’d be that much work’

Female Citizens’ Panel Member

‘The other thing that they need to think about is the windows around the pool – anyone can just come and stare in and they do. I know that it isn’t just ethnic minority groups who want more privacy when they are swimming.’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

6.3 Social Work

The Asian Women’s Group has forged a good relationship with the Social Work Department at West Dunbartonshire Council, and the representatives at the focus group were confident they could rely on one particular individual:

‘The Scottish lady who works at the Council is very nice, she does everything for us and takes our side if we need her, but I do worry that if it wasn’t for her then nobody would listen to us’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

‘She fights for us and for the group which is good’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

‘Now we make sure that if anyone has a problem that they come to the Council with the social worker to make sure that it gets taken seriously. That is not ideal, but it does ensure that problems are dealt with.’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

6.4 Police

It was felt that ethnic minority and community relations with the Police force are generally improving through direct links and enhanced co-operation and communication between groups:

‘We have a link with the Police and they are invited to ethnic minority group meetings, and if there are any problems we have direct links with them.’

Male, The Ethnic Minority Association

‘Nowadays the relationship with the Police is much better: some of the Police are bad, just like in any place, but most people do trust them more now than they have done in the past’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

‘I have noticed an improvement over the past few years – there are more Police walking around and the majority of them do seem to care that minority groups are not targeted for harassment.’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

6.5 Front line Staff

While generally positive about West Dunbartonshire Council services which they had had experience of accessing, participants did raise concerns over a perceived lack of equality training for frontline staff, as touched on in Section 5.

In relation to health services the general attitude towards health care professionals was that they are satisfactory, but there are concerns about receptionists withholding appointments on racist grounds:

‘Generally the health services are fine. The doctors are fine, but sometimes the receptionists can be strange with you – they don’t give you any appointments when you speak and they hear your accent’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

A related anecdotal incident occurred within West Dunbartonshire Council when a woman from an ethnic minority tried to complain about the state of her Council-owned flat:

‘There’s a friend of mine who used to come here everyday to complain about the condition of her Council house. It’s disgusting, covered with bugs and damp. She came here nearly everyday and told the person on the desk what the problem was. That person would never even take a note. Eventually, after 3 years, her social worker (a white woman) came with her, and the call was logged. They told her they’d never heard that she’d come in to complain once. The guy at the front desk used to put his head down and ignore her completely.’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

Similar incidents were cited involving Police officers:

‘There are problems with a small number of Police and Council workers who interact with the public who have racist attitudes and manufacture situations.’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

A member of the Citizens’ Panel recognised similar sectarian attitudes from a small number of Police officers in West Dunbartonshire:

‘It’s important to realise that there are also Protestant and Catholic sections of society that are discriminated against by Police and some Council workers. I agree that there are some racist Police on the force, and there are also some sectarian Police on the force. This is something that should be dealt with, although I don’t know who has responsibility for it.’

Male Citizens’ Panel Member

It was acknowledged that problems of this kind, while unacceptable, are rare and are perpetrated by a small number of Council workers and Police officers:

‘I think that the same thing happens everywhere – it is only a few ‘bad apples’ in the Police or in the Council, and that means that many people get blamed, which is not fair. However it is an issue that needs to be recognised, because it means that people don’t trust whole organisations’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

It was suggested by a member of the Citizens’ Panel that the reason people from ethnic minorities are reluctant to complain about unacceptable service is because they do not know how to access the help they need:

‘There are complaints procedures that should stop things like that happening. But people don’t always know the best way to access the help they need, and so they fall between the gaps.’

Female Citizens’ Panel Member

‘That’s certainly part of the problem: one part is that you can’t access the help you need because of the person on the front desk, but you don’t know how to get past him because there isn’t enough information available’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

A suggestion for how to combat these issues was that a higher number of ethnic minority staff should be employed by the Council to ensure services are available to all citizens in the area. It was noted that very few members of ethnic minorities are represented on the Council staff, and there is confusion as to whether this is due to racism or other factors:

'I think that if the Council put more ethnic minority employees on at the front desk that would help. It's always been white people: I have never spoken to anyone from an ethnic minority in the Council.'

Male Citizens' Panel Member

'There are very few people from ethnic minorities who work for the Council, that's why we never see them!'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

7. The Voluntary Sector

Initially this section of the discussion focussed on the groups represented around the table and the positive effect which dedicated groups can have on supporting vulnerable individuals through disseminating relevant information, accessing services and bringing communities into communication with one another:

‘Since we have established the Asian Women’s Group we have met a lot of people and spread a lot of information so that people from ethnic minorities and the rest of the community come into contact with one another more frequently, and there’s a support network in place so that ethnic minorities do not hide in a segregated area.’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

The benefits offered to and by the Council were also recognised, and the funding streams which the Council offered were greatly appreciated, as well as their advice and guidance with funding applications:

‘We have approximately 25 – 35 women who visit regularly now, and we hold meetings to discuss events and issues to which we invite the Council and other organisations’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

‘We are applying for funding at the moment and a woman from the Council is helping us to do this at the moment. We have been helped by Social Work to know what grants and funding is out there for us, and they are also helping us apply for them.’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

Voluntary organisations which participants had found particularly useful were the Citizens’ Advice Bureau (CAB) and the Clydebank Voluntary Service (CVS). The main benefits cited by participants were advocacy and information services offered by both:

‘The CAB is also very helpful, they help with advocacy and finances. I think that the CAB is one of the most useful organisations because you can go and access such a wide variety of services from them.’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

‘There is also the Clydebank Voluntary Service who help to set up forums and inform people about racial equality, and help with filling in forms and advocacy.’

Male, The Ethnic Minority Association

‘I think the Council fund CVS and the CAB and I think the funding is invaluable: both organisations do great jobs for many residents of Clydebank, ethnic minority or not.’

Male Citizens’ Panel Member

One suggestion for improving the services was to recruit more Asian and ethnic minority staff so that there was raised awareness of issues facing ethnic minorities, as well as attracting more 'customers' from these areas:

'I have noticed that there are very few Asians working for either organisation. It would be good if they could employ some because it means that more people from ethnic minorities would recognise it as a possible place to use.'

Female, The Asian Women's Group

8. The Council's Racial Equality Scheme

The final element of the discussion was the Council's Racial Equality Scheme. Initially participants were asked the extent of their awareness of the Scheme and how they had heard about it. Some were aware of the Scheme, but nobody present was aware of its specifics:

'I have heard of the Scheme through the literature that comes through the door'
Male Citizens' Panel Member

'I have heard the title, but I don't know the details of the Scheme'
Female, The Asian Women's Group

'I maybe saw some leaflets somewhere, and there are posters in the health centre'
Female, The Asian Women's Group

It was suggested that the information might be disseminated in a more targeted way to ensure comprehensive packs were delivered to relevant individuals and groups:

'You'd think that the Council might send out the information in packs to the groups, or consult with relevant groups!'
Male Citizens' Panel Member

A member of the Asian Women's Group was disappointed not to have been consulted and was enthusiastic to be included in future consultative exercises:

'If there is a Race Equality Scheme I haven't heard anything about it and we haven't been consulted as a group. It seems that they are missing opportunities to consult with minority groups'
Female, The Asian Women's Group

A member of the Ethnic Minority Association remembered being contacted to take part in a consultation exercise about the Scheme in 2006. However, he had never received any further information:

'When they were doing the mapping exercise, they were supposed to provide information to my group. It is more than two years later now, and I am still waiting for the information! Nothing ever seemed to come from the consultation we were asked to take part in.'
Male, The Ethnic Minority Association

It is greatly appreciated that Council representatives attend meetings to which they are invited. However it was felt that if members of ethnic minorities were to be invited to Council meetings they may have suggestions which might add to future initiatives:

‘Whenever we invite the Council to our group meetings, they do come along but they do not invite us back.’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

Other suggestions for the best way to consult with people from ethnic minorities included:

‘Go to religious places – people go to the Mosque for Friday prayers, so take information there and that will attract people to come to consultations’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

‘Or nursery schools and health centres too – anywhere where people need to go sometimes’

Female, The Asian Women’s Group

‘In my experience many ethnic people are involved in businesses – stick up posters in their shops or speak to business people about what needs done. If the Council gets in touch with these people they will get a more realistic idea of how many people are out there that they should be consulting with.’

Male, The Ethnic Minority Association

‘We pay Council tax like everyone else so they have our details on file, why not get in touch with us specifically and ask us for our opinions on issues and problems? That is a good first step.’

Male, The Ethnic Minority Association

Appendix 1
Focus Group Discussion Guide

West Dunbartonshire Council Race Equality Scheme

Focus Group Discussion Guide

<p>1. Introduction (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Welcome respondents</p> <p>Outline purpose of the discussion</p> <p>Emphasise confidentiality</p>
<p>2. Experience of living in West Dunbartonshire (10 minutes)</p>	<p>Views on West Dunbartonshire as a place to live for diverse communities</p> <p>Prompt: Community cohesion Access to jobs Access to services (Police, health, Council services)</p>
<p>3. The Council's Role (10 minutes)</p>	<p>What do you think the Council's role is in promoting equal opportunities?</p> <p>Prompt: Equal access to services for all Remove barriers Respond to communication needs</p> <p>What do you think the Council should be doing that it isn't at present?</p> <p>Prompt: Providing more information in translation Encouraging uptake of services among equalities/ BME groups</p>
<p>4. Access to Services (15 minutes)</p>	<p>Refer back to any issues raised in Section 2 in relation to accessing services.</p> <p>Are there access problems for BME residents to any of the following services?</p> <p>What can the agencies concerned do to help improve access to services for all, irrespective of ethnic origin?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life long learning – Education • Health • Provision of public services (housing, social work and transport)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being part of a community (social inclusion) • Justice and the law • Business support • Support networks and organisations • Poverty • Being active – volunteering
<p>5. Voluntary Sector (10 minutes)</p>	<p>What do you think voluntary sector organisations should do to support the minority ethnic sector?</p> <p>Prompt: Practical support Access to funding</p>
<p>6. The Council's Race Equality Scheme 2008-2011 (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Aware the Council had a Race Equality Scheme?</p> <p>Views on the Scheme:</p> <p>Overall, do you feel the scheme accurately reflects the needs of BME communities?</p>
<p>7. Close (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Summary next stages</p> <p>Thank respondents and close</p>