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The Royal College of Midwives welcomes the opportunity to provide written evidence to be considered by the Equality, Social Justice committee in regards to the current state and delivery of the Anti-Racist Wales action plan, particularly in the health sector. Through the RCM Race Matters programme we are committed to a coordinated plan of continuous action to work collaboratively to make a difference for our black, Asian and minority ethnic members, so welcome the Welsh Government action plan and ongoing work to instal an anti racist approach in Wales. Whilst the RCM recognises that there is a need to make steps to dismantle systematic racism within the midwifery profession we must also attempt to find answers to the often raised but as yet unresolved question of why black women in the UK are four times and Asian women two times more likely to die during childbirth in comparison to white women. (source: https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/assets/downloads/mbrrace-uk/reports/maternal-report-2023/MBRRACE-UK_Maternal_Report_2023_-_Lay_Summary.pdf)

Consider the effectiveness of Welsh Government actions to deliver the plan, including what is being done to ‘lead by example’ in taking a pro-active and cross-governmental approach to racism

The RCM welcomed progress in regards to key action for Maternity and Neonatal services with the publication of the Maternity and Neonatal Safety Support programme publication in July 23 which includes priority actions for Health Boards to review access to maternity care for all women regardless of ethnicity, geography or social economic status or other protected characteristics. These priority actions will require health boards to co-produce communications tailored to ethnic minority women in their communities. There is also commitment to ensure rapid access to advice if women are concerned about their health. It is positive that the Chief Nursing Office has appointed an Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion manager to support and influence the Maternity and Neonatal services to progress their action plans for MatNeo SSP around Racism. However this post is only until March 24 and the work requires long term investment and leadership. The RCM have welcomed the position and focus with the anticipation that the work will identify the resources needed including more specialist midwives in each health board so that every woman gets the high-quality care and support they need throughout their pregnancy.

The progress and monitoring arrangements for the Plan, including the role of the public sector (local authorities, health, education), third sector and where applicable, the private sector.

The RCM is playing a role in helping to improve the situation in Wales. It is of course vital that we tackle this deeply entrenched disparity, which is grounded in inequalities that are baked into so many aspects of our culture, through action at all levels of government and society. We must all play a role in eliminating racism: the RCM is involved via the RCM Matters action plan and Diverse Cymru Cultural Competence action plans, we are promoting and influencing that maternity services become workplaces to feel confident and empowered to make a real difference for their staff and services that they deliver. Through Welsh Union Learning Funding, RCM Wales



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of Midwives

have been able to offer Diverse Cymru training to a representative from all Health Boards and HEIs providing midwifery training programmes to increase maternity services broad knowledge and awareness through the cultural competency scheme.

The progress made by the Racial Disparity Unit, and whether there are gaps in data collection and analysis of data is being carried out effectively.

The RCM welcomes the implementation of Workforce Race Equality Standards (WRES) data in Wales which is key in providing valuable workforce data for healthcare organisations in Wales. Similar to other trade unions the RCM believes it is important that post-implementation of WRES, healthcare organisations in Wales are held accountable for the following things: - Development of an action plan to address issues highlighted by WRES data. This action plan should be co-produced in Social Partnership with Trade Union colleagues and internal diversity networks. Producing and publishing an easy-to-read report so that all staff have easy, legible access to the key findings from WRES data. An evidence-based approach to encouraging staff to self-report for diversity monitoring to inform the WRES. The Workforce Partnership Council's report in diversity monitoring data would be a good starting point. A follow up to the previous year's action plan to look at what has worked and what hasn't with an aim to improve outcomes on the WRES data. Demonstrating they are using the data as a source of triangulation of data to pick up on 'hotspots' of issues in the workplace. It is important to consider the pace of the implementation in England change which hasn't happened and taking action based on the data is the most important thing. The RCM would also wish to highlight the importance of the Wales WRES should extend to hospital bank staff. Bank WRES is being introduced in England and data shows there is a high proportion of bank ethnic minority workers: [NHS England » Workforce Race Equality Standard \(WRES\) – indicators for the NHS bank only workforce](#)

The MatNeo Safety support programme highlighted the huge variation in the Health Boards' ability to collect data. The RCM welcomes the MatNeo Safety support programme priorities that ethnicity must be recorded at booking and data used to monitor outcomes for women of different ethnic origins. The clinical data will enable Health Boards to have population health data to plan and co-produce services for the communities they serve.

What channels of communication have been established to ensure people with lived experience are informed of the plan's progress and what changes are happening as a result of the plan.



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of Midwives

The RCM are not aware of what the channels are but we would hope and expect that lived experiences are information about plans and have the ability to inform their development. The RCM are aware of the work of the Welsh Government in terms of Maternity EDI Manager who is currently in communication with Health Boards and relevant stakeholders to scope up the priority work. The RCM would assume there will be ongoing communication on what is happening at a local level to ensure people with lived experience are informed of the plan's progress and what changes are happening as a result of the plan. The RCM also assumed that the MatNeo Safety programme discovery phase would have taken into account the lived experiences to inform the recommendations / priorities.

The effectiveness of the Plan in its first year, including whether actions have been delivered, what the key outcomes have been so far and to determine why any outstanding actions have not been implemented.

Whilst the MatNeo Safety Support programme has been published, the RCM would call for continued action and resources around the progress with MatNeo Safety Support programme priorities around improving outcomes for global majority women and families. The RCM would welcome the ongoing journey for midwifery educators and other stakeholders involved for the implementation of the RCM Decolonisation Midwifery curriculum toolkit. The RCM would call for traction to ensure high priority is given to ensure recruitment strategies provide equitable opportunity for students from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds to be successfully recruited into midwifery. For Wales, there is limited evidence that there is any increase at this stage for global majority students entering into midwifery education in Wales

Help further understanding of what other interventions are needed to support delivery of the plan and whether there are barriers to implementing the plan.

The RCM believes that the current financial position of the NHS and the scrutiny of NHS managers this brings with it, is likely to be a significant barrier to the implementation of the plan. Managers are only able to do so much, and with cost savings plans to be created and delivered, financial control panels placing more bureaucratic requirements on individual managers and assurance meetings, the CSP feel that the implementation of the anti-Racist action plan is likely to suffer. There has been an increase in maternity services across Wales trying to make relevant improvements to influence change in their workplace using the Diverse Cymru cultural competency framework. Welsh Government should harness this enthusiasm of individuals and provide the support and leadership for them to make changes that will positively contribute to the NHS becoming actively anti-Racist. The RCM have



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of Midwives

developed a Race Matters Advisory Committee, which meets bi monthly to implement national RCM changes. The RCM have formulated the following five-point plan RCM Race Matters publication [race-matters-statement.pdf \(rcm.org.uk\)](https://www.rcm.org.uk/race-matters-statement.pdf) as a first step to ensuring inclusivity and diversity:

- Training for all RCM staff and activists to support and empower them in recognising and challenging racism
- Listen and learn from all members to reflect their experiences accurately and actively use what we've learnt to influence and promote positive change in the workplace
- Using our position, both as an organisation and through our reps, to challenge discriminatory behaviour in the workplace
- Ensuring that the RCM at every level is representative of the membership we serve
- Supporting research and championing positive change in outcomes for pregnant women from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds

This RCM commitment to our Black, Asian and minority ethnic members is phase one of an ongoing coordinated plan of continuous action to work collaboratively to make a difference.