



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Welsh Government Board Meeting: 9 June 2023

Minutes from the Board meeting held on 9 June 2023.

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See minutes.

2. Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan update – addressing the challenges.

[No papers – round table discussion with reference documents supplied]

3. Update on the work of the Education, Social Justice and Welsh Language Group

[Paper Item 3]

4. Programme for Government Update

[Paper Item 4]

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Present

- Permanent Secretary (Chair)
- Gareth Lynn
- Meena Upadhyaya
- Aled Edwards
- Judith Paget
- Reg Kilpatrick
- Tim Moss
- Jo-Anne Daniels
- Tracey Burke
- Amelia John
- Gawain Evans
- Peter Kennedy
- Zakhyia Begum
- David Richards
- Des Clifford

In attendance

- Professor Emmanuel Ogbonna
- Usha Ladwa-Thomas
- Riaz Hassan
- Polina Cowley
- Catrin Sully

Apologies

- Helen Lentle
- Andrew Slade
- Carys Williams

Secretariat

- Alison Rees

1. Welcome/Current Issues

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and noted the apologies received. The notes of the meeting of 28 April were agreed. The Chair thanked Zakhyia Begum for sharing the notes of Shadow Board's meeting of 26 June.

1.2 The Chair congratulated Judith Paget on her permanent appointment to the role of Director General Health and Social Services and NHS Wales Chief Executive.

1.3 The Chair updated the Board on a number of current issues including pay remit negotiations, preparations for the COVID Public Inquiry and work on preparing Welsh Government's annual accounts. The Chair also noted that transition arrangements are in place for managing the Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru while the party elects a new leader.

2. Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan update – addressing the challenges

2.1 The Chair welcomed Professor Emmanuel Ogbonna to the meeting and invited the Professor to share with the Board his thoughts on the challenges in achieving the goals of the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (the Plan) and what Welsh Government can do to overcome these challenges.

2.2 Professor Ogbonna began by identifying three key questions he believes are key to eradicating racism in Wales. First, how to convince people that institutional racism exists. Secondly, how to get people to engage with the type of change needed to eradicate racism. Thirdly, how to convince those in power that the way to achieve fairness is not to be colour blind, as this means that you do not see the outcomes of colour.

2.3 Tim Moss highlighted the importance of Welsh Government analysing its policies through an anti-racist perspective and having access to disaggregated data to support policy making. As an employer Tim stressed that Welsh Government needs to see differences in its recruitment outcomes.

2.4 David Richards noted the need for a more fundamental understanding of how institutional racism works.

2.5 Reflecting on her own personal experiences Meena Upadhyaya addressed the importance of monitoring and tackling racism in public places and translating data on lived experiences into positive action.

2.6 Reg Kilpatrick highlighted the role that local authorities both as large employers across Wales and service providers have in addressing racism.

2.7 Judith Paget noted the enormity of the challenge and posited whether more and/or different actions need to be taken to bring about the necessary changes. Reflecting on the NHS in Wales, Judith noted work underway to tackle inequalities in access to services and highlighted the challenges in addressing health inequalities.

2.8 Gareth Lynne noted the alarming statistics on racism in society and asked how Welsh Government as an organisation can tackle this issue.

2.9 The Chair invited Professor Ogbonna to respond to the comments made. The Professor highlighted the challenge in tackling racism in organisations and

areas where there are small Black and Minority Ethnic populations. In the case of organisations Professor Ogbonna suggested that Welsh Government could apply indirect pressure to force organisations to change. Professor Ogbonna added that it government cannot change personal attitudes and that these can take a long time to change. Instead government should focus on changing attitudes at an organisational level.

2.10 The Chair invited Zakhyia Begum to comment on behalf of the Shadow Board. Zakhyia noted the complex nature of the issues and that trauma caused by racism can be passed down through generations. The Shadow Board suggested that anti-racism training should be mandatory for staff in public sector and funded bodies. Reflecting on experiences amongst the disability community, Shadow Board cautioned against the dangers of glorifying those who have experienced issues, so called 'inspiration porn', as this can create an 'other' status.

2.11 Amelia John noted that all Welsh Government Senior Civil Servants now have performance objectives linked to tackling racism.

2.12 The Chair invited Usha Ladwa-Thomas and Riaz Hassan to comment. Usha advised the Board not to underestimate the challenge in tackling racism in Wales and asked the Board to keep in mind the key questions it needs to ask given its role in Welsh Government. Riaz commented that although Wales is geographically a small country it's has a large global footprint and is providing international leadership in tackling racism. Riaz highlighted the importance of ensuring that policy making takes account of lived experience.

2.13 The Chair thanked all for their comments and invited Professor Ogbonna to make any final comments. The Professor noted the trauma that asking individuals to share their experiences of racism repeatedly, particularly if sharing does not lead to positive action. The Professor noted that trauma can be intergenerational and shared throughout communities. The professor concluded by noting his excitement at the work underway to tackle racism in Wales and the

commitment of the Welsh Government.

3. Update on the work of the Education, Social Justice, and Welsh Language Group

3.1 The Chair invited Jo-Anne Daniels, Director General Education, Social Justice and Welsh Language to present to Board on the work of the Group. In her presentation Jo-Anne provided an overview of the group together with the key priorities and challenges for the Group.

3.2 The Chair invited Board members to comment on the presentation.

3.3 Meena Upadhyaya noted the funding pressures facing the High Education sector and queried the impact these are having on the sustainability of the sector. Meena also asked for further information on the impact of the new curriculum on attainment. On the issue of funding for the Higher Education sector, Jo-Anne commented that broadly speaking the sector receives the bulk of its funding from student fees (both home and international students) and research income; each of these areas are under financial pressure. Jo-Anne added that while there is no cause for alarm currently, the sector is having to make trade-offs owing to financial pressures. Regarding the new curriculum, Jo-Anne responded that while it is too soon to measure the impact of the new curriculum, one of its objectives is to narrow the attainment gap.

3.4 The Chair invited Zakhyia to comment on behalf of the Shadow Board. Zakhyia thanked Jo-Anne for an excellent presentation. Shadow Board noted how passionate colleagues working in the Group are about their work and noted the challenges they face. Reflecting on reforms to Additional Learning Needs, Shadow Board noted that ongoing challenges those with additional learning needs face both within education and in their everyday lives.

3.5 The Chair closed discussions thanking Jo-Anne for her presentation, noting the value this discussion brings to Board's understanding of the complexity and capacity of the organisation.

4. Programme for Government update

4.1 The Chair welcomed Catrin Sully to the meeting and invited her to update Board on the delivery of the Programme for Government.

4.2 Gareth Lynn asked for clarification on the issues outlined in paragraph 2.6 the accompanying paper. Catrin responded that the First Minister has asked for the key deliverables recorded on BIRT to clearly set out the critical path to achieving the commitment by May 2026, currently only a small number of commitments do so. Catrin noted that for some areas, particularly those which are demand led, this can be problematic.

4.3 Meena Upadhyaya noted that a number of those commitments with a RAG rating of 'red' highlight resourcing as a pressure and asked if additional resources are expected. Jo-Anne Daniels reminded Board of the resourcing pressures experienced by non-PfG areas; Reg Kilpatrick agreed with this comment. Tim Moss added that having clearly articulated deliverables for Programme for Government and other commitments plays an essential role in helping the organisation to address its ability to deliver; Judith Paget agreed with this comment. The Chair noted that that resourcing pressures are being felt across the organisation and that action is being taken through a variety of routes.

4.4 The Chair invited Zakhyia Begum to comment on behalf of the Shadow Board. Zakhyia noted that Shadow Board found the revised format of the report very helpful in understand progress against commitments. Noting the pressures, Shadow Board queried whether there is an opportunity for Welsh Government to

prioritise given the finite resources available to it.

4.5 The Chair thanked all for their comments and closed the discussion.

5. AOB

5.1 No items of any other business were raised. The Chair thanked Board members and closed the meeting. Board will next meet on 14 July.

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