

DATE Friday 6th October 2023

RE **Response to Consultation - Anti-racist Wales**
INQUIRY: The Implementation and Delivery of the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan

PUBLISHING STATEMENT

1. The information contained in this document relates to my experience of racial ignorance, unconscious bias, and structural racism during my last 12 years in Wales.
2. I agree to the publishing of my responses where the information is used in its correct context.
3. I wish to remain anonymous for fear that current ongoing racial harassment directed towards me by professionals may be exacerbated should my name be revealed alongside my comments.
4. I am able and willing to evidence, substantiate, and discuss further any of the comments made in my statement towards a Wales that leads on a meaningful anti-racist agenda.

The Committee has agreed to explore concerns raised at its stakeholder meeting on 20th March 2023 by holding an inquiry into the effectiveness of the implementation and delivery of the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan.

Paragraph 1

Racism must be discussed and addressed in context. We need to establish a more coherent understanding of the relationship between living experience, perception, practice, legislation, and the impact that racism and/or perceived racism has on the lives and wellbeing of Welsh citizens.

Paragraph 2

Racism is a multi-faceted and complex issue, often arising out of ignorance and lack of experience and engagement with difference and diversity. Racism can, and often reveals itself in the least likely individuals, when there is an assumption of innate understanding, or when training has been delivered and completed and/or via the 'sign-up' commitment to equality, equity and inclusion policy, strategy, and procedure.

Paragraph 3

An anti-racist approach requires active Equal Opportunities Policies, active Inclusion Strategies, and active Ant-Racist Action Plans to avoid a tokenistic approach towards practice and real change. Active, equitable and measurable practices that recognise intersectionality must be introduced to help guide individuals towards meaningful and accountable change in the spirit of an anti-racist agenda for Wales.

Paragraph 4

Practice must begin to encourage and support open, honest and transparent discussion about how positive change can support revelations of unconscious bias, racist policy and practice that may once have gone unnoticed or are now ignored due to the difficulty in being able to identify and address such issues at the individual and organisational level where the actions of several professionals serve to deny the rights of the diverse citizen and begin to destroy lives at a structural level.

Paragraph 5 – Black & White?

The complex nature of racism today is not a straightforward issue relating to verbal or physical attacks that can be clearly denoted by their content as racist. Structural racism can include people of all cultures collectively applying a force of destruction against a person or persons already marginalised by their racial status. I have observed Black professionals acting against Black citizens to deny them their rights because the Black professional is so low in the professional order, they too are subject to the discriminations of their peers/organisations and may feel forced to join in the denial of another citizen's rights to simply keep their job, and/or the status quo.

Paragraph 6

Every citizen, professionals, organisations, decision-makers, and stakeholders must be open and accountable to their actions to enable an anti-racist Wales that does not ignore the structural abuses that have settled into our most trusted organisations. Wales needs to allow its citizens to become more vocal about the real and active racism that occurs at all levels and across all walks of life. We need clear and meaningful reporting processes that take matters seriously and activate real change to improve the lives of those who continue to be marginalised, made seriously ill from and even die from racist abuses.

Paragraph 7

Early life conditioning and exposure to 'cultural' and/or inherited beliefs, whether positive or negative can contribute to the unconscious standards of how human interaction manifests itself in differing and diverse situations. Inequity, ignorance, and hatred have been the stimuli for our long history of human development towards the perfection of guiding Laws, policies, procedures, and processes that will lead us into active citizenship, equitable working practices, and the humanity we crave so desperately. We must come out of a culture of turning a blind eye because we are too embarrassed to deal with the issues at hand. The conversation, no matter how difficult needs to take place through the activation of the guiding principles, and our processes and practices must be made easier and more accessible for difficult conversations to take place to be able to move towards an anti-racist agenda for all Welsh citizens.

Paragraph 8

Born in Africa 50+ years ago to a Black African mother and a White African father, I was taught to treat **all** people with respect, whatever they looked like, could or could not do, or from wherever they came. Whilst it was not unusual that people of Black and White mixed heritage existed, the occurrences of these diversifying groups was less prevalent in some areas of the world.

Paragraph 9

My experiences of people have yielded a multitude of responses across a spectrum of genuine dignity and respect, naive intrigue, to torment, regular beatings, and destructive rage from fellow humans across all ages. I carry the accumulative memories of subtle and some not-so-subtle insults that infer that I am deemed unworthy of basic respect in a shop, or school, on the bus, or at work, and more recently as a person accessing a service.

Paragraph 10 – Ignorance IS NOT bliss!

My family and I have lived with racism our whole lives and through the foundational principles of my wider family's teachings, we have learned that gentle, clear, and open communication, awareness of intent, and an understanding towards others can often (but not always) diffuse, de-escalate, and even positively alter the course of a situation, where a person or people are at risk of the real harm that can be caused through the ignorance and carelessness of racism and the more subtle forms of racial bias. Our approach has often, but not always provided an opportunity for a perpetrator(s) - unwitting or not, to take stock of and reflect on the active and potentially harmful bias that they may possess and be exhibiting against another citizen or citizens. It is not easy to discern the intentions of a perceived perpetrator and it can be challenging for a victim themselves not be perceived as an aggressor when they challenge or simply question the motives of the person directing harm towards them.

Paragraph 11

“We want to make meaningful changes to the lives of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in a transparent way that uses their lived experiences and respects their rights as citizens of Wales.”

An investigation into the effectiveness of the implementation and delivery of the Anti-Racist Wales Action plan is a vital and much needed study that must set the parameters for change and measure that change with immediate effect. Our only hope towards achieving anti-racist practices, is to alter our current course by respecting the voice of our marginalised citizens by providing accessible and independently supported avenues that reveal incidents of personal and structural racism which continue to result in damaging, poor and even hateful practices by trusted members of the Welsh workforce, and by citizens in our communities at large. The people we trust **must** be able to lead by example, and be open, honest, transparent, and accountable in their efforts to eradicate racism in Wales.

Paragraph 12

Whilst there is an absolute acceptance that racial disparities exist across all sectors and at all levels of civilian life in Wales, there is a distinct lack of acceptance and/or baseline reference data to indicate the extent to which diverse communities are being marginalised through policy, operational and legislative practice. The commitment appears to be on paper alone, marginally backed by discussions that do not appear to be transparent or forthcoming with real, measurable actions towards positive change. Citizens are unable to activate their rights to change and redress, as defined by the Law in our current climate of policymaking and practice.

Paragraph 13

The current statute of limitations for reporting racism do not allow for the person suffering the aftermath of racism to access the proper and necessary legal guidance and support to report and conduct their concern or complaint at a level (whatever the outcome) that investigates, records, and responds to the incident(s) to begin to work towards improving public confidence in the commitment to combat racism in Wales. This attitude can render any plan or strategy towards change futile as professionals turn a blind eye and pretend that “it’s not happening”.

“The aim of the Plan is to build an anti-racist Wales, tackling institutional and systemic racism.”

Paragraph 14

The current statute of limitations for reporting do not acknowledge the fact that structural racism can take a very long time to 1. Realise, and 2. Report, by which time a citizen may become further harassed, victimised, and abused so badly by the systems in which they seek trust that the issue/s become null and void, allowing harmful behaviours to continue without change or redress. Citizens are asked to complain to the very bodies which discriminate against them, at best finding no resolve, and at worst, becoming the subjects of further hatred, harassment, ridicule, “guilty with no chance of being proven innocent”, and torment by those said bodies. There is too much leeway for professionals to abuse, and to continue to abuse their power in these situations and thus racism is becoming deeper seated in the structure, rather than being rooted out towards an anti-racist Wales.

Paragraph 15

Furthermore, my family and I have witnessed a complacent bravery setting in with some professionals/public bodies who have gone so far as to commit contempt in court, with individual professionals committing perjury in the Judicial system because they are sure that there will be no repercussions to them. I have discovered that these professionals and their organisations are correct – there are no repercussions for public bodies who lie about Black people in court, particularly if those Black people have no money to seek redress through the courts themselves.

Paragraph 16

Solicitors seem to reject Legal Aid clients who wish to pursue structural racism claims against public bodies who harass, act in contempt, and actively destroy the characters and future potential of perfectly reasonable citizens going about their business within the scope of the Law. The citizen suffering the aftermath of structural racism is directed towards the stereotype of being able to seek solace in mental health charities or is left to continue to suffer in silence by accepting that Wales is simply racist and appears uninterested in the basic human rights of its diverse communities. There seems to be no room for change in the current practices which in turn appear to reinforce discriminatory policies and practices, including racism.

Paragraph 17

- a) Who can we (diverse community citizens) turn to for help to activate our basic human rights and change the way that Wales sees and deals with us currently?
- b) Who will help us to address the very real harm that we are subjected to daily and change the way that we see Wales?
- c) Who will pick us up when we are so exhausted from being ignored from the bottom to the top and back again?
- d) Who can help us to avoid illness that can and will lead to our early deaths?
- e) Who will deal with the individual cases that get ignored and never become part of the record that shows the bigger picture of harm being experienced today?
- f) How can we help Welsh Government to understand and realise how deeply rooted racism is in Wales?
- g) How can we be part of the solution when we have no voice, choice, justice, or future?

Paragraph 18

There is no realistic avenue to enable you (as a diverse citizen), to invoke your rights under the various legislations intended to assist everyone to work towards the stamping out of across all areas of society. This brand burns further into the hearts of the Welsh diverse communities as a living statement that we are not worthy of respect or justice. There is little, if any point in appealing to the support of those who sit on the steering groups or as the chair of our anti-racist task forces; they too do not respond to our cries for help or acknowledge receipt of the pleas of their diverse citizens.

Paragraph 19

If potential victims of personal and structural racism are enabled to access appropriately designed mechanisms for redress, legal guidance and support that activates the Welsh Government's legal commitment to our rights as equitable citizens; our concerns and complaints (whatever the outcome) would be taken seriously, investigated, recorded, and responded to accordingly. This would begin an active process of change and accountability in what currently seems like an air of lip service, inaction, and a continuum of abuse, rather than a concerted effort towards an anti-racist Wales.

1. Leadership and Representation

Paragraph 20 – Leadership and the voice of the citizen...

There is a lack of connectivity in the effectiveness of current policy and practice to recognise cultural competence and leadership skills in citizens of diverse communities. For example, when a Black citizen described their own ethnicity, a White worker expected that citizen to describe themselves as 'Black'. This was not the question, and it is questionable that the White professional then felt able to state that the citizen did not know their own ethnicity. This example is evidential and on paper. The professional went on to state that the citizen spoke pidgin English and did not know what they were talking about.

Paragraph 21

This power dynamic has and will continue to interfere with the most fundamental aspects of service provision. It is shocking that this ilk of racism can be so openly accepted today and goes unchallenged and without apology to this day by the worker, their peers, senior managers and even Directors.

Paragraph 22

Where a person of colour can meet and successfully achieve partnership working with a professional or professionals to enable mutual respect, leadership at the individual, family, and community levels, it seems that fear and ignorance take over for some professionals. The problems begin to manifest themselves when these professionals, their managers and their superiors in turn begin to demonstrate dishonesty, aggression, and disdain towards the diverse citizen, by lying about them, defaming their characters, harassing them into submission and blocking any course of redress that may be available for the victim to expect their basic human rights in dignity and respect. There is no possibility to achieve our full potentials, and once again the future is blocked.

2. Health & Social Care:

Paragraph 23

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 sets out the basis from which all practice can begin to communicate successful change. It is currently failing alongside all other legislations. These are the sectors that promise to safeguard, promote, and facilitate the wellbeing of **all** Welsh citizens, and at this time when all people most need humanity. How can Welsh citizens be citizens if their rights and voices are taken away by our most trusted professionals?

Paragraph 24

Racism is a horrific disease that builds up toxins, tangible morbidities, and pain over the years for those lucky enough to not lose their lives as millions watch on but who have to carry the consequences of racism's shame without mercy or the possibility to heal. Racism is avoidable via the immunisation of awareness, monitoring, reporting, accountability, and a through road via which those affected can activate their basic human rights, help address and eventually stamp out this silent killer. There is up to date research (e.g., The King's Fund; 2021) that identifies a clear link between the mortality rates of the UK's ethnic minorities and structural racism.

Paragraph 25

The following information is about my personal experiences of structural racism across the last two years to date. I have included some examples of the conduct that I experienced and have too many more than I can share. Should anyone feel able to assist me and my family with this matter, we welcome the chance for some resolve in this respect.

Paragraph 26

A social services department continues to demonstrate a lack of candour and competence in dealing with diverse citizens and more widely, people with combined protected characteristics. The last 2 years have shown me what 'the trusted professional' can be, and despite repeated opportunities to reasonably adjust behaviour, the choice has been to harass, fabricate and torment a family of citizens of colour. Most alarmingly has been the witnessing of the removal of a child to local authority care when that child has willing and viable family members of African origin available to provide the highest care, when the parents needed help and support. It was also made clear by many professionals that should any White members of the family come forward, "this would be a better bet". Had a White family member come forward, perhaps the lies, abuse and reprehensible professional conduct of professionals would not have stretched across 54 weeks of proceedings.

3. **Employment and Income**

Paragraph 27

I went through a thoroughly painful and abusive foster Wales assessment to look after my young and voiceless relative. I continue to be refused any information to show that I was dragged through the process without being given any information, support, development, or training. I was informed by my White peers that their fostering assessments were very informative and supportive. I have asked for my information on the basis that I am in a position to decide to foster other children as the shortage of foster carers, and in particular, Black foster carers grows ever more concerning.

Paragraph 28

A social worker stated in court documents that I had the child in my care when I had not met the child and was actively being denied the chance to meet my young relative, despite having achieved a positive viability assessment just 13 days after the child was placed in stranger care with the preferred White local authority foster carer. Even the Independent Reviewing Officer actively blocked the child's return home to his Black relatives, and continues to give her judgement to this day. What chance does a Black person have if even those who are supposed to be independent, are not?

Paragraph 29

I was profiled and lied about, and the Judge was informed that I was uncooperative. My full medical records were accessed by a social services solicitor who stated that the Judge had asked for them, when this was untrue. My full medical records were then openly distributed to others in the department and again, there is no apology or redress for me. It is possible that my information is still being distributed further and wider than I will ever know. I have no chance to develop my employment situation - all doors have been locked, and I have nothing! The ICO cannot help me, the Children's Commissioner cannot help the child, the SRA will not look at the matter, and the Ombudsman is waiting for me to go through the next barrage of abuse before my concerns are even considered.

4. **Education:**

Paragraph 30

I was forced to repeatedly beg for information, training, support, and development to improve my role as a local authority approved foster (Wales) carer but denied any of it all the way. In fact, when I approached the date of my independent panel meeting, I discovered that foster Wales knew nothing about me at all, yet I have seen adverts looking for Black foster carers. I do not understand this but I learned that I am not worth investing in. My information is shown to anyone who wants to see it, including Members of Cabinet who have stated that I am vulnerable, which can only infer that I am either not mentally well or may have some kind of learning disability...? These key people speak without having met me, and do not know anything about me, yet the whispers compound a very bleak future for me where there is no respect for my GDPR, human rights and ability to develop myself as a Black citizen of Wales.

5. **Housing & Accommodation:**

Paragraph 31

There has been no respect for my right to privacy, with a social worker giving out my home address and details for all to access, again under the guise that the Judge requested this, when the Judge did not. This has and continues to cause me to feel unsafe in my own home and community.

6. **Crime and Justice:**

Paragraph 32

I was prejudiced throughout what should have been a supportive process to place a child with their viable family member under the CA1989. I was treated like a perpetrator, abused, harassed, and tormented. I did not give up. I will not give up my right to be human in dignity and respect. I did not have a right to a fair trial, and I feel very let down by Wales.

There were concerns that existing legislation, for example the Equality Act 2010 and other powers are inadequate or were not being used properly to hold Government and public bodies to account.

Paragraph 33

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to feed into this consultation and hope that my contributions will make a difference to us all. I hope that I will not be further harassed and abused for making these contributions and would welcome the chance to discuss these matters in more detail with those who wish to make a difference towards an anti-racist Wales.