



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION, DOCUMENT

Human Rights Advisory Group meeting: 10 May 2023

Summary of the minutes of the meeting held on 10 May 2023.

First published: 10 May 2023

Last updated: 10 May 2023

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Attendees

- Mick Antoniw MS (Chair), Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution (CGMC)
- Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip (MSJCW)
- Hannah Blythyn MS, Deputy Minister for Social Partnership (DMSP)
- Elisabeth Jones, Independent (EJ)
- Charles Whitmore, WCVA / Human Rights Consortium (CW)
- Nicola Evans, Older People's Commissioner for Wales (NE)
- Sean O'Neill, Children in Wales (SON)
- Prof Robert Moore, NWREN (RM)
- Rhian Davies, Disability Wales (RD)
- Alicja Zalesinska, Tai Pawb (AZ)
- Catherine Fookes, WEN Wales (CF)
- Fran Targett OBE, WCVA (FT)
- Cllr Mary Ann Brocklesby, WLGA (MAB)
- Shahien Taj, Women Connect First (ST)
- Katie White, Equality and Human Rights Commission Wales (KW)
- Nazir Afzal OBE, Independent (NA)
- Reverend Gethin Rhys, Cytûn (GR)
- Nancy Liduwi, BAWSO (NL)
- Sarah Rees, Oxfam Cymru (SR)
- Ellis Peares, Youth Parliament (EP)
- Fatmanur Aksoy, Youth Parliament (FA)
- Marie Brousseau-Navarro, Future Generations Commission Office (MBN)
- Dr Emily Kakoullis, Cardiff University (EK)

Welsh Government officials

- Stuart Evans, Deputy Director, Equality and Human Rights Team (SE)

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- Karyn Pittick, Human Rights Team (KP)
- Hena Thorne, Human Rights Team (HT)
- Chris James, Justice Policy (CJ)
- Chrishan Kamalan, Equality Team (CK)
- Kimberley Mortimer, Human Rights Team (KM)
- Amanda Woodrow, Human Rights Team (AW)
- Sian Pope, Communications (SP)
- James Walsh-Heron, Communications (JWH)
- Lyndon Evans, Cabinet Division (LE)
- Kate Bacon, Cabinet Division (KB)
- Sam Edwards, Cabinet Division (SE)
- David Hooson, Special Advisor (DH)
- Bethan Phillips, Cabinet Division (BP)

Apologies

- Ruth Coombs, Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Dr Alison Parken, Cardiff University
- Professor Simon Hoffman, Swansea University
- Ella Kenny, Wales Youth Parliament

Welcome and opening comments by CGMC

CGMC welcomed all.

A long serving member retired on 31 March. CGMC thanked them for their dedication, time and support with the human rights agenda in Wales.

Minutes of the second meeting of HRAG: 9

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February 2023

All actions from the previous meeting had been followed up. No comments were given and minutes for the meeting 9 February are now approved.

An action from last meeting was Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED) being an agenda item for this meeting. As this work is currently being reviewed, an update will be provided at a future meeting of this group.

Action 1: add PSED Review as an agenda item for a future HRAG meeting.

Update: membership of group / Illegal Migration Bill

Membership of group

CMGC welcomed 5 new members and gave introductory information.

Illegal Migration Bill

The Welsh Government has laid a Legislative Consent Motion and has asked Senedd Members to withhold their consent for the UK parliament to legislate on these matters.

The Bill serves to significantly diminish the rights of looked after and accommodated children in Wales.

Some members expressed their concerns and stated how Wales' positive position and statements helps to strengthen their own organisations work.

This Bill breaches the Refugee Convention and there is no assurance it will be compliant with the European Convention on Human Rights.

Welsh Government Action Plan update: Legislative Options Working group Chairs update

CW thanked LOWG members for their considerable commitment and stated there is still considerable work to be done.

Seven Policy objectives were outlined:

1. Wales' incorporation should be inclusive in scope, including core UN Conventions.
2. The approach to incorporation should be a maximalist within the limits of devolved competence and should include a duty to 'comply' with incorporated rights while maintaining obligations which embed a human rights approach to policy development.
3. Legislation to incorporate human rights should include a duty of progressive realisation.
4. Legislation to incorporate human rights should, as far as is possible, re-state civil and political rights.
5. Ensure that the legislative framework on human rights in Wales remains in line with domestic, international and social developments, the Bill should contain relevant interpretative clauses for Welsh ministers, public authorities and courts.
6. Legislation to incorporate human rights should include a bespoke right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment
7. A duty to prepare and publish a Human Rights Scheme

The next LOWG meeting is on 17 May 2023 and discussions are ongoing with colleagues in the Welsh Government.

Members asked about timescales and next steps, a further work plan will be produced.

CGMC acknowledged there is clearly lots more work to be done and looked forward to more reports on this work at future HRAG meetings so the paper could be turned into something more substantive.

Welsh Government action plan update: update by secretariat and update on a communications plan

KP introduced a new team member who will lead on taking forward the human rights agenda within Welsh Government.

Secretariat and comms have had meetings with Amnesty and Liberty to discuss key messaging. A further meeting is to be had with Swansea local authority to review learning from their journey to becoming Wales' first Human Right's City.

Close work has begun with colleagues in the knowledge and analytical team to develop a baseline of public understanding of human rights in Wales and work is continuing to develop a webpage to reflect human rights.

Impact assessment work is progressing with the human rights team working with the equality team to develop tools and guidance. Activities from the curriculum team under the Curriculum Act will be brought to the next meeting.

Comms team outlined two strands of work, one to formulate an understanding of human rights in Wales and the other to develop a communication approach.

The communication plan takes into account words, images and actions as well as gauging a basic understanding of what people associate with human rights to start to develop basic messages for the people of Wales.

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Members commented positively on the work and there were some offers to share contacts which may be helpful going forward.

Action 2: an update on curriculum specific duties to be brought to the next meeting.

Action 3: all HRAG members to share real life stories in relation to human rights matters so WG can develop a bank of real case studies.

Action 4: FT to share Law Society link with the secretariat so it can be forwarded to the comms team for them to link in.

Action 5: SR to share Oxfam shop of sanctuary link with KP from the secretariat.

Recommendation 2 of the Strengthening and Advancing Equality and Human Rights report: formulating a human rights statement.

CGMC asked for volunteers, from the HRAG group or nominations from their organisation to work with Welsh Government Officials to form a small task and finish group.

It was expected, this would be a further 2 meetings between now and the September meeting as well as email correspondence.

Action 6: members interested in working on a task and finish group in relation to recommendation should inform the secretariat.

Human Rights Day 2023

CGMC reminded members it is the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December 2023 and so it is important to discuss options for marking this occasion as it will soon come around.

CGMC said ideas included; To invite a speaker from the Council of Europe or United Nations to present on the history of human rights and the European Convention on Human Rights or the possibility of hosting a discussion event with young people. CGMC asked for any further options and ideas.

Some members agreed inviting a speaker from the Council of Europe could strengthen connections and build relationships.

Other members shared their own work and plans. Some members suggested speakers for the event.

Some members were keen to get involved and to take information back to their own organisations and report back to the HRAG at a future meeting.

Some members expressed concern around a civil society lack of understanding around what human rights meant to people but felt any event needed to be at grass roots level to make a positive impact.

DMSP proposed high profile events in Cardiff with speakers who have been suggested and also scope for community focused activities, sharing with networks and community groups and involving schools and colleges as well spreading throughout Wales geographically.

General discussions raised issues around school uniform and that younger people may be able to lead on educating and raising awareness due the success of the UNCRC in Wales. Some members offered to share contacts.

MSJCW thanked everyone for the discussion and shared she is chairing a third sector partnership shortly and will ensure this is added to the meeting agenda.

CGMC agreed events should be sufficiently diverse as human rights means different things to different people, and asked members to be hands on with this event. Members were asked to volunteer to ensure this strand was joined up.

Action 7: SR to send contact details of relevant speakers for a Human Rights Day event to the secretariat.

Action 8: EP to take information back to Wales' Youth Parliament and inform the secretariat with the outcome of member's interest and ideas in regard to an event for Human Rights Day and how the message can reach Wales' young people.

Action 9: MSJCW to add Human Rights Day 2023 to the agenda of the Third Sector Partnership Meeting.

Action 10: members to gather any further ideas within their own networks regarding an event to mark Human Rights Day and share these with the secretariat.

Action 11: HRAG group volunteers needed to help organise and support events around Human Rights Day 2023.

Any other business

It was highlighted the UK and devolved nations are being scrutinised by the UN at the end of next week as part of the UNCRC on the 18 19 May 2023 and to anticipate a new set of concluding observations.

Future dates / meeting close

CGMC thanked members for their contributions and closed the meeting.

The next meeting will be held as scheduled on 19 September 2023.

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