



**Board Meeting: 12 November 2021**

**AGENDA ITEM: [3]**

<b>Title of paper:</b>	<b>Update on Race Equality Action Plan</b>
<b>Purpose of paper:</b>	The Permanent Secretary has requested an update on progress on race equality work.
<b>Action required by the Board:</b>	The Board is asked to consider the scale of change required to embed an anti-racist approach in Welsh Government and provide a steer on where effort should be focused to make progress.
<b>Official presenting the paper:</b>	Claire Bennett
<b>Paper prepared by / cleared by:</b>	Tracey Burke
<b>TUS engagement/ Viewpoint</b>	Not specifically informed this paper
<b>Date submitted to Secretariat:</b>	5 November 2021

**1. Background**

- 1.1 The Race Equality Action Plan was published for consultation in March this year. The consultation was developed using a co-construction model with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in Wales and set out a vision for a Wales which is anti-racist. The Action Plan is very wide-ranging and contains proposed actions in a wide range of policy areas. The scope was informed by an evidence review undertaken by the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) in partnership with a wider

group of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic academics and by community engagement undertaken by community groups and other organisations to present lived experience of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people living in Wales.

- 1.2 The consultation received 320 responses from a wide range of organisations, individuals and other groups – and the second phase of community engagement, again led by community groups. The analysis of the consultation is nearing completion and is being undertaken by Race Equality First.
- 1.3 The consultation responses are broadly supportive of the Action Plan and its ambition for an anti-racist Wales but with many suggestions about how the Action Plan could be made clearer and the actions more impactful. More broadly, the responses provide a lot of rich detail about people's experiences of racism and its impact on people and communities as well as many specific proposals for what needs to change and practical solutions to make progress.
- 1.4 However, despite being supportive of the ambition of the Action Plan, there remains a high degree of scepticism from many Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people about the likelihood of meaningful change in their lived experience occurring. In addition, the development of the plan itself and some of the consultation responses point to a lack of understanding of what anti-racism means in practice in Welsh Government and in public bodies in Wales and resistance to the changes in behaviours, culture and practice that acknowledging and addressing structural and systemic racism requires.

## **2. Issues for consideration**

- 2.1 Work to revise the Action Plan, strengthen the actions and agree the governance structures that will support and challenge us in implementing the Plan is continuing. However, this is not just about implementing specific actions set out in the Action Plan. There is a need for sustained work to build our capability and capacity in anti-racist practice, change behaviours and rethink much more fundamentally our existing systems and processes and how they can be remade to secure anti-racist outcomes.
- 2.2 In our experience so far, resistance to change manifests in a range of different ways for example:
  - 'What about...?' objections – where making progress on anti-racism is presented as being at the expense of progress for another protected characteristic
  - 'We need more data / evidence...' – where the case for change needs to be further validated before action can be considered or potential solutions cannot be applied without a lot more evidence – and the negative consequences for people awaiting change is tolerated

- ‘It / they do a good job...’ – where services or organisations are delivering, a reluctance to engage with concerns being expressed about whether they are delivering for everyone
- ‘We don’t have the resources, time or we have other priorities to deliver...’ – where, effectively, we are saying that having assurance at to whether the policies and services we offer are equally accessible to, appropriate for and provide equity of outcomes for different groups of citizens is optional rather than the fundamental starting point

2.3 Key questions for the Board to consider are:

- What does adopting an anti-racist approach mean for the Board, its composition and ways of working?
- What role should the Board play in providing assurance about how we are embedding anti-racist practice and rethinking our processes to provide more equitable outcomes? What evidence would the Board wish to see reported to inform its consideration?
- Given the current challenging resource position and limited external recruitment, where should we focus in developing capacity and capability in anti-racist practice?
- How can resistance to change be challenged and behaviours changed?

**3. Resource implications**

*Financial Implications*

- 3.1 There are financial implications for the implementation of the Race Equality Action Plan. These are additional of the order of around £8m and have been fed into the Welsh Government budget process. The outcome has not yet been determined. Additionally, a specific request for ring-fenced DRC funding of just under £1.5m for staff to enable delivery of the Action Plan in various teams across Welsh Government has been made. This request is still under consideration. Some scaling would be possible but it will not be possible to fulfil the ambition of the Action Plan without additional investment in staff and programme resources.

*Implications for staff*

- 3.2 Embedding an anti-racist approach in Welsh Government should have a positive impact on the experience of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff in Welsh Government. Addressing systems and processes so they are more transparent, fairer and lead to equity in outcomes will benefit other groups.
- 3.3 Welsh Government Trade Unions have not been engaged directly in the development of the Race Equality Action Plan but Wales TUC are a member of the Steering Group. Welsh Government Trade Unions are engaged directly in the development and implementation of actions in the plan related to our HR processes and the wider ‘leadership’ section of the Plan.

#### **4. Risks**

- 4.1 The key risks associated with the implementation of the Race Equality Action Plan and embedding an anti-racist approach are:
- Lack of staff (with relevant expertise and credibility) and lack programme resources to lead the work and support securing change in Welsh Government and more widely
  - Losing the confidence of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people who have co-constructed the plan that we are serious about achieving our anti-racist vision and being held to account for our effectiveness in doing so
  - Not sustaining the profile and energy necessary to secure the behavioural and cultural change needed

#### **5. Communication**

- 5.1 At this stage there is not a specific proposal to communicate to staff but a clear plan to sustain the conversations around race which started last year should be developed to coincide with the publication of the final Action Plan in March 2022.

#### **6. General Compliance Issues**

- 6.1 There are no specific compliance issues to highlight but embedding an anti-racist approach will make an important contribution to the Welsh Government's compliance with the Public Sector Equality duty and the requirements of the Equality Act and the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

- 7.1 The Board is asked to consider the scale of change required to embed an anti-racist approach in Welsh Government and provide a steer on where effort should be focused to make progress.

---

#### **Publication**

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