

<b>TITLE/ORGANISATION</b>	Racial Equality Subgroup
<b>VENUE:</b>	Castle Buildings, Stormont
<b>DATE/TIME:</b>	11 September 2025, 10.00am – 12.30pm
<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>• Paul Yam – Wah Hep</li> <li>• Ivy Goddard – Inter Ethnic Forum</li> <li>• Judith Searle – Barnardo’s NI</li> <li>• Ann Marie White – British Red Cross</li> <li>• Jill Robinson – Flourish NI</li> <li>• John Cieslik - Polish Language, Culture and Affairs (POLCA)</li> <li>• Sarah Caldwell – Bryson Charitable Group</li> <li>• Mimi Unamoyo – Bomoko NI</li> <li>• Fernanda Hermosilla – Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC)</li> <li>• Julija Ivanova – North Down YMCA (deputising for Monika Ciok-Giertuga)</li> <li>• Katy Radford – Belfast Jewish Community</li> <li>• Deirdre McAliskey - South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP)</li> <li>• Nicholas (Nick) Cassidy – Omagh Ethnic Community Support Group (OECSG)</li> <li>• Gerard Rice – Lower Ormeau Resident’s Action Group (LORAG)</li> <li>• Lili Wu – Chinese Welfare Association (CWA)</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 Race Relations Legislation Branch</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>• Jolena Flett – Victims Support NI</li> </ul>
<b>Apologies:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarah Stack – Black and Minority Ethnic Women’s Network</li> <li>• Monika Ciok-Giertuga – North Down YMCA</li> </ul>

## **Welcome and Apologies**

- Chair noted apologies received from Monika Ciok-Giertuga and Sarah Stack, and welcomed their colleagues Julija Ivanova and Athi Silevu who are, respectively, deputising.
- Chair welcomed the new chair of the Hate Crime Working Group, Jolena Flett of Victim Support NI, and Fernanda Hermosilla who is deputising for Julia Buchanan of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission while she is on maternity leave.
- Chair asked that members declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest. No conflicts were raised.
- Chair reminded members of prohibition of recording of minutes, that minutes are published, meeting documents are not to be shared without prior consent and the members can be reimbursed for travel costs

## **Presentation on upcoming research report**

- “Investigating outcomes for minority ethnic groups in Northern Ireland using the 2021 Census” delivered by TEO representative on research steering group, in collaboration with TEO Statistician.
- Presenter let members know that this is the first piece of research to use Census 2021 microdata; the most comprehensive data available on minority ethnic groups here. While the size of some groups is small, analysis has been completed for all 13 ethnic groups, however there may be gaps in certain household-level data due to the smaller group sizes.
- The research looks at correlation, not causation, though the data may provide some insights on issues to be addressed by government policy.
- Clearance of the research should take place this Autumn, with the aim to publish this Winter.
- Subgroup is to be involved in the drafting of the summary report, to draw out lived experience and expertise and insight for policy development related to this research.
- A copy of the slides for this presentation to be issued to members [AP1].
- Member raised a question regarding the rationale used by Census Office in combining or overlapping nationality and ethnicity in the ethnic group question. Presenters advised the development of census questions involves extensive planning and consultation, and that the inclusion of specific response options reflects use demand. Presenter to share background to Census 2021 question development [AP2].
- A point was raised by a member around qualitative data, and whether TEO had considered its usefulness in this research. Presenters advised that it is hoped that the Subgroup’s involvement in the drafting of the summary report will provide further insights.
- Members asked whether the nomenclature of “other”, as well as intersectionality of identity, was considered. Presenters acknowledged the limitation of focusing on ethnic group alone and advised that a separate request had been made to Census Office for religion data, however caution is advised when interpreting results for smaller religion groups.

- Race Relations Legislation Branch will follow up with Katy Radford on highlighting the visibility of religion groups with ONS. [AP3]
- Brian, researcher, is to be invited to the next Subgroup meeting following research publication [AP4]. It was suggested that TEO Officials could be invited to present at the next Ethnic Equality Monitoring Working Group meeting and at the RTG/TTG [AP5].
- Chair advised members that if they have any further questions, these can be emailed through to TEO Secretariat.

### **Approval of Minutes and Action Updates from Previous Meetings**

- The minutes of the meetings held on 11 June 2025 and 10 July 2025, a single agenda item meeting on bonfires, were provided as part of the papers. Chair asked if members were content with the minutes issued.
- Members agreed that as the papers were issued too close to the meeting they did not have time to sufficiently scrutinize them. Members are to come back in writing with their changes / agreement [AP6].
- Chair highlighted AP1 of June 2025's meeting – *Meeting to be requested with the Minister for Communities in relation to the removal of intimidation points*. Chair reminded members that this was put on the backburner due to the meeting with the First and deputy First Ministers in July and ongoing unrest. It was agreed that Chair 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) [AP7]. Concurrently, the Chair of the Hate Crime Working Group will invite the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to an upcoming meeting [AP8].
- A member raised that the Subgroup should take a clear position on this issue; it is of their opinion that they cannot be part of the mechanisms that purport to uphold rights while regression of rights continues.
- Chair highlighted AP2 of June 2025's meeting – *Letter to be written to NUJ regarding the reporting of the unrest in Ballymena*. Chair advised members this action has been completed, and a copy of this letter was provided as part of the papers. Members agreed to write to OFCOM regarding this issue [AP9].
- Chair mentioned to members that she will be meeting Inspector Katrina McMullan, PSNI Community, on Monday. The issue of hate speech will be raised at this meeting [AP10]. Members discussed the high threshold for hate speech of social media companies and their community standards. Member agreed it would be of benefit to ask for a meeting with the Minister of Justice [AP11].
- Chair reminded members, following the single agenda meeting in July regarding bonfires, a letter issued to the Chief Constable following the meeting and subsequent response was provided as part of the papers for today's meeting. Members raised their concerns with PSNI's response and asked for clarity on constitution of sufficient evidence of a hate crime prosecution. It was agreed this issue would be raised at Monday's meeting with Inspector McMullan [AP12].
- Chair highlighted the letter they have drafted for the First Minister and deputy First Minister that was included in the papers. Members asked that the Chair include the issue of removal of intimidation points, questions for FM & dFM on progress of legislation, replacement processes and weight of priority needs. Chair will revise the letter and agreement from Subgroup on changes before issue [AP13].

### **Race Relations & Integration Update**

- The divisional update was provided as part of the papers for today's meeting, therefore taken as read.
- Members raised the issue of pausing family reunions, including those who arrived through resettlement schemes, and the impact this will have on refugees. TEO are following up with the Home Office and will provide further update via TEO Migration & Integration Policy Branch [AP14].
- A member raised the issue of Article 8 rights and Section 75. ECNI and NIHRC will defer to the Dedicated Mechanism for advice [AP15].
- A member raised their concerns for the end of MEDF and whether arrangements are in place to fund voluntary groups following this. TEO are developing options, including interim options, that will be considered by Ministers.
- TEO advised that a meeting with other departments took place on 10 September regarding the new draft approach to Racial Equality. Members have been asked, when papers were issued, for their availability this month for a single item agenda meeting on the draft new approach to Racial Equality post-2025 and are to respond via email [AP16].

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

- Chair of TTG let members know that TTG had welcomed Carol Folis (Omagh Traveller Interagency Forum) and Claire Fordyce (BHSCT), and Bryson have left the group. TTG will meet the Strategic Planning Group annually (once there is an Action Plan). Accommodation will be a standing agenda item going forward.
- Chair (TTG) briefed members on the Irish Traveller Workshop. A report was drafted following this workshop which will inform the development of an Action Plan. Some outcomes of the Workshop include the need to focus on capacity building for local Traveller groups, implementing evidence-based, targeted, and mainstreamed actions, and addressing mental health issues. While there is currently no remit for a standalone Irish Traveller Strategy, this can be an option to recommend to Ministers and members concurred.
- Chair (TTG) let members know that he will be temporarily standing down from his position as Chair to take up a traineeship with the Council of Europe (until end of February 2026).

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

- Chair of the RTG invited members to the upcoming workshop of Wednesday 17 September, at ArtsEkta, to hear from cross-jurisdictional speakers [AP17].

### **Working Group Updates**

- It was agreed that Working Group updates be provided by correspondence [AP18].

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

- This agenda item will rollover to the next meeting of the Racial Equality Subgroup due to time constraints.

### **Any Other Business**

- Ann Marie White of British Red Cross raised issues surrounding access to language support interpreters for non-statutory services. She advised the Family Support Hub refer service access requests to voluntary organisations, who do not have the funding to fulfil the service, and so the referral is rejected. Chair asked that details of the issue be supplied in writing **[AP19]**.
- Katy Radford, in the context of the voting age being lowered to 16 by the 2028 election, advised that the Electoral Commission has a new Engagement Participation Officer. Members agreed it would be useful to invite the EC to the Subgroup meeting in March **[AP20]**.
- As the meeting went over the allocated time again, Members agreed that future Subgroup meetings be scheduled for three-hour slots **[AP21]**.

### **Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting(s)**

- The next meeting date to be circulated to members **[AP22]**.
- Chair made members aware that the next meeting of the Subgroup will be her final as Chair.

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

- **AP1 – [TEO Secretariat]** A copy of the slides for the presentation to be issued to members **[Complete]**.
- **AP2 – [TEO Secretariat]** Presenter to share background to Census 2021 question development.
- **AP3 – [TEO Legislation Branch]** Race Relations Legislation Branch to follow up with Katy Radford on engagement with ONS on religion groups.
- **AP4 – [Chair]** Researcher involved in outcomes for minority ethnic groups research is to be invited to the March 2026 Subgroup meeting.
- **AP5 – [Chair of EEM WG, TTG, RTG]** TEO Officials to be invited to present at the next Ethnic Equality Monitoring Working Group meeting and potentially RTG and TTG meetings.
- **AP6 – [Members]** Members are to come back in writing with their changes / agreement on the last meeting's minutes **[Complete]**.
- **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).
- **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.

- **AP9 – [Chair]** to write to OFCOM regarding accountability regarding online hate incidents.
- **AP10 – [Chair]** The issue of hate speech will be raised at Monday 15 September 2025 meeting with Inspector Katrina McMullan.
- **AP11 – [Chair]** to write to request a meeting between the Subgroup and the Minister of Justice [**Complete**].
- **AP12 – [Chair]** Constitution of sufficient evidence of a hate crime prosecution would be raised at Monday’s meeting with Inspector McMullan.
- **AP13 – [Chair]** to revise the letter for the First Minister and deputy First Minister, and to seek agreement from Subgroup on changes before issue [**Complete**].
- **AP14 – [TEO]** Migration & Integration Policy Branch to provide further update on pausing of family reunions.
- **AP15 – [ECNI and NIHRC]** to raise diminution of Article 8 rights, regarding pausing of family reunions, to the Dedicated Mechanism for advice.
- **AP16 – [Members]** to return their availability to TEO Secretariat for a meeting this month on the draft new approach to Racial Equality post-2025 [**Complete**].
- **AP17 – [TEO Secretariat]** invitation to the Roma Thematic Group Workshop at ArtsEkta to be extended to the Subgroup [**Complete**].
- **AP18 – [Working Group Chairs]** to provide updates via correspondence [**Complete**].
- **AP19 – [Ann Marie White]** to supply details of access issues regarding language support interpreters for non-statutory services in writing [**Complete**].
- **AP20 – [Chair]** to invite the Electoral Commission to the March 2026 Subgroup meeting.
- **AP21 – [TEO Secretariat]** to note, for planning and organisation, that future Subgroup meetings are to be scheduled for three-hour slots [**Complete**].
- **AP22 – [TEO Secretariat]** to circulate next meeting date to members [**Complete**].

**Minutes written by:**  
TEO Secretariat

**Date:**  
11/09/2025