

**Faith Communities Forum
Minutes of the Meeting on 16 April 2018
Events Suite, Cathays Park**

Present:

Julie James AM, Leader of the House and Chief Whip	Deputy Chairperson
John Davies, Archbishop of Church in Wales	Church in Wales
Carol Wardman	Church in Wales
Elfed Godding	Evangelical Alliance Wales
Viv Bartlett	Bahá'í Council for Wales
Christine Abbas	Bahá'í Council for Wales
Aled Edwards	Churches Together in Wales
Gethin Rhys	Churches Together in Wales
Stanley Soffa	South Wales Jewish Representative Council
Lisa Gerson	South Wales Jewish Representative Council
Joga Singh	Sikh Council of Wales
Gurmit Singh Randhawa	Sikh Council of Wales
Dr Taikya David Morgan	Buddhist Council of Wales

Apologies:

First Minister	Chairperson
Philip Manghan	(Representative) Archbishop of Cardiff
Nordzin Pamo	Buddhist Council of Wales
Naran Patel	Hindu Council of Wales
Ahmed Darwish	Muslim Council for Wales
Saleem Kidwai	Muslim Council for Wales
Nirmala Pisavadia	Hindu Council of Wales
Peter Richards	Free Church Council of Wales

Presentations:

Rocio Cifuentes Director EYST
Ginger Wiegand, Project Manager, EYST

Presentations from Welsh Government Officials:

Sinead Gallagher
Steve Chapman

Welsh Government Officials:

Paul Dear	Head of Equality Team
Emma Small	Equality and Prosperity Division
Andrea Adams	Equality and Prosperity Division

Welcome and Introductions

The Leader of the House and Chief Whip (the 'Minister') welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Minister explained that the First Minister had urgent business that prevented him to attend this meeting.

The Minister welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Forum in 2018. She recorded her thanks to Jim Stewart and Surinder Channa, who had stepped down from the membership, for all their support and hard work as Forum members over the past years.

The Minister welcomed new members Joga Singh and Gurmit Singh, representing the Sikh Council of Wales.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were circulated to members in advance of the meeting. The minutes were agreed for accuracy.

Action Points from last meeting

A summary of the action points from the last meeting together with updates was sent to members in advance of the meeting. These were noted.

Matters Arising

Update: Faith and Community Cohesion Meeting of UK and Devolved Administrations.

The Minister told the Forum that she will Chair the next meeting of the Faith and Community Cohesion Meeting of UK and Devolved Administrations in Cardiff on 19 April. This will be the third meeting of the group. The Minister will share the outcomes of that meeting with the Forum at the next meeting.

Update: Review of the All Wales Missing Children Protocol

The Minister gave an update from the last meeting about the Welsh Government review of the All Wales Missing Children Protocol. The Minister for Children and Social Care and his officials have engaged in a number of meetings to discuss the issues put forward in The Children's Society report and have shared the Welsh Government position on safeguarding children who go missing from home or care.

A multi-agency Task and Finish Group has completed the draft 'All Wales Practice Guidance – safeguarding children missing from home or care' to be used in conjunction with new National Protection Procedures.

This draft practice guidance will be provided to Cardiff and the Vale Safeguarding Board who will undertake a formal consultation exercise as part of wider work to develop National Protection Procedures on behalf of ADSS Cymru and the Safeguarding Boards. The Welsh Government has provided funding to enable this work.

Recent Malicious Letter Campaign

The Minister addressed the matter of the recent malicious letter campaign aimed at Muslim communities. A number of “Punish a Muslim Day” letters were sent to Muslims in England. She confirmed that counter terrorism police are investigating the incident. As far as it is known, no letters were received in Wales. However, the letters received publicity in the press, and were spread widely on social media.

On 29 March the Minister wrote to Imams and their congregations in Wales with a message of solidarity. The letter was distributed to Mosques throughout Wales with the help of the Muslim Council of Wales, other Muslim stakeholders and the Community Cohesion Co-ordinators. The Minister said that the Welsh Government and the police take all reports of Islamophobia and hate crimes extremely seriously. We stand united and condemn the vile hatred expressed by a tiny minority.

Agenda Item 1 - Race, Poverty and Representation Conference on 20 March Feedback and Group Discussion: Rocio Cifuentes, Director EYST

Rocio gave a short outline of the work of EYST. EYST is funded by the Welsh Government to deliver the All Wales BAME Engagement Programme. This is a three year BAME engagement project. EYST will work with partners and other stakeholders to gather views and experiences to create an evidence base from which to positively influence Welsh Government policies and public services to better reflect and respond to the needs of BAME communities, in support of Welsh Government’s Strategic Equality Plan.

Following the last meeting, the Forum was invited to contribute to a Paper in preparation for the Race, Poverty and Representation Conference, organised by EYST on 20 March.

The conference was opened by Jenny Rathbone AM with over 100 delegates in attendance, from across Wales, including some Forum members. During the day, discussions were held to explore potential solutions to the following themes:

- 1) Racism & Islamophobia
- 2) Racism in Schools
- 3) Political Representation, and
- 4) Employment Discrimination/Poverty.

EYST will produce a Conference Paper, summarising the discussions on the day, with the aim of making recommendations for Welsh Government and other stakeholders at the Wales Race Forum meeting in May. The Minister will Chair that meeting.

During the discussion the following matters were raised:

- Islamophobia - there is a sense that people are enduring hate crimes and not reporting it.
- Positive ethnic role models should be imbedded in the school curriculum to reflect that 30% of people living in Cardiff are from multi-ethnic backgrounds.

- Welsh Government to take the lead in BAME representation at managerial level, appropriate employment opportunities for BAME post graduates, diversity in interview panels and political representation.
- It is important to see Welsh Government as a role model to work across with people from across all faiths.
- The malicious letters impacted on the Sikh communities too. Education about the different faiths in schools – there is a lot of ignorance about different faiths

The Forum members thanked EYST for their work done in the past few months.

Gethin Rhys and Nordzin Pamo are members of the education stakeholder group to consider how faith should be taught in schools in the future. The Minister said she will speak to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and asked for this to be added to the agenda at the next meeting.

The Minister said that the FM has asked her to conduct a Rapid Review of Gender Equality. This work is only just beginning but some initial ideas include: ‘blind’ applications to move to a neutral recruitment process; the need for a practical way to gather equality data; and wider roll out of unconscious bias training.

Members encouraged Welsh Government to make the wider public aware of the work of the Faith Communities Forum in promoting equality and influencing a wide range of Welsh Government policies.

Actions

- **To have an update on faith education at the next Forum meeting.**
- **Officials to consider how the work of the Faith Forum can be publicised**

Agenda Item 2 – Employability Plan:

Sinead Gallagher, Cross Government Employability Delivery Manager

Sinead explained the Employability Plan emphasises this Government’s commitment to social justice and equality of opportunity. Through the Plan, we are working to help individuals address personal barriers to work, but there are some institutional and structural barriers which need to be addressed at a national level.

Producing the Plan is the first step – now it’s out there we’ll be working closely with partners and stakeholders to make sure that we develop the actions carefully and in a way that works for local communities. This national Plan is a framework, but it’s through local delivery of services that we can really change people’s lives.

Background:

The Employability Plan is an inclusive, cross government approach which outlines actions under four key themes:

- ***Providing a individualised approach to employability support:*** rather than offering a wide range of specific programmes, we will instead provide bespoke

solutions to those in greatest need of employability support, and tailored support of varying intensity to all people looking for work;

- ***Underlining the responsibility of employers to up-skill their workers, support their staff and provide fair work:*** we will encourage employers to play their part in promoting healthy and inclusive workplaces and prioritising skills development so those in employment can thrive in work;
- ***Responding to current and projected skills gaps:*** we will use the levers at our disposal to match supply and demand for today's local, regional and national labour market.
- ***Preparing for a radical shift in the world of work:*** mindful of the rapid developments in automation, artificial intelligence and digitalisation, we are developing an education and training system that will prepare our nation for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

Targets

This Plan also sets ambitious targets; to eliminate the gap between Wales and UK for unemployment and economic inactivity, and to bring Welsh skills levels to the UK average in ten years.

In order to bring the economic inactivity rate in Wales in line with the UK average, we would need to move approximately 24,300 people into work (aged 16-64 excluding students and retirees).

To achieve this, we must reduce the number of people moving in and out of short term, unstable work. Our new employability support will achieve this by helping people into jobs which fit their ambitions and skills, rather than pushing people into the first available low paid role.

The Minister invited the Forum to consider ideas for further engagement. Are there particular groups or communities we should meet with? The Minister is interested to know about any employers who have demonstrated particularly good practice with regarding the welfare of their workforce.

During the discussion the following matters were raised:

- There is an untapped source of much needed skills within the refugee community.
- Cardiff Council is exploring a project working with qualified doctors as part of the re-settlement programme.
- Welsh Government are promoting a 'fair work' project
- There is a lot happening in Wales in the technology industry – but there are still barriers to recruit the people with the right skills.
- Welsh Government must use the levers available- to link WG funding to businesses and organisations where there is evidence of a commitment to drive forward diversity in the workplace.
- People who live in rural locations in Wales should not be disadvantaged to access high tech, high skilled employment

**Agenda Item 3 - Modern Slavery – recent developments:
Steve Chapman, Anti-Slavery Co-Ordinator**

The Minister explained that ‘Tackling Slavery’ is not a devolved responsibility and many of the levers rest with the UK Government. Nevertheless, we remain committed to tackling slavery and in many ways, Wales is leading the way in the UK.

She explained that Steve has attended an earlier meeting in 2016 and she had invited him to update the Forum on recent developments in this important work.

Steve said, we have established the Wales Anti-Slavery Leadership Group to provide strategic leadership and guidance on how we tackle slavery in Wales and to provide the best possible support for survivors.

He explained that we have shared the learning from Wales with other partners including, UK Government Departments and with the UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, and we are starting to gain international recognition for our work on this agenda.

Slavery is a complex crime to investigate and prosecute which is why we have worked with our partners to develop the Organised Crime and Modern Slavery Course. This a three day joint training provision for Law Enforcement Senior Investigating Officers and Crown Prosecutors and Crown Advocates.

Until recently, slavery was a ‘hidden’ crime; it is still under reported. This is why we introduced new data collection systems in Wales and continue to work with partners to develop a better evidence base that more accurately reflects the level of slavery in Wales.

Steve is working with partners to provide support for refugees coming to Wales which will help mitigate against the risk of exploitation.

Raising awareness of slavery is expected to lead to an increase in the number of reported cases. It is through improved reporting, we can help ensuring that victims receive the support they need and that perpetrators of this heinous crime can be brought to justice.

Welsh Government embarked on an awareness raising campaign. Welsh Government has delivered more free training to about 8,000 people in Wales, working with organisations such as BAWSO and Barnardo’s Cymru. We are rescuing more people. In 2017, 193 people have been saved from a life in slavery. The Welsh Government is leading the way in this matter.

During the discussion the following matters were raised:

- The Forum have engaged with the free training and thanked Steve for his advice Section 4 is coming to the end of the process- we need to hear their stories
- There is an initiative in schools through the All Wales Liaison Programme
- Welsh Government has produced a Code of Practice. Employers are signing up to the Code – particularly where WG funding is awarded to organisations.

Action: Secretariat to email the link to the Code of Practice to the Forum.

Any Other Business

None.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Monday 5 November in the Events Suite, Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff at 11.30am.