

<b>TITLE/ORGANISATION</b>	Roma Thematic Group
<b>VENUE:</b>	Castle Buildings
<b>DATE/TIME:</b>	16 April 2026, 10:00-12:00
<b>List of Attendees:</b>	<p>Fidelma Fearon – Chair (Minority Ethnic Support Armagh)</p> <p>Ivy Goddard (Inter Ethnic Forum)</p> <p>Aisling Walsh-Papageorgiou (Early Years)</p> <p>Colin Caughey (NI Human Rights Commission)</p> <p>Dr. Jacqueline Monahan (Forward South Partnership)</p> <p>Jill Robertson (Sure Start South Belfast)</p> <p>Jennifer Coll (Education Authority)</p> <p>Lili-Wu (Chinese Welfare Association)</p> <p>Judith Thompson (ToyBox)</p> <p>Polina Malcheva (Community Intercultural Programme)</p> <p>Laura Euler (Belfast Health and Social Care Trust)</p> <p>Oleg Danuta (Migrant Centre NI)</p> <p>Paddy McEldowney (Public Health Agency)</p> <p>Paul Noonan (Equality Commission NI)</p> <p>Paul Naylor (TEO)</p> <p>TEO Officials</p>
<b>Declined/Apologies:</b>	<p>Lee Duffin (NIHE)</p> <p>Nisha Tandon (ArtsEkta)</p> <p>Kieran Shields (Education Authority)</p>
<b>KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:</b>	
<p><b>1. Welcome and Apologies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chair welcomed group and stated apologies received from Lee Duffin (NIHE), Nisha Tandon (ArtsEkta), and Kieran Shields (Education Authority).</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Approval of minutes and action updates from 3 December 2025</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members were content to approve the minutes of 3 December 2025, with Paul Noonan (ECNI) proposing and Ivy Goddard (Inter Ethnic Forum) seconding.</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Race Relations &amp; Integration Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Race Relations &amp; Integration Update was provided as part of the papers for this meeting and taken as read. TEO provided attendees with an update on the public</li> </ul>	

consultation, including consultation engagement events that have taken place and those which have been arranged for the coming weeks, and on next steps following the closure of the consultation.

- Member queried the timeline for publishing of the microdata report, as any findings may encourage people/organisations/groups to respond to the consultation that may not have otherwise felt it worthwhile, and it is of the member's belief that the report should have been published before the launch of the consultation; TEO advised that the report is back from statisticians and is currently being reviewed, and advised on the limitations of carrying out this piece of work to meet the consultation launch date.
- Discussion took place regarding the validity of some data that already exists, the influence this data may have on policy and public perceptions, and on the balance between qualitative and quantitative evidence. ECNI member added that ethnic quality monitoring (EEM) is the approach recommended by the UN and the Equality Act 2010, and that Section 75 recognises the need for both qualitative and quantitative data.
- A member raised concerns about the failure to introduce EEM through the system Encompass, used by the health trusts to monitor patient data, as any EEM fields are not mandatory without legislation.

#### **4. RTG Action Plan & Working Groups**

- Chair made members aware of the Racial Equality Subgroup (RES) Action Plan workshop taking place on 3 June 2026. Members agreed that the next RTG meeting, taking place 2 July 2026, will be a workshop on the group's action plan [AP1].
- Members discussed priorities for consideration at the workshop, for the action plan, including education (primary, post-primary and further/higher), learning from examples in other jurisdictions, using the draft Framework for Race Relations primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions as a basis for RTG's actions, a document in the main Roma languages to assist people in times of crisis, and engagement with the media during unrest and violence.
- Discussion took place concerning the value of attending thematic group meetings, as it takes time away from working with service users and families. Members discussed the value of influencing policy, and that contribution to mid- and long-term government actions and strategies is important for service users in the future.
- Chair drew members' attention to the current working groups of RTG, as well as working groups of the RES, and encouraged them to consider volunteering their time and expertise to them as there are issues that crossover between the groups and duplication may be avoided if a more cohesive approach to the structures was taken. Members were of the general consensus that each working group needs someone willing to lead and be responsible for driving engagement and communicating working group progress back to RTG.
- Members agreed that the dialogue between RTG (and RES & TTG) and the Strategic Planning Group (SPG) and Tactical Delivery Group (TDG), in terms of priorities and actions being passed from the Groups to SPG and TDG, needed to be better

evidenced by paper trail. The action plan produced on 2 July, once it is agreed by the group, will be provided to SPG and TDG along with the RES and TTG action plans.

- A member made attendees of a mapping exercise they are beginning to undertake on the organisations that work with Roma communities.

#### **5. Any Other Business**

- Chair made members aware that she had contributed to a joint response, from RES, Traveller Thematic Group and RTG Chair's, for the consultation on Widening Participation in Higher Education. A couple of members let attendees know that their organisations have or will also be submitting a response.
- Discussion took place on readiness for the summer should violence repeat. Members agreed that a consensus between themselves should be reached on what can be expected of each other in support of one another. While PSNI should be called in the first instance of violence, members also agreed that up to date guidance on contingency planning should be available with Dr Jacqueline Monahan offering to draft a letter with this request [AP2]. On this matter, discussion also took place on the unhelpful rhetoric from politicians, TEO advised members that, in response to last summer's handling, a core script has been agreed by Executive Ministers.
- Member stated that this is too reactive, that plans need to be in place so that member organisations know what to do before violence happens, and members need to be able to take away provisions from this group back to their communities and colleagues. Member also raised that the structures of the Groups may complicate flow of information due to hierarchies, and stated that the group needs to know what learning has taken place from last summer.
- Member from Inter Ethnic Forum advised attendees that a piece of research is being carried out on the impact of last year's violence and will share this with the group [AP3].
- TEO advised members that the Voluntary & Community Sector Forum, which is currently primarily concerned with asylum seekers and refugees but will broaden to wider immigration and migration matters, will become a working group of the RES. Once this happens, Secretariat will share a document containing the group structures [AP4].
- Secretariat advised that this meeting's minutes will be agreed by the group via correspondence [AP5].

#### **6. Date, time & venue of next meeting**

- Next meeting of the RTG will be a workshop on the Action Plan, on 2 July 2026 at Castle Buildings.

#### **Action Points:**

**AP1 – Secretariat** to make arrangements for the next Roma Thematic Group meeting to be a workshop on the group's action plan. [COMPLETE]

**AP2 – Dr Jacqueline Monahan** to write an initial draft letter regarding contingency planning arrangements for repeats of summer violence.

**AP3 – Inter Ethnic Forum** member to share a piece of research on the impact of last summer’s violence with the group.

**AP4 – Secretariat** to share group structures document with RTG once the VCSF becomes a working group of the Racial Equality Subgroup.

**AP5 – Secretariat** to arrange for this meeting’s minutes to be agreed by members via correspondence.

**Minutes written by:**  
TEO Secretariat

**Date:**  
**24 April 2026**