

**All Party Assembly Group on Ethnic
Minority Communities
Annual Review 2009-10**

Introduction

This report details the work of the All Party Assembly Group on Ethnic Minority Communities (APAG on Ethnic Minority Communities) for the 2009-10 session. The purpose of the report is to highlight the key issues raised during meetings of the APAG on Ethnic Minority Communities and to demonstrate the actions taken by the group in this period.

The All Party Assembly Group on Ethnic Minorities became an officially constituted group of the Assembly in June 2008. The group was established as a mechanism for representatives of ethnic minority communities to discuss and lobby with politicians on issues of specific concern.

There are four positions of office bearer in the APAG on Ethnic Minority Communities: Chair, Deputy-chair, Treasurer and Secretary. These positions are held by the political representatives in the group and are rotated on a six-monthly basis. The following positions were held over the past year:

September – December 2009

Chair – UUP (Danny Kennedy MLA)
Vice-chair – SDLP (Declan O’Loan MLA)
Secretary – Alliance Party (Anna Lo MLA)
Treasurer – PUP (Dawn Purvis MLA)

January – June 2010

Chair – SDLP (Declan O’Loan MLA)
Vice-chair – Alliance Party (Anna Lo MLA)
Secretary – PUP (Dawn Purvis MLA)
Treasurer – Green Party (Steven Agnew)

1. Issues discussed by the All Party Assembly Group on Ethnic Minority Communities 2009-10

Roma Incidents and Racist Attacks

During the September 2009 meeting members of the APAG on Ethnic Minority Communities discussed the events regarding the Roma community in Belfast in June 2009. The meeting also discussed more broadly the issue of racist attacks. Following this discussion the APAG agreed to invite the Equality Commission NI to the October 2009 meeting to give a presentation on what estate agents can do to advise people who may be moving into areas where they could be subject to racist attacks.

Complaint to Committee for Standards and Privileges

At the September 2009 meeting the APAG agreed to send a letter to the Committee for Standards and Privileges to request an update on the

complaint made in February 2009 against Mr Sammy Wilson MP MLA by Jennifer McCann MLA on behalf of the All Party Assembly Group on Ethnic Minority Communities. At the April 2010 meeting the APAG noted the publication of the report from the Committee on Standards and Privileges on the complaint and agreed to take no further action on the issue.

Review of Race Relations Order

At the September 2009 meeting the APAG recorded a note of thanks to the political representatives of the group for their contributions to the debate on the review on Race Relations Order during the previous session. The APAG continued to consider the issue of the race relations legislation in Northern Ireland during the October 2009 meeting by receiving a presentation from the Equality Commission NI on legislative reform.

Racial Equality Forum and the Shadow Forum

At the November 2009 meeting papers detailing the plans for the reinstatement of the Racial Equality Forum were distributed to members and at this meeting the APAG welcomed the restoration of the Forum. During this meeting members discussed the new format of the Racial Equality Forum and noted the Forum would have one meeting per year, with a Racial Equality Panel and working groups established to serve the Forum. At this meeting the APAG discussed the appointment process for the Race Equality Forum and noted the need for adequate representation of the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) sector in these new structures. The meeting also discussed the need for those representatives to be accountable to the wider BME sector and discussed how the work of the APAG on Ethnic Minority Communities could link with the Racial Equality Forum.

OFMDFM Restructuring And Core Funding

During the November 2009 meeting members noted the review of the Office for First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) structures and highlighted concerns that specific units, such as race, gender, disability etc., could be merged with the loss of specialist expertise. The APAG also noted at this meeting there had been a separate consultation on the core funding process and highlighted concerns over the future of core funding distribution. At the meeting it was agreed to invite representatives from the OFMDFM to brief the APAG on the Racial Equality Forum, restructuring of OFMDFM and the future core funding for the BME sector.

At the January 2010 meeting of the APAG representatives from OFMDFM gave an update following the meeting of the Racial Equality Forum on 24 November 2009. The APAG heard that the purpose of the first meeting of the Racial Equality Forum had been to review the remit and structure of the Forum in the devolved context. The meeting noted the following points:

- A Racial Equality Panel would be established. This panel would be made up of 12 – 16 people and would meet twice a year to conduct business.
- The self-nomination criteria membership of the Racial Equality Panel was being finalised.
- There would continue to be sub-groups working in distinct areas of work. The Race Unit of OFMDFM would provide the secretariat for the Racial Equality Panel and Forum with secretariats for the sub-groups provided by expert groups.
- Future Racial Equality Forum meetings would be chaired by the Junior Ministers and not by the OFMDFM Good Relations Officer.

At the May 2010 APAG meeting members received copies of the Official Report of proceedings of the OFMDFM Committee in which officials gave a briefing on OFMDFM restructuring plans. On the basis of this additional information members agreed to ask the new head of the Equality Directory in OFMDFM to give a presentation on OFMDFM restructuring at the June 2010 meeting of the APAG.

Persons with Limited or No Access To Public Funds

During the 2009-10 session the APAG on Ethnic Minority Communities has considered the issue of those people who have limited or no access to public funds due to their immigration status. At the November 2009 meeting members of the APAG received an overview of the key findings and recommendations from the NICEM research report, 'Za Chlebem': The Impact of the Economic Downturn on the Polish Community in Northern Ireland. Following discussion of these issues the APAG agreed to draft a motion calling for a fund for those without access to public funds. The APAG noted the motion should be broader than just one particular community and the meeting agreed the motion would be for all those without access to public funds.

In order to fully scope the issues for persons with limited or no access to public funds the APAG received presentations from the Law Centre (NI) and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission at the January 2010 meeting. It was agreed the secretariat of the APAG would liaise with both the Law Centre (NI) and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to produce a briefing paper that could raise awareness of these issues ahead of the motion debate. At this meeting the APAG discussed the difficulties faced by those migrants on temporary working contracts and problems with the Workers Registration Scheme. Members also noted difficulties faced by asylum seekers whose support has finished and have lost their accommodation but have no right to work while they lodge a fresh claim for status.

At the January 2010 meeting the APAG agreed the motion could help to build momentum and focus around this issue and noted the wording of the motion had been drafted and placed with the business committee in the Assembly. Also during this meeting the APAG agreed to send a letter to the Department

of Finance and Personnel requesting information on the use of the Migration Impacts Fund in Northern Ireland.

At the February 2010 APAG meeting copies of questions asked by Anna Lo to the deputy First Minister regarding the Migration Impacts Fund in Northern Ireland were distributed to members. The meeting noted the response confirmed the Northern Ireland Executive had received funding under the Barnett Formula that was “available to the Executive to spend in correspondence with local needs and priorities”. At the March meeting of the APAG the meeting noted receipt of letter from Department of Finance and Personnel in response to the enquiry about the use of the Migration Impacts Fund in Northern Ireland. This letter confirmed that the Northern Ireland Executive had received funds under the Migration Impacts Fund that had been distributed under the Barnett Formula and were unhypothecated.

At the February 2010 meeting copies of the summary briefing papers prepared by the Law Centre (NI) and the NI Human Rights Commission were distributed. At the April meeting of the APAG members agreed the motion debate would be delayed until after the general election and at the May meeting it was agreed that the secretariat would contact those parties who had yet to sign the motion debate.

Human Trafficking

The APAG has continued to consider the issue of human trafficking in Northern Ireland following the seminar organized by the group during the 2008-09 session.

During the 2009-10 session members of the APAG noted the ongoing work in Northern Ireland in relation to human trafficking and highlighted a number of concerns. At the April 2010 meeting members of the APAG highlighted the cases of trafficking victims who have gone missing from systems. The meeting also discussed difficulties with current systems regarding human trafficking and members highlighted that the emphasis on convictions means people who are trafficked are reluctant to come forward. Members also noted concerns about unaccompanied minors disappearing from the system.

During the April 2010 meeting the APAG debated what was the most effective way for the group to take the issue of human trafficking forward. It was agreed to invite the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to give the group additional information on this issue. At the May 2010 meeting it was agreed to discuss the issue of human trafficking at the September 2010 meeting, including updating on the information that had been provided at the seminar organised in June 2009.

Media Coverage of APAG Meetings

Following initial discussion at the February 2010 meeting, the APAG debated media coverage of APAG meetings at the March 2010 meeting. Members

highlighted the potential of using media coverage as a way to raise the profile of the APAG and agreed reporting of discussions of the APAG meetings would be based on the agreed minutes of meetings.

Dormant Accounts

At the February 2010 meeting it was highlighted to members of the APAG on Ethnic Minority Communities that funds from dormant bank accounts could be made available to children groups and faith groups. Members agreed to monitor this issue and at March 2010 meeting members were given information from the Committee for Finance and Personnel that stated that

“work has not progressed as quickly as was expected in relation to the Dormant Account priorities. It is hoped that a paper will be put to the Minister shortly for consideration”.

Members of the APAG noted this information and agreed to monitor any future developments in this area.

Traveller Accommodation

Following the Derry Travellers Support Group presentation at the February 2010 meeting, the APAG invited the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Department of Social Development to present at the March 2010 meeting on the issue of Traveller accommodation in Northern Ireland. In response to this presentation members of the APAG highlighted the recommendations from the Equality Commission NI regarding Traveller accommodation and asked about the establishment of a Travellers taskforce chaired by the Department of Social Development. Members also asked questions about the current provision of transit sites for Travellers and heard the Housing Executive was looking at the needs of transit sites and the location of these sites, identifying the economic situation as a reason for changes in travelling and halting patterns. The meeting heard the direct impact policies have on families due to the lack of access to water, toilets and electricity.

Membership of the APAG

Following a request made by a group to attend the APAG meeting, the April 2010 meeting discussed the protocol by which the groups receive invitation to the APAG. Members discussed the terms of reference for the APAG and the need for a process of how groups can become members of the APAG. At the May 2010 meeting it was agreed that the terms of reference, membership procedure and operation of the APAG would be reviewed at the June 2010 meeting.

2. Actions taken by the APAG 2009-10

In the 2009-10 session the APAG on Ethnic Minority Communities has taken actions following discussions during meetings to invite a number of organisations and departments to present to members. A full list of

presentations given to the APAG on Ethnic Minority Communities is detailed in section 4 of this report.

Complaint to Committee for Standards and Privileges

At the September 2009 meeting the APAG agreed to send a reminder letter to the Committee for Standards and Privileges to request an update on the complaint made against Mr Sammy Wilson MP MLA on behalf of the All Party Assembly Group on Ethnic Minority Communities.

Persons with Limited or No Access To Public Funds

During the 2009-10 session the APAG on Ethnic Minority Communities has taken actions to pursue the issues faced by those persons with limited or no access to public funds. At the January 2010 meeting the APAG agreed to send a letter to the Department of Finance and Personnel requesting information on the use of the Migration Impacts Fund in Northern Ireland.

Press Coverage of the APAG on Ethnic Minority Communities

At the February 2010 meeting of the APAG on Ethnic Minority Communities it was agreed to issue a press release detailing the current officer bearers of the APAG, the membership of the group from all political parties in the Assembly and the current work of the APAG. The press release was issued on 10th February 2010 by the secretariat on behalf of the APAG.

Membership of the APAG

Following discussions at the April and May meetings of the APAG it was agreed to conduct a review of the terms of reference for the group and the procedure for membership of the group. This review is scheduled to begin with a discussion at the June 2010 meeting of the APAG.

3. Presentations made by APAG member groups 2009-10

During each meeting of the APAG on Ethnic Minority Communities time is allocated for member groups to give a short presentation about their work and the main issues they are currently facing. Presenting groups have also answered questions from other members of the APAG about their groups. In this session there have been presentations by fifteen members of the APAG on Ethnic Minority Communities:

Date of Meeting	Group Presentations
September 2009	Bulgarian Association NI Indian Community Centre
October 2009	Tuar Ceatha Barnardos Chinese Welfare Association
November 2009	Belfast Jewish Community

	Multicultural Resource Centre NI Multicultural Association
December 2009	Ballymena Inter Ethnic Forum Omagh Ethnic Community Support Group
January 2010	No Presentations
Feb 2010	Derry Travellers Support Group
Mar 2010	Egyptian Society NI NI Pakistani Cultural Association
April 2010	Baha'i Council NI
May 2010	Wah Hep Chinese Community Association Mandarin Speakers Association

During the March 2010 meeting the APAG also had a presentation on behalf of the Belfast Islamic Centre giving details of their proposed new community centre.

4. Presentations made to the APAG 2009-10

The following organisations and departments have given presentations to the APAG on Ethnic Minority Communities during this session:

Organisation/Department	Presentation Subject	Date of meeting
Equality Commission NI	An update on legislative reform and issues regarding letting and estate agents.	October 2009
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission	Briefing on the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and consultation process.	December 2009
Law Centre NI	Presentation on Law Centre (NI) paper on plugging the gaps in welfare support for migrant workers.	January 2010
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission	Outlined to the meeting the main findings and recommendations from Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission research report 'No Home From Home'.	January 2010
Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister	An update on the Racial Equality Forum, OFMDFM restructuring and core funding for the sector.	January 2010
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	Presentation on Traveller accommodation provision in Northern Ireland.	March 2010
Department for Social Development	Presentation on Traveller accommodation provision in	March 2010

	Northern Ireland.	
Census Office	A presentation on the Census 2011 process and community engagement.	May 2010

5. Events organised by the APAG

There have been no events sponsored by the APAG on Ethnic Minority Communities in the 2009-10 session.

6. Dates of meetings in the period 2009-10

8th September 2009
 13th October 2009
 10th November 2009
 8th December 2009
 12th January 2010
 9th February 2010
 9th March 2010
 13th April 2010
 11th May 2010

Participation in the APAG Since June 2008

Based on postal and email mailing list of APAG since June 2008. The current mailing lists consists of 55 groups representing the BME sector and 7 political parties.

Group	Meetings Attended	Apologies
ACSONI	10	1
Al-Nisa Association	1	4
Alliance of Filipino Communities in Northern Ireland	0	0
An Munia Tober	10	6
Armagh Travellers Support Group	0	6
Baha'i Council For NI	16	3
Baha'i Community of Belfast	0	0
Ballymena Inter Ethnic Community Forum	6	9
Bangladeshi Association	4	4
Barnardos Tuar Ceatha	6	2
Belfast Chinese Christian Church	0	0
Belfast Islamic Centre	15	2
Belfast Jewish Community	7	7
Bulgarian Association NI	1	1
Chinese Chamber of Commerce	0	0
Chinese Welfare Association	5	10
Craigavon Travellers Support Group	5	5
Czech and Slovak Association NI	1	1
Derry Travellers Support Group	1	2
Egyptian Society NI	9	2
Hare Krishna Community	0	0
Hungarian Community Association	0	0
Indian Community Centre	9	2
Indonesian Association NI	0	0
Kropka PL	0	2
Latino America Unida	0	0
Mandarin Speakers Association	2	0
Mid Ulster International Cultural Group	0	0
Multi Cultural Resource Centre	13	3
Multi Cultural Group Windsor Women's Centre	0	0
Newry and Mourne Traveller Support Group	0	0
NI Multicultural Association	3	0
NI Muslim Family Association	3	1
NI Pakistani Cultural Association	1	6
NI Sikh Association	2	0
NICEM	19	0
NICRAS	11	4
Northern Ireland Filipino Association	0	0
Northern Ireland Filipino Community in Action	0	0
Oi Kwan Chinese Women's Group	0	0
Oi Wah Chinese Women's Group	0	0

Omagh Ethnic Community Support Group	2	3
Omagh Traveller Support Group	0	0
Pakistani Community Association	0	0
Polish Association NI	1	4
Portuguese Speakers Association NI	0	0
Romanian Community Group	1	0
Sai Pak Chinese Community Project	0	0
Strabane Ethnic Community Association	5	6
Sikh Community Association	1	0
Sikh Women and Children's Association	0	0
Wah Hep Chinese Community Association	10	5
Women of the World	1	2
World Wide Women @ North Down / Oi Yin Chinese Women's Group	5	7
Alliance	15	2
DUP	3	6
Green Party	11	4
PUP	15	4
SDLP	14	2
Sinn Fein	18	1
UUP	6	1

Meeting Date	Attendees	Apologies
June 2008	16	3
September 2008	16	9
October 2008	15	5
November 2008	11	9
December 2008	9	9
January 2009	15	6
February 2009	16	7
March 2009	12	11
May 2009	13	11
June 2009	9	4
September 2009	16	7
October 2009	17	4
November 2009	19	6
December 2009	16	4
January 2010	16	7
February 2010	12	8
March 2010	17	5
April 2010	15	9
May 2010	12	5
June 2010		