

Appendix one

BRIEFING NOTE: WELSH GOVERNMENT RACE EQUALITY ACTION PLAN (REAP)

Purpose

This briefing paper aims to provide an initial, high-level overview of the Welsh Government's draft [Race Equality Action Plan \(REAP\)](#).

This action plan is currently out for public consultation (deadline for responses 15th July), and the Council Equality team has sought responses from Corporate Directors to fully understand the operational implications of implementing the proposed actions.

This internal exercise, along with discussions with other public sector partners, will inform the authority's official response. The Welsh Government intend to publish a final version of the plan by late autumn 2021.

Summary

In the summer of 2020, Jane Hutt MS, The Deputy Minister responsible for Equalities, asked officials to develop an "ambitious and radical" - Race Equality Plan: An Anti-racist Wales. The Plan aims to make Wales an anti-racist nation and make the Welsh Government and all public bodies become anti-racist organisations by 2030.

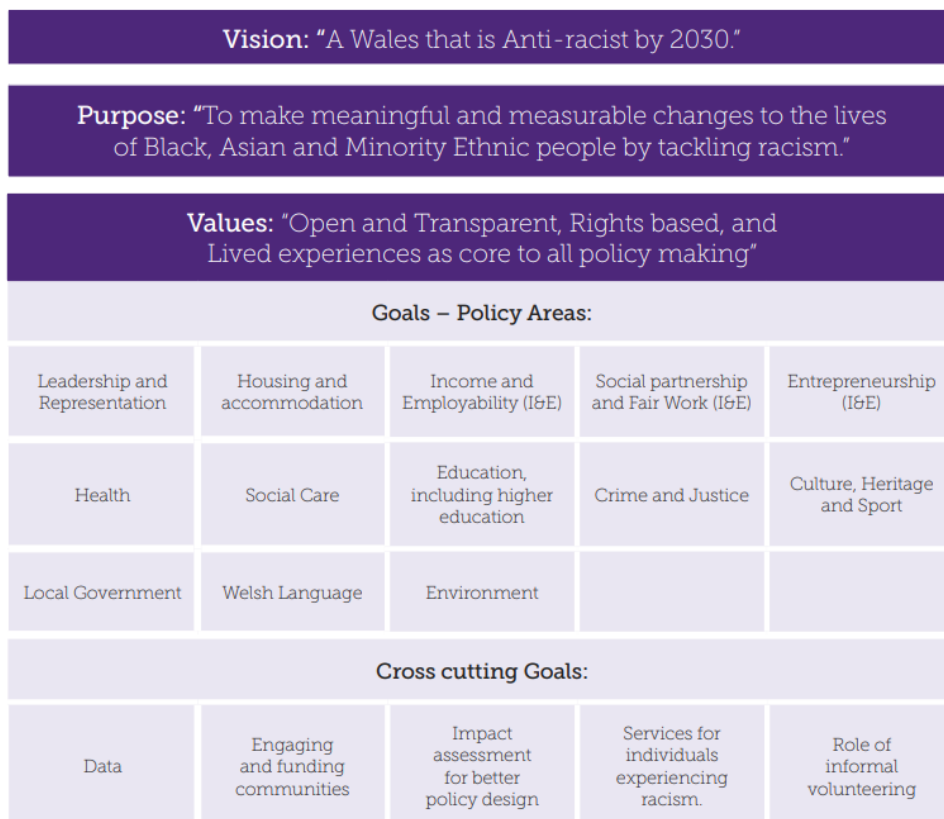
- In January 2021, Welsh Government wrote to Welsh Chief Executives informing them of their intention to develop the plan before the end of the current Senedd term.
- The plan itself makes clear that the relatively short development time is linked to the BLM movement and the inequalities highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Both the ministerial and co-chairs' foreword also make clear that the plan is intended to be practical and 'action orientated', and raises questions around the efficacy of the current legislative frameworks (particularly in regards to the Equality Act, the Social Services and Well-being Act and the Well-being of Future Generations Act).
- The REAP journey started with the Wales Race Forum and race equality organisations calling on the government to develop a race-specific Strategy. The killing of George Floyd and the Covid-19 pandemic related inequalities further strengthened the argument towards the need for this plan.
- The plan was guided by a rapid evidence review undertaken by the Wales Centre for Public Policy, informed by research and existing evidence and wider engagement with community representatives and stakeholders and has been shaped by lived experiences.

- The work and recommendations of wider working groups convened by the Welsh Government in response to Black Lives Matter and the impact of COVID-19 on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, including the COVID 19 BAME Socio-economic Sub-Group have also informed the development of this plan.
- The REAP steering group was established to oversee this work and it was co-chaired by Professor Emmanuel Ogbonna, Cardiff University and Dame Shan Morgan Permanent Secretary, Welsh Government.
- To make the plan more inclusive, the Welsh Government awarded 24 grants to Community groups across Wales to engage the hard to reach communities to gather their views.
- 17 community mentors were appointed to work with Senior Welsh government officials and Policy focussed deep dives and round tables sessions were held during the development of the plan.

Aimed at Welsh Government, the action plan put forward a large number of recommendations spanning a wide range of policy areas. The REAP is a large, complex document at 147 pages with around 64 goals and approximately 340 actions. It covers 13 policy themes and 5 cross-cutting themes.

Whilst not all of these policy areas apply to local authorities, there are several areas where there is significant overlap, and relevance to the council's ongoing community cohesion and equalities work and delivery of our 2020-2024 Strategic Equality Plan.

The diagram below summarises the whole approach towards the development of the REAP and that how the Vision-setting and the Goals fit together:



BAME as a terminology

The report also suggests practitioners move away from the use of “BAME” and should instead use ‘Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic’ in full within further communications. When shortened, the report suggests that ‘ethnic minority groups/communities/individuals’ should be used. This position has already been adopted by the Welsh Government and has been broadly welcomed by WLGA, communities, and other local authorities.

Values

The plan is underpinned by three core values:

Anti-racism: This can be best described as a standard whereby organisations acknowledge the salience of institutional racism and work consciously and deliberately to provide opportunities for everyone on an individual and systemic level.

The report acknowledges that this approach may alienate some members of the “dominant community” as anti-racism involves accepting “privilege/white privilege” as a fundamental concept and examining the stereotypes and biases that contribute to racism being created through structure and policy.

Co-production: The plan is described as a culmination of open dialogues between various stakeholders across sectors and individual members of minority groups across Wales. The development of the plan has been led by a Steering Group, co-chaired by Professor Emmanuel Ogbonna, Cardiff University, and Shan Morgan, Permanent Secretary, Welsh Government.

Closing the implementation gap: The action plan suggests that previous Race Equality Plans have not resulted in meaningful improvements to the lives of ethnic minority communities and that there are a number of questions relating to the efficacy of current legislative frameworks.

Links to existing BCBC policies

BCBC has already been working towards its agreed equality objectives within the 2020-2024 Strategic Equality Plan (SEP).

- While work in delivering this action plan has been slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- There are clear overlaps of approach and themes within the authority’s current SEP and Welsh Government’s draft REAP.
- Many actions within the REAP mirror actions within the authority’s SEP.
- It is anticipated that actions within the REAP could if required, be absorbed into ongoing SEP workstreams.

Synergy in approach

The REAP's outcome-orientated approach and emphasis on co-production sit well with the authority's aim to deliver more people-centred services and work towards setting clear outcome-focused actions within our own SEP.

- Community empowerment and participation in decision-making are also important themes within the REAP and align well with the council's approach to building community engagement.
- The council has also recently signed up to the Zero Tolerance to Racism Wales campaign, which commits to developing an organisation that is anti-racist in its culture and practices.

The Challenge

The REAP represents a bold policy initiative, that lays down a challenge for both Welsh Government and the Welsh public sector.

- It stands in stark contrast to the recent UK government report produced by the [Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities](#), which rejects many of the values that underpin the Welsh Government's action plan.
- Reasonable risks associated with the REAP's recommendations, therefore, include operationally focused challenges associated with implementing a wide range of recommendations, but also the politically charged landscape which surrounds current conversations on race, race equality, and anti-racism.
- Commitment to delivery of the plan's recommendations for local government will require local authorities, their staff, senior officers, and Elected Members to fully accept the **values** on which it is based.

WLGA concerns re. Governance and Support

- Feedback has been supportive about the principles and aims of the REAP but more attention is focusing on the implications of some of the actions. One area that WLGA has highlighted is the proposals for 'Governance for Implementation' (P29) which suggests changing the existing Steering Group into an Accountability Group to hold the Welsh Government, public services and others to account for their commitments and actions concerning race equality/anti-racism as outlined in the Plan.
- WLGA argue that this model although appropriate for monitoring the Welsh Government's own compliance and progress, is not an appropriate governance or accountability model to oversee local government or arguably other public bodies.
- WLGA maintained that local authorities have their own internal democratic and managerial governance and accountability arrangements. Progress against REAP actions, as well as wider Strategic Equality Objectives, should be overseen by cabinet and senior leadership teams with oversight and challenge through scrutiny committees, informed by staff forums and networks and community and local stakeholder engagement. Authorities are also subject to regulatory regimes, including through the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Estyn.

- A copy of WLGA initial draft briefing report on REAP is attached as Appendix two.

Race Disparity Unit and Equality Data and Evidence Unit

- The Welsh Government is currently scoping the remit of a proposed new Race Disparity Unit and an Equality Data and Evidence Unit. It is envisaged that the Race Disparity Unit will play a key role by providing data and analysis. The Race Disparity Unit could also play a role in sharing good practise across public services.
- The proposed Race Disparity Unit is a welcome development as is ongoing funding for particular programmes delivered through local government, such as the Hate Crime in Schools project and the Community Cohesion Programme.

Theory into Practice: Implementation

The council intend to provide a formal response to the Welsh Government's consultation. The Equality Team is currently seeking the views of different service areas to which the plan is most relevant to ensure an inclusive response.

- There are 11 questions in total to respond to by the extended deadline of 15th July 2021.
- Whilst it is anticipated that areas of work will align with the council's existing and planned approach to equalities and community cohesion, it is noted that this area of work is rapidly expanding and becoming increasingly complex.
- Delivery of those actions set out in the plan will require an organisation-wide commitment.