



Improving Race Equality in Wales

Introduction

The Welsh Government has made a commitment to publish a Race Equality Action Plan designed to tackle structural racial and ethnic inequalities in Wales. The Deputy Minister and Chief Whip asked the Wales Centre for Public Policy to undertake evidence reviews to inform the development of the Action Plan across six key policy areas, chosen as they were believed to have the largest impact on racial inequality: leadership and representation, housing and accommodation, education, health and social care, employment and income and crime and justice.

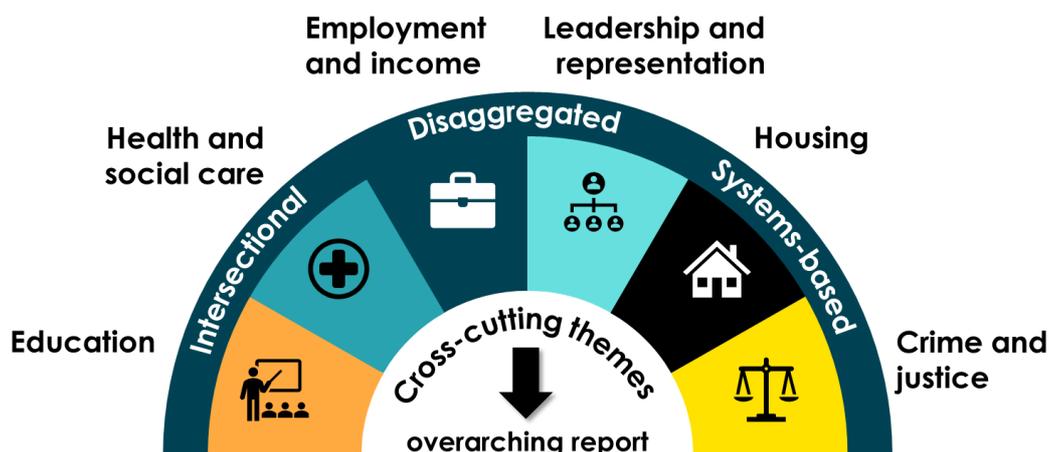
Our research highlighted a number of key areas for action across policy areas. These will be important in designing and implementing the Race Equality Action Plan. These actions are often system-wide, and success in addressing the overarching themes we have identified will also contribute to success in implementing policy area-specific recommendations.

This briefing summarises the principles we used when researching our reviews, as well as our findings across the four key areas and guiding principles for implementation.

Key concepts

While researching and writing our reviews we were mindful of the following concepts, which we recommend are taken on board in the development of the Race Equality Action Plan.

- We understand ‘**race**’ and ‘**ethnicity**’ as **social constructs** rather than representing biological distinctions between groups of people.
- We have aimed to take an **intersectional** perspective wherever possible, taking into account other aspects of people’s social identities e.g. gender, sexual orientation, disability.
- We have also attempted to take a **disaggregated approach**, in which we explore differences among ethnic minority people, as well as with the White majority population.
- We **actively avoid using the acronyms ‘BAME’ or ‘BME’**, recognising that these are contested terms and can be experienced as stigmatising, depersonalising and ‘othering’. Where referring to specific groups is not



possible, we use the (imperfect) term 'Black, Asian and minority ethnic'.

- While government policy is important, we also recognise that effective action will require interventions that are **both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up'** and which can foster overall systems change.

Data collection, reporting and disaggregation

Our six evidence reviews consistently found that data availability and quality are limiting factors in understanding the extent, nature and causes of racial disparities, and in evaluating and designing effective policies to counteract them.

Tackling disparities also requires addressing underrepresentation of people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds at leadership levels.

It is also important to have data on the differences that exist within, as well as between, different ethnic groups. Disaggregation allows policy responses to better respond to need by giving a more granular picture of each group and subgroup's experiences and needs.

Disaggregating data can be challenging to achieve. In Wales, the proportion of residents

from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background remains quite low at around 5.5%. As a result, collecting data of sufficient quality to be disaggregated without causing issues with anonymity will require oversampling, particularly outside of the more diverse coastal cities of South Wales. Given the cost of oversampling, however, it will be important to prioritise indicators where better data are required, and other methods such as improving survey response rates will also be needed. This will depend on building trust with minority communities, for instance through renewed engagement and clearly explaining the purpose of seeking these data at the point of collection.

Public bodies will also need to work to ensure that they are aware of any gaps in the data they hold so that they are able to address them. Finally, consistent data standards across public service organisations will allow comparability across a range of measures.

Leadership and representation

Research finds that interventions to promote racial equality are most successful when organisational leaders at all levels are committed to achieving them.

Achieving 'buy-in' from leaders requires a mixed approach that combines incentives and recognition with accountability mechanisms such as including relevant targets in performance management and appraisals.

Tackling disparities also requires addressing underrepresentation of people from Black, Asian



and minority ethnic backgrounds at leadership levels.

Organisations can use job specifications, advertisements and recruitment practices, including anonymised applications and diverse interview panels, to help increase the representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people.

Progression practices are also important as they can help to create a strong pool of more diverse future leaders, which also helps organisational continuity and succession planning. Mentoring and/or reverse mentoring opportunities, as well as development opportunities and secondments, could help to increase the proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic future leaders.

Changing organisational cultures

Wider changes in organisational cultures will also be needed to ensure that interventions to tackle racial disparities succeed. Experts characterise this as requiring a change from a 'non-racist' approach where organisations do not contribute to racial inequalities to an 'anti-racist' approach where these inequalities are actively challenged and resolved.

Implementation is particularly important given that many issues and potential solutions relating to race inequality have been known about for some time, but there has been a lack of progress in reality.

Organisational culture change is a long-term process and needs to be conceived as such. Putting in place long-term targets with visible leadership commitment will be important. So will building in accountability and transparency mechanisms such as regular reporting of progress.

Cultural change goes beyond training and development, although these are often areas of focus and attention. There is limited evidence that popular forms of anti-racism training (such as training in white privilege or unconscious bias) effectively achieve their aims and some evidence that they can be counterproductive under certain circumstances, although further research is needed.

Careful implementation of these and similar programmes may help to avoid these risks and have more of a positive impact. Increasing intergroup contact and facilitating empathetic approaches can contribute to successful culture change in organisations.

More broadly, participatory decision making and opportunities for ethnic minority staff to share their concerns and have a 'voice' that is listened to are seen as useful. Adoption of more inclusive and distributed leadership styles could also promote more open and positive workplace environments.

Engagement and outreach

Different policy areas and points in the policy process will benefit from differing levels of community involvement and participation, but including people and groups from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds in decision-making processes can help to increase the effectiveness of interventions as well as promote buy-in among stakeholders.

Co-production and co-design, where stakeholders and individuals are directly involved in planning, designing and implementing interventions, offer a way for policymakers to draw on existing expertise. In other areas, expanding existing consultative processes could also help to clarify the need for interventions and how best to implement them.

A mixture of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' processes that recognise the need for technical expertise and the strategic role of government, while giving scope for local flexibility and feedback, may offer a good framework for engagement that can be built on where possible.

Engagement also requires service providers to acknowledge failures to reach some communities and to overcome 'trust deficits' that can prevent engagement. Openness and genuine commitment to change on the part of service providers will be important in these situations.

Implementation

Implementation is particularly important given that many issues and potential solutions relating to race inequality have been known about for some time, but there has been a lack of progress in reality.

Research by the [Education Endowment Foundation](#) highlights the importance of seeing implementation as a process, rather than an event. Among other things, this means careful planning and research (including selecting which areas and interventions to prioritise) and building in opportunities to evaluate and, where necessary, change or discontinue interventions.

Complex systems can respond in unpredictable and sometimes counter-intuitive ways to

interventions, so a flexible and reflexive implementation process, including evaluation, will help improve service delivery.

Conclusion

The recurring themes we identify in this report cut across the six policy areas that we studied and highlight the importance of an integrated, strategic approach to the Welsh Government's Race Equality Action Plan.

Improved data collection, inclusive and representative leadership, organisational culture change and better community engagement and outreach will all play an important role in ensuring that policy-specific interventions succeed, as well as being important components of successful implementation more generally. And taking an adaptable, long-term and strategic approach to implementation will help ensure that interventions contribute to improvements in the lives of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people in Wales.

Find out more

For the full report see Price, J., Roberts, M. and Hill-Dixon, A. **Improving race equality in Wales: Summary report**. Cardiff: Wales Centre for Public Policy.

About the Wales Centre for Public Policy

Here at the Centre, we collaborate with leading policy experts to provide ministers, the civil service and Welsh public services with high quality evidence and independent advice that helps them to improve policy decisions and outcomes.

Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and Welsh Government, the Centre is based

at Cardiff University and a member of the UK's What Works Network.

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