Minority Ethnic Youth Forum

Background

The Minority Ethnic Youth Forum (MEYF) is an initiative started by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) in 2005. There was a feeling that WAG was not engaging with young people from minority ethnic backgrounds and this could pose problems in future with minority ethnic[1] young people feeling that they were disengaged from the mainstream.

In July 2005, the Wales Resilience Forum heard from minority ethnic young people about issues which affected them and which were caused by their exclusion from the political process and consultations to inform policy. It was felt that the consultation processes in place overlooked the contribution of minority ethnic young people, thereby creating gaps in engagement with the Assembly Government. Key issues raised included race relations, education, training, employment; cultural needs of minority ethnic pupils in schools and community safety.

This provided a base on which MEYF was born. The main objective is to bridge the gaps in engagement between the Assembly Government and minority ethnic young people in Wales. The Forum was launched around Wales and attended by Ministers interested in listening to the views of young people. The first launch of the Forum took place on the 7th December 2005 at Cardiff City Hall hosted by the then Minister for Children, Equalities and Assembly Business, Jane Hutt AM.

The launch was attended by 200 minority ethnic young people from Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Porth. A second MEYF launch took place in Wrexham, North Wales on the 30th March 2006. This was attended by up to 40 minority ethnic young people.

Following the success of the two launch events, a regional Forum was held in Swansea on 15th May 2005 attended by minority ethnic young people from surrounding areas such as Neath Port Talbot. The Forum was hosted by the then Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration, Edwina Hart AM MBE.

On 20th July 2006, another regional Forum took place in Newport attended by up to minority ethnic young people from Newport and the surrounding areas. The Forum was hosted by the Department for Education and Lifelong Learning and was launched by the then Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, Jane Davidson AM. The Minister spent some time to respond to issues that had been raised on Education by minority ethnic young people during the Cardiff launch in December 2005.

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[1] Minority ethnic young people in this research is used to refer to young people between 11 and 25 years, born of migrant parents both long term residents of African and Asian descent, mixed British and new immigrants from Eastern Europe.

Establishment of the Minority Ethnic Youth Forum

The MEYF was set up in accordance with the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to mainstreaming race equality into its work and practices. It also complements the Race Equality Scheme which sets out plans to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination at all levels and to promote race equality and good race relations.

The Welsh Assembly Government has a statutory duty under section 120 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 (section 77 of the Government of Wales Act 2006) to ensure that equality of opportunity is embedded in its work. This includes all aspects of Welsh life such as age, disability, race, religion, belief and sexual orientation.

The MEYF is in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to which the United Kingdom is a signatory. The Convention grants young people in the UK a comprehensive set of rights including the right to participation. This right is promoted through Youth and Participation Division in the Department for Education and Lifelong Learning.

Methodology of Research

We adopted structured open ended questionnaires for both youth workers and Assembly Government departmental leads. Follow ups were made via telephone conversations to cover any grey areas. The questionnaires were administered face to face allowing for more explanation on the issues involved.

The questionnaires were developed using the reports from the launch forums as a follow up to establishing the problems faced by minority ethnic young people and how they could be addressed.

It was necessary to conduct focus group discussions with minority ethnic young people in Wales to explore in depth the nature of engagement they wanted to have with the Welsh Assembly Government and mainstream bodies. We also sought to find out the kind of structures minority ethnic young people preferred for engagement and how they wanted to be involved in policy development. This would provide a clear road map to a sustainable engagement channel acceptable to minority ethnic young people and representative minority ethnic organisations.

Minority Ethnic Demography Analysis

The population of the UK according to 2001 census was 58,789,194 with the white population accounting for 92% of the total UK population. The data shows that all minority ethnic groups accounted for 8.1% (4.635, 296) overall of the whole UK population[2]. Figures obtained from the EOC[3] website on ethnic minorities in Wales show that ethnic minority people accounted for 2.1% (98,791) of Wales' population out of a total population of 2,903,085 persons. The white population accounted for 97.9 per cent of the total population at 2,841,500.

The census (2001) shows a settlement trend of minority ethnic population concentrated mainly in urban centres as compared to the rural areas. London is home to a large minority ethnic population, some 45% of all ethnic minorities in the UK. Of the urban centres of South Wales, Cardiff has the highest number at 25,700 (8.4%) minority ethnic population followed by Newport at 6,600 (4.8%) and Swansea with 4,800 (2.2%). There is notable presence of minority ethnic population recorded in the Valleys with Rhondda Cynon Taff leading with a population of 2,700 (1.2%), and Vale of Glamorgan accounting for 2,600 (2.2%) people.

North Wales has a small minority ethnic population at only 6,697 out of a total population of 663,645[4], concentrated mainly in Bangor and Wrexham. It should be noted that the two areas have a considerably high population of minority ethnic international students.

The Census (2001) shows that the white population generally has an older age structure compared to people from minority ethnic groups who have a large younger generation which is set to grow with time. Over all, Black Caribbeans had the largest older population at over 65 years accounting for 15% of the total population after the white population at 82%.

Figures for 2001 are not available, however according to the 1991 Census for Wales, Bangladeshi and Black other accounted for 47% of the younger population under 16, compared to 20% recorded for the white population. In the age range between 16 and 29, the Chinese had the highest, accounting for 30% of the total population, followed by Black Caribbean and Black other at 27%. The figure for Asian other and Black African was 26%, with the white population accounting for only 19% which was the smallest percentage.

Religion

The 2001 Census results show that the British population is culturally diverse but also that the largest population British White (40 million people) identifying themselves as being Christian. A total of 815,000 Black people and 353,000 people from mixed ethnic backgrounds identified themselves as Christians.

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[2] The national census, 2001
[3] Equal Opportunity Commission
[4] BEST report 2004

Considering other faiths, Pakistani Muslims (686,000) and Indian Hindus (471,000) accounted for the largest minority ethnic groups. This was followed by Indian Sikhs (307,000), Bangladeshi Muslims (261,000) and white Jews (259,000). Fifteen per cent of the British Population reported having no religion. These groups include the Chinese (53%) and mixed ethnic background (23%). Asian, Black African and white Irish were least likely to report having no religion.

In Wales, figures for religion show that Islam accounted for the largest minority religion with 19,000 people mainly from the Asian backgrounds. Of this figure, 7,000 were of Pakistani origin and 5,000 Bangladeshi Muslims. The EOC Report on Minority Ethnic Females in Wales 2004 indicates that Cardiff is host to the largest Muslim population in Wales accounting for 4% of the population. Seventy percent of black Caribbeans and 50% of people from mixed race background identify themselves as Christians. There were 4,000 people from the Indian descent who identify themselves as Hindu while 2,000 belonged to the Sikh faith[5].

The Census 2001 results help us to understand both the social and economic lifestyle trends of minority ethnic young people. It shows that the minority ethnic population has a growing young population which is likely to increase with time. At the same time it provides an interesting picture of our religious affiliation. Care should be taken when planning services for young people, and delivery mechanisms should also ensure certain groups that may not be religious or belong to specific ethnic groups are not left out. The Census 2001 shows that the needs of minority ethnic young people are key to the planning process.

Education

The office of the National Statistics-ONS (2005) shows that in 2002, Chinese pupils were the most likely to achieve five or more GCSE grades A*-C in England with 77% of Chinese girls and 71% of Chinese boys. This is followed by 70% of Indian girls and 58% of Indian boys. The lowest recorded levels are from Black other, Black African and pupils from Pakistani groups. In terms of higher education, the report indicates that in 2001/2002, people from the Black Caribbean, other Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups are less likely to than British White to have degrees or equivalent. Interestingly, Chinese, Black African, Indian and other Asian groups are more likely to have degrees than white people in the UK.

Considering gender desegregation, Black Caribbean men were the least likely to have degrees (8%) while Pakistani and Bangladeshi women were the least likely to have degrees (7%). The results show that Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were most likely to be unqualified. Research findings on the achievement of minority ethnic pupils in Wales (2002/2003) reveal the same trend.

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[5] EOC 2004

Black pupils were more likely to be excluded from schools in England in 2001/2002 than children from other ethnic groups. The highest rate being noted among Black Caribbean children at 42 per 10,000. This was three times the rate for white children. Chinese and Indian pupils had the lowest exclusions at 2 per 10,000 and 3 per 10,000 respectively.

Ravinder (2001) attributes underachievement of BME young people to social class, cultural background, neighbourhood, peer pressure, teacher influence and lack of fluency in English for Pakistani and Bangladeshi boys. Other causes include stereotyping and racism in schools; institutional racism and racist bullying in schools. The same group also accounts for the highest number of exclusions in England. Parents are asked to withdraw their children from school.

Employment and economic activity

Data for Great Britain (excluding Northern Ireland) as extracted from the Labour Force Survey Summer 2003 shows a higher number of minority ethnic people, especially Pakistani and Bangladeshi, in self employment at one fifth compared to one in ten among white people. The same trend is evident in other minority ethnic populations, notably the Chinese and Indian. The data also shows that the white population had significantly lower unemployment rates compared to any other ethnic groups. It also recorded a lower economic activity than other groups. People from Black groups were the most economically inactive at 40% compared to other ethnic groups such as the Chinese were 70% economically active.

Research findings from this work revealed that minority ethnic young people, especially Pakistani and Bangladeshi boys, are more likely to go into family businesses than go for higher education and training because of discrimination in the job market.

Ravinder (2001) in his research in England found a close relation between education and employment, noting that employment chances were greatly determined by one's education attainment and training.

Trends in crime

Research findings published on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) website, March 2005 show that in 2002/2003, adults from a mixed race or Asian background are more likely to be a victim of crime. Forty six per cent of adults from the mixed background had been victims in the past 12 months, with 30% from an Asian background. Black adults, Chinese or other groups similarly fall victims compared to their white counterparts. The report shows that young adults are more likely to be victims of crime than the older generation. Type of crimes ranged from common assault, robbery, theft and other personal theft at 17% compared with between 7 and 9% of people from other ethnic groups including white.

Victims of racially motivated incidents were found to be higher among minority ethnic populations than amongst white people.

We learn from the Census 2001, and more recently 2002/03 research published on the ONS website that most of the issues raised by minority ethnic young people - issues of education, underachievement, lack of employment, experiences of racism and crime have been with us for some time.

Statistics

Census 2001 BME group percentages of Wales and England

Total resident population of Wales: 2,903,085
Total resident population of England: 43,558,424

	WALES	ENGLAND	SCOTLAND
White	97.89%	94.9%	
Mixed	0.6%	1.31%	(figures not yet
Asian	0.9%	4.57%	available)
Black	0.2%	0.2%	
Chinese	0.2%	0.45%	
Other	0.2%	0.44%	

Percentage of BME groups making up the non-white populations in England and Wales

Total resident non-white English population: 2,207,533
Total resident non-white Welsh population: 62,126

	ENGLAND	WALES	SCOTLAND
Mixed	22.9%	28.5%	
Asian	47.7%	41.1%	(Figures not yet
Black	25.2%	11.7%	Available)
Chinese	2.6%	10.3%	
Other	1.5%	8.4%	

Differential age profile of BME groups in Wales: (1991 census)

ETHNIC GROUP	UNDER 16	16-29	30-PENS	PENSPLUS
White	20%	19%	40%	20%
Black Caribbean	21%	27%	42%	11%
Black African	32%	26%	37%	6%
Black Other	47%	27%	24%	4%
Indian	28%	24%	45%	3%
Pakistani	38%	24%	34%	2%
Bangladeshi	47%	25%	27%	1%
Chinese	26%	30%	40%	4%
Asian Other	26%	26%	45%	2%
Other	42%	23%	31%	4%

LOCAL AUTHORITY	WHITE	ETHNIC MINORITY
Cardiff	91.6%	8.4%
Newport	95.2%	4.8%
Swansea	97.8%	2.2%
Torfaen	97.8%	2.2%
Ceredigion	98.6%	1.4%
Bridgend	98.6%	1.4%
Denbighshire	98.8%	1.2%
Gwynedd	98.8%	1.2%
Rhondda Cynon Taff	98.8%	1.2%
Conway	98.9%	1.1%
Monmouthshire	98.9%	1.1%
Neath Port Talbot	98.9%	1.1%
Wrexham	98.9%	1.1%
Merthyr Tydfil	99.0%	1.0%
Carmarthenshire	99.1%	0.9%
Caerphilly	99.1%	0.9%
Pembrokeshire	99.1%	0.9%
Powys	99.1%	0.9%
Vale of Glamorgan	99.1%	0.9%
Flintshire	99.2%	0.8%
Blaenau Gwent	99.2%	0.8%
Isle of Anglesey	99.3%	0.7%

Office of National Statistics (2001 Census)

Welsh Assembly Government Policy Initiatives for Young People

Heads of Department contributed a list of policy initiatives within their Departments. This was shared with minority ethnic young people during the focus group discussions following young people indicating at the launch forums a lack of information on their entitlements.

1. **Extending entitlement** - is the Welsh Assembly Governments overarching policy for all young people aged 11-25 years. This policy contains 10 key entitlements. Every young person is entitled to services and support which will help them to access effective education and training, take advantage of opportunities for employment and to participate effectively and responsibly in the lives of their communities.

2. Part of the policy for young people (of all backgrounds) in Wales is to participate fully in decisions that concern them and understand their right to be heard. They should be able to exercise this right and to get assistance when they need it on issues ranging from education, housing, employment etc. Multi agency **Young People's Partnerships** are based in each county area across Wales to coordinate planning and delivery of youth support services to all young people in Wales.

3. **School Councils** - All primary, secondary and special schools in Wales are legally required to have a school council in place. A school council is a group of students who are elected to represent the views of all pupils and to improve their school[6]. Some of the things they can influence include teaching and learning, environment; problems faced in school such as bullying, exclusions and help to improve teacher / pupil relations etc.

4. **Cliconline** - Information and advice service for young people in Wales aged 11-25 years[7]. This covers all areas of interest such as education, environment, housing, law and rights etc http//:www.cliconline.co.uk

5. **Funky Dragon** - The children and young people's Assembly for Wales. It is a peer led organisation that aims to give children and young people from 0 - 25 years opportunity to be heard on issues that affect them[8] and promotes dialogue with the Welsh Assembly Government.

6. **Having a Voice, Having a Choice** - "Participation means that it is my right to be involved in making decisions or planning and reviewing any action that may affect me." The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to making Article 12 of the UN Convention on Rights of the Child a reality for everyone aged 0-25 in Wales. It has set up a participation project to help make this happen in areas such as making new policy, consulting on proposals, appointing staff, and auditing services. It is also working to make sure that organisations such as Councils, health services, and voluntary organisations are working towards this goal. **The participation**

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[6] http://schoolcouncilswales.org.uk – 03/01/2007
[7] http://www.funkydragon.org – 01/11/2006
[8] http://www.funkydragon.org – 26/09/2006

Consortium for Children and Young People in Wales and the Participation Unit based in Save the Children are helping to take this forward.

7. **Youth Forums** - Most areas in Wales have a county wide youth forum or youth council to give young people opportunities and support to work with their local council and influence what it does.

8. **Local Participation Strategies** - These will be in place in Wales by April 2008. Among other things, they will let children and young people from a wide range of backgrounds know more about ways in which they can get involved, and be listened to in the decision making process on issues that affect them.

9. **Learning Pathways 14-19 years** - A commitment[9] to the transformation of learning provision for young people, targeting youngsters in Wales. Young people get support to grow into responsible citizens and able to make wise future choices in regard to higher learning and employment.

10. **BEST Project** – This is a Communities First funded project which aims to identify the particular support needs of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) individuals and communities as they relate to the Welsh Assembly Government's Communities First Strategy[10].

11. **The Youth Service** – Involved in the education[11] and development of young people between 11 and 25 years, especially the age group between 13 and 19 years.

12. **Student Finance Wales** - Developed to provide financial support to students in Wales.

13. **Cymorth – the Children and Youth Support Fund**[12] - Provides support to children and young people in Wales to improve the lives of those from disadvantaged families. The fund replaces Sure Start, Children and Youth Partnership Fund, National Childcare Strategy, Youth Access and Play grant.

14. **Children's Commissioner for Wales** - The late Peter Clarke was the Children's Commissioner until his death in January 2007. Young people have a right to raise their issues, voice their concerns and be listened to through the commissioner.

15. **Welsh Youth Forum on Sustainable Development (WYFSD)** – A youth led organisation that supports young people's empowerment, education and action on sustainable development.[13]

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[9] http://new.wales.gov.uk- 15/11/2006
[10] North Wales BME Communities Research commissioned by BEST, 2004
[11] http://new.wales.gov.uk – 15/11/2006
[12] http://new.wales.gov.uk – 15/11/2006
[13] http://www.newportyouth.org.uk/links - 15/11/2006

16. **Sports Policy** - Climbing Higher is the national strategy for sport and physical activity in Wales. The strategy encourages more physically active lifestyles for young people.

    1.   Key areas - to reach young people through school play.
    2.   Physical education.
    3.   Out/after school sport and physical activity-classes, clubs, coaching teams and competitions.
    4.   Youth and community informal recreational sport and physical activity.
    5.   Sports clubs.

17. **Appetite for Life** - The then Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning set up the Food In Schools Working Group in July 2005 to advise on how school food could be improved. The report **Appetite for Life**, sets out the review of school meals and their proposals on how the Education Department should continue to drive forward the whole school approach to improving food and nutrition in schools in Wales. It was launched for consultation Summer 2006.

18. The consultation received over 500 responses, of which more than 300 were from children and young people. As part of the consultation process it was important to capture the views of those who matter most – the pupils. Specific children and young people's versions of the consultation document were produced in order to encourage the children and young people to express their opinions.

19. To support this work, facilitated sessions with 3 youth forums across Wales will be arranged. An Action Plan will be developed to bring forward the proposals within Appetite for Life.

20. Proposal 3 of Appetite for Life stated that further urgent work should be undertaken to investigate how the dietary needs of minority ethnic groups in relation to the proposed nutrient and food based standards can be effectively met. A Special Dietary Needs subgroup will be set up to investigate the dietary needs of minority ethnic groups and also vegetarians, vegans, and children with medical dietary need i.e. allergies and intolerances.

Good Practice

England

Research was carried out in 35 Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in England involving 34,000 pupils in mainly white schools and teachers. The research was commissioned by the Department for Education and skills to look into the situation of minority ethnic pupils in mainly white schools and how the schools dealt with some of the problems specific to minority ethnic pupils such as racist bullying. Research was carried out by Tony Cline and other research teams in 2002, publication titled "Minority Ethnic Pupils in mainly White Schools".

Below is a synopsis of key findings that show how positive approach to dealing with issues of minority ethnic pupils in a holistic way helped both the pupils and teachers in their work:

1. Sharing experiences among children from different ethnic backgrounds and religious backgrounds helped in promoting integration and acceptance of other people's cultures and beliefs.

2. Positive action was taken by schools to promote other cultures and religions other than Christianity during Assembly's. This was done by allowing staff from other cultures to lead the Assembly's or inviting guest speakers from other faiths.

3. Teachers provided support to pupils who were learning English.

4. Encouraging mentoring by school peers.

5. Support in interpretation given to early English learners.

6. Support to minority ethnic pupils from classroom assistants.

7. Ethnic identity was promoted by most parents in terms of language, religion and teaching young people their cultural values. (This is one area that affects minority ethnic pupils with cultural identity difficulties).

8. Participation in community religious education helped minority ethnic pupils identify with their cultures.

9. Social integration in schools and parents' social networks played a role.

10. Teaching minority ethnic religion in schools and other faiths in schools provided exposure to other religions and promoted integration.

These are some of the measures taken by schools to address and reduce race related bullying and name calling in schools:

11. Teachers carried out a fair investigation of the incident and provided feedback to victims and their parents on the findings and action take.

12. Teachers made sure that perpetrators understood their mistakes and what they had done wrong.

13. They informed parents when their children were involved in persistent abuse.

14. Head teachers personally got involved in racism and bullying issues. This restored confidence in victims that the school was committed to dealing with their problems and encouraged families to report to teachers forms of abuse.

15. One of the positive measures noted in this research was the presence of "bullying box" in schools. Messages on bullying and racism would be posted. Teachers addressed issues posted within 24 hours, which was also seen by pupils as a commitment from teachers and staff to end bullying in school.

16. Although the research points out positive aspects of embracing multi-culturalism in mainly white schools in England, the authors point out the fact that no single school in their sample had 'fully developed a strategy for preparing pupils through the curriculum for life in a diverse society'. Measures were adopted to deal with the problems with a few schools working towards addressing the problems. This included all aspects of school life, language, religion and cultural diversity and dealing with racist incidences.

Meeting Questionnaires

Questionnaire for minority ethnic organisations

(Set of questions may differ depending on the nature of organisation)

1) Information about the work of BME group/funding sources.

2) Tell us about the issues young EM people raise or present to you and how you deal with them? Do you know of any other issues/needs?

3) What support do you provide to young people who come to you? Can we say that you have been successful in addressing those issues? What is your measure (benchmarks)-how do you measure success/the impact of your work?

4) How do you ensure that their needs/views reach policy makers/mainstream bodies concerned? Are there any problems you have experienced in your work representing or dealing with young people's issues? - share any experiences (mainstream engagement, communication); suggest ways of dealing with the above problems.

5) Do young people know how to contact/get to you? What structures/networks do you have in place to ensure that their needs get to you and are dealt with, and they can trust you with their issues? How do you work with young people? What's the nature of your relationship with EM youth? Are there any gaps that you would like to share with us? What should be done?

6) Are there any other youth networks that you know of i.e. forums, centres, clubs that young people belong to and which feed into your work? (What are they, composition/representation, activities they do, where are they located-towns, schools, faith centres etc) if they have a problem/suggestion to make, whom do they contact?

7) Can we say that young people are well represented by these structures/networks including you? What are the gaps? What should be done about them?

8) What type of support would you require to effectively deal with young people's issues, engage with them and in turn promote their engagement and active participation in mainstream activities like influencing policy-through voting etc?-capacity building, funding, policy etc.

9) In your view, how should young EM people be consulted? What are the best structures for engagement with the youth, both with EM organisations, mainstream bodies/organisations and their dealings with WAG?

10) How can these structures be established, strengthened (if already existing), supported in order to be self sustaining?

11) What type of support do they need to be effective?

12) What would be the mode of operation?

13) How would you like to see WAG engage with young EM people and vice versa? What should be done to promote closer and effective engagement between the two (WAG & EM youth) and ensure that young people's views/concerns get heard and are addressed?

14) Can we say that EM youth participate actively in local democratic processes and are able to influence policy especially on issues that concern them? What are the gaps, and what should be the way forward?

15) What do you know about Funky dragon? Are young EM people involved-do they participate in FD activities?

16) What do you know about the MEYF? Who should move it forward? From your experience working with EM individuals, how should the forum operate to be successful and be sustainable-(meetings, activities, quarterly, bi-annually, annually) etc? Do you have any other comments about the forum?

17) Do you think the MEYF is the best means of communication/engagement with WAG/mainstream bodies and participating in mainstream activities? Comment.

18) What are your views on the roles of FD & MEYF in being representative bodies for young people? (15-25 age range)

19) What should be their mandate (if you want-TOR)

20) Where do you want to see the two networks/forums 10 years from now?

21) What do you think is going to be done differently by MEYF from yourselves?

22) What kind of support can your organisation provide to the above forums/initiatives? How would you like to work with the above forums?

23) What are your comments on the various policy initiatives in place (the ones you are aware of) that support young people and promote their engagement in mainstream activities? How can young EM people influence policy and service delivery?

24) Any general comments i.e. threats & opportunities for MEYF etc.

Questionnaire for WAG staff

1) A brief about work in the department.

2) Information on policy initiatives in place that provide support to young people; how do (EM youth) needs fit in? what are the gaps if any?

3) What structures do you have in place to ensure that the views of young EM people are heard by WAG and both communicate with each other effectively?

4) Do you think these structures represent adequately the views and needs/concerns of EM youth, and in return communicate WAG's commitment to them?

5) What are your views on the reasons for disengagement (if any), what needs to be done?

6) Have there been any attempts to get feedback from EM young people on their feelings about the way the structures work in terms of promoting inclusion and diversity? (monitoring targets/plans to ensure information gets to EM young people).

7) How would you describe your current involvement with young EM people? Do you think that the communication from both parties (WAG & young EM people could be improved)? What in your view would be the appropriate mechanism/avenue/vessel for achieving a cohesive engagement and sustaining it?

8) Do you have any information about EM young people's problems/concerns – and how have they been resolved?

9) Tell us briefly about Funky Dragon/any other initiative. Nature of and means of outreach.

10) What are your views on the MEYF, and how would you like to see it work with other youth forums/groups/initiatives under your portfolio?

11) What type of support (policy, capacity building, and resources, and any other) do you think youth organisations need to be able to engage more with WAG and air their views on issues that concern them clearly? – to promote greater and active participation.

12) What do you see being done differently by MEYF from other youth networks-like Funky Dragon etc?

13) What sort of support can we expect to get from you/your office towards MEYF?

Focus Group Discussion Questions

Engagement:

1. How do young ME people want to engage with WAG?

2. Which organisations would or could if supported/enhanced provide this link between young ME people and WAG? (a list of some of the ME organisations to be provided as a guide only but young ME people free to add to the list organisations, youth centres known to them).

3. Who would be their representatives? At least 2 from North Wales (ME young people can nominate their representative to be based at the organisation in item 2 and decide when all ME young people representatives meet, and how they want to be represented. This team will be part of 'friends of WAG departments).

4. What type of information do they need from WAG? (from departments and Ministers) How would they like to receive it? Email, newsletter, meetings?

5. How often? – i) would they like to have meetings with ministers; ii) Assembly departments through SEDU?

Policy formulation

6. What do they want to know about policy? Which areas are they interested in? (e.g. what they are, how they are formulated and how they affect young ME people)

7. How do they want to be involved? (e.g. through ME organisations, youth centres-as in item 2 above)

Participation in the Political process

8. What type of information do they need?

9. Who should provide this information?

10. How do they want to be involved and when?

Participation in Funky Dragon and school councils

11. What type of assistance do they need to be able to participate in Funky Dragon activities and school councils? (capacity building)

Notes for facilitators

1. Hand out notes - document 1: some of the policy initiatives in place for young people; document 2: notes from launch forums.

2. Why are we holding FGD? - During the launch forums that took place in 2005/06, young ME participants raised a number of issues that are of concern to them. We would like to find out the best way of communicating with young ME people, listening to their views, ideas and responding to their questions and how young people can likewise communicate with WAG.

3. It was felt that current mainstream youth forums such as Funky Dragon, school councils do not reach out to young ME people or appeal to them. Young ME people felt that school councils do not deal with their issues in schools. We would like to know which alternative WAG can use to reach ME young people and how best young ME people's issues can be addressed.

4. Why participate? It is the right of all young people under the UN Convention on the Rights of the child 1989 to be heard and listened to. Young people have a right to voice up their concerns to relevant bodies and need to be heard. It is through their own forums and own nominated representatives that their voice can be heard by policy makers.

5. Policy affects young people in many ways. It is important that they understand how policy is formulated and how they can participate in the consultations to raise any issues that may have been overlooked by policy makers and yet they are of importance to ME young people. For example education curriculum, housing, transport, training and higher education etc.

6. Issues raised in document 2 would have been raised and dealt with in good time if young ME people had a channel through which to share their views, raise their concerns/talk to WAG.

7. Participation in the political process - it is their right to vote for candidates of their own choice who can represent their views, make change in the way they are viewed and understood, need to be part of the decision making process.

8. Young ME people who met with the Assembly appointed Wales Resilience Forum members expressed concerns that they are not involved in the political process. They have a chance to be part of this process through active participation.

9. Examples of information needed-such as information on the different political parties we have, party manifestos, nomination procedures,

party local representatives who can provide more information (this is for over 18 year olds).

10. Participation in Funky Dragon and school councils - some ME participants raised the issue of lack of confidence in communicating with other people; if ME young people would need support and guidance on building their self confidence to be able to stand in front of other young people and contribute to discussions (self confidence building exercises).

11. Explain why they should participate in school councils-they could be good channels for raising issues that affect ME young people in schools such as halal food, bullying, racism, school curriculum etc.

12. It is important that young ME people are assisted to join school councils, feel part of it and contribute to it. This can be done through a channel (forum) they have identified themselves.

Facilitators to

1. Share their group discussions in plenary and let all young ME participants agree on the issues as a group. For example on 1 representative, an organisation that will host the local ME youth forum, number of times to meet in a year at a local forum and with WAG. We need young people to reach a consensus on issues agreed on in their individual groups.

2. The facilitating organisation to submit to SEDU event report within two weeks of hosting the FGD.

3. Facilitating organisations will organise for a few representatives to attend a regional dissemination event that should take 30minutes to 1 hour and within a fortnight after the FGD. This will provide an opportunity for young people to be aware of 'a regional consensus plan and what came out of another region, i.e. South and North Wales. South Wales to combine with the Valleys, North Wales (East, West and Mid).

4. Each local area with exception of North Wales to nominate 10 representatives to attend dissemination event. The purpose of the events is to disseminate FGD outcome as soon as possible.

5. Each Region to come together after two weeks of completing the FGD. We may need to get someone (from SEDU) to share North Wales outcome with South Wales and vice versa.

Some of the additional points to consider by facilitating organisations

1. Newport to cover any surrounding areas with ME population.

2. Swansea to cover the surrounding areas of Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire etc.
3. Valleys - surrounding areas such as Pontypridd and any other known to Valrec.
4. North Wales to cover East, Mid and West North Wales.
5. Organisations to consider health and safety measures.
6. Disability support/accessibility/language.

Outcome from Focus Group Discussions

We held 11 focus group discussions in the Valleys, South Wales including South West Swansea, and North Wales hosted by local and regional organisations. A total of 181 minority ethnic young people attended the discussions.

Engagement and participation in the mainstream:

1. They expressed willingness to engage with the Welsh Assembly Government and AMs on a bi-annual basis and through annual information days.

2. They support the establishment of and running of the Minority Ethnic Youth Forum.

3. They have expressed confidence that if the MEYF structure is adopted and used, it will bridge the gap in engagement between the Welsh Assembly Government and minority ethnic young people, as well as their own minority ethnic communities.

4. That the MEYF will provide a dual channel for communication between minority ethnic young people and the Welsh Assembly Government.

5. That the MEYF will be used to articulate Welsh Assembly Government policy initiatives to minority ethnic young people and provide the missing link in participation in policy development process which is at the moment lacking.

6. They expressed confidence that the MEYF will be able to build young people's confidence and self esteem needed to participate in other mainstream initiatives such as youth forums and Funky Dragon.

7. They would like to see the Youth Forum being run independently of any established groups both mainstream and minority ethnic based.

8. The MEYF will not duplicate current work being undertaken by minority ethnic organisations and other networks but promote dialogue between the Welsh Assembly Government and minority ethnic young people.

9. Despite the enthusiasm shown by young people, they however have misgivings about the Welsh Assembly Governments commitment to the forum and engagement.

10. They would like future engagement to channelled through youth forums, clubs, minority ethnic organisations, visits to schools and emails through MEYF host organisations.

11. Minority ethnic young people nominated representatives to the MEYF and host organisations to initiate dialogue and the engagement process. Below are host organisations nominated by minority ethnic young people during the focus group discussions:

- The Valleys - Valleys Race Equality Council (VALREC)

- North Wales – North Wales Race Equality Network (NWREN)

- Swansea – Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST) and Minority Ethnic Women's Network (MEWN Swansea)

- Newport – South Wales Race Equality Council (SEWREC)

- Cardiff – Social Inclusion Division, Cardiff County Council

Quotes from the research

"Racism is in everything. It is everywhere. If we are not having health we can not get education. We need somewhere to live and we need employment". North Wales respondent.

"Living here in Wrexham is not like living in Birmingham. I can not wander around by myself, to feel safe I need to have other with me: Racism affects our access to all sorts of areas".

"I hear them using our music, but they don't want to use us. It gives me a feeling of hopelessness and I become depressed". Wrexham".

"I have been stopped twice in the last month".
"I have been stopped so many times for looking suspicious". Valleys

A participant from the Valleys sharing her experience of racial discrimination when asked if the same would happen in her African country had this to say "My mum tells us that if you go for a job in her country with a white person, preference is given to the white person even though you are more qualified than him/her".

"WAG needs to disseminate the facts', need to make the public more aware that racism is part of our everyday lives". Racism is illegal but because we are so few, it does not seem to matter it goes on happening".

Issues raised by ME young people during launch forums.

North Wales Forum Launch notes

Below are issues raised by minority ethnic young people during the launch forum in North Wales on 30th March 2006 in Wrexham:

1. Education

   - School curriculum to include Islamic education.
   - Schooling in Wrexham not supportive of all ethnic minority immigrants.
   - Bullying and racism in schools.
   - International students find it difficult to get jobs.
   - Lack of prayer facilities in schools, colleges and universities in North Wales.
   - International students discriminated on fees.

2. Lack of social facilities for ME young people.
3. Media-negative portrayal of ME young people especially Muslims.
4. North Wales suffers from rurality and isolation.
5. Infrastructure - problems with transport.
6. Publicity of forum events to be done through schools, intranet, Yale college.
7. Consider issues for young people who are or have been in care.
8. The Forum:

   - To provide a focus for local issues.
   - Age group to be considered-lowered to 9-11.
   - Forum to meet twice a year, 3 times.

South Wales MEYF launch notes

Below are issues raised by ME young people during the launch of the MEYF in Cardiff on 7th December 2005.

1. Education

   - Need for grants for higher education.
   - Information not provided on available grants for higher education.
   - Asylum seekers and refugees are not eligible for grants and so lose out.
   - Religious holidays should be available to all students.
   - Religious education to cover all religions to give a better understanding on all beliefs.
   - Provision of halal food in schools.
   - Need for teachers to have more awareness about Islam and religious duties Muslim students are required to observe especially prayer times and Eid days.

2. Communication - translations to be done in different languages; leaflets in different languages.
3. Publicity - events to be publicised through schools.
4. Representation – through direct consultation and not groups.
5. Social Facilities – need for sport facilities and youth centres.
6. Social problems – gang culture, police harassment, drugs, prostitution.
7. Racist attacks/violence and abuse, bullying, Islam phobia.
8. Media – biased reporting on ME young people. Bad publicity.
9. Funding - given to mosques for various activities that would attract a lot of people.
10. Discrimination in employment opportunities through job recruitment procedures and stereotyping.

11. Participation

   - No information on Funky Dragon.
   - Activities initiated for women including English classes.

12. The Forum:

   - Forum outcome/report should be fed back to participants.
   - Forum meetings should be held bi-annually and rotational in different cities.
   - Forum for different age groups (11-16; 16-20; 20-30) – gender issues to be considered (whether to mix or not).
   - Local forums preferred.

Conclusions

There emerged varied thoughts on the problems minority ethnic young people faced in their schools, communities and what they encounter on the streets.

Looking at the composition of participants, it is clear that a 'one size-fits all' solution to issues raised will not work. Over 50% of young respondents were either in university or college; 20% in employment, 10% just finishing their secondary education with a further 20% excluded from school and involved in extra curricula activities and alternative training.

It was clear that ethnicity played a role in the way they are treated by the wider Welsh population, while some had not experienced direct discrimination, they thought it was silently practised.

Perpetrators of racist bullying were known to victims who chose to ignore it and live with the consequences. They did not feel like they belonged to Wales, yet considered it their home country.

There is a need to look at the needs of minority ethnic young people as different groups, according to their ethnicity and religion (Muslims are likely to experience religious intolerance due to world issues and their distinct dressing).

There are issues related to deprivation, poverty, education and employment with racism and discrimination cutting across all ethnic groups and social status.

Rurality in North Wales and the Valleys plays a role in the way minority ethnic young people socialise with others and they way local people perceive them. This is different from South Wales where the minority ethnic population is higher and a degree of integration evident.

The same issues in South Wales are viewed differently with those living in deprived areas and poor families feeling more disadvantaged. Although asylum seekers and refugees were not targeted directly, their needs are also different.

North Wales and the Valleys do not have as many minority ethnic organisations to help as in South Wales. Despite the high population of minority ethnic people in South Wales, consideration is needed of the issues identified.

A positive aspect of the findings is that most of the problems minority ethnic young people have raised can be addressed effectively within existing policy initiatives.