

TITLE/ORGANISATION	Racial Equality Subgroup
VENUE:	Castle Buildings, D2 Lecture Theatre
DATE/TIME:	11 December 2025, 10:00-12:00
List of Attendees:	<p><u>Attendees</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan Russam (GEMSNI – Chair) • Stephen Atkinson (GEMSNI) • Ann Marie White (British Red Cross) • Nisha Tandon (ArtsEkta) • Ivy Goddard (Inter Ethnic Forum) • Judith Searle (Barnardo’s NI) • Shannon Doherty (North West Migrants Forum) • Paul Yam (Wah Hep) • Takura Donald Makoni (ACSONI) • Suleiman Abdulahi (HAPNI) • Dr Katy Radford (Belfast (NI) Jewish Community) • Lili Wu (Chinese Welfare Commission) • Paul Noonan (Equality Commission NI) • Fernanda Hermosilla (NI Human Rights Commission) <p><u>TEO</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul Naylor (Head of RRI Development & Delivery) • Peter McCusker (Head of RRI Legislation Branch) • TEO Officials
Apologies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joanne Neill (Bryson Charitable Group) • Deirdre McAliskey (STEPNI) • Jill Robinson (Flourish NI) • Fergal Quinn (Building Communities Resource Centre) • Monika Ciok-Giertuga (North Down YMCA) • Mimi Unamoyo (Bomoko NI)

Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Chair welcomed attendees, particularly Stephen Atkinson who will be the GEMSNI representative going forward. No conflicts of interest were raised by attendees.
- Chair made members aware of apologies received.

- Late apologies were received from Home Office who were scheduled to attend to provide information on the Windrush Compensation Scheme. A one-off meeting is to be arranged in the New Year for those interested [AP1].
- Chair reminded attendees that during meetings, the recording of audio and/or video by any attendee is not permitted.
- Chair reminded attendees that minutes of meetings are published, including the names of attendees and organisations.
- Chair reminded attendees that given the nature of some of the issues that might be discussed, including policy in development, members should be sensitive about sharing details of the content of discussion at meetings and any papers or presentations must remain confidential and not shared beyond the Subgroup, without the prior consent of the author(s) of the paper(s). Such consent should be requested through the TEO Secretariat at race.equality@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk.
- Chair reminded attendees that members can be reimbursed for allowable travel costs attending required meetings. Travel claims guidance and form has previously been issued to members; any queries please contact race.equality@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk.

Minutes and Action Points from last meeting

- Following amendments after the previous meeting, members were content to approve the minutes of 11 June 2025 and 10 July 2025.
- Judith Searle proposed to agree the minutes of 11 September 2025 and 25 September 2025, and Ivy Goddard seconded.
- Chair updated members regarding the Subgroup's meeting with Minister Long in November. A letter was sent to Minister Long to thank her and acknowledge her commitment to meeting again in the New Year. Members agreed it important to confirm a date for this meeting to ensure appropriate emphasis is provided to the Minister regarding the Bills [AP2].

Outstanding Action Points from September 2025 meeting:

- *AP7 – [Chair] Chair to write again to the Minister for Communities, including examples of cases of incidents and their impact (the draft letter will be sent to the Subgroup before issue).* This was incorporated into the letter to the First Minister and deputy First Minister, and no reply received as of yet. Next Chair to follow up on a response [AP3].
- *AP8 – [Chair of HC WG] Chair of the Hate Crime, Legislation & Access to Justice Working Group will invite the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to an upcoming meeting.* Chair advised attendees that NIHE has been contacted, and Secretariat are awaiting confirmation. Invite for this meeting will be extended to the Racist Bullying Working Group and Subgroup [AP4].
- *AP9 – [Chair] to write to OFCOM regarding accountability regarding online hate incidents.* This action will roll over for action by the next Chair.
- *AP10 & 12 – The issue of hate speech & constitution of sufficient evidence of a hate crime prosecution would be raised at Monday's meeting with Inspector*

McMullan. Attendees who were present at this meeting said that this issue was not raised specifically as a direct question. Attendees discussed cases of racist abuse on social media posts of young minority ethnic people, including on posts by the PSNI, where the posts have been removed - the messaging this may send young people, as well as the balance of risks and safeguarding children and young people. Attendees stated that organisations are now having to be especially careful of what they post, to ensure the safety of their service users, while news outlets and social media do not mediate their platforms to any meaningful effect. It was agreed that this be raised at the next meeting with Minister Long [AP5], as well as at the meeting which is being organised with Zoe McKee, PSNI [AP6]. Attendees requested that Chief Constable Jon Boucher be invited to the meeting with Zoe McKee [AP7].

- *AP13 – Chair revised the letter for the First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding state of civic and public society, and sought agreement from the Subgroup before issuing.* Chair updated members to let them know a response has not yet been received.
- *AP14 – [TEO] Migration & Integration Policy Branch to provide further update on pausing of family reunions.* Chair drew attendees' attention to the RRI Update Paper that was provided in advance of the meeting. Attendees felt the update did not cover the original ask, and that the matter was being treated as separate from the devolved responsibilities. Secretariat to go back to Policy Branch to ask what scenario planning has been done; what provisions has TEO made regarding the impact of this policy; what will be done to protect people from exploitation resulting from this policy; and what the devolved responsibilities are regarding this policy in regard to integration, health, housing, education [AP8].
- *AP15 – ECNI and NIHRC were to raise diminution of Article 8 rights, regarding pausing of family reunions, to the Dedicated Mechanism for advice.* ECNI provided members with an update; they have raised this issue with the Dedicated Mechanism and will undertake to bring any consideration once received via correspondence. NIHRC have raised the issue of family reunion pausing. NIHRC are also internally considering the reforms and an update will follow a meeting in January.
- Attendees felt that Article 3, freedom from torture and inhumane and degrading treatment is being narrowed by legacy cases, and that the impact of this will be far reaching for departments. Mapping of the impact and where devolved matters lie would be beneficial.

Race Relations & Integration Update

- Chair drew attendees' attention to the relevant paper provided.
- Discussion took place on the make-up of the Community Cohesion Group, which are working to develop joined-up messaging, and attendees felt it would be good to engage the sector on this. TEO advised that the sector can be engaged at a later stage.

- ECNI raised concerns regarding a lack of visible progress on EEM and training for civil servants, and proposals following Black Lives Matter protests. Further concerns were raised regarding disengagement from the Subgroup, that messaging over summer has not translated into action on the causes of racism, that key issues identified by the group have not been addressed, and ending violence against women and girls has not been incorporated.
- TEO Legislation Branch advised that they are working towards achieving legislation within this mandate, and a first draft of the ARU report arrived this morning. It is hoped that it will be brought to the EEM Working Group in March 2026, and the next meeting of the EEM Working Group is expected to be in January 2026. Attendees reminded TEO that collection of data on an ongoing basis for policy development is the requirement. While TEO are engaging with NISRA on data that already exists and is already collected for better use by departments, attendees proposed mapping the data that already exists; what is happening with this data; how this data is being utilised; and for a standing agenda item for a 'living document' to be included in each meetings' papers [AP9].
- An attendee queried the differences in approach compared to the current Racial Equality Strategy and the draft Framework for Race Relations. TEO advised racial equality will always be the goal, but that the framework-style approach will allow for flexible interventions under shared outcomes that benefit all communities.
- TEO advised cultural awareness training for the civil service is being developed, but sign-off is required before the Subgroup can be given advanced sight. Attendees raised their concerns that this would be too late to meaningfully inform the training.
- A member, who provided their apologies for this meeting, submitted questions in advance of the meeting which included topics covering RRI Migration & Integration Policy Branch as well as Development & Delivery Branch. These questions have been provided to the relevant branches and are currently being considered. At the earliest opportunity, Secretariat will write directly to the member with responses to these questions before onward sharing to the Subgroup [AP10].
- Discussion took place on the optimum timeframe for raising questions to allow for informed response by TEO at the Subgroup meeting itself. It was felt that representation from Migration & Integration Policy Branch should attend future Subgroup meetings to minimise issues [AP11].

Racial Equality Subgroup Priorities & Future Action Plan

- Chair reminded attendees that this item has been carried over since June 2025, and that the Action Plan can involve both input from working group draft workplans and also any key issues of the group in need of attention for 2026/2027.

- If working groups wish to send their draft workplans to Secretariat, they can combine everything into one Action Plan for consideration by the group at the March meeting [AP12].

Working Group Updates

- Following the last meeting of the Subgroup, written updates were provided by the Chairs of each Working Group.
- Racist Bullying: a letter was issued to DE's Curriculum Review Taskforce by the group. They are still waiting on a response. Secretariat will circulate the letter with Subgroup members after the meeting [AP13].
- Discussion took place on WJEC's removal of Of Mice and Men from the curriculum. Attendees felt it would be useful to meet with the Curriculum Review Taskforce to discuss priorities that will reflect the lived experience of minority ethnic children and young people [AP14].
- Discussion took place on the recent Supreme Court judgment regarding JR87, which found the religious education curriculum in Northern Ireland to be unlawful. Attendees felt it important that Subgroup representation is on the Curriculum Review Taskforce, and this work is ongoing under the working group.
- Discussion took place regarding widening participation in education for Traveller children and young people, attendees agreed to request an update from DE on how recommendations are making a difference [AP15].
- Discussion took place on minority ethnic children and young people losing access to education due to homelessness and being provided temporary accommodation far away from their schools, and how the remit of the Racist Bullying Working Group might widen to include access to education. Attendees felt that the Child Services Cooperation Act is being underutilised, and the rights of the child are being deprioritised over affordable housing. It was agreed that Paul Noonan and Suleiman Abdulahi would attend the next Racist Bullying Working Group to further discuss this issue [AP16].

Traveller and Roma Thematic Group Updates

- RTG: Chair of the RTG, Ivy Goddard, let members know Jock McToal, PSNI, attended the latest meeting to present on the PSNI's work in Ballymena since this summer's riots. She advised the group that attacks are continuing to take place in Ballymena, but now reporting in the media has slowed down.
- Discussion took place on responsible behaviour in public and political discourse, including the portrayal of people not from the UK, and that the messaging this creates is one of difference.
- TTG: Chair of the TTG, Paul Naylor (temp), let members know that NIHE will provide more regular updates on progress of Traveller sites, and that priorities and an action plan are currently being developed by TTG.

Chair Election

- Chair advised attendees that TEO will be issuing guidance and information for Chair nominations today [AP17].

Any Other Business

- In the context of migrant workers being mistreated and exploited, and the Scottish Government's proposal to provide a set amount of funds for sponsoring migrant workers, a member reminded attendees of the Good Jobs Bill which is due to come before the Assembly and a UK wide body which is to come into being which will replace the Gangmasters Group. Discussion took place around policies to support migrant workers when they are made destitute. Attendees were reminded of the Crisis Fund, administered by Red Cross, which may provide some financial bridging for a short period of time.
- TEO advised that initial work has begun on ways to support those with no recourse to public funds. This work is in its very early stages and would require development as well as Ministerial sign-off before it can be brought to the group. A member made attendees aware that under the Swept Protocol, for homelessness caused by adverse weather conditions such as flooding, people with no recourse to public funds are not provided accommodation. This issue has been raised with RRI Migration & Integration Policy Branch.

Date of Next Meeting

- Chair advised attendees that the next meeting of the Racial Equality Subgroup will take place on 4 March 2026 in Castle Buildings.

ACTION POINTS/OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE/TARGET DATE:

- **AP1** – TEO Secretariat to arrange a one-off meeting with Home Office on the Windrush Compensation Scheme in the New Year for those interested.
- **AP2** – **Chair/Secretariat** to confirm a date for the meeting with Minister of Justice in the New Year.
- **AP3** – **Incoming Chair** to follow up on a response from the First Minister and deputy First Minister on letter sent on 22 September 2025.
- **AP4** – **TEO Secretariat**; Hate Crime, Legislation & Access to Justice Working Group will be having a one-off meeting with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in the New Year, and the invite is to be extended to the Racist Bullying Working Group.
- **AP5** – **Members** to raise issue of hate speech & constitution of sufficient evidence of a hate crime prosecution, and social media abuse at the next meeting with the Minister of Justice.
- **AP6** – **Members** to raise issue of hate speech & constitution of sufficient evidence of a hate crime prosecution, and social media abuse at the meeting with the Zoe McKee.
- **AP7** – **TEO Secretariat** to invite Chief Constable Jon Boucher to attend the meeting being organised with Zoe McKee.
- **AP8** – **TEO Secretariat** to go back to Policy Branch regarding pausing of family reunions to ask what scenario planning has been done; what provisions has TEO made regarding the impact of this policy; what will be done to protect people from exploitation resulting from this policy; and what the devolved responsibilities are regarding this policy in regard to integration, health, housing, education.
- **AP9** – **TEO Legislation Branch** to consider members proposal for mapping data that already exists; what is happening with this data; how this data is being utilised;

and for a standing agenda item for a 'living document' to be included in each meetings' papers.

- **AP10 – TEO Secretariat** to write directly to the member with responses to the questions before onward sharing to the Subgroup.
- **AP11 – TEO Secretariat** to invite representation from Migration & Integration Policy Branch for subsequent Subgroup meetings.
- **AP12 – Working Group Chairs** to share Action Plans with TEO Secretariat for consideration at the next Subgroup meeting in March.
- **AP13 – TEO Secretariat** to share Racist Bullying Working Group letter to DE's Curriculum Review Taskforce with the Subgroup.
- **AP14 – Chair** to write to the Curriculum Review Taskforce to request a meeting to discuss priorities that will reflect the lived experience of minority ethnic children and young people.
- **AP15 – TEO Secretariat** to request an update from DE on Widening Participation in Education for Traveller children and young people, for sharing with the Subgroup.
- **AP16 – TEO Secretariat** to share meeting invite with Paul Noonan and Suleiman Abdulahi to attend the next Racist Bullying Working Group.
- **AP17 – TEO Secretariat** to issue guidance and information for members to begin Chair nominations today. **[COMPLETE]**

Minutes written by:

TEO Secretariat

Date:

11/12/2025