



Federation Northern Ireland

A response to

**Consultation on Racial Equality
Strategy 2014 - 2024**

**Office of the First Minister & Deputy First
Minister**

10 October 2014

Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland

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24 Hour Domestic & Sexual Violence Helpline

Call: 0808 802 1414

Email Support: 24hrsupport@dvhelpline.org

Text **support** to 07797 805 839

Freephone from all landlines and mobiles. Translation service available.

Open to *all women and men* affected by domestic & sexual violence

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1.0 Introduction

Women's Aid is the lead voluntary organisation in Northern Ireland addressing domestic violence and providing services for women and children. We recognise domestic violence as one form of violence against women. Women's Aid seeks to challenge attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate domestic violence and, through our work, promote healthy and non-abusive relationships.

2.0 Core work of Women's Aid

The core work of Women's Aid in Northern Ireland, including Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland and local Women's Aid groups is:

-) To provide refuge accommodation to women and their children suffering mental, physical or sexual abuse within the home.
-) To run the 24 Hour Domestic & Sexual Violence Helpline.
-) To provide a range of support services to enable women who are affected by domestic and/or sexual to rebuild their lives and the lives of their children.
-) To provide a range of support services to children and young people who have experienced domestic violence.
-) To run preventative education programmes in schools and other settings.
-) To educate and inform the public, media, police, courts, social services and other agencies of the impact and effects of domestic violence.
-) To advise and support all relevant agencies in the development of domestic violence policies, protocols and service delivery.
-) To work in partnership with all relevant agencies to ensure a joined up response to domestic violence.

Throughout this consultation response, the term "Women's Aid" is used to reflect the overall Women's Aid movement in Northern Ireland, which is made up of our local Women's Aid groups and Women's Aid Federation. All local Women's Aid groups are members of Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland. Each Women's Aid group offers a range of specialist services to women, children and young people who have experienced domestic violence.

3.0 Women's Aid statistics (2012-2013)

- J 880 women and 546 children sought refuge.
- J 53 women in refuge were supported during their pregnancies and 14 babies were born to women in refuge.
- J 1,517 one to one support sessions were held with children and young people in refuge.
- J 3,659 women with 4,469 children accessed the Floating Support service, and a further 811 women accessed other Women's Aid outreach services, enabling women to access support whilst remaining in their own homes and communities.
- J 1,591 women participated in a range of group work and personal development programme including *Journey to Freedom* and *You and Me, Mum*. 219 children were indirectly supported through their mothers' participation on the *You and Me, Mum* programme.
- J 375 women with 519 children accessed support from a Women's Aid Women's Safety Worker while their partners or ex partners were undertaking the IDAP perpetrators programme provided by Probation Board Northern Ireland.
- J The 24 Hour Domestic & Sexual Violence Helpline, open to all women and men affected by domestic & sexual violence, managed 47,597 calls.
- J 168 teachers were trained to deliver the Helping Hands programme in primary schools.

4.0 Additional Women's Aid statistical data

- J Since 1999, Women's Aid across Northern Ireland gave refuge to 16,425 women and 15,488 children and young people.
- J During the last 17 years Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland managed 374,406 calls to the 24 Hour Domestic & Sexual Violence Helpline.

5.0 Statistics: Domestic violence & violence against women

- J Domestic violence is a violation of Article 5 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights – that “no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”.

- J The joint DOJ, DHSSPS Strategy “Tackling Violence at Home” estimates that the cost of domestic violence in Northern Ireland, including the potential loss of economic output, could amount to £180 million each year.
- J UNICEF research released in 2006, showing per capita incidence, indicates that there are up to 32,000 children and young people living with domestic violence in Northern Ireland.
- J Where the gender of the victim was known, 72% of adult victims of domestic crimes recorded by the PSNI in 2012/13 were female.¹
- J Over 30% of all domestic violence starts during pregnancy.²

6.0 Domestic & Sexual Violence: Crime statistics (Source: PSNI Statistics 2013/14)

- J Domestic Violence is a crime. PSNI statistics for 2013/14 indicate that there were more recorded crimes with a domestic motivation (12,720) than the combined total of all the following crimes (12,079) – possession of drugs (3764), shoplifting (6,372) and theft of a motor vehicle (1,943).
- J PSNI Statistics for 13/14 indicate that they responded to a domestic incident every 19 minutes of every day of the year.
- J The total of 12,720 crimes with a domestic motivation in 13/14 represents an average of approximately 1 domestic crime every 41 minutes in Northern Ireland.
- J The number of all recorded offences of murder in Northern Ireland in 13/14 total 17. Those classed as having a domestic motivation total 7. Therefore, 41% of all murders in Northern Ireland in 13/14 had a domestic motivation.
- J There were 550 rapes (including attempted Rapes) in Northern Ireland in the period 2013/14.

(Source: PSNI Statistics 2013/14)

- J Official sources (NISOSMC) estimate that up to 80% of sex crimes are not reported.

¹Findings from the PSNI Trends in Domestic Abuse Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland 2004/05 to 2012/13 N.B. “Adult” defined as aged 18 and over

²Women’s Aid Federation Northern Ireland

7.0 Consultation Response

- J Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland welcomes the publication of *A Sense of Belonging: Delivering Social Change through a Racial Equality Strategy 2014 – 2024*, and the opportunity to comment on it on behalf of our local groups.
- J Women's Aid supports the civil society Common Platform paper on the Racial Equality Strategy, and the views and themes included therein. The paper is attached at Appendix A.
- J As the lead voluntary organisation in Northern Ireland addressing domestic and sexual violence, we are disappointed that the draft strategy does not address issues relating to domestic and sexual violence or other forms of violence against women, specifically how such violence and abuse can affect BME women. Nor does the document make the link between such abuse and inequality. The proliferation of domestic and sexual violence, and indeed all forms of violence against women and girls, is rooted in inequality. Domestic and sexual violence are allowed to thrive where inequalities persist, and tackling inequality is essential to eradicate gender-based violence.
- J BME women in Northern Ireland are vulnerable to multiple forms of discrimination by virtue of being women and being from a minority ethnic background. For many BME women, gender inequality is compounded and magnified by racial inequality and *vice versa*. It is essential that the Racial Equality Strategy recognises the multiple identities of BME women and the intersection between racial and gender discrimination, and includes concrete measures to tackle these inequalities in an effective and tailored manner.
- J There are a number of unique issues faced by BME women relating to domestic and sexual violence. These include no recourse to public funds and the risk of destitution if a victim leaves an abusive partner; practices such as forced marriage and FGM; the magnifying impact of language barriers, cultural barriers and societal isolation on victims of domestic or sexual violence within BME communities. Women's Aid urges that the Racial Equality Strategy recognises and addresses these particular issues, and includes an explicit commitment to coordinate implementation with parallel action plans from other equality and equality-related strategies, such as the Gender Equality Strategy and the Stopping Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy. This would go some way towards fulfilling the recommendations of the

Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to “intensify its efforts to eliminate discrimination against ethnic minority women.”

8.0 Appendix A: Common Platform Paper

Common Platform

Common Platform agreed in response to the draft Racial Equality Strategy

This Common Platform paper has been agreed by organisations working for and with people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)¹ backgrounds living and working in Northern Ireland, in response to the draft Racial Equality Strategy, *A Sense of Belonging*, produced by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

The Common Platform highlights agreed common themes and principles that the undersigned organisations believe are critical to the successful implementation of a strategy. It is not a summary of all issues or their input.

If, after reading this document you wish to sign up to these principles please email commonplatform@nicrc.org.uk and type RES in the subject line.



Agreed by

African and Caribbean Support Organisation NI (ACSONI)
Artsekta
Baha'i Community of the UK
Ballymena Inter Ethnic Forum
Belfast Islamic Centre Executive Committee
Bryson Intercultural
Bryson An Munia Tober
Centre for Democracy and Peace Building
Community Arts Partnership
Community Relations Council
Committee on Administration of Justice
Corrymeela Community
EMBRACE NI
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Honorary Polish Consul Jerome Mullan
Interfaith Forum
Irish Congress of Trade Unions Northern Ireland Committee
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
Northern Ireland Jewish Community
Polish Educational and Cultural Association
Rural Community Network
South Belfast Roundtable
South Tyrone Empowerment Programme
Whiterock Children's Centre

This Common Platform paper has been agreed by organisations working for and with people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)³ backgrounds living and working in Northern Ireland, in response to the draft Racial Equality Strategy, *A Sense of Belonging*, produced by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

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Common Platform

1. Ambitious and Co-ordinated.

- a. The final Racial Equality Strategy (RES) and Action Plan needs to be clear in its ambition, providing a coherent regional vision for a diverse and integrated society. This needs to be mainstreamed into departmental work plans, and those of arms length structures and local authorities. The RES should provide clarity on goals, actions, responsibilities, resources, timeframes and indicators.
- b. It needs to match the ambitions of civil society and BME communities themselves and be held up as an exemplar internationally.
- c. The RES needs to be primarily an outcome-based strategy for Government-led action which delivers on the Government's national and international obligations in relation to protecting the rights of those vulnerable to racism and racial inequality, and enables collaborative civic action towards that end.
- d. The strategy needs to elaborate and develop clear links between RES and Together Building a United Community (T:BUC), with other equality and anti-discrimination strategies and the Delivering Social Change and Programme for Government frameworks.
- e. The contribution of trades unions, business and employers, as well as the rest of civil society needs to be harnessed.

Accountability and Action Plan. Implementation requires robust accountability arrangements.

- a. The RES should be accompanied by a detailed robust action plan which must include a comprehensive programme of activities.

³ BME community has an inclusive meaning to unite all minority community together, whether it is racial or religious minority, against racism. References in this document to BME groups should be taken to mean BME groups and associated multiple identities – i.e. racial group, or race intersecting with other equality grounds such as religious belief or gender etc. See paragraph on multiple identities.

- b. The RES requires a senior official designated in each department, such as the previous champions, to promote and coordinate the implementation of the strategy across departmental structures and their relevant arms length structures.
- c. A mechanism with a robust monitoring role underpinned by a set of principles and an approved work plan is essential. The proposed oversight structure is considerably weaker than under T:BUC. The oversight arrangements should be aligned with those established for T:BUC.
- d. Those principles should include:
 - 1) A transparent oversight structures with a robust monitoring/challenge role.
 - 2) Utilise the experience of BME communities and include as members people with appropriate skills.
 - 3) Ensure the arrangements to chair the structure are strong and accountable.
 - 4) Ensure the mechanism has a strong and independent voice in advising Government.
- e. OFMDFM should give consideration to how such a mechanism might also independently report to Ministers and the OFMDFM Committee on the implementation of the programme of work.

2. Evidence-based.

- a. A strong RES should include a meaningful assessment of the ‘scale of the challenge’ and utilise the wide range of contemporary evidence and research available. A wider reading would provide pertinent data regarding the challenges, barriers, obstacles to racial equality and cohesion. This narrow analysis limits the scope for actions and targets.
- b. The department should document the experience of BME communities and set out clear evidence of the social, political and economic inequalities (including multiple identity issues). This will enable clear rationales in support of priority actions, a comprehensive baseline assessment and relevant indicators to track progress to be produced and communicated.
- c. Complex concepts of indirect discrimination and institutional racism/discrimination should be explained and definitions given to racism and sectarianism and the interplay with Section 75 groups.

3. Multiple identity. A key focus of the strategy should be to encompass a framework to deal with not only issues on the ground of race, but also with associated multiple identities. Such an approach would allow the strategy

to tackle inequalities associated with, for example, race and religion, or race and gender etc.

- 4. Human Rights International Obligations and Standards.** The RES should make clear the NI Executive's obligations under the international human rights' treaties and recommendations/UN Concluding Remarks regarding BME communities and specifically eliminating racial discrimination (CERD) and discrimination against women (CEDAW). It should detail how these duties intersect with each of the 'shared aims' and identified policy areas. It should also draw on influential soft law standards, such as the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.
- 5. Hate Crime.** Adherence to EU standards and a commitment to develop the Hate Crime Action Plan demands multi-disciplinary approaches and partnerships, and should include support for victims, address under-reporting and consider the implications for the criminal justice agencies.
- 6. Positive messages.**
 - a. All stakeholders must fully recognise, and the strategy include actions to promote, the essential contribution of BME communities historically and presently to the peace process and civic society, to health services, enterprise and the local economy.
 - b. There is an urgent need for OFMDFM central and local government, all levels of civil society and the media to challenge prejudice and promote understanding. This should include actions to counteract damaging myths and debunk stereotyping in the context of on-going racial tensions
- 7. Positive Action.** There is great potential for positive action to tackle inequalities and promote integration under Section 75 and Race Relations legislation which must be clearly aligned to all parts of the strategy.
- 8. Resources.** Adequate funding and development support over five year periods should be provided on the same basis as with equivalent funding schemes, to support actions that will have an immediate and positive effect on communities with a focus on outcomes, and transparency in selection.
- 9. Local Work.** More recognition and resources are needed for the work of building relations and networks to ease tensions, address issues and assist in preventing racially motivated hate incidents/crime while supporting the two way process of community cohesion and integration.

10. Gaps. The RES needs to urgently address actions in the following priority areas:

- a. Reform of race relations legislation should be implemented in line with Equality Commission proposals and clearly timetabled.
- b. Develop and deliver a clear action plan across central and local government to tackle key inequalities in a range of social policy issues including social attitudes; education, employment, accommodation; health; welfare and ensure consideration of multiple identity issues therein.
- c. The role of the arts and festivals in promoting integration and increasing understanding needs to be reviewed and improved.
- d. Serious consideration should be given to the role of local authorities in addressing integration and tackling inequalities. Local government will play a critical role in the context of community planning and cohesion.
- e. The RES should identify how spaces for interaction can be created and comprehensive educational programmes developed through which people can develop the skills, capacities and relations for intercultural dialogue, participation and networking leading to increased community cohesion. The action plan should include such positive activities.
- f. Recognition and resourcing for the role of trades unions, community and BME groups in challenging inequalities and in creating harmonious workplaces and neighbourhoods.
- g. OFMDFM needs to develop and implement overarching Roma and Traveller and Refugee Integration and Inclusion Strategies (to ensure effective delivery and coordination across any existing actions).
- h. The current draft requires an Equality Impact Assessment in line with equality scheme commitments and rural proofing.

11. Monitoring.

- a. **Ethnic Monitoring.** The RES should include a strong implementation plan for the robust collection of data regarding BME communities. Effective and progressive policy development and implementation will only occur when proper baselines are in place. The OFMDFM Guidance on Ethnic Monitoring should be compulsory and be implemented, monitored and reviewed across the full range of public services. Current inconsistencies with data collection in GB need to be addressed.
- b. **Strategic Monitoring.** Implementation of the strategy should be monitored effectively and reviewed regularly for example in line with

the spending reviews, and the accountability structures and relevant personnel must hold government accountable for monitoring the execution of actions. This will support the early development of a subsequent strategy. A weakness in this draft is the lack of recognition of successes or failures of the first Racial Equality Strategy.

12. Indicators. Indicators must clearly show their relevance to actions aimed at targeting racial inequality and will require the development of indicators and mechanisms for the improved collection of relevant data. It is recommended that the current indicators are reviewed.

[CRC Towards A Shared Society](#)

[ECNI Race Policy Position – key point briefing \(2 page\)](#)

[ECNI Race Law Reform Recommendations – key point briefing: \(2 page\)](#)

[NICEM Racial Equality Strategy Submission](#)

[STEP Response Synopsis](#)

9.0 Contact details

For further information about this response please contact:

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Email: louise.kennedy@womensaidni.org

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24 Hour Domestic Violence Helpline - 0800 917 1414

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Text **support** to 07797805839

*Open to **all women and men** affected by domestic violence*