

Wales Race Forum Meeting
11 February 2016 at 10:30am-12.00pm
Ty Hywel, Cardiff Bay

Attendees:

Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty

Owain Rhys	Black History Association
Mandy Burrows	Community Cohesion Regional Co-ordinator, North East
Rocio Cifuentes	Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST)
Aled Edwards	Faith Communities Forum Representative
Uzo Iwobi	Race Council Cymru
Isaac Blake	Romani Cultural and Arts Company
Sunil Patel	Show Racism the Red Card
Cath Fortune	Unity Project
David Phillips	Welsh Equality Group
Maria Mesa	Women Connect First

Welsh Government Officials in Attendance:

Jo Glenn	Fairer Futures Division
Andrea Adams	Fairer Futures Division

Apologies:

Samsunear Ali	BAWSO
Shereen Williams	Community Cohesion Regional Co-ordinator, Gwent East
Shahien Taj	Henna Foundation
Melineh Essavy	Hope2Shine
Daniel Hurford	Welsh Local Government Association
Hannah Wharf	Welsh Refugee Council

Welcome and Introductions

1. The Minister welcomed everyone to the meeting. Mandy Burrows joined the meeting via video conference from Llandudno Junction.

Minutes of the last meetings

2. The minutes of the last meeting held on 22 June 2015 were agreed and the action points update was noted.

Matters Arising

i) British Bill of Rights Proposal

The Minister updated the Forum on progress made since the last meeting in June. The Minister met with Dominic Raab, Justice Minister in September and he confirmed the UK Government will bring forward the proposals for the Bill of Rights in the Autumn. Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Justice, announced in December the consultation would not be launched until 2016. No further progress has been made to date.

The Minister said careful scrutiny of the detail of the proposal is required and the Welsh Government would expect to be consulted on these issues as and when more concrete proposals are made available. The Welsh

Government will do all it can to ensure the rights people presently enjoy are not eroded by any proposals coming from the UK Government. The Minister will continue to keep the Forum informed on this matter.

ii) Identification of hate crimes in the court system

The Minister wrote to Karen Bradley MP, Minister for Preventing Abuse and Exploitation, including Hate Crime, about the flagging of hate crimes within the offender management service. Home Office officials are meeting Welsh Government officials and Deputy Chief Constable Mark Warrender, Chair of the Hate Crime Justice Board Cymru, at the Board meeting in Cardiff on 12 February to discuss the drafting of the Hate Crime Action Plan to address this issue.

Action: The Minister will continue to keep the Forum informed of further progress at the next meeting.

iii) Welsh Equality Group (WEG) Hate Crime Projects (David Phillips)

David Phillips updated the Forum about the progress of the Hate Crime Projects delivered by WEG. David said the projects are going well and WEG is working collaboratively. The funding for the projects will end at different times and to avoid this happening, WEG has applied to Big Lottery to extend some of the projects to ensure they will complete simultaneously.

Jo Glenn confirmed decisions on the next round of Equality and Inclusion funding will be taken after the Welsh Government elections in May.

Agenda Item 1: Syrian Refugee Taskforce

The Minister updated the Forum on the current progress across Wales with regards to the refugee crisis and discussed the breadth of work and challenges which lie ahead.

The Minister explained in September 2015 the Prime Minister committed to the UK taking 20,000 Syrian refugees over a 5 year period. The refugees will be granted Humanitarian Protection for five years which means they will be entitled to work and claim benefits. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees will be responsible for identifying those most in need, with those considered for resettlement to be subject to security checks.

The Minister confirmed the First Minister and the Welsh Government have been clear about the commitment for Wales to take a full part to resettle refugees. Wales has a long and established history of welcoming migrants and refugees in times of need. To initiate and begin a Welsh based approach, the First Minister hosted a Refugee Summit on 17 September. This resulted in a joint communique which confirmed the commitment of Public Authorities and the Third Sector to participate in the resettlement of Syrian refugees.

Since this point, the UK Government has established a Syrian Resettlement Programme from the overseas aid budget. This is a programme which requires voluntary sign up from Local Authorities and is being overseen by an appointed Syrian Refugee Minister, Richard Harrington MP.

The Minister explained the Summit agreed the creation of a Syrian Refugee Taskforce, of which she is the chair. The Taskforce is overseeing preparations for the resettlement programme in Wales. It met for the first time on 19 November and again on 10 February to assess progress across Wales and to explore areas where further support is required.

The Taskforce is supported by an Operations Board, chaired by Sarah McGill, Director of Communities, Housing and Customer Service at Cardiff Council, which has been tasked with mapping the capacity and expertise of services across Wales. This process is helping to ensure the resettlement of refugees is manageable and sustainable.

The Operations Board identifies issues which need to be resolved on a national level and reports back to the Taskforce at its quarterly meetings. It has also established a Communications Subgroup, which has devised a communications strategy to ensure people and organisations across Wales are kept informed of the resettlement process and how they can contribute.

The Minister explained she is committed to ensuring all organisations who can help to deliver the effective and timely resettlement of refugees will be involved or represented through this new structure. The role of faith groups and the Third Sector will not be overlooked and they have a vital role to play. In terms of progress through the Syrian Resettlement Programme, the Prime Minister set a target for 1,000 refugees to arrive across the UK before Christmas. In Wales Ceredigion, Torfaen, Neath Port Talbot and Caerphilly have between them resettled approximately 50 Syrian refugees before Christmas.

All 22 Local Authorities are keen to resettle Syrian refugees and the remaining 18 are at different stages in their considerations. Local Authorities have key decisions to make and the Minister explained she has been clear there must be sufficient time allowed for partners to go through their local processes to ensure the necessary services are in place.

It is important for new arrivals to receive a warm welcome and many Local Authorities do not have any experience of resettling refugees, which has certainly provided challenges. As part of the Statement of Requirements set by the Home Office, Local Authorities are expected to sign up to a set of conditions with the Home Office, which includes the provision of support for new arrivals.

The Minister said EYST has been selected to deliver the Orientation Service as part of Swansea Council's Syrian Resettlement Programme. The Welsh Government has produced a Welcome to Wales Pack for new arrivals, which includes practical advice and information around areas such as health, education and community safety. The Minister said she

was also pleased to fund a conference in December last year, which brought together Local Authorities and partners to share practice and current issues. A conference report has been published on the Welsh Government Website.

The Minister said she is pleased there is continued positive engagement taking place with the Home Office, Welsh Local Government Association and the Welsh Strategic Migration Partnership. This includes exploring opportunities to develop national and regional approaches to support consistent delivery across Wales. For example, the WLGA has published a Knowledge Hub, which enables Local Authorities to share current practice.

In terms of next steps, the Minister explained she is aware of particular community concerns with regard to safety and extremism. It is important there continues to be counter narrative messages in place and for tension monitoring processes to be in place to respond to identified issues.

The Minister has committed to funding Community Cohesion Co-ordinators for 2016-17 and the new Delivery Plan will be published shortly. This will aim to demonstrate how these roles are being utilised to support delivery of the Programme and to look at sustainable ways to work with communities.

The Minister said the Welsh Government is waiting to have more detail from the UK Government following the Prime Minister's commitment to resettle unaccompanied refugee children. The Welsh Government is exploring ways to support positive cohesion amongst all refugees and asylum seekers in Wales. The Refugee and Asylum Seeker Delivery Plan will be launched in March, this will demonstrate our continued commitment to support work across Wales.

During the discussion which followed the following points were made:

- Wales has resettled high numbers of spontaneous arrivals.
- Funding is a challenge for the Welsh Local Authorities.
- The Home Office must manage the employment and health care expectations of refugees resettled in the UK.
- A refugee skills audit will help to match people to potential employment opportunities in Wales. The Minister explained there will be closer matching of refugees to Local Authorities including matching of skills.

Action: The Minister will write to Richard Harrington, Minister for Syrian Refugees following the discussions at the meeting of the Taskforce on 10 February. In her letter, the Minister will emphasise Wales' involvement in accepting spontaneous arrivals.

Agenda Item 2 - Refugees and Race Issues (Rocio Cifuentes)

Rocio said there is a need to explore the links between refugee issues and wider attitudes towards race including issues of racism, Islamophobia and xenophobia. There is a gap in appropriate information and education to the

wider public around these issues. Most people do not understand or have never been told what a refugee, an asylum seeker or a migrant is, or the difference between the three. This lack of understanding is exploited by extremist groups.

Rocio asked the Wales Race Forum to consider better ways to work collaboratively to develop an effective public awareness strategy to include three different aspects:

- Young people – awareness in schools through educational lessons
- Public sector workers – especially frontline workers through workforce development/ public sector training
- The wider public – through a traditional and social media campaign and strategy utilising key events to get good messages across to the public

During the discussion the following points were made:

- Organisations represented on the Wales Race Forum have been delivering good work locally and they need to be supported.
- The Forum will meet again informally to agree better collaborative working to deliver a public awareness strategy.
- The Forum will develop a coherent strategy to prepare timely press releases and good news stories.
- The Forum agreed there is some overlap of projects in the Third Sector due to the restriction of programme funding.
- The strategy will help the Third Sector to support the Welsh Government initiatives.
- The Forum suggested a future Equality and Inclusion Grant should ensure there is dedicated funding for BME issues and support the work of the Third Sector organisations.

Actions:

1. The Minister will write to the Big Lottery following the discussions about Race Forum organisations working together.
2. Fairer Futures officials to make arrangements for an informal meeting of Forum members to discuss ideas of working collaboratively to support a fairer Wales.
3. A sub-group of the Forum will develop a media handling 'fact file'.

Agenda Item 3 – Review of the Equality Objectives (Jo Glenn, Fairer Futures Division)

Jo explained the progress made since the last meeting of the review of the Equality Objectives. Jo said the Welsh Government's revised Equality Objectives have been developed following extensive engagement with our stakeholders and protected groups. The feedback from our engagement and

consultation strongly supported retaining the essence of the current Equality Objectives.

Jo confirmed the new Equality Objectives 1 – 8 will continue to tackle barriers to equality and strengthen the existing evidence base, achieving better outcomes for all citizens. The objectives continue to reflect the long-term priorities of those with protected characteristics in Wales and the two new Equality Objectives have been developed to reflect the priorities of our stakeholders. The Welsh Government has an Objective on community cohesion, a vital area of work in today's social and economic climate and an Objective on tackling poverty and inequality, strengthening our approach to addressing socio-economic disadvantage for protected groups.

Jo informed the Forum the new eight Equality Objectives were agreed by Cabinet on 2 February and they will continue to drive change and embed the progress which has been achieved over the first four years.

The new Equality Objectives will support the seven key challenges identified in the 'Is Wales Fairer?' report by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.

Agenda Item 4: Third Sector Partnership Council (TSPC) Uzo Iwobi

Uzo confirmed the TSPC is focussing on an agreed voluntary strategy in Wales and the key issues remain tackling racism in schools and on the streets. Uzo said the Race Council Cymru has represented BME groups at the TSPC meetings for two years and representation will be renewed this year. Uzo thanked the Minister for making TSPC issues a standing item on the Forum agenda.

The Forum thanked Uzo for representing the views of the Wales Race Forum on the TSPC over the past two years.

Agenda Item 5 – (Paper 1) Planning and Development Working Group proposed updated priority themes for 2016-2017

The Minister reminded everyone she asked for nominations to join the Planning and Development Group, at the last meeting. The Minister confirmed the members of the Group are Aled Edwards, David Phillips, Hannah Wharf, Maria Mesa, Rocio Cifuentes, Uzo Iwobi and Andrea Adams. The Group met on 12 January and it was agreed at the meeting to update the key priorities for the Forum to take forward in 2016-17. The Group propose race issues are addressed as part of two updated broader headings: tackling racism and race hate crime, and, race, refugees and asylum seekers. The Minister invited comments from the Forum about the proposal to be sent by email to the Secretariat.

Agenda Item 6 – Any Other Business

i) Race Council Cymru's All Wales Equality Conference 2016 (Uzo Iwobi)

Uzo reminded everyone the All Wales Conference 2016 will be held on 21 March at Cardiff Bay, with speakers who will cover a broad range of issues. The theme for the 2016 Conference is 'The Impact of Racist Hate Crime on Victims.'

ii) Equality Impact Assessments (Sunil Patel)

Sunil raised the issue of a consultation exercise by Cardiff Council about a proposed change to the English-medium primary and secondary schools catchment area. Sunil wanted to bring the matter to the Minister's attention because there are concerns amongst some families in the area regarding the Equality Impact Assessment.

The Minister confirmed it is the statutory duty of all Local Authorities to undertake Equality Impact Assessments under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties)(Wales) Regulations 2011, as part of their legal duties around eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations on the basis of protected characteristics.

Action: The Minister will write to Cardiff Council about their statutory duty in this matter.

Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be arranged following the Welsh Government's elections.

The Forum thanked the Minister for her commitment to the Wales Race Forum over the past two years.