

Wales Safer Communities Network response to: Senedd Consultation: Anti-racist Wales October 2023

Closed 06 October 2024

Crime and Justice: Concerns around lack of actions on reporting racism, tackling 'everyday racism' and overt forms of racism targeted at specific groups (including migrants and refugees) and racial disproportionality in the criminal justice system.

Terms of reference

The terms of reference for the inquiry are to:

- 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.
- Consider 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.
- Examine the progress of the Racial Disparity Unit, and determine whether there are gaps in data collection and analysis of data is being carried out effectively.
- Explore what channels of communication has 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.
- Evaluate 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.
- Help further understanding of what other interventions are needed to support delivery of the plan and whether there are barriers to implementing the plan.

Introduction

The Wales Safer Communities Network (Network) came into existence in January 2021. The purpose of the Network is to be the strategic voice for community safety in Wales, working collaboratively with our members to champion and support community safety partnership working and influence the shaping and development of national policy and local delivery. As a result, this response is focused on the Crime and Justice element of the consultation, which is covered on pages 115 – 123 in the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan

(https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-06/anti-racist-wales-action-plan_0.pdf) .

Response to specific actions in the plan

The Criminal Justice Anti-Racism Action plan for Wales was finalised and is being delivered and monitored through the Criminal Justice Board for Wales which includes representatives from police and local authorities.

There has been an increase in the number of PCSOs but we understand this may be reviewed in light of the economic pressures currently being felt due to the Covid pandemic and the cost of living. Therefore, there ongoing influence and impact on improving positive action may be limited.

There are still gaps in the statistics from criminal justice on ethnicity and race, though some of these may be due to specific data processing issues that the mitigations are still working through the system.

The Network has been carrying out some work around international student families, and have heard anecdotally of the impact that these and others are having in changing the demographics of communities across Wales. Active community cohesion enables integration and seems to help ease potential tensions.

There has been a lot of conversation and information around hate crime and anti-social behaviour which has come from Westminster Government and is still to be delivered or legislated for. For example the Beating Crime Action Plan and Diversionary and Community Cautions. In addition, the Draft Community Scrutiny Framework which is currently being consulted on by the Home Office is expected to have a focus on ethnicity, culture as part of the scrutiny function.

Community cohesion appears to continue to be a challenge with changing demographics, but there are some good examples where local authorities and partners have taken a proactive approach on training, empathy and awareness to enable cohesion and prevent or limit racism and breaches in people feeling safe within their communities.

There may also be delays in managing unauthorised camping with secondary legislation that is required to replace the Vagrancy Act whilst consulted about has yet to be go through the full parliamentary process.

General comments in relation to Wales delivering on being anti-racist

Welsh Government officials engage and actively listen to feedback and suggestions from partners, exploring opportunities to learn and respond to deliver the plan as necessary. A zero tolerance approach to racism has been strengthened following recent high profile international and local incidences (Keith Floyd being one example) however there remains much work to change policy, training and mindsets before an anti-racist Wales is achievable.

The Network ran a Seminar in June 2023, looking at an Anti-racist Criminal Justice System, which highlighted that whilst resources for all partners are strained there is a desire and appreciation that this requires a whole system approach which will only be successful if there is buy in from across all partners in Wales both devolved and with reserved powers. There was a sense that data collection needs to enable proactive activity as well as reactive.

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