

<b>TITLE/ORGANISATION</b>	Racial Equality Subgroup
<b>VENUE:</b>	ArtsEkta, Fountain Street, Belfast
<b>DATE/TIME:</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> June 2025, 10.00am – 12.00pm
<b>List of Attendees:</b>	<p><b><u>Attendees</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Susan Russam – GEMS NI (Chair)</li> <li>• Paul Noonan – Equality Commission NI</li> <li>• Takura Makoni – African and Caribbean Support Organisation Northern Ireland (ACSONI)</li> <li>• Paul Yam – Wah Hep</li> <li>• Sarah Stack – Black and Minority Ethnic Women’s Network</li> <li>• Ivy Goddard – Inter Ethnic Forum</li> <li>• Heather Floyd – Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG)</li> <li>• Judith Searle – Barnardo’s NI</li> <li>• Ann Marie White – British Red Cross</li> <li>• Mary Hegarty – Bryson Charitable Group</li> <li>• Fergal Quinn – Building Communities Resource Centre</li> <li>• Jill Robinson – Flourish NI</li> <li>• John Cieslik - Polish Language, Culture and Affairs (POLCA)</li> <li>• Monika Ciok-Giertuga – North Down YMCA</li> <li>• Nisha Tandon – ArtsEkta NI</li> <li>• Mimi Unamoyo – Bomoko NI</li> <li>• Julia Buchanan – Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>TEO</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orla McStravick – Director of Race Relations &amp; Integration</li> <li>• Paul Naylor – Head of Race Relations Development &amp; Delivery</li> <li>• Peter McCusker – Head of Racial Equality Legislation</li> <li>• TEO Officials</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Guests</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Martin McDonagh – Chair of the Travellers Thematic Group</li> <li>• Chris Jenkins – Equality Commission NI (Racist Bullying Working Group Member)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michael Avila – Victims Support NI (Chair of the Hate Crime, Legislation &amp; Access to Justice Working Group)</li> </ul>
<b>Apologies:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Justin Kouame – Migrant Centre</li> <li>• Shannon Doherty – North West Migrant Forum</li> <li>• Deirdre McAliskey - South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP)</li> <li>• Livingstone Thompson – Chair of the Racist Bullying Working Group</li> <li>• Katy Radford – Belfast Jewish Community</li> </ul>

## 1. Welcome and Apologies

- Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, and in particular Martin McDonagh, Michael Avila and Chris Jenkins. Martin was elected Chair of the Travellers Thematic Group at the beginning of 2025 and Michael is the new Chair of the Hate Crime Working Group. Chris, who is a member of the Racist Bullying Working Group, is in attendance to provide an update on the Working Group, alongside John Cieslik, on behalf of Livingstone Thompson who is now the group's Chair.
- Chair noted apologies from Justin Kouame, Shannon Doherty, Deirdre McAliskey, Livingstone Thompson and Katy Radford.
- Chair thanked Nisha Tandon for hosting today's meeting in ArtsEkta's new premises.
- Chair invited members to declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest. There were no conflicts raised.
- Chair reminded members that during meetings, the recording of audio and/or video by any attendee is not permitted.
- Chair reminded members 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](mailto:race.equality@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk).
- Chair reminded members that they can be reimbursed for allowable travel costs attending required meetings. Travel claims guidance and form has previously been issued to members; any queries are to be forwarded to [race.equality@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:race.equality@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk).

## 2. Working Group Updates

- **Hate Crime, Legislation & Access to Justice Working Group: Michael Avila – Chair**
  - Michael Avila (MA) advised that the last meeting of the Hate Crime Working Group had taken place in March 2025. The next meeting will be scheduled in due course.

- MA updated the group on legislative changes that are arising from the Sentencing Bill that is due to be introduced in Autumn 2025. A stand-alone Hate Crime Bill will not be delivered in the current mandate but hate crime provisions are scheduled to be delivered as part of the Sentencing Bill and a Victims Bill.
  - There was discussion around housing issues and the removal of intimidation points. Chair noted that, following the last Racial Equality Subgroup meeting, a second letter had been issued to the Minister for Communities on 20 March 2025, highlighting the impact the removal of intimidation points would have on victims of racially motivated hate crimes. The response from the Department was included as part of today's papers. Members agreed that the Minister should be invited to meet with the Subgroup **[AP1]**.
  - There was discussion around the media coverage of the alleged sexual assault in Ballymena and the subsequent impact it has had on community relations, particularly within minority ethnic communities. It was agreed that the recent media reports have raised significant issues with regard to the sensitivity and accuracy of the reporting and the need to adhere to ethical guidelines when reporting on sensitive issues. Members agreed that a letter should be written to the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) regarding these issues **[AP2]**.
- **Racist Bullying Working Group: John Cieslik & Chris Jenkins – Members**
    - John Cieslik (JC) advised that the last meeting of the Racist Bullying Working Group had taken place on 5 June 2025. The next meeting is scheduled for 28 August 2025.
    - JC noted that during the last meeting, the Group had discussed their Action Plan for 2025/26 and four key actions had been agreed:
      1. Northern Ireland Curriculum Review - The final Curriculum Review report, "A Foundation for the Future: Developing Capabilities Through a Knowledge-Rich Curriculum in Northern Ireland", was published on 3 June. The Working Group will be reviewing the outworkings of this final report and believe that decolonisation of the curriculum is required.
      2. Data Collection & Publication - The Working Group will be engaging with the Department of Education on data publication in relation to racist bullying in schools. A main priority would be to have sight of data being collected to see where gaps in reporting lie. It was noted that, while specific schools shouldn't be singled out, it was felt that a broadened outlook of incidents would help direct practices going forward.
      3. Delivery of Training
      4. Trauma Informed Practice in Teaching
  - **Ethnic Equality Monitoring Working Group: Peter McCusker – Chair**
    - Peter McCusker (PMcC) provided an overview of the EEM Working Group's recent actions:
      - NISRA's Administrative Research Unit (ARU) Census 2021 microdata research project is underway. The research has been commissioned to help achieve a greater understanding of education, economic activity, health and housing outcomes for the minority ethnic population in Northern Ireland and will help to inform the new strategic approach to racial equality. Findings will be published in the coming months.

- Within the recent Call for Views on Racial Equality, and in line with TEO's guidance for Ethnic Equality Monitoring in the Public Sector, five optional EEM questions were included for those responding as Individuals. Analytical Unit (AU) colleagues (NISRA statisticians embedded in TEO) will trial the use of these EEM questions in all TEO surveys hosted on Citizen Space.
- AU are developing a report comparing the tables from the 2011 and 2021 Census on the Racial Equality Variable. It is hoped that this report will ease some of the confusion where people have compared the ethnicity figure in 2011 with the 'TEO Racial Equality Variable' in 2021 and allow us to promote the use of the variable more widely across the public sector.

### **3. Traveller Thematic Group Update: Martin McDonagh – Chair**

- Martin McDonagh (MMcD) gave a brief overview of the Irish Traveller Workshop that was held on 14 May 2025.
- The Workshop was organised by the TTG as part of the ongoing development and engagement of the new strategic approach to racial equality to ensure that the needs of Irish Travellers are accurately represented and considered within the new strategic framework.
- Representatives from voluntary sector organisations, government departments and statutory bodies were in attendance and there were speakers from Pavee Point, Irish Traveller Movement and the National Traveller Women's Forum.
- Topics of discussion included community development approaches, increased participation and long-term funding. A Workshop Summary will be shared in due course.

### **4. Roma Thematic Group Update: Ivy Goddard – Chair**

- Ivy Goddard (IG) provided an update on the recent unrest in Ballymena and the practical support being provided to those affected. Members agreed that an urgent meeting should be arranged with the First Minister and deputy First Minister to discuss these events [AP3].
- IG noted that the RTG had recently invited Jonathan Lamb from Housing Rights to provide a presentation on landlord responsibilities and training. Members had felt the presentation had been very informative and suggested it might also be beneficial for the wider Subgroup.
- IG advised that Mid & East Antrim Council have been approached regarding the possibility of setting up a Landlords Forum as a conduit for issues to be addressed.
- The next meeting of the Roma Thematic Group is scheduled for September 25.

### **5. Racial Equality Subgroup Priorities & Future Action Plan**

- With the current situation in Ballymena and consequent discussion at the meeting, the Chair asked that this agenda item be delayed until the next meeting.

### **6. Minutes of Previous Meetings, Action Points & Issues Arising**

- Chair noted that the minutes of the meetings held on 17 February 2025 and 12 March 2025 had been provided as part of the papers and asked members if they were content to approve. The minutes were agreed by members.
- Chair highlighted Action Point 6 from the meeting held in June 2024 - *Chair to extend an invitation to the Chair of the All-Party Group on Ethnic Minority*

*Community to meet with the Subgroup.* This action is outstanding and will be discussed at the next meeting.

- Chair highlighted Action Point 2 from the meeting held in March 2025 - *Chair to extend an invitation to the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Grainia Long, to meet with the Subgroup.* This action is outstanding, and it was agreed that, due to the situation in Ballymena and victims of hate crime having to secure alternative accommodation, this action was still relevant.

#### **7. Questions on the Race Relations & Integration Update**

- Chair advised that the Race Relations & Integration Update had been provided as part of the papers for today's meeting and therefore taken as read.
- There were no queries raised in relation to the report.

#### **8. Any Other Business**

- There was discussion around the recent Skills and Employment Experience Survey: Asylum Seekers, Refugees and British National (Overseas) visa holders in Northern Ireland that had recently been published.
- Some members felt that some refugees and asylum seekers may be mistrustful of a survey relating to employment and that there may not be a large response.
- A member who had been consulted on the draft survey explained that it was hoped responses to the survey would provide information that could be used to provide pathways and support for people when they receive their leave to remain status.
- There was no other business.

#### **9. Next Meeting**

- The next meeting is scheduled for 3 September 2025, 10.00am – 12.00pm. The meeting will be held in Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate.

#### **ACTION POINTS/OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE/TARGET DATE:**

- **AP1** – Meeting to be requested with the Minister for Communities in relation to the removal of intimidation points – **Chair**.
- **AP2** – Letter to be written to NUJ regarding the reporting of the unrest in Ballymena – **Chair**.
- **AP3** – Urgent meeting to be requested with the First Minister and deputy first Minister in relation to the unrest in Ballymena – **Chair**.

**Minutes written by:**

TEO Secretariat

**Date:**

12/06/2025