

Wales Race Forum

10:00 – 11.00am Thursday 21st September 2023 – MS Teams

Attendance

Name - Organisation
Chair, Minister for Social Justice & Chief Whip, Jane Hutt MS
Representatives from:
Race Alliance Wales (RAW)
Swansea University
Gypsies, Travellers Wales (GTW)
Cardiff Third Sector Council (C3SC)
North Wales Regional Equality Network (NWREN)
The Knowledge-based Intercommunity Relationship (KIRAN)
Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN)
Networking for World Awareness of Multicultural Integration (NWAMI)
Wales Trades Union Congress (TUC)
Chinese in Wales Association
Race Council Cymru
Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales (EYST)
Black Association Women Stepping Out (BAWSO)
Romani Cultural & Arts Company
Wales Equalities Network
Diverse Cymru
Race Alliance Wales
WG OFM Cabinet Division
WG Equalities and Human Rights
WG Health Social Care and Early Years
WG ArWAP Policy Team
WG Race Faith and Belief Policy Team
WG Cabinet Division
WG Education, Culture and Welsh Language
WG Bus Policy Team

Meeting notes

Discussion

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Minister (MSJCW) welcomed everyone to the third full meeting of the year and expressed appreciation for the recent Windrush 75 celebrations.

Individuals were encouraged to engage in the upcoming webinars by the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan Implementation Team and to contact the Equality and Human Rights team for further details.

2. Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP) Update - followed by Q&A and Discussions

An update on the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan by the Head of the Implementation team:

The Welsh Government is committed to an anti-racist nation by 2030. The ongoing work includes engaging stakeholders, regional forums for community input, a new governance structure, mandatory teaching of diverse histories, initiatives for workforce diversity, and an accountability framework.

Regular updates, policy-focused subgroups, and seeking public feedback through webinars and an enquiry by the Equalities and Social Justice Committee seeking feedback on plan implementation by October 6th. The annual report due to be published will showcase progress.

A representative of (NWREN) raised concerns about a lack of transparency and collaboration among North Wales local authorities regarding their actions and communication on anti-racism initiatives, highlighting a disconnect between Councillors' activities and the awareness of Equality Officers in these authorities.

A representative of Romani Cultural & Arts Company voiced concerns about the lack of involvement of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities in anti-racist efforts in Wales. He highlighted the Romani Cultural Arts Company's expertise in creating a digital education pack for the Holocaust Education Centre but noted the limited funding support from the Welsh Government compared to the UK Government. Isaac stressed the need for more transparency in decision-making and genuine engagement with the community for effective anti-racist initiatives in Wales.

A representative from RCC highlighted a concern about local authorities' lack of awareness and seriousness regarding the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan. She mentioned working with venues across Wales, revealing that many were unaware of

the plan's existence, suggesting a need for increased accountability among council leaders and chief executives through the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA).

MSJCW emphasised the crucial role of Local Government in anti-racist efforts and plans to engage with WLGA's cabinet members on equality.

MSJCW committed to ongoing discussions and collaborations, aiming for the inclusion of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities in Welsh initiatives, mentioning a WG representative's involvement in this effort.

A representative of Romani Cultural & Arts Company emphasised the need for a shift in attitude within certain offices, highlighting the lack of lived experience and expertise among some Government Personnel concerning Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities. He advocated for a serious conversation to address the disparity in funding and support, aiming to hold the Welsh Government accountable for not adequately supporting the Gypsy Roma Traveller community.

MSJCW recognised the concerns and indicated a commitment to arrange an urgent meeting to address the points raised.

3. Diversity in Political Parties – followed by Q&A and discussions

A representative of Race Alliance Wales shared their presentation including a draft brief regarding Diversity and Inclusion Strategies for Political Parties in the context of the upcoming Welsh Senate election in 2026.

The draft outlines recommendations, including a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, mandatory equality and diversity training for candidates, robust standards and grievance procedures, annual diversity audits, voluntary targets for candidates with protected characteristics, expanded mentoring schemes, accessible candidate information, anonymised recruitment, diversity questions in interviews, and the publication of anonymised candidate diversity data, among others.

MSJCW highlighted the importance of diversity in the upcoming Welsh Senate reform, emphasising the need for all political parties to actively contribute to a more diverse representation. A representative from the Women's Equality Network joined the discussion, acknowledging the presentation and the significance of aiming for a diverse new Senedd that truly represents Wales.

A representative of the Women's Equality Network praised the collaborative effort in crafting practical measures for enhancing diversity in political representation, acknowledging work. She emphasised the need to push forward with these strategies, expressing optimism about significant changes in Wales's political landscape by 2026/2027. She expressed gratitude for the ongoing support and anticipated working with the new director of the Women's Equality Network.

Race Equality Wales extended an invitation for further discussion, offering to share the recommendations again and encouraging any thoughts or queries from the group.

MSJCW requested Race Equality Wales share the presentation with all members after the meeting.

4. Bus Bill Consultation Update – Followed by Q&A and discussions

MSJCW introduced the next agenda item from the bus legislation team who will discuss the upcoming legislation concerning bus services, ensuring alignment with the Anti-racist Wales action plan.

The Bus Bill Manager outlined the need for a new passenger-centred bus system in Wales, emphasising the challenges of the current deregulated system. The proposed legislation aims to establish a more integrated, sustainable, and accessible bus service network under the Welsh Government's oversight, requiring collaboration with stakeholders and addressing the impacts on protected characteristics for an inclusive transport system.

A representative from the North Wales Regional Equality Network (NWREN) highlighted the need for comprehensive bus policy integration with education, emphasising the impact on individuals' access to educational opportunities due to inadequate bus services, especially in deprived areas in North Wales.

A representative from RCC highlighted challenges faced by diverse communities, especially Muslim women, regarding buses passing them at stops and suggested deploying the Anti-Racism Wales Action Plan to ensure bus companies adhere to the Equality Act and inclusivity in picking up passengers.

A representative of Romani Cultural & Arts Company raised concerns around the inadequate accessibility to public transport for Gypsy and Traveller sites, urging a review by the Welsh Government to identify sites lacking nearby bus services and address the challenges faced by these communities in accessing mainstream society.

A representative of Networking for World Awareness of Multicultural Integration (NWAMI) highlighted concerns regarding secondary school students lacking proper identification and facing scepticism from bus drivers, suggesting the need for a government-introduced ID system to validate their age and student status for smoother travel experiences.

MSJCW highlighted driver training for anti-racism and emphasised the commitment to delivering on this important aspect within contractual arrangements, urging follow-up on this crucial lever for progress.

5. Any Other Business

A representative of Wales Trades Union Congress (TUC) emphasised the urgency of connecting with the workforce and employers to ensure adequate training for frontline staff, highlighting the responsibility of both parties in upholding fairness and equality in public service roles. They are actively collaborating with affiliates and frontline workers, intending to integrate anti-racism action plans within union memberships, aiming to address and condemn discriminatory behaviours, especially within public services.

A representative of the ArWAP Policy Team stressed the need for regional conveners across Wales to boost engagement with local authorities, seeing these roles as crucial for improving local delivery. They noted that the current plan covers the first two years, with intentions to develop new goals and actions after June 2024, aiming to co-produce these strategies with input from regional forums.

MSJCW thanks everyone for their contribution and attendance, meeting ends.