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Submission To: **The Race Equality Commissioner**

Submitted By: **The Management Committee at Ellesmere Children's Centre**

Ellesmere Children Centre (ECC) is an award winning multi cultural educational establishment who would like to submit evidence of our experience of systemic racism.

We would like to raise the following issues:

- Lack of resources for children in areas of socioeconomic deprivation.
- Differential treatment in obtaining community buildings as an asset.
- Lack of partnership from SCC to support black staff seconded from the LEA.
- Inadequate funding for early years children given their complexities.

Ellesmere Children's centre was established in 1996 specifically after consultation with the local community. Within the consultation the community called for nursery provision that was accessible, affordable whilst maintaining educational quality and delivering culturally appropriate services. It was essential that appointed staff were reflective of the local community including support provided for multi lingual families.

Within the LEA at that time and to present day there are limited early years educational services that has this rich professional reflection representing wider society. Members of the local and wider communities in Burngreave face continuous challenges, that include

the effects of poverty, mental health, depression, eating disorders, debt, and all the characteristics associated with being in the top 1% deprived areas in the country.

“87 council wards in the UK have a majority of children living in households defined as ‘in poverty.’ One of those is Burngreave”.Burngreave Messenger- 19th March 2018

Mental health problems, anger issues, anxiety and depression are rampant in our area this has been accelerated during covid.

Bearing in mind factors of inequality and the implication of structural racism we began our journey in partnership with SCC. A black manager was employed and seconded to run the service with a voluntary management committee. The budget given at the start of the project was £1800 from the Tutor trust. The project was set-up to fail and SCC withdrew their development worker six weeks into the conception. There was no funding or resources and we only had two staff members at that time. However, under the manager’s leadership and many setbacks we have striven to maintain early excellence for over 20 years. We have received Ofsted Outstanding twice in 2014 (the first within the area) and in November 2018. We have numerous awards and received nursery world recognition.

Sadly the relationship with SCC has been stressful since ECC conception and continued development. The committee believe we have experienced the effects of differential treatment displayed by various officers in SCC. This has boarded on intimidation, racialised bullying and harassment on members of staff and the management board. Negotiations had been on-going for over 20 years to secure a full lease from Sheffield City Council. We have had several drafts of the lease but SCC refused to give a fair lease leading to the loss of a grant bid in 2006 of £165,000 because we could not provide copies of the lease. This was despite the funding body holding the funds for 2 years. These uncertainties have added pressure to the boards’ role and responsibilities and indeed some members of the board have resigned fearing reprisal from SCC affecting their own employment status.

In 2014 SCC offered the sale of ECC which at this time was in a severe state of disrepair and demise. The agreement was made but then silence fell and we could not get a response from SCC for several more years to come. This was to continue until our Local MP and councillor investigated our concerns. (Copy of letter can be provided). However another 3 years passed which resulted in an agreement set out by SCC in which our solicitor said in 20 years as a legal conveyancer he had never seen such caveats in an agreement. (Copy of sale with caveats can be provided) In June 2017, the Management Committee decided in good faith to invest significant funds taken from their charity reserves. This was alongside of Capital funds from the DfE for renovation and extension of an old caretaker's house and the entire floor of the upstairs building. This was after ECC independently and successfully maintained the ground floor for over 20 years. However we were still not provided with the full cost of the outstanding repairs. Leaving us to cover the new electrical wiring, fire points and emergency lighting This was not covered in the bid. (Further information is available for clarification).

The adjoining and dilapidated caretaker's house has now been renovated to better serve Ellesmere Community and families. The Emosi Centre was established with independent funding to support children social and emotional well-being. This was no small commitment or investment but a necessary response to the serious and extensive gap of transcultural care. We view the need for therapeutic development for children, families, parents and carers with partnership and commitments to the wider city locally and nationally to be crucial.

The needs as we see it....

Urgent need for special needs support and family support services from a transcultural approach.

Recognising these needs, which serve to exclude adults and children from wider participation in community life and in the development of economic independence.

Specific services need to be planned for and provided such as

Therapeutic care, appropriate resources, and early years practitioners who are culturally competent to combat the continued marginalisation of this rich diverse community.

The immediate need due to the current pandemic needed are increased resources as we have had no early years intervention services, no MAST support and no Speech and language for the children in our care. Parents have noticed the lack of engagement with health visiting team during this time who have not engaged with families during the pandemic and complaints have been submitted to health watch.

Questions:

How are decision made regarding funding for early year provision for multi-racial families in areas of deprivation?

How many black leaders are there within Sheffield city council early years provision including maintained nursery schools?

Who is able to obtain a building as a community asset after what period of time?

How many black leaders have a voice as part of the directorate in education?

How does SCC support cultural competence in the delivery of services for children and families in areas of high deprivation?

Is there a need for social justice leadership in early years provision?

What training is given in early years in regards to race and the effects for children and families within the last 5 years?

Submitted by :Ellesmere Management Committee