

**Wales Race Forum Meeting  
27 September 2017 at 12.00pm – 13.00pm  
Ty Hywel, Cardiff Bay**

**Attendees:****Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children**

Samsunear Ali	BAWSO
Isaac Blake	Romani Cultural and Arts Company
Rocio Cifuentes	Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST)
Aled Edwards	Faith Communities Forum Representative
Kristina Hedges	Show Racism the Red Card (attending on behalf of Sunil Patel)
Daniel Hurford	Welsh Local Government Association
Uzo Iwobi	Race Council Cymru
Maria Mesa	Women Connect First
Tracy Sherlock	Welsh Refugee Council
Shahien Taj	Henna Foundation
Shereen Williams	Community Cohesion Regional Co-ordinator, Gwent East

**Welsh Government Officials in Attendance:**

Paul Dear	Equality Team
Emma Small	Equality Team
Francesca Jeremy	Equality Team

**Apologies:**

Mandy Burrows	Community Cohesion Regional Co-ordinator, North East
Melineh Essavy	Hope2Shine
David Phillips	Welsh Equality Group

**Presentations:**

Uzo Iwobi	Race Council Cymru
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**Welcome and Introductions**

Welcoming everyone to the meeting, the Cabinet Secretary referred to the letter he sent to colleagues in advance of this meeting to remind members of the purpose of the Forum and the standard of conduct that is expected of all members when engaging in its business.

**Minutes of last meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting and the actions paper were noted and agreed.

**Item 1: Feedback on 1:1 meetings with members, Paul Dear, Head of Equality**

In July, the secretariat sent an invitation to all Forum members to meet with Welsh Government. Paul has since had several meetings with members, and thanked those concerned for the courteous and respectful manner in which they had been conducted.

He said that a common issue raised at each meeting was the impact of the Welsh Government grant-funded All Wales BAME Engagement project, being delivered by EYST. There is continuing concern on how the project will work in practice and the impact it may have on other BAME organisations working in the same geographical areas.

Paul emphasised that the project was not intended to duplicate, take over or undermine the work of any other BAME organisation in Wales. Rather it was intended to complement and support the activities of other organisations, filling gaps and helping to strengthen the sector. He made a commitment to continue work alongside EYST with other BAME organisations and Forum members to minimise any possible duplication and agree ways of working that build on the established expertise and geographic focus of each organisation.

Looking to the future, he said that, if BAME organisations across Wales can find new ways of working together that provides the necessary all-Wales coverage, then this could be very persuasive in terms of how Welsh Government supports BAME organisations beyond the current 2017-20 project. He invited BAME organisations to work together to help “design the future”. He said that Welsh Government officials were happy to join in the discussions if such involvement was helpful, but equally that, ideally, the solution needs to come from the sector itself.

Members commented that greater consultation on the 2017-20 funding programme would have helped. Paul agreed that it is important that we move forward with genuine dialogue.

**Action: Officials to keep the Cabinet Secretary updated on the progress of 1:1 meetings with members and other BAME organisations.**

**Item 2 : Standing Item - Update on Third Sector Partnership Council, Uzo Iwobi, CEO Race Council Cymru**

Uzo explained that Race Council Cymru and Race Equality First work in alliance to represent race issues on the Third Sector Partnership Council (alongside about 20 other representative bodies). A key current issue is that of racism in schools, especially towards European migrants, and Muslim girls wearing hijabs. RCC has provided a paper on this to the WCVA, and asked that the TSPC use this when working with Welsh Government around the new Education Workforce and Pioneer Schools. In particular, RCC feel that the new curriculum should include areas of learning that specifically help to tackle racism in schools.

Comments by Forum members included the following:

- Daniel Hurford suggested that RCC contact WLGA directly.
- Aled Edwards suggested that we need to initiate a national conversation about civic education – how to instil in children a greater understanding of modern history that includes BME history.
- Isaac Blake advised the Forum that he believes anti-Gypsy racism is spreading in North Wales. He also advised that in cases where Gypsy or Traveller communities experienced racism from Local Authority staff then there was nowhere for them to take a complaint, because if they raised one it would end up being referred back to the same Local Authority staff.
- Kristina Hedges observed that there is a problem in that racist incidents in schools are not being reported up to the Local Authority level.

- Uzo reflected that there are huge challenges being faced by BME young people, and that they now run a drop in centre in Wrexham for both school children and adults. Many members agreed with the observations that offensive racist behaviour was getting worse, and was increasingly moving on-line, and becoming more subtle (non-criminal) rather than overtly hostile.
- Tracey said that the increasing negative rhetoric is sometimes fuelled by UK policies around immigration and ‘health tourism’ / NHS charging, which may be seen as ‘legitimising racism’, and that Wales needs to provide a robust response back to the UK Government.
- Rocio Cifuentes said public bodies had statutory duties under the Equality Act to foster good relations, and it was incumbent upon them to do more. Aled said that things were now so intense now that, for example, Big Lottery Cymru was subjected to abuse because it funded a project for asylum seekers. To counteract this we need to initiate a new conversation that sets out the lines that must not be crossed, including around offensive speech that may not be a criminal offence, i.e. where unacceptable behaviour needs to be challenged.

The Cabinet Secretary said he shared the concerns of the Forum members around recent changes in the levels of racism, and an apparently rapid shift in what is socially acceptable. He also shared members’ frustration that the statutory duties under the Equality Act have not resulted in the cultural shift we need. He asked that the Forum members work together to provide detailed advice for him on what it would take to get the necessary cultural shift – not just by working with children – but in a way that will also shift the culture of adults and parents. He recognised that this may well include a strand of work relating to education, but that he would like to see the Forum’s proposals for a wider suite of activity. He would then use that to seek the thoughts of public bodies in Wales.

**Action: Uzo Iwobi to share their TSPC paper racism in schools with members of the Forum. Isaac Blake to circulate a report on education and health relating to Gypsy and Travellers. Other members to contact the Secretariat if there are other relevant recent reports to be circulated.**

**Action: Daniel Hurford to contact Uzo Iwobi to discuss RCC’s paper.**

**Action: Secretariat to facilitate work between the Forum members to develop proposals for the Cabinet Secretary that could help trigger a cultural shift in the acceptability of racism, including**

- **The current position**
- **Why the current position isn’t working**
- **What we need to do next**
- **Roles of different agencies, including for example, BBC.**

**Item 3: Black History Month** Uzo Iwobi, CEO Race Council Cymru

Uzo reminded members that Black History Month begins next week. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the celebrations in Wales to acknowledge the contribution of black people to culture, history and society in Wales. Black History Month Wales is managed by Race Council Cymru, who chair a steering committee.

107 organisations are members of the BHM network. This year there will be a series of celebratory and educational activities, and Youth Awards.

Maria recorded her thanks to the all the people who had worked to get BHM established in Wales, and also to the Arts Council and National Museum of Wales.

The Welsh Government has also organised a number of internal events to mark the month, with a focus on improving the recruitment, retention of BAME employees and awareness of BAME issues in the workplace. Uzo invited someone from Welsh Government to attend the steering committee for next year so that the events could be coordinated.

**Action: Welsh Government representative [Emma Small] to attend BHM Steering Group meetings in future.**

#### **Item 4: Community Cohesion** Emma Small, Community Cohesion Manager

Emma introduced the item by explaining how the Welsh Government measures community cohesion, using the Well-being of Future Generations Act measures of people's sense of belonging and also using hate crime data.

The work that the Welsh Government is doing with partners focuses on long-term, preventative work to foster tolerance and good relations, tackle deep-rooted inequality and support people to breakdown any feelings of fear and distrust. This approach recognises that this 'upstream' work is essential for developing community resilience so that communities can work to prevent and manage 'downstream' problems of community tensions, discrimination, hate crime and vulnerability to radicalisation.

Many other areas of work under Prosperity for All (PfA) will contribute to cohesion by tackling inequality, for example through supporting people into employment, tackling health inequalities, supporting all young people to fulfil their potential, and building resilient communities. The priority PfA areas are also very relevant to cohesion because there are disparities between different groups in society, including BAME groups: mental health, housing, early years, social care, skills and employability

There is also a specific PfA commitment: to work with communities, the voluntary sector and local service to counter the threat of extremism and hate crime in communities. Partners for this work include other Welsh Government departments (such as community safety, education, sport, housing), also Local Authorities / Regional Community Cohesion Coordinators; four Welsh Police Forces, criminal justice agencies; and Equality and Inclusion organisations.

Some of our key work areas are around supporting public bodies to fulfil their statutory duties under the Equality Act and the Well-being of Future Generations Act; increasing the representation of minority groups in public life and leadership roles; communications to counter negative rhetoric; cohesion support for specific groups (including RAS, migrants, Gypsy or Traveller communities); Community

tension monitoring; hate-related bullying; providing support for victims and increasing reporting; reducing radicalisation risks and working with perpetrators.

The Cabinet Secretary said that although we had been thinking of publishing an updated Community Cohesion National Delivery Plan for 2017-20, he is minded not to publish a new version at present. The community cohesion agenda is fast moving and constantly changing and it would be more effective to keep our approach and priorities constantly under review. He said that he welcomed the views of the Forum members on what needed to be done, and these views could come through the advice he has asked for under Item 2.

### **Any Other Business**

Aled Edwards said he had attended an event recently in Berlin on Statelessness. Aled explained that in some countries, citizenship is granted through the paternal line. Children of mothers who, for example, have been raped and so do not have a registered father, can be left stateless. He asked that we discuss this at the next meeting. The Cabinet Secretary said that he would write to the UK Government to ask their current position on this issue and that he would provide feedback at the next meeting.

Isaac Blake said that he attended an event in Brussels on the review of the Roma Integration Strategy. Isaac is going to contribute.

Rocio gave members a diary marker for 20 March, for a conference sponsored by the Cabinet Secretary in the Pierhead on race issues. Uzo asked whether this event was a Race Forum event or an EYST event.

**Action:** The Cabinet Secretary will write to the UK Government to ask their current position on statelessness. Secretariat to put statelessness on the agenda for the next meeting.

**Action:** The Secretariat to arrange meetings with Uzo and Rocio to discuss the plans and approach for the race conference on 20 March.

The next meeting will be held once the Forum members have prepared their advice for the Cabinet Secretary. The secretariat will email members with the date and time of the next meeting in due course.