

Wales Race Forum
09:30, Wednesday 22 September

Agenda

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Update on Welsh Government response to Afghanistan evacuation
3. Update on Race Equality Action Plan development work
4. Update on vaccine equity
5. Any other business

Item 1 - Welcome and introductions

The Minister for Social Justice opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and introducing Ruth Meadows, who has replaced Alyson Francis as Deputy Director of Communities Division.

The Minister went on to congratulate the nominees and winners of the Ethnic Minority Welsh Women Achievement Association's awards, which were present on Friday 17 September.

The Minister also congratulated Reverend Aled Edwards for his recognition as a "racial justice champion and troublemaker", and Professor Emmanuel Ogbonna's appointment as a Fellow.

Item 2 - Update on Welsh Government response to Afghanistan evacuation

[Written Statement: Resettling Afghan citizens in Wales \(9 September 2021\)](#)

Turning to the second agenda item, the Minister invited John Davies to provide an update on the Welsh Government's response to the Afghanistan evacuation.

John explained there are two schemes operating. The first is known as the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP). This is focussed on helping interpreters and others in similar support roles to come to the UK with their families.

While around 7000 people arrived in the UK, John confirmed there are around 300 people who have not been able to get out of Afghanistan and it is unclear how the UK Government plans to help them move.

The second scheme operating targets refugees who didn't have links to the UK but wanted to leave. This includes at-risk individuals, for example those who were active in civil life, helped to create institutions in Afghanistan, high-profile sports stars, women etc. John confirmed around 500 people came to the UK as part of this

scheme. The majority of those who fit this scheme are probably still in Afghanistan, Pakistan or neighbouring country and the UK Government is yet to explain what their path to the UK looks like. The Welsh Government continues to push to get those details as soon as possible.

In regard to ARAP, John confirmed that while Wales' proportionate share would be 5% of refugees, we are aiming for 7.5% - around 80-100 families. More than 50 families (approximately 230 people) have arrived so far and are doing well, but there is more to do. These refugees are being helped, by every local authority in Wales, in to two types of accommodation: sustainable accommodation (i.e permanent housing) and bridging accommodation (i.e. temporary accommodation such as hotels). Local authorities are doing all they can to get those currently in bridging accommodation in to more permanent accommodation as soon as possible.

John explained that refugees are, generally, integrating well; there are no major issues. However, the Welsh Government would like to call on the services of organisations such as those in attendance to help support refugees.

The group discussed John's update. It was noted that there will be cultural and religious needs as well as the more obvious language barriers. These needs will have to be taken in to account when offering support.

The group also discussed the need to engage with female refugees directly in order to avoid an imbalance in support and services offered. It was noted that work is ongoing in this area with women-only spaces offered in accommodation and female interpreters being sourced, though there is clearly more to do. **The Minister suggested a follow-up meeting on gender issues with Henna Foundation, Bawso, Women Connect Fist and others to discuss further support.**

The Minister and officials confirmed they would continue to press the Home Office on the issue of the plight faced by asylum seekers in countries adjacent to Afghanistan. The Minister explained she has raised this issue in previous four-nation meetings and will do so again.

Item 3 - Update on Race Equality Action Plan (REAP) development work

Further to the update paper, Rhianydd Williams confirmed over 330 responses to the REAP consultation had been received. They came from a variety of individuals, organisations and public services, and took the form of various formats: interviews, videos, questionnaires etc. Rhianydd thanked those who had contributed to the consultation.

It was confirmed that Race Equality First is undertaking an analysis of the responses and an initial report is expected in October. Welsh Government officials are already looking at the responses in advance of receipt of the report in order to see what changes can be made to Plan.

Rhianydd explained one of the clear messages from consultation responses was the need to fill the implementation gap and to ensure the actions of the Plan are delivered upon.

Another clear message was that governance arrangements which compel people to act were required. Rhianydd confirmed that a governance framework will deliver implementation and include an Accountability Group, supported by the Race Disparity Unit and a Data Unit. They will provide an annual report on progress.

Rhianydd went on to discuss transitional arrangements. It was confirmed that Professor Ogbonna and the Permanent Secretary will continue as co-chairs for the first six months and that Steering Group members will be invited to join the Accountability Group for two years. Senior Welsh Government officials will also join the Accountability Group.

Following an invitation for questions or comments on the update, it was confirmed that, while a small number of organisations may have been asked to re-send responses, they have been looked at. A technical issue has meant that some links to responses have expired and, as such, needed to be re-submitted.

It was noted that resourcing and implementation of the Plan are critical.

Item 4 - Update on vaccine equity

Bon Westcott, providing an update on vaccine equity, ran through a PowerPoint presentation and noted much work has already been done. While there is more to do to close the equity gap, vaccine take-up is high compared to other programmes.

Bon explained there is more work to do in terms of encouraging take-up with Black-African and Black-Caribbean communities, especially among younger people. While the gap in take-up between these communities and others is closing, there is more to do. It is crucial people are given accurate and up-to-date information in order to allow them to make informed decisions.

Bon noted that access to the vaccine is a barrier. In order to counter this, mobile facilities have been deployed. More has been done in terms of outreach to faith and community centres, and community outreach workers have been deployed. Work has been undertaken alongside third sector organisations and there has also been more communication through social media.

Bon confirmed there is still an issue with vaccine hesitancy and as well as disinformation, which has risen.

Confirming the latest advice, Bon explained offers of a first and second dose will be made to 12 – 15 year old, who will be provided with full information so they can make an informed decision with their parents

Bon went on to explain that some people will be offered a third primary dose. Those who are at most risk and front-line workers will receive the offer first. Advice on whether younger people should receive a third dose will come forward.

Bon confirmed she'd share her presentation in order to allow those who wish to contact her with questions or comments after the meeting to do so.

During discussion, the group noted there has been some adverse reactions to the vaccine, and underlined how important it is that these experiences are recorded and addressed. **It was confirmed the issue would be raised with the Vaccine Equity Group.**

Item 5 - Any other business

None.

Participants

Alicja Zalesinska, Tai Pawb

Mymuna Soleman, Privilege Café

Doctor Roy, NWAMi

Maria Mesa, Women Connect First

Riaz Hassan, RCCC for Swansea and NPT

Rocio Cifuentes, EYST

Shavanah Taj, Wales TUC

Sunil Patel, Show Racism the Red Card

Suzanne Duval, Diverse

QuinnazizA, Cardiff University

Aled Edwards, Cytun

Andrewogun, Black Lives Matter, Newport

Cindy Ikie, Black Lives Matter Wales

Faith Walker, FW Consultancy

Holly Taylor, Welsh Refugee Council
Fowzia Ali, Hayaat Women Trust
Kay Denyer, Race Council Cymru
Ali Abdi, Race Council Cymru
Iolanda Banu Viegas, Race Council Cymru
Isaac Blake, Romani Cultural & Arts Company
Laura O'Keeffe, Race Equality First
Professor Robert Moore
Mutale Merrill, BAWSO
Samsunear Ali, BAWSO
Shahien Taj, Henna Foundation
Tamasree Mukhopadhyay, Kiran
Roon Adam
Bon Westcott, Welsh Government
Steven Macey, Welsh Government
Ayanna Mathurine, Welsh Government
Rhian Gibson, Welsh Government
Rhianydd Williams, Welsh Government
Ruth Meadows, Welsh Government
Sue Vincent-Jones, Welsh Government
Uzi Iwobi, Welsh Government
Usha Ladwa-Thomas, Welsh Government
Patrick Daly, Welsh Government
John Davies, Welsh Government
Nashima Begum, Welsh Government

Heather Payne, Welsh Government