

Wales Race Forum
10:00, Wednesday 23 March 2022

Agenda

1. Welcome and introductions
2. An Anti-racist Wales Action Plan Development Work Update
3. Vaccine Equity Update
4. Welsh Language Race Terminology
5. New 111 First Model
6. Any Other Business

Participants

Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice
Abyd Quinn Aziz, Race Alliance Wales
Aled Edwards, Cytun
Alicja Zalesinska, Tai Pawb
Andrew Charles, Welsh Government
Andrew Ogun, BLM Gwent
Anirban Mukhopadhyay, Kiran
Catrin Awoyemi, Welsh Government
Catrin Dowling, Welsh Government
Chrisan Kamalan, Welsh Government
Dr Jo Mower, Welsh Government
Ellie Cook, Welsh Government
Faith Walker, Race Alliance Wales
Helal Uddin, EYST
Isaac Blake, Romani Cultural & Arts Company
Lowri Roberts, Welsh Government
Lyndon Evans, Welsh Government
Mymuna Soleman, Privilege Cafe
Nkechi Allen Dawson, Mentee, Equal Power, Equal Voice Programme
Patrick Daly, Welsh Government
Professor Robert Moore, NWREN
Professor Uzo Iwobi, Race Council Cymru
Riaz Hassan, RCCC for Swansea and NPT
Selima Bahadur, EYST
Sue Leake, Welsh Government
Sue Vincent-Jones, Welsh Government
Suzanne Duval, Diverse Cymru

Item 1 - Welcome and introductions

1. The Minister for Social Justice opened the meeting by welcoming attendees.
2. The Minister attended a march in Cardiff to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on Sunday 20 March. One of the main themes was that refugees are welcome here in Wales.
3. The Welsh Government has published “Together for a Safer Future”, a long-term plan to live with coronavirus safely. <https://gov.wales/wales-long-term-covid-19-transition-pandemic-endemic>
4. Attendees were directed to the Welsh Government’s “Claim What’s Yours” campaign, which encourages citizens to claim benefits to which they are entitled. <https://gov.wales/claim-whats-yours>
5. The Minister thanked attendees for their help in responding to the deepening humanitarian crisis in Ukraine follow the unprovoked invasion by Russia. It was noted the Welsh Government stands in solidarity with Ukraine and her people. Wales’ links with the country are long and deep, and we are ready to work together to offer any practical support and humanitarian assistance that we can.
6. The Minister recognised the racial discrimination faced by some Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic persons as they have attempted to leave Ukraine.
7. Attendees were directed to Welsh Government guidance on support for the people of Ukraine. <https://gov.wales/ukraine-support-people-affected>
8. Solidarity between minority groups was noted. <https://www.dw.com/en/ukraines-roma-activists-at-work-for-their-community/a-61032799>
9. The continuing support for refugees from Afghanistan and Syria was recognised and the Minister drew attention to a video showcasing the role of the Urdd in supporting Afghan refugees. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cHYEQReIYIk>

Item 2 - An Anti-racist Wales Action Plan Development Work Update

10. The Race Equality Action Plan has been renamed to An Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan in light of feedback that anti-racism should be at the Plan’s forefront.
11. The Steering Group met on Tuesday 1 March to consider a near-final draft of the Plan. Members proposed some amendments and these are in hand.

12. A number of different actions are close to being finalised and the team is in the process of approaching each Minister for their formal sign-off.
13. Progress is good and it is expected the timetable for publication will be agreed in the coming days.
14. The next meeting of the Steering Group has been arranged for Wednesday 13 April and the arrangements for publication of the Plan will be discussed.
15. Questions regarding the Plan should be directed to Sue Vincent-Jones and Kate Rose.

Item 3 – Vaccine Equity Update

16. The vaccine programme remains crucial in boosting immunity and helping to limit the spread of variants within Wales. It has been incredibly successful. More people than ever before, faster than ever before, have been vaccinated.
17. Forum members were urged to encourage take-up of the vaccine within communities and to refute strongly misinformation.
18. Vaccine uptake rates compare favourably internationally and whilst inequalities continue, good progress has been made in reaching those we traditionally struggle to engage, for example, people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. We have seen the narrowing of the gap in coverage over time.
19. Vaccine equity has been a key principle of Wales' vaccination programme. The 'Nobody Left Behind' campaign set out in the autumn and winter Covid-19 Vaccination Strategy is built on the premise that everyone should have fair access and fair opportunity to take up the offer of a vaccination.
20. It is vital that a significant proportion of Wales' population is immunised in order to ensure protection against this virus. However vaccine equity is not only important from a public health perspective, it's also a matter of social justice. We know that many of those under-served groups in our communities have been disproportionately affected by the effects of Coronavirus.
21. Action to ensure equitable vaccine uptake is important as the health harms from COVID-19 have not affected people in Wales equally. People from Minority Ethnic communities and people from communities with socioeconomic disadvantage have disproportionately higher death rates, hospitalisation and admission to critical care than people from less deprived communities and of White ethnicity.
22. Attitudes to vaccination in Wales have been positive, however vaccination acceptance is not equal across all of society. Surveys of peoples' attitudes and acceptance to COVID-19 vaccination in the UK show that there is greater

vaccine hesitancy in people from Minority Ethnic communities than those from White ethnic groups.

23. To confirm the Welsh Government's commitment to vaccine equity, a Vaccine Equity Strategy was published in early 2021, and in March 2021 a Vaccine Equity Committee was established jointly by the Welsh Government and Public Health Wales. Its aim is to identify barriers and causes of hesitancy to vaccine take-up and advise on additional support to address those barriers within under-served communities.
24. As vaccination remains an individual choice, which is very important, the Vaccination Equity Committee plays an important role in ensuring that people can access the vaccine equally and can make an informed choice about accepting the vaccine. The barriers to vaccination very often come down to accessibility and or acceptability and the Committee has focused on both of these issues to advise health boards on further actions that could be taken to address barriers.
25. Data has been an incredible enabler in this process – never before have we had such rich data on the take-up rates and engagement within vaccination programmes. While it is not perfect, it's a huge step forward. It's allowed the Vaccine Equity Committee to identify groups who have been left behind and to interrogate the research to understand why that might be.
26. We've seen a huge amount of innovation from health boards and other to engage with under-served communities, examples of which can be found in the attached PowerPoint presentation. Collaboration and partnership working has been pivotal as interventions and actions need to be tailored to the specific concerns of population groups.
27. The data is telling us the narrowing of the inequality gaps in coverage of two doses of vaccine has slowed in recent months.
28. The gaps in coverage of two doses between the combined Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups and combined White ethnic groups have remained stable.
29. Coverage varies between individual ethnic groups, with lowest coverage currently in the Unknown, Black African, Black Caribbean and Mixed groups.
30. The gaps in coverage of booster between the combined Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups and combined White ethnic groups have also remained stable in most age groups, though increased in the under 50 age cohorts.
31. To some degree the statistics are positive as we've been able to see the narrowing of the gaps in coverage. However the stabilisation of those gaps now are concerning as it suggests we still might not be reaching elements of our communities and we need to find out why that is. What is preventing some of our Black Asian and Minority Ethnic communities from engaging in

vaccination – is it accessibility or is there an acceptability issue that we need to address through tailored messaging and engagement?

32. Our commitment to the “no one left behind’ principle will be re-affirmed in the new strategy.
33. We aim to continue to engage with under-served communities to re-affirm the offer of a COVID-19 vaccination. We also aim to continue to work with health boards, partner organisations, community voices and those with lived experience to implement further interventions to narrow the equity gaps in vaccine cover in Wales.
34. There will be a focussed discussion at the next Programme Board meeting on the enhanced surveillance report and the fact that the gaps have stabilised and even widened in some age groups.
35. The Vaccine Equity Committee is likely to be commissioned to undertake a review and deep-dive exercise to understand what is prevent young people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities taking up the offer of vaccination.
36. The team is now also working on all vaccine programmes, not just COVID-19 vaccines. Inclusion and engagement is a key principle in that work.
37. It was noted the apparent disengagement of young people can be seen as part of the general disengagement of people from mainstream society, of which there is substantial literature.
38. It was felt that take-up rates in the 5-11 year old group would be higher, but there are concerns by parents. Health boards continue to engage with parents and work on this issue is ongoing.
39. Fears of the vaccines by Black and Asian people and the lack of trust of treatments has come through in the behavioural insights work, and at local work taken by health boards. Healthboards have put things in place to address that, such as holding Q&A sessions, holding specific clinics providing longer appointment times in recognition of fears of vaccines. Trusted voices have been used to share information about the vaccination
40. It was noted that invites for the booster for those over 75 years old are being issued.

Item 4 – Welsh Language Race Terminology

41. Recent feedback to Welsh Government has highlighted that there is a shortage of suitable and modern terms in Welsh in order to be able to discuss race and ethnicity.

42. Therefore, a group of language experts and representatives of various minority ethnic communities have come together to discuss a number of Welsh terms in the field. Bangor University have been asked to chair this group.
43. The group is now ready to seek the views of Welsh-speaking people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, and this will mainly be done through an online questionnaire. The questionnaire will enable open and honest discussions about race in Welsh.
44. The questionnaire will be issued to Forum Members when it is available next week.
45. Learners of the Welsh language will be able to get involved and the Welsh Government have links with the National Centre for Learning Welsh (<https://learnwelsh.cymru/>) to cover this.
46. Once responses have been received, the group will reconvene to consider them and will refine terminologies.
47. Terminology databases used by schools, public sector bodies and others will be updated.

Item 5 – New 111 First Model

48. A new 111 Service went live in Cardiff & Vale University Health Board on 16 March 2022.
49. Wales now has a consistent first point of 24/7 access for people to call for health information & advice, and to access urgent primary care.
50. The 111 service prioritises care for those with the greatest need first and aims at reducing duplication and hand-offs to ensure that the patient gets to the right part of the NHS system first time.
51. The service aims to allow people with urgent care needs to be assessed, advised or treated as close to home as possible, and ensure people with an emergency care need are able to return home, avoiding a hospital stay unless clinically necessary.
52. The service was set up in response to challenges around overcrowding and the need for social distancing in emergency departments.
53. Six goals have been developed for urgent and emergency care to help achieve the best possible clinical outcomes, value and experience for patients and staff involved in the delivery of care:
 - i. Co-ordination, planning and support for people at greater risk of needing urgent or emergency care

- ii. Signposting to the right place, first time
 - iii. Access to clinically safe alternatives to admission to hospital
 - iv. Rapid response in a physical or mental health crisis
 - v. Optimal hospital care following admission
 - vi. Home-first approach and reduce the risk of readmission
54. The 111 First/Clinical assessment streaming services model is being taken forward as part of goal ii, but will link with other models as part of a whole system approach to developing a more integrated health and care system.
55. A Universal Guidance on Communication with Vulnerable Groups Task and Finish Group has been established and its intention is to develop guidance for 111 call handlers to communicate effectively with vulnerable groups, and support all people to access urgent care services.
56. The next round of engagement meetings are being planned to sense-check draft call handler guidance with key stakeholders.
57. Diverse Cymru are in discussions with the National Collaborative Commissioning Unit regarding the cultural competency training of the 111 call handlers to ensure the cultural sensitivity of communication, although work has not yet commenced.
58. Dr Jo Mower offered to meet with members and their groups individually to talk through the service in detail. Members wishing to take up this offer should contact Jo.

Item 6 - Any Other Business

59. The Minister noted the cost of living crisis and suggested the issue could be discussed at the next Wales Race Forum meeting.
60. The Minister drew attention to the Welsh Government's announcement that unpaid carers in Wales will receive a £500 payment – which isn't taxable – to recognise their efforts during the pandemic. <https://gov.wales/unpaid-carers-wales-receive-500-payment-part-29m-investment>
61. The Minister closed the meeting by thanking forum members for their ongoing hard work and dedication to building stronger, more cohesive communities.

ACTION: Sue/colleagues to clarify whether the offer for free travel for refugees (<https://gov.wales/wales-offers-free-rail-travel-for-ukrainian-refugees>) applies to refugees from all countries and how to access this support.