

# Anti-racist Wales Action Plan: Notes of stakeholder event

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol Pwyllgor | 20  
Mawrth 2023

Equality and Social Justice Committee | 20 March 2023

**Reference:** RS23/5572-1

## Introduction

On 20 March the Committee met with stakeholders to gather views and ideas for a potential inquiry looking at racism and the anti-racist Wales Action Plan. Participants were given a choice of either online or in person attendance and the sessions were run concurrently.

This paper provides a note of the key themes that emerged.

25 stakeholders attended the event. Details of attendees can be found in Section 4.



# 1. Delivering the Action Plan

Stakeholders expressed their broad support for the Plan and its overarching ambition of achieving an anti-racist Wales by 2030. With seven years to achieve this ambition many discussed what they felt is needed to ensure actions included in the Plan are achieved.

## **1.1.1. Welsh Government leadership is crucial**

Stakeholders stressed the Welsh Government has a pivotal role in ensuring the actions are delivered. They argued the Welsh Government needs to lead by example, to show they are committed to taking a pro-active approach to racism and to ensure they have systems in place which support an anti-racist approach. They need to be able to demonstrate they deliver training on race and racism, they employ staff from diverse backgrounds and they are investing resources to tackle racial inequalities.

They said the Government not only has to lead on delivery of the plan, they need to ensure other organisations like local authorities, health, and education know exactly what they need to do.

There were also concerns that Welsh Government leadership was being undermined by the rhetoric of some in the UK Government particularly in respect of asylum and immigration matters. The need to moderate the rhetoric when discussing these matters was emphasised by several participants.

## **1.1.2. Cross governmental action is needed**

Given the breadth of the Plan and the intersectional nature of racism, delivering the actions is heavily dependent on a cross-governmental approach.

Stakeholders stressed the need to “join the dots”, for example housing issues will impact on mental health. They argued that Ministers should be required to share what they have done to implement the actions under their portfolio to address the actions in the Plan.

## **1.1.3. Grassroots organisations should be included in delivery of the plan**

Involving grass roots organisations to deliver the Action Plan was said to be crucial, yet stakeholders argued the Welsh Government has developed a “top down” approach to the delivery of the plan, without involving grassroots organisations sufficiently. There was a concern that the Welsh Government tend to prefer working with one or two lead organisations who do not necessarily represent all voices and the Government also have a tendency to place everyone

in “one box”. It was argued that there is a need to ensure resources are spread across community groups, rather than concentrated in a few larger organisations.

There were concerns that the Plan itself has encouraged this approach by considering ethnic minority as a homogenous group, without acknowledging that people and ethnic minorities are very different.

#### **1.1.4. Communication about impact**

Stakeholders said that community involvement and confidence in the delivery of the Plan is crucial. They explained there had been a reliance on people’s willingness to share lived experiences and participate in deep dives and there was a sense that people were feeling “consultation fatigue”. Rather than continue to share their lived experience people want to see how things are changing and what impact it was having on the ground. However, they felt that there is an absence of communication channels between the Welsh Government and communities. Stakeholders from south Wales also raised the importance of reaching communities in mid and north Wales.

#### **1.1.5. Monitoring and accountability**

To ensure the actions are delivered, stakeholders argued that it needs to be clear who is responsible for delivering those actions, how they will be monitored and what are the consequences when those actions are not implemented. Stakeholders were eager to point out that an Action Plan with little accountability would be just another tick box exercise. One stakeholder suggested the creation of time limited policy enforcing forums, which could be run in co-production with the Welsh Government.

#### **1.1.6. Data**

Stakeholders told us that the collection of data is key to understanding where there are issues, but noted that there are inconsistencies in data collection across policy areas, and that analysis of data that is being collected is not being carried out.

#### **1.1.7. Intersectionality**

The importance of intersectionality was stressed by stakeholders, with some noting that it should be integral or policies will not be effective and problems will be exacerbated.

*Older people*

Some stakeholders argued that the way older people experience racism can be very different and felt inadequate attention was given to this in the plan.

### *Children and Young People*

Other stakeholders contended that the way Children and Young People experience racism is unique. It was felt that it would be worth consulting with public bodies who are studying the impact of racism on schoolchildren and asking them to feed into any inquiry that the Committee undertakes. Stakeholders felt that children who suffered racism in school suffered Adverse Childhood Experiences and that this should be formally acknowledged. One stakeholder felt that more consideration needs to be given to children who experience racism outside of school, as it was felt that schools took the view that if racist incidents happen outside of the school gates, there was little that the school could do to assist.

Another stakeholder raised the issue of children having to be translators for older family relatives at doctors surgeries and the awkwardness that could bring about for families. It was felt that more needs to be done to make translation services available at surgeries and hospitals so that Children are spared having to translate often quite personal and sometimes harrowing medical assessments.

### *People with disabilities*

Stakeholders felt that all too often ethnic minority people with disabilities experience racism in everyday occurrences such as trying to travel by either bus or taxi. It was felt that white people with physical disabilities would be given more assistance than black people with physical disabilities. Stakeholders also felt that black men suffering mental health conditions also experienced racist behaviour at the hands of the Police.

## **1.1.8. A vision of what “good” looks like**

Some stakeholders argued there is a need to establish a clearer vision of what an anti-racist Wales would look like to ensure people understand what they are working towards.

## **1.2. Implementing the Plan**

Stakeholders expressed concerns about the lack of progress on implementing the Plan, with one arguing there is a “danger of it becoming just another document”. The following issues were highlighted:

- **Resources within the Implementation Team:** it was highlighted that the Head of Anti-racist Wales Action Plan Implementation Team has been in post for a year, yet it is unclear if a team has been recruited;
- **Actions to improve outcomes for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community:** some of the actions are already overdue and there is no evidence of resources or of clear timeframes being in place. This is causing frustration as families who were involved in the consultation are asking stakeholders for updates;
- **Coordination:** There are nine cohesion officers across Wales who will have responsibility for delivering and coordinating actions, however there is no strategy in place and the cohesion plan hasn't been updated;
- **Resources:** there are concerns that the necessary resources are not in place and the "Welsh Government are writing policy cheques but don't have the resources to back it up";
- **Training:** Stakeholders felt that there was a need for Anti Racist training to be more readily available and that those responsible for delivering policy should undertake the training to improve their understanding. Participants emphasised the need to work with those with lived experience in developing the training to ensure accuracy and effectiveness. There were also concerns regarding quality assurance of anti-racism training more broadly as some participants had anecdotal evidence of training which was poor quality and/or factually inaccurate.
- **High turnover of staff:** there were concerns about a high turnover of staff, particular in the equalities division at Welsh Government and it was argued this could potentially have an impact on delivery of the plan. It was argued the plan has not been "future-proofed" and that the high turnover could lead to loss of "organisational memory".
- **The role of Welsh Government:** Stakeholders shared their concerns about whether there were any serious attempts by the Welsh Government to take a pro-active approach to racism. One participant expressed particular disappointment that the Welsh Government did not speak out against the decision by St Davids Hall to re-book Jimmy Carr following his comment about the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. It was argued that if they were truly focused on being anti-racist the same approach as Cambridge Council, who refused to

book him, should have been adopted. A similar argument was made about the Welsh Government's response to derogatory comments by a Member in the Senedd about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. One stakeholder said that she had seen very little changes and shared the example of being invited to a meeting on criminal justice to find she was the only person of colour in the room.

- **Communication:** it is crucial that the general public are aware of the plan but no evidence this is happening;
- **Accountability:** there were concerns that the Plan lacks detail on who is accountable for ensuring the actions are completed and stakeholders questioned whether local authorities know what is needed to be done and by whom. Furthermore, the lack of external scrutiny and challenge means that there are risks the Government is marking its own homework. There were real concerns by some stakeholders that many local authorities are not fully aware of the Plan and have failed to take any steps thus far to implement it.
- **Progress of the Race Disparity Unit:** One stakeholder said that the Race Disparity Unit is still talking about measurements and still working on how they will measure impact.

## 2. Policy Areas included in the Action Plan

### 2.1. Crime and Justice

While definitions of racism are included in the plan, stakeholders argued that it can be difficult for people to understand what is meant in practice. One stakeholder said that the plan and those with responsibility for delivering it are used to using "policy speak" which people affected by racism may struggle to understand. Another argued that it would be useful for racism to be explained in lay terms so people understand what it means in practice.

It was argued that people who have been affected by racism are being let down when it comes to the justice system and don't get the outcomes they expected. They explained that there has been a push by Welsh Government to ensure people are reporting racism, yet when they do they end up spending two hours of their time to report it and nothing happens. For many this is an everyday occurrence with people experiencing micro aggressions which are not always understood to be racist.

There are also concerns that some groups, particularly migrants and refugees are now facing more direct forms of overt racism.

One stakeholder expressed concerns around the existence of racial disproportionality in the criminal justice system. It was argued that the police are “way ahead” on taking action on race but that a “busy competitive space” exists around action plans. For example in addition to the Welsh Government Criminal Justice Action Plan, South Wales Police has its own strategy “Lets talk about Race”. However, the National Police Chiefs Council Race Action Plan takes “primacy” over and above all other plans.

Some stakeholders argued that many people from ethnic minority backgrounds have poor awareness and understanding of their rights. Furthermore there was a perception that these fundamental rights are under attack following the Windrush scandal, Brexit and the current government’s position on boats crossing the English Channel.

## **2.2. Education**

Questions were raised regarding changes to the curriculum for schools including for the mandated teaching of black history. Some participants identified a potential lack of knowledge, skills and expertise among the teaching profession as an area of concern. It was argued that this could be improved by recruiting more people into teaching from ethnic minority backgrounds. There was also a need to look at the resources provided to teachers to support roll out of a more diverse curriculum and the quality of those resources.

The attainment gap between different demographic groups in schools was highlighted as a persistent issue which requires a more robust policy response. It was also highlighted as a potential area for further inquiry by a committee.

One participant noted that race is missing from scholarship in many subjects and areas of research and argued that numerous barriers persist in the higher education sector.

## **2.3. Housing**

It was noted that awareness of the Action Plan was generally low within the housing sector and that implementation was variable as a result. Registered Social Landlords were generally thought of as leading the way but the lack of engagement with private landlords was seen as a barrier to further progress.

## **2.4. Policy areas not included in the Action Plan**

### **2.4.1. Language**

Some stakeholders argued that action to tackle language barriers is important, yet the plan does very little to address this and doesn't go "deep enough" in the same way as health, housing and mental health; yet language barriers will impact accessing support in those areas.

One stakeholder explained that some people from the Bangladeshi backgrounds can find it difficult to get their point across and tend to get over powered and come across as respectful and timid. This results in it being difficult to get their voice heard.

## **3. What an inquiry could look like**

### **3.1. Considerations when carrying out an inquiry**

Stakeholders were generally supportive of the Committee's intention to undertake further work in this area.

Given the breadth of the Plan, they felt strongly that an inquiry would need to take a cross-governmental approach to scrutiny and include input from sessions with Ministers with responsibility beyond social justice, including with the Ministers for health, housing and education. One stakeholder said it was disappointing that, during the Local Government and Housing inquiry into site provision for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers, the Minister for Social Justice gave evidence but the Committee also should have scrutinised the Minister for Climate Change.

Community members were heavily involved in shaping the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan and will have a crucial role in monitoring its delivery. Some stakeholders noted that the Committee needed to be mindful that some representatives who give evidence are paid to do so by their organisations, yet some smaller organisations and community groups are giving their time for free and this should be recognised and addressed.

Some stakeholders expressed a concern that their voices can often be "watered down", to make their views more palatable for White audiences. It was felt that whilst ethnic minority communities are happy to engage with politicians on race issues, it is important that their lived experiences are not presented in a diluted manner.



### 3.2. The role of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Stakeholders suggested a role for this Committee in monitoring the progress of the Plan possibly in the form of regular annual monitoring.

## 4. Attendees

### **Jenny Rathbone MS**

1. Laura Shobiye, Cardiff University
2. Simon Lu, Tai Pawb
3. Isata Kanneh, Bevan Foundation
4. Tamasree Mukhopadhyay, KIRAN Cymru

### **Jane Dodds MS**

5. Lauren Cooper: Older People's Commissioner for Wales
6. Maria Mesa: Women's Connect First
7. Martyn Jones: Equality and Human Rights Commission
8. Trudy Aspinwall: Travelling Ahead (Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Advice and Advocacy)
9. Tamesree Mukhopadhyay: KIRAN Cymru

### **Sioned Williams MS**

10. Shahien Taj, Women Connect First
11. Jasmine Jones, Gypsy Travellers Wales
12. Nicola Evans, Older People's Commissioner for Wales
13. Dr Hanin Abou Salem, Cardiff University

### **Online stakeholder session with Ken Skates, Altaf Hussain & Sarah Murphy**

14. Amarjite Singh, Wales TUC

- 15.** Professor Robert Moore, North Wales Regional Equality Network
- 16.** Kembra Hadaway – Morgan, UNISON
- 17.** Ginger Wiegand, Equality and Human Rights Commission
- 18.** Sana Afreen, Displaced People In Action
- 19.** Fadhili Maghiya, Sub Saharan Advisory Panel
- 20.** Megan Thomas, Disability Wales
- 21.** Huw Anslow, Welsh Refugee Coalition
- 22.** Rocio Cifuentes, Children’s Commissioner
- 23.** Joanne Maksymi, Race Council Wales
- 24.** Uzo Iwobi, Race Council Wales

## 5. Contact

For more information contact:

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