

A call to action: Is the proposed Racial Equality Strategy fit for purpose?

A presentation prepared by NICEM to address “A Sense of Belonging: Delivering Social Change through a Racial Equality Strategy for NI 2014-2024”



- NICEM'S substantive response has been published
- briefing paper published
- Consultation events
- Dedicated web page, please bookmark and check for updates.. <http://nicem.org.uk/about-us/racial-equality-strategy-2014>

NICEM has serious concerns about the ability of the strategy to deliver racial equality in NI

Headline points;

1. Much weaker than previous RES
2. Lacks accountability and governance mechanisms, action plans and clear objectives
3. Evidence base is not reflective of the current context
4. Cross-cutting departmental issues and issues of intersectionality ignored
5. Fails to recognise the significant contribution of ethnic minorities to NI
6. Failure to adhere to human rights obligations

Why everyone should be concerned?

- Racism affects **all of society**;
 - For a peaceful, prosperous diverse future we must address racism at all levels of society
 - Not just about reacting to hate crime/discrimination about examining the prejudices that lead to hate crime/discrimination; institutional discrimination
 - Impact on intersectional identities

What can you do?

- Respond to the consultation;
 - Written individual responses (NICEM advises not to use online survey monkey but do separate response)
 - Attend consultation events, see NICEM website 'Race Strategy' section
 - Talk to your political representatives
 - Use social/print media to bring the issue to the wider population
 - Tell your networks/members why they should be involved
 - Specific campaigning strategies within your organisation?

Why do we need an updated Racial Equality Strategy?

- Changes to the context since previous strategy:
- Demographic changes (e.g. EU enlargement - accession of A8 and A2 States, 2011 census results-accuracy?)
- Economic downturn
- Lack of political leadership; Islamophobic/xenophobic remarks
- Racist attacks
- Need to have a robust human rights based framework to underpin government action

Differences with Racial Equality Strategy 2005-2010

- Much weaker than previous Racial Equality Strategy, 2005- 2010, previous strategy developed with civil society, incorporated Human Rights Standards
- Ministerial Foreword had strong language to condemn racism and made a strong commitment to eradicating it;
- Stronger evidence base of racial inequalities in NI;
- Details of key issues under each aim that echoed the evidence based research reports
- Details on the concept of racism and racial discrimination;
- Requires each department and their next step agencies providing annual Action Plan to implement the six aims of the Strategy;
- A senior civil servant within each department appointed as the Race Champion to monitoring their progress.

Failures to implement Racial Equality...

- Assembly motion debate in 2007 on Racial Equality Strategy
- 2009 debate on reforming RE legislation; unanimous agreement that legislation should be reformed yet this has not happened
- Crisis fund; not functioning
- Minority Ethnic Development fund, delays, lack of transparency
- Key government flagship policies are designed with a two-communities approach which overlooks ethnic minorities
 - Delivering Social Change (DSC) under PfG
 - Together Building a United Community (TBUC) is the current Good Relations (i.e. community relations and race relations) policy to replace CSI;

Human Rights Standards

- Neglects the majority of UN Human Rights Treaties which protect women, children, people with disabilities etc (e.g. CEDAW, CRC, UNCRPD, ICCPR, ICESCR), failure to address intersectional identities
- scarce reference to UN Concluding Observations.
- No reference to Human Rights Act 1998
- The majority of EU human rights law (e.g. EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Racial Equality Directive, Victims Directive, Employment Equality Directive) is overlooked.
- No reference to UN guidance on development of national action plans against racial discrimination

ICERD Continued...

- **CERD explicitly calls for protection through a strategy**
- The Committee recommends that the State party develop and **adopt a detailed action plan, with targets and monitoring procedures, in consultation with minority and ethnic groups, for tackling race inequality as an integral part of the Equality Strategy**, or separately provide an action plan for an **effective race equality strategy**.
- (para 17, ICERD Concluding Observations 2011)

Recommendations for Change (1) **Ministerial Foreword**

- Ministerial Foreword should show political leadership and commitment to eradicate racism and racial discrimination;
- Ministerial Foreword should recognise the positive contribution of ethnic minorities in our economy and society

Recommendations for Change (2) Purpose, Vision & Aims

- **“Vision:** A society in which racial equality and diversity is supported, understood, valued and respected and where people of minority ethnic backgrounds have **a sense of belonging** which is acknowledged and valued by people from all backgrounds”
- **We believe it should be stronger:** the extent of institutional racism which is manifested in racial inequality, socio-economic disadvantage, social exclusion and systematic discrimination against ethnic minority people must be addressed;
- Using “Sense of Belonging” as title is totally inappropriate as it does not reflect the extent of institutional racism; We suggest using simply the **Racial Equality Strategy**

6 shared aims (2)

Six Shared Aims

1. Elimination of Racial Inequality;
2. Combating racism and hate crime;
3. Equality of Service Provision;
4. Participation;
5. Social Cohesion;
6. Capacity Building
7. Proposed 7th Aim: 'Right to Maintain Cultural Identity'

Recommendations for Change **(3) Evidence Base**

- Chapter 2 of the consultation document is insufficient to provide evidence on the extent of racial inequality in Northern Ireland despite a lot of research reports;

Recommendations for Change (4) Legislative Reform/RRO

- No timetable addressing the outdated race relations law in Chapter 6 of the consultation document;
- In 2009 the Assembly passed the motion to reform the law but no action has been taken;
- Without an effective legal protection, the Racial Equality Strategy is meaningless;
- The Thematic Action Plan developed by OFMDFM should put forward a legislative proposal and the final document should have a timetable to assure ethnic minorities.

Recommendations for Change (5)

Governance & Accountability

- Each Department should be required to appoint a **Racial Equality Champion** to oversee implementation of the RES
- The **Racial Equality Panel** should be chaired jointly by the Junior Ministers and a representative of ethnic minorities in order to strengthen accountability
- The Racial Equality Panel should annually review the progress of a **Departmental Action Plan**, which the Racial Equality Champion will report to it

Recommendations for Change (6) Outcomes

- Chapter 10 on **Monitoring and Reviewing Progress**, once action plans are established there must be SMART-based, overarching evaluation framework for all Departments and their next step agencies
- We endorse the use of **Positive Action** measures in certain circumstances to achieve the 6 Aims of the Strategy (Chapter 3 and Annex A);
- We also endorse the use of **ethnic monitoring** which must be implemented in a compulsory way. (Chapter 5)

Experiences/issues

- disillusionment with the effectiveness of current legislation
- feeling that current government approach to policy is based on 2 communities
- subtler forms of social exclusion
- Lack of knowledge by employers/public bodies on requirements with respect to equality law
- Lack of effective political leadership, engagement and active commitment to racial equality

- Most people have limited knowledge of rights and entitlement and even when they do fearful to speak out
- whilst cultural events are important they are not an alternative to tackling difficult issues of institutional discrimination
- BME people dont want to be seen as victims but as members of society
- importance of education and the need to tackle racist bullying

- Long term impact of hate crime
- Underrepresentation of BME in public sector, PSNI and higher level jobs
- inaction by police over racially motivated incidents
- lack of understanding of what racism is “It’s not racism, they just dont want those people to live there”
- Lack of training of frontline staff

- HE often allocated houses to BME people in unsafe areas
- delays experienced in registering with a GP
- in-work poverty
- lack of english classes

Thank you for your participation!

**Please get involved with the consultation, if you need any help
assistance, please do get in touch.....**

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