Race Equality Action Plan - Consultation

Response from the British Association of Social Workers – Cymru

BASW Cymru

The professional association for social work and social workers

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) is the UK's professional membership organisation for social work. We are the independent voice of social work. We champion social work and help members achieve the highest professional standards.

Our key organisational aims are:

- Improved professional support, recognition, and rights at work for social workers.
- Better social work for the benefit of people who need our services.
- A fairer society

A note on terminology

People who experience racism are not a homogenous group. As such there is no one word or phrase to describe them. Just as 'white' does not adequately describe the myriad of variations in origin and backgrounds of people who might be racialised as such, neither do frequently used terms such as 'BAME' or 'people of colour'. The term BAME relates to Black, Asian and Minoritised people or communities, although the M is often used to refer to Minority. For the purposes of writing this consultation response we will use the convention of the Race Equality Action Plan and refer to Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic (BAME) people and White people. We acknowledge these umbrella terms are unsatisfactory and do not provide an accurate reflection of the characteristics of the people who they attempt to categorise. For an in-depth discussion of language and terms. Dacosta, Dixon-Smith & Singh (2021)

Introduction

This submission was co-produced with our members and the BASW Cymru anti-racist social work group' so includes the lived experiences of Asian, Black and minoritized social workers who experience racism in their personal and working lives.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation on a very optimistic and ambitious race equality action plan which will need to translate into tangible and sustained change if Wales is to become truly anti-racist. We also welcome the focus on priority areas in the plan which include; leadership and representation, social care, hateful crime and justice, arts, culture sports and heritage and cross cutting issues. None of the priority areas can sit as stand-alone and understanding and responding to intersectionality in a holistic way, is required.

In the recently published '*Joint NGO Shadow Report on Racial Inequality in Wales*'[1] (to which BASW Cymru submitted evidence) the conclusion is that '*Welsh Government 'has failed to address many of CERD's recommendations since the last periodic review*'[2] and that '*Despite Welsh Government having acknowledged the issue of institutional racism and structural inequalities, they have been frustratingly slow at implementing the recommendations in such action plans, such as 'Travelling to a Better Health' (2015).*'[3]

This above report is highly significant because it provides a real-time snapshot of racial inequality in Wales in 2021. This really is where distance travelled to reach the Welsh Government aspirations of an anti-racist Wales by 2030, must be measured from.

In our response, we have focused in the main, on social care, although the priorities are cross cuttings.

Does the vision, purpose, values and the imagined future to 2030 reflect what you would like to see achieved by 2030? What may get in the way to realise the vision and values? What may help to realise the vision and values?

- The vision, purpose and values are clearly evident. It is a very optimistic and ambitious action plan which looks great on paper, and we would love to see this future in Wales, because only by achieving it can we improve the lives of people who live with the corrosive impacts of racial inequality on an individual and structural level.
- We hope funding is in not going to hinder progress as these actions and goals require financial backing or they often remain unfulfilled. Economic support should be plentiful and not the bare minimum or any change will not be long term or sustainable.
- Poor leadership and a lack of clear accountability mechanisms will hinder any action plan and its progress.
- Regardless of what you call this, be it an action plan or strategy; it will not work without its people. Capturing a wide range of diverse participation and engagement at each stage is required. This means securing the 'hidden voices' of those who are excluded from services and not just the loudest voices.
- People who have experienced being oppressed and excluded often have the solutions – safe psychological spaces and grassroots level co-production is vital.
- Authentic collaboration and co-production with citizens are required at all levels not just at 'pinch points' of the action plan.

We would like your views on the goals and actions. To comment on some or all of the goals, actions and outcomes please reflect on the below:

Does the explanation (narrative/background) make clear why we have chosen the goals and actions in this policy area?

- Communities know their own history and often that of other minoritised groups. The oppressed know 'why' this action plan is required – so require less explanation of 'why' and more explanation of 'how' they will be provided with a sense of belonging and acceptance of their authentic selves and not systemically persecuted for who they are.
- The narrative and background are not new to minoritised communities. They are only unheard of and unspoken to those who have not felt the impact of such racial disparity.
- The actions and goals are clear as a starting point to change which are clear, as communities have been seeking these changes for many decades. Perhaps, this section is more relevant for those who lack understanding in Wales due to their own privileges and require justification for such action.

Are there any goals and actions that you can think of that are missing? Who should deliver on them and what actions would help to deliver them?

- We must consider neurodiversity and neurotypical approaches when implementing any services (mental health, education, health, housing, criminal justice etc.) regarding children and adults.
- Improved bereavement care for ethnic minorities as part of the post covid recovery plan to build trust and community cohesion.
- Funding and supporting appropriate services regarding mental health including poor mental health deriving from neurodiversity. This means social workers working in partnership with NHS clinical mental health practitioners and taking a holistic approach; without this, intervention is often ineffective. This leaves young people from certain communities subjected to further exclusion from education and training. There must be a separate clear pathway for assessment and treatment for those who come under neurodevelopmental conditions as the wait for CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) is long and CAMHS is often not the most appropriate service.
- CAHMS is not a service which is well used by Black, Asian or minority ethnic children and yet they struggle with mental health difficulties (often from the impact of racism

and associated bullying), eating disorders, neurodevelopmental conditions etc. Children from ethnic background are more likely to be excluded from their education compared to their white counterparts.

- We should consider tailored services to meet the cultural needs and create a deeper understanding of difficulties which those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic people must be considered. For example, LGBTQIA+ services should include an understanding of culture and religious beliefs to increase effectiveness and a sense of belonging. Many adults and young people from certain communities still think being dead is better than being gay and will take their own lives rather than reach out for support.
- We would recommend further consideration to the role of volunteering. These are significant roles and should be rewarded appropriately. Organisations who rely on individuals with lived experience must reward them adequately for their time and contribution. There are many barriers for individuals who wish to volunteer not being able to do so and yet these are the people that need a seat at the table when planning and implementing such an action plan. We only feed oppression further when we do not fully consider an individual's circumstances. We should seek to make these roles more accessible to all. Building mutual trust and respect is key and it about time we evolved our volunteering process to capture voices and have genuine co-production which is needed for such an action plan.
- Data (particularly Governmental data) must be investigated further. For example, suicide data recorded should include sexuality (if when asked they volunteer this information). Individuals commit suicide and sexuality, culture, identity plays a part. Accurate information would support a better understanding of harm and suicide prevention action/programmes.
- The Home Office publishes the statistics for Forced marriages and yet they do not capture sexuality – they do not ask and therefore very few therefore volunteer, however, this is vital information that would help make this service more effective. We do not have a true picture of how sexuality and forced marriage plays

out and this is impacting on minoritised communities. Existing services must integrate their data and improve it to support this action plan and create even more meaningful goals that prevent significant harm to young people and adults. The same will apply in other areas such as female genital mutilation.

- We need clear ongoing diversity training that includes intersectionality and not one-off sessions that happen periodically. Those with lived experience delivering the training makes it more authentic and impactful.
- Robust diversity and inclusion education is needed for all the students in Wales. Particularly within Higher Education, on decolonised curricula, to create a deeper understanding from the offset and to build on this. Afterall, graduates are the leaders of our tomorrow.
- Organisations who do not comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty should be named and shamed, fined etc. There must be clear consequences to promote good practice and deter unlawfulness in this area. Having a 'Public Body Duty of Candour' in this area would work well and produce the accountability we are all seeking with this plan.

What are the key challenges that could stop the goals and actions achieving anti-racism by 2025?

- If key stakeholders, contributors, wider society etc. do not buy in to the action plan and actively seek and promote change.
- Deeply embedded bureaucracy in key services – for example, this plan is clear about student attainment however, higher education is deeply embedded with systemic racial discrimination furthermore, the workforce including lecturers, do not represent the cohorts they teach – students want change.
- Power and leadership remaining within the dominant culture, characterised by White Privilege. (We exclude white ethnic minorities from this term)
- Class not being considered when considering race.
- No adequate funding and/or resources will prevent any meaningful sustainable change.

- A legal system and unfair social policies that do not acknowledge oppression and marginalisation but widens them.
- A lack of positive supportive media representation regarding local communities and the progress of the action plan and its purpose.
- No focus or lack of focus on the benefits to the wider society as a whole in Wales – more education is required in this area to expel the ongoing myths about certain communities.
- Not adopting a clear and robust intersectional approach to racism which considers all aspects of identity will not produce sustainable long-term change and achieve the desired goals.
- Avoidance of tokenistic measures which do more harm than good and will create lack of trust at every stage.
- An over-reliance on data or lack of it. Data should not hinder or prevent action in key areas – trust the stories of these with lived experience and do not wait for data to justify action.
- Seeking change without working in partnership and co-producing the specific action plan points will affect the quality of outcome. This requires more than consultation at the planning stage – it requires close collaboration throughout the entire period and thereafter when reviewing each goal and action. This must become a way of life as there is a high chance of relapse.
- There must be clear due process to deal with matters when they do not go as planned. Being able to make mistakes and learn from these and make the appropriate changes and improvements to action points.
- Without creative freedom and some flexibility for wiggle room when implementing the action plan, the process is likely to become rigid and not evolve with societal changes which is fundamental for the long-term impact and its sustainability.
- Social care must be adequately funded and resourced. Social Workers must be based within those communities they serve to build trust, greater understanding, and meaningful relationships with those they serve. This worked well before the centralised systems were introduced.

Furthermore, we should not be relying on charities to undertake what the State should be providing to all citizens.
- Social workers must be given more recognition and positive publicity as we understand communities and are trained to build alliances with people from all background. This should be seen as a valuable bridge to the success of this plan.

What resources (this could include funding, staff time, training, access to support or advocacy services among other things) do you think will be necessary in achieving the goals and actions outlined?

- Protected time for those advancing this action plan should also be provided, it should not be seen as an 'add on' to existing role responsibilities.
- Training must be provided – understanding intersectionality and local communities and cultural competence is key.

Do you feel the Race Equality Action Plan adequately covers the intersection of race with other protected characteristics, such as religion or belief, disability, age, sexuaorientation, gender reassignment, sex, and marriage and civil partnership? If not, how can we improve this?

- No, it does not. Tackling racial disparities without focussing on other aspects of identity only brings surface level change which has been tried time and time again. Deep level learning and growth mindset is required for the change you seek, and this cannot be done without considering intersectionality from the offset – not adding it in as an afterthought.

Please see the section on Governance. What suggestions can you provide for measuring success in creating an anti-racist Wales and for strengthening the accountability for implementation?

- Measurable outcomes such as an increased employability, student attainment at all levels of education, more diverse and cultural celebrations being held in Wales, better health outcomes for those from minoritised communities, less racial disparities in the criminal justice system.

- Talking to those with lived experience – e.g. data on 'stop and search' in local communities, have local communities been able to understand their GP services better (e.g. due to leaflets being provided in different languages etc), explore data from social care. Use of SAIL data base to integrate health and social care data.
- Gather intelligence about the attitudes of people prior to the action plan and then periodically to explore changes in mindsets etc.
- Celebrating success.
- Transparency in all decision making.

We would like to know your views on the effects that these proposals would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

- There is no reason to suppose these proposals would not have any detrimental effect on the Welsh language however, Welsh Government should also support other minority Welsh dialects such as the Romani Welsh Kale dialect which is unique to Wales and saved by the determination of two Welsh Gypsy families who have preserved what remains of the dialect, for future generations with no recognition or support from Welsh Government. This dialect should be taught on the school curriculum as part of the commitment to teaching Black, Asian and minority ethnic history and taught to Welsh Gypsy children, as a fundamental human right in accessing one's indigenous language.
https://shikawaromanus.thinkific.com/
https://www.travellerstimes.org.uk/news/2019/06/heritage-fund-keeping-alive-welsh-romany-language-future-generations

Please also explain how you believe the proposed draft regulations or the proposal in respect of the revised trading order could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

- We believe that Welsh should be the more favourable language as you are in Wales with a clear provision for those who prefer to use English. In India there are many languages spoken and English is one of those and often not the most favourable. In our view, there is no need to overthink as the question appears to. To some people English will be more favourable, to some Welsh will be – we believe thinking about it this way creates hostility – people are accepting of languages – we communicate in many ways other than using words.

This plan has been developed in co-construction, and discussions around language and identity have shown that many people do not consider the term 'BAME' to be appropriate. As a result, we refer to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people or particular ethnic minority people in the Plan. However, we recognise that this term is also problematic and, where possible, being more specific to the particular race or ethnicity an individual or community identifies with is generally preferred. However, there are times where it is necessary to reference to all those people who share the experience of being subject to racism. We have used the term Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people for this purpose. What are your views on this term and is there an alternative you would prefer? Welsh speakers may wish to consider suitable terminology in both languages.

- Using a single term 'Black' is not ideal as it further suppresses other minoritised ethnicities creating more oppression and yet people will happily sit with this, rather than BAME. There is no accepted way to describe 'minoritised communities'.
- Race is a social construct and within the UK brings much negative connotations as difference if often not celebrated within British culture. There is no word/words that would be preferred, as in the UK as it has become extremely difficult due to the damage it brings with it. Any term will be

problematic – it is best taking the time and respectfully state to whom you are specifically referring. How else are we going to take meaningful action if we just group people together based on race, and not all aspects of their identity?

We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

● Some of the success of this plan in certain areas shall rely on some systems being completed overhauled and re-invented. Working within existing discriminatory systems and trying to adapt them will go right against the ethos of this action plan and what Welsh Government seems to be promising – paradigmatic shift. Is Welsh Government prepared to do this and how do they seek to do this?
● How will priorities in this action plan be decided and by whom? The action plan refers frequently to accountability and mechanisms to ensure this must be clear, transparent, and open to challenge.
● How will Welsh Government ensure that those that are currently the most vulnerable in our communities, are viewed as priority in regard to the actions in this plan? For example, Gypsy Roma and Traveler communities having better access to health services, employment. education, and social care. Black woman having better outcomes within maternity services?

Social Care

Social care is seen as a key vehicle for delivering anti-racist, intersectional, culturally sensitive services without which there will never be dignity for those who use social care services, unpaid carers or the *workforce. It is right and proper that in this action plan, Welsh Government is reflective of the gaps in 'what it does and doesn't know'* in order to achieve its ambitions and that it identifies the lack of quality data as a *'don't know'* area. Although this is slightly at odds with what Black, Asian and ethnic minority social workers have told BASW Cymru; *"issues are already known, what is needed is a 'plan in action' to address this known stuff…"*

Quality data collection in social care – particularly disaggregated data, is central to deeply knowing the needs of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people in Wales. This is especially an issue when it comes to understanding the most basic information about Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people. Gypsy and Traveller people who were only able to self-identify in the census in 2011 - Roma for the first time in 2021. Many Gypsy, Traveller and Roma people do not feel confident to self-identify due to persecution, both current and historic, with the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill providing a particularly challenging environment at this time, in which to self-identity. It is not clear from this action what measures Welsh Government will take to increase confidence in self-identifying. The statement issued by Jane Hutt in March 2021 https://gov.wales/written-statement-police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-billf on the impact of the Policing Bill and intention to lay down a legislative consent motion, demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting Gypsies and Travellers in an anti-racist and inclusive Wales. It is important for Gypsies and Travellers to hear the Welsh Government standing up for their legal rights.

The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Social Work Association (GRTSW Association) was set up in June 2020 and one of its aims is to improve understanding between social workers and Gypsy, Traveller and Roma people. They are deeply concerned about Part 4 of the Policing Bill and how it will act as a significant barrier to this happening, as social workers are at risk of being involved in enforcement action and not support.

Experiences of racism in the social work workforce

At the core of the profession of social work lie respect, a duty to challenge discrimination, recognise diversity, and to treat people with compassion, empathy, and care. We all agree that racism has no place amongst these values of human rights and social justice. However, could it be that the assumption that all social workers have this value base as a foundation, creates a situation where racism is potentially invisible and/or ignored? Racism can be embedded in the systems we all work

in, and we cannot assume that social workers are immune to the impacts of this. *"Put simply, the decisions made within institutions reflect the preferences, priorities, social norms, perspectives and needs that the decision makers share. If a majority of those decision makers are from the white majority population (not to mention usually male, able-bodied etc.) then the institution will evolve to suit that type of person, creating gaps and barriers for everyone else. This is how institutional racism puts minoritised ethnic people at a disadvantage."* CRER (2016)[5]

There is a growing body of writing about racism in social work [6] and a demand for change is being led from the grassroots with the formation of such groups as the BASW Anti-Racist Social Work Group, the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Social Work Association and the Association of Black Social Workers and Allied Workers. Themes from the research include a lack of diversity among social workers, particularly noticeable in senior management positions and this will have a direct impact on recruitment to the profession, retention, and how valued Black, Asian and minority ethnic social workers feel.

The GRTSW Association was set up to provide an opportunity for social workers from these diverse ethnic backgrounds to be visible, to find peer support and to act as role models and mentors for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers to enter the profession. There are few social workers from these minority ethnic backgrounds because Gypsy and Traveller people suffer some of the worst outcomes in relation to educational when compared to other ethnic minorities. Gypsy and Traveller children were the lowest attaining ethnic group at key stage four in Wales between 2017 – 2019[4]

There is clearly a huge amount of work that Welsh Government needs to undertake to close the attainment gap for Gypsies and Travellers to improve life chances and choices, although this will not support increasing numbers into social work or in other social care roles, in the short-term. In the here and now, Welsh Government could encourage higher education institutions to develop initiatives such as the New

Buckinghamshire University Pledge as a vehicle for positively ensuring inclusion. www.bucks.ac.uk/about-us/what-we-stand/gtrsb-higher-education-pledge#:~:text=The%20GTRSB%20into%20Higher%20Education,it%20is%20required%2C%20see%20here

BASW Cymru and the GRTSW Association are actively supporting the Pledge, which is not onerous and can be integrated into higher education equality and diversity and inclusion strategies. Welsh Government could consider making such initiatives mandatory for higher education institutions, if they are serious about removing the practical barriers to inclusion in higher education and the professions.

Research in England tells us that Black, Asian an Ethnic Minority social workers are disproportionately subject to fitness to practice investigations with the social work regulator. www.communitycare.co.uk/2020/07/31/black-ethnic-minority-social-workers-disproportionately-subject-fitness-practise-investigations

We are aware that **Social Care Wales** has recently reviewed its fitness to practice process and part of the outcome of this process must be to capture accurately the numbers of Black, Asian and minority ethnic social workers going through fitness to practice, the reasons and the sanctions, to determine disproportionality and whether discrimination and racism are factors. Learning from this process must be used to inform how best to support social workers already traumatised through such processes and feed into social work employers anti-racist and equality, inclusion and diversity policy/plans/evaluation.

In March 2021, following calls from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic social workers, we set up an anti-racist social work group in BASW Cymru. The group's immediate priority was to have a safe space to share their experiences and stories, a space where they were not asked to 'explain' and where their lived experience would be accepted and validated as authentic. As one group member said; *"If social workers and practice educators*

don't have safe places to discuss and relay stories about racism, it will continue."

This group was necessary because of their experiences of racism in the workplace and some of their lived experience is captured in our snapshot survey of members conducted in June/July 2021. The survey was undertaken to explore the prevalence of racism in social work in Wales, who experiences it, who perpetrates it and its impact.

83% of survey respondents said that they had experienced racism either in their workplace, in education (whilst undertaking qualifying programmes in social work) or during social work placements. These are some of their comments:

"At placement ID cards were given to us, but while my white colleagues were given 2 years ID, I was given less than the period of my placement, I felt like I was expected to fail."

"over-critical and undermining."

"It feels like there are fewer overt examples as people are now less obviously using racist language or actions. Sometimes that's worse, it feels uncomfortable, and you know when the micro-aggressions are happening, just finding the words to name them is hard and you don't bother because it's too tiring, you just internalise it."

"Comments about immigrants taking over and sharing of racist social media memes were my last experience of overt racism in the workplace. These are easy to draw attention to and for the most part, action was taken, although the perpetrators were not punished, an email was circulated to say sharing such media and emails is not acceptable, but beyond that, nothing. How do you draw attention to the myriad of slights, lack of promotions, access to the same opportunities or same support as your white colleagues? These things happen with great regularity but 'proving' it is racism is nigh on impossible and I have been told not to 'play the race card' by a senior manager in the past, so it remains difficult."

To the question 'What happened when you reported racist incidents?' 33% of respondents said they had '*no support*', 17% said they had '*some support*', 17% said response was '*very supportive*'.

Here are some of their comments:

"I reported it, because that was the right thing to do, then I kept having to chase up to see what was happening and it sort of just disappeared. Why would I report another incident?"

"The response I have to my complaint was strong, I felt like I was being taken seriously and things like my mental health were considered. Being taken seriously was the biggest thing for me."

We do know that social workers from Black, Asian and minoritised communities must not be expected to resolve racism, exclusion, or discrimination on their own. Responses suggest that social workers see the professional association as having a role and influence in addressing the issue of racism in social work and this is an active process with the recruitment of two anti-racist social work leads and a robust equality, diversity and inclusion strategy coproduced with a diverse membership cohort.

Social Care

Goal 1

We know there is a lack of trust in social workers who have been called the 'cruelty' by some Gypsy and Traveller families, because of their association with removal of children from parental and kinship care, so setting a goal around confidence in accessing and using services is welcomed. The actions related to this goal appear too vague and this is where real detail is needed – if the people examining the reasons for people's fears are not representative of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people, how successful will this action be? Who, how and with what financial support are the key questions that need to be addressed in this goal.

In terms of outcomes – we would prefer it if said something like – '*Black, Asian and*

minority ethnic people are fully involved in co-producing/designing and delivering the support systems that directly affect them.'

Goal 2

It will be important that Black, Asian and minority ethnic people critically appraise and decide on what is considered positive practice in any new repository. An example may be that the 2015 Welsh Government strategy *'Travelling to Better Health'*[7] intended to support health practitioners in closing the health inequality gap for Gypsies and Travellers, could be cited as an example of positive practice, when in actuality, it has not resulted in any appreciable closing of that gap.[8]

Goal 3a – Workforce

Ensuring that the workforce receives cultural competence training, which is updated throughout their careers, is required. This training should be quality assured, co-designed and co-delivered by Black, Asian and minority ethnic people. Clear evaluation mechanisms must be designed to evidence impact of such training on those receiving care and support and unpaid carers.

Cultural competence should be seen as gateway training and continuing education and learning, which deeps knowledge and understanding in anti-racism/intersectionality must be made **mandatory** on all social work programmes and in post qualifying education and training.

Evidencing having undertaken cultural competence and anti-racist education (to include the difference it makes to practice) could be made a mandatory requirement for social work registration, in order to have the greatest impact. For too long the teaching of anti-racism on social work curricula has been ad hoc at best and non-existent at worst. Social work students and practitioners will rarely encounter any education or learning on anti-Gypsy, Traveller or Roma racism when being taught anti-racism, Welsh Government has to change this.

Goal 4 – Leadership

Leadership will be key in realising the huge ambition as set out in the race Equality Action Plan. Modelling anti-racism within the current structures of White privilege will not result in fast or meaningful change, it will simply reinforce the oppression, disadvantage and trauma experienced by the Black, Asian and minority ethnic workforce and those needing care and support. There needs to be clearly defined timeframes and processes for recruiting Black, Asian and minority ethnic people into leadership roles and clear procedures for ensuring accountability if this doesn't happen. Reverse mentorship should be initiated where Black, Asian or minority ethnic staff, mentor leaders in developing their anti-racist modelling knowledge and skills.

*BASW Cymru consents to parts, or all of this consultation response being made public.

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