



SOUTH BELFAST
PARTNERSHIP BOARD

OFMDFM Equality Directorate
Racial Equality Unit
Room E4.15
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast BT4 3SQ

Tuesday 7 October 2014

Dear OFMDFMNI Racial Equality Directorate,

Please find attached the South Belfast consultation response to the OFMDFM NI Racial Equality Strategy: A Sense of Belonging: Delivering Social Change through a Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014 – 2024. The South Belfast consultation response has been submitted by the South Belfast Roundtable and the Common Purpose Platform.

The South Belfast consultation response was prepared following a community consultation on the strategy in South Belfast with community, voluntary and statutory sector representatives with local Black and Minority Ethnic communities. The consultation event involved the South Belfast Partnership Boards input in contributing to the response.

South Belfast Partnership Board is a Board which brings together all sectors – community, statutory, political and private – to strengthen and better target the efforts being made by the community, the private sector and the Government to tackle in partnership the economic, social and environmental problems which affect people in the most disadvantaged areas of South Belfast. Over 139 community, voluntary and statutory sector organisations including Black and Minority Ethnic communities are sought on consultation documents such as the Racial Equality Strategy.

The South Belfast Health and Well-being Forum were established in January 2010 in response to the growing health inequalities emerging as an area requiring a strategic focus in South Belfast. The programme objective was to encourage a strategic approach to address health inequalities and the promotion of wellbeing across South Belfast as a whole through enabling stakeholders to identify priority issues and develop responses to these issues. To achieve this, a South Belfast Health and Wellbeing Forum was created in August 2010. The members include a wide range of community, voluntary and statutory organisations.

South Belfast Partnership

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The South Belfast Partnership Board is submitting this cover note in support of this South Belfast response to the strategy that was developed by the South Belfast Roundtable and also to support the Common Sector Platform response which the Partnership Board has also signed up to support.

Most importantly the views from a number of local community groups and structures have been captured and input into the response.

The South Belfast Partnership Board would also like to submit the following additional comments in addition to the South Belfast Roundtable Table South Belfast consultation response:

- **South Belfast has a diverse population:** South Belfast has one of the largest Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Northern Ireland with ethnicities including; Chinese, Indian, Somalia, Roma, Polish, Hungarian and Black and African Caribbean. It is vital that a Racial Equality Strategy has a vision and realistic objectives that understand the complex differing needs of communities and plan for inclusion and belonging of all Black and Minority Ethnic communities with indigenous communities.
- **Purpose of the strategy:** All BME communities have differing needs and cultures. Some BME communities are integrated into the community in Northern Ireland whilst other BME groups face ongoing incidents of hate crime. This is particularly notably in South Belfast. The Racial Equality Strategy welcomes this strategy to tackle the increasing issues of hate crime in Northern Ireland however, an understanding as to why the hate crime happens is required before racial equality can be invested. Hate crime is one of many challenges BME communities face.
- **Linking strategic documents:** There needs to be greater links across all strategic documents in departments and better coordination of funding attached to strategies/action plans. This includes DOJ, DSD Space and Place, Delivering Social Change, Transforming Your Care and Programme for Government to ensure equality and equity of all Section 75 groups particularly BME communities. All strategic documents should endorse racial equality under the Human Rights Act and Northern Ireland Race Relations Order (1997).
- **Delivery:** Who will deliver upon the Racial Equality Strategy, what work action plans will this be delivered through? Would this fit well within Neighbourhood Renewal Area Agenda's in Belfast?
- **Funding:** The funding of careful multicultural work is required to break down barriers of isolation and change social attitudes towards BME communities in Northern Ireland.
- **Best Practice in South Belfast:**
 - The **South Belfast Creating Cohesive Communities** has been bringing together indigenous communities with BME communities through multicultural work, small worlds (food taster sessions and cultural promotion workshops).
 - The **South Belfast Roundtable** brings together community, voluntary and statutory sector organisations that represent BME communities in South Belfast to tackle inequalities faced by BME communities in South Belfast and lobby.

This work is based on short term minimal funding which limits the detail of work that can be endeavoured.

- **Consulting with BME communities:** Further consultation and dialogue with local community structures and BME communities is required to ensure commissioners and decision makers develop a supporting action plan that realistically addresses inequality in BME communities in relation to employment, housing, childcare, access to services, access to transport and feeling safe and secure in their home, community and workplace.
- **Evidence of need for the strategy:** To include case studies of racial equality incidents in Northern Ireland would strengthen the Racial Equality Strategy. This will demonstrate need for the strategy and associated actions, demonstrate evident of departmental understanding and note priority in tackling inequality faced by BME communities daily in Northern Ireland. Personal experiences do not need to be provided but examples of media coverage etc.
- **Designing an action plan:** The local BME communities should be involved in the design of an associated action plan. The South Belfast consultation workshop which took place on 24 September 2014 with local BME communities (as attached) demonstrates that BME communities have complex needs that are achievable with governmental steer and commitment.
- **Mainstream funding of Translation and Interpretation Services:** Northern Ireland has become a diverse province that welcomes all communities. However, a lack of funding to resource translation and interpretation services provides inequality to accessing information from the onset. These vital services are required in order to achieve racial equality. How can racial equality be achieved if documents are not published in multi languages and interpreters for dialogue are not available or resourced.
- **Assessing change:** There needs to be careful work done with the media on addressing hate crime. Police Service NI should be trained on supporting victims of hate crime. The Police and Community Safety Partnerships should support families following the incident. A process should be agreed and adopted regionally to support the BME family following the incident.
- **Evaluating the outcomes/impact:** How will the outcomes of the Racial Equality Strategy be measured; will there be outcomes performance accountability measures attached to the action plan.
- **Name of the strategy:** We agree with the Common Platform consultation response recommendation to revise the name of the strategy. There needs to be consideration of '**racial equality for all in Northern Ireland**'. It is important that this strategy demonstrates the importance of inclusion, acceptance, celebrating diversity and participation of all cultures in developing AND delivering this document.
- **Timeframe of the strategy:** The strategy is proposed for 2014-2024. This is a ten year plan however government may need to revise this document five years into implementation as some BME communities are quite transient / regular movement whilst others can be more settled. This strategy needs to be flexible to the change inequalities and needs of all communities, particularly BME communities in Northern

Ireland.

We trust that you find these comments useful and look forward to seeing how they help shape the final OFMDFM Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland in due course. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of the matters raised within this response with OFMDFM, so please don't hesitate to contact my colleague Stephanie Thompson, Strategic Health Officer on 02890 244 070 or enquiries@southbelfast.org if you would like any further information or clarity in relation to any of our comments.

Yours sincerely,

Briege Arthurs
Chief Executive
South Belfast Partnership Board