



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Board Meeting: 26 March 2021

AGENDA ITEM: [4]

Title of paper:	An Anti-Racist Wales - A Race Equality Action Plan.
Purpose of paper:	To provide the Board with an update on progress to create a Race Equality Action Plan and the work of the steering group.
Action required by the Board:	The Board is asked to note the paper and consider its implications for both external facing work and for the Welsh Government staff team.
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Paper prepared by / cleared by:	Hannah Fisher Senior policy manager – Race, Faith and Gypsy, Roma and Travellers. Cleared by: Tracey Burke
TUS engagement/ Viewpoint	<i>N/A</i>
Date submitted to Secretariat:	<i>18/03/21</i>

Background

1. Many Black Asian and Minority Ethnic people experience racism in Wales on a regular basis.¹ This racism ranges from explicit verbal hostility and physical assault to micro-aggressions, statistical discrimination, profiling and institutional racism.
2. This has profound and traumatic consequences for individuals which are further compounded by a lack of representation in leadership, broader democratic processes and within the design and governance of public services.
3. Lack of progress to end racism and to improve representation and outcomes has undermined trust in institutions to deliver tangible change and acted as a barrier to securing positive engagement from people and communities.
4. Informed by the lived experience outlined above, the Wales Race Forum and other race equality organisations have called for a standalone strategy or plan on race for many years. The Covid 19 pandemic and its disproportionate impact on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities has amplified this call and illustrated its necessity.
5. In March 2020 the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip committed to develop a Race Equality Action Plan for Wales. Development work on the Plan is complete and preparations and the Plan was published for consultation by 25 March 2021.
6. The Plan has been developed through an iterative process, involving an ongoing exchange of ideas and knowledge between stakeholders, policy leads, academics and those with lived experience.
7. This process has led to a clear set of principles which will ground the Plan; principles, which in many ways, are more important than the themed actions. These principles are co-construction, anti-racism and closing the implementation gap.

Co-construction

8. The Plan is based on the findings from a rapid evidence review undertaken by the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) who have engaged with subject experts, including academics from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds in Wales and beyond.

¹ Wavehill – Analysis of Welsh Government Community Engagement Grant activity (publication pending)

9. In addition to the written evidence, the Plan has been shaped by the lived experience of around 2,000 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people and the development process has involved hours of discussion amongst academic experts, policy officials, practitioners and those with lived experience.
10. Following a successful procurement programme in late 2020, Seventeen “community mentors” are now working with the Welsh Government, on a freelance basis, to help design, shape and implement the Plan. The impact of the mentors has been very positive and consideration is being given to developing the model of work for continued benefit.
11. The steering group overseeing the development of the Race Equality Action Plan is co-chaired by Professor Emmanuel Ogbonna (author of the BAME Covid-19 Socio Economic report) and the Permanent Secretary.

Anti-racism

12. The detail and the scale of the Race Equality Action Plan is bold, to reflect a vision of a Wales that is anti-racist.
13. Taking this stance is vitally important to our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic stakeholders because it provides for an active and conscious understanding that our society is structured in a way that excludes Ethnic Minorities.
14. There will be many people in Wales who do not consider themselves racist but anti-racism requires us to make a conscious, active effort to call out racism wherever we see it. Simply standing by and staying silent is not enough.
15. Taking an anti-racist stance sets the Race Equality Action Plan apart from any other policy intervention of this kind, either previously in Wales or across the UK.

Closing the implementation gap

16. Stakeholders are clear that many previous and existing Government policies are strong but have lacked impetus in delivery, leading to diluted results or ineffective implementation in the past.
17. It is important to note that stakeholders are not generally asking for swathes of new work. Many of them prioritise delivery of existing policy and value effective governance and ensuring accountability over new innovation. This prioritisation is being responded to through the proposed creation of an accountability group and

investment in a scoping exercise for the creation of Welsh Race Disparity Unit.

18. As a result, the Race Equality Action Plan emphasises the importance of closing the “implementation gap” in order that we deliver our anti-racist vision and create real culture change.
19. In time, this may require legislative underpinning of the Race Equality Action Plan. This will be a matter for the next Government but the First Minister has asked for a scoping exercise of the legislative levers that may be available. In the shorter term, we must utilise all of the levers at our disposal (funding agreements, procurement, terms and conditions, performance indicators etc.) to deliver our ambition and work alongside stakeholders as co-owners of the Plan, to ensure accountability.
20. Underpinned by these principles, the Race Equality Action Plan will cover the following policy based themes and contains actions listed under each theme.
 - health and social care,
 - education,
 - employment and income,
 - leadership and representation,
 - the criminal justice system
 - housing and accommodation.
 - Culture, arts, sports and heritage
 - Local democracy
 - Welsh Language
 - Environment
 - Social Partnership and Fair Work and Entrepreneurship as part of Income and Employability

Issues for consideration

21. As an organisation, it will be important that the theme of leadership and representation (in particular) within the Race Equality Action Plan is considered and implemented for the benefit of all staff. This should happen alongside consideration of the findings of the internal “Running against the Wind” report and the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy.
22. The Race Equality Action Plan has organisational and external facing implications for the Welsh Government and this paper will try to illustrate both.
23. Within the Plan we repeat our commitment (outlined in the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2021-2026) to become an exemplar workplace that reflects our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic population and ensures fair and open recruitment to our decision making bodies. In order to do so the Welsh Government will need to address structural and systemic racism within our own organisation.

24. We commit to review and improve our recruitment and selection processes, ensure good induction, effective ongoing support and development and progression opportunities.
25. In parallel to the development of the Race Equality Action Plan, some internal work has taken place in partnership with the organisational women's network and MESN. The work has resulted in the report "Running against the Wind" which was also published this week.
26. That report outlines the challenges that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women, working for the Welsh Government have experienced in the workplace, including racism, and highlights experiences that are mirrored in the summary of broader communities experience outlined in the background of this paper.

Resource implications

27. Given the prioritisation of addressing the implementation gap by stakeholders it is crucial that delivery of the Race Equality Action Plan is prioritised by all public services, including the Welsh Government and that resource is allocated to (at least) cover implementation of the most urgent actions in the Plan.
28. .We are investing £809,000 to scope and support the establishment of an Equality Data and Evidence Unit and a Race Disparity Unit in 2021-22.

Financial Implications

29. Costs associated with implementation of the Plan are Cross-Governmental. Some immediate work is underway and resource has been allocated from various budgets to address this. However, come the finalisation of the Plan in the autumn, additional budget will need to be allocated to implementation and discussion with the new Government will need to take place on this in the next term.

Implications for staff

30. The internal commitments linked to achieving goals and actions within the Plan would have implications for staff in Welsh Government to ensure the buy in and commitment filters down and throughout the organisation. Achieving the goals and actions will diversify the workforce, bringing new expertise, experience and fresh perspectives which should benefit the entire staff team.

Risks

31. There are a number of risks related to the implementation of recommendations within the Race Equality Action Plan and Running against the Wind. These are briefly set out below:

Backlash

32. Unfortunately, there will be some who worry that a focus on achieving race equality somehow places other groups at a disadvantage and others who consider that racism no longer exists in our society and feel very strongly about any suggestion that it does.
33. We have seen some signals of this during recent “Let’s Talk” events. To mitigate this risk, a strong line is required across the organisation that the successful implementation of the Race Equality Action Plan and achieving racial equality within the organisation will benefit all citizens and staff members and ensures that existing rights within legislation are recognised and adhered to.

Non delivery

34. Failure to deliver against the goals and actions of the Race Equality Action Plan, particularly in the next year to eighteen months, will be seen by stakeholders and by the staff group as evidence that the Welsh Government are not committed to ending race inequality or becoming an anti-racist Wales. This will have an extremely damaging reputational impact, particularly in relation to Black Asian and Minority Ethnic staff, stakeholders, communities and their allies. Moreover, race equality will not have been advanced in Wales.

Changing Government

35. In relation to the external facing work especially, prioritisation of the Race Equality Action Plan depends on the next Government. However, organisationally, implementation of the Plan can be prioritised and the Permanent Secretary’s prioritisation of these matters in her own personal objectives has been widely welcomed by stakeholders.

Communication

36. Announcements related to the Race Equality Action Plan will be made via the intranet and in updates to MESN. They will coincide with the publication of “Running Against the Wind”; an internal report on Black Lives Matter and staff experiences of race, gender and intersectionality in the Welsh Government.
37. A formal consultation on the Race Equality Action Plan has been published this week and a full communications plan is in place to support external communication.

General Compliance Issues

38. There are no compliance issues associated with the paper,

Recommendation(s)

36. The Board is asked to note the paper and consider its implications for both external facing work and for the Welsh Government staff team.

Publication

This paper should be published in full as none of the exemptions in the Code of Practice on Public Access to Information apply.