

## WMCA Board

<b>Date</b>	17 March 2023
<b>Report title</b>	West Midlands Race Equalities Taskforce - Independent Strategy
<b>Portfolio Lead</b>	Inclusive Communities - Councillor Kerrie Carmichael
<b>Accountable Chief Executive</b>	Laura Shoaf, West Midlands Combined Authority email: laura.shoaf@wmca.org.uk
<b>Accountable Employee</b>	Lucy Gosling, Race Equalities Taskforce Programme Manager email: lucy.gosling@wmca.org.uk  Claire Dhami, Head of Systems Change & Inclusion email: claire.dhami@wmca.org.uk
<b>Report has been considered by</b>	WMCA Executive Board - 11 January 2023 WMCA Mayor and Leaders Liaison - 3 March 2023

### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

- 1) Note the launch and progress of the West Midlands Race Equalities Taskforce, which was established by the WMCA Board in July 2021.
- 2) Endorse the West Midlands Race Equalities Taskforce's independent strategy (Appendix A).
- 3) Commit to responding to the Taskforce's independent strategy, and to continued action to address race inequality across the West Midlands.

- 4) Nominate an elected member to represent your local authority as part of a Members Advisory Group for the Race Equalities Taskforce.

## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To update the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Board on the establishment of the West Midlands Race Equalities Taskforce and the development of its independent strategy.
- 1.2 To seek the WMCA Board's endorsement of the Taskforce's independent strategy and ongoing commitment to taking action to address race inequality for our communities.

## **2. Background to the Taskforce**

- 2.1 The WMCA Board endorsed the establishment of an independent West Midlands Race Equalities Taskforce to take action that will improve equality of opportunity for all of our communities (23 July 2021). The Taskforce's role is to concentrate on developing policy solutions in areas *'over which the WMCA has roles and responsibilities in delivering, enabling and influencing - namely: jobs and the economy; education and skills; transport and connectivity; housing and homelessness; health and wellbeing; and also criminal justice with the cooperation of the Police and Crime Commissioner as chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board.'*
- 2.2 This decision was made in recognition of the wide and deep inequality across the West Midlands. Evidence clearly shows that people who experience race inequality are likely to face additional barriers to success, from finding it more difficult to get good jobs, housing and transport to having poorer experiences of health, education and criminal justice. These disparities need to be urgently tackled if the WMCA is to deliver on our aims of 'levelling up' the West Midlands and ensuring that everyone can share in the region's success.
- 2.3 Since the launch of the Taskforce, data published from the UK Census 2021 has found that of the 2.9 million people who live in the West Midlands metropolitan area, around 1.3 million did not identify as being from a White British background. This means that around 45 percent of our residents may experience race inequality and reinforces the need for action.

## **3. Launch and early activity of the Taskforce**

- 3.1 The Taskforce is an independent group that brings together a wide range of people and partners from across the West Midlands to find new and sustainable ways to tackle race disparities. It launched in April 2022 following the appointment of its Independent Chair and membership.

- 3.2 The Independent Chair of the Taskforce is Yetunde Dania, who is a solicitor, Partner and Head of the Birmingham Office at international law firm Trower and Hamlins LLP. The Taskforce is made up of around 30 strategic leaders from different sectors, places and communities across the West Midlands. Half of the Taskforce's membership are independent and were appointed through an open recruitment process. Senior leaders from regional partners, such as local authorities, the Department of Work and Pensions and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, who are leading the Taskforce's activity on criminal justice, represent the second half of the Taskforce membership. Their support and insights have and will continue to be instrumental in ensuring that the Taskforce adds value to existing activity, responds to local priorities and can connect with opportunities to make a tangible impact. The Taskforce is also supported by additional 'subject matter experts' who play a vital role in supporting the Taskforce's action plan. There will be new opportunities for partners to get involved as the Taskforce moves towards delivery.
- 3.3 The Taskforce is focused on action and will continuously learn. It has already started to make an impact while developing its strategy, which has been included as **Appendix A**. This is part of the 'social innovation' approach that is being taken with the guidance of our partners, The Young Foundation.
- 3.4 Early activity of the Taskforce has included to:
- Influence the region's response to Levelling Up and the Trailblazer Devolution Deal. This includes securing a commitment to prioritise inclusion and community engagement in the design of successful proposals.
  - Review the independent baseline report on race disparities that was produced by The Equal Group (included as Appendix B).
  - Deliver 5 workshops to explore its priority areas, and participate in workshops with the West Midlands Mental Health Commission.
  - Hold a community listening event, to ensure its strategy is shaped by lived experience (included as Appendix C).
  - Develop a 3-5 year strategy to set out the Taskforce's direction of travel in addressing race inequality in the West Midlands (included as Appendix A).

#### 4. Independent strategy

4.1 The Taskforce was established with a vision that ‘in the West Midlands, race, ethnicity and heritage should never be obstacles to having a fair start in life or the opportunity to reach your full potential and flourish.’ Its independent strategy sets out the change that the Taskforce want to enable, influence and mobilise over the next 5 years to make a lasting impact on a regional scale.

4.2 The Taskforce’s strategy outlines how the Taskforce plan to bring together a wide range of partners to tackle race inequality across the whole of the West Midlands. It identifies 5 ‘thematic action areas’ where the Taskforce want to find new ways to address disparities and improve opportunities for all communities. These are policy areas where the WMCA and its partners have the most potential to make an impact. In addition to these 5 areas, the Taskforce has also identified 3 ‘cross-cutting priorities’ and 3 ‘guiding principles’ that will be important for unlocking change. These are:

5 thematic action areas	3 cross cutting priorities	3 guiding principles
Jobs, living standards, skills and education. Health and wellbeing. Housing and homelessness. Transport. Criminal Justice.	Improving data and evidence on race inequality. Advancing diversity in leadership. Building cultural intelligence.	Valuing coproduction. Taking an intersectional approach. Building trust with and in communities.

4.3 Partnerships are central to the Taskforce’s strategy. The Taskforce recognise that it cannot work on its own, and that its role will not be to deliver new projects that are separate from existing activity. Instead, the Taskforce will focus on challenging and supporting other organisations to improve the way they work, so that public services, businesses and communities are all doing more to shift the dial on race inequality. This is outlined in the Taskforce’s ‘social innovation spiral’ which describes the steps that the Taskforce plan to take to enable, influence and mobilise lasting change.

4.4 To bring its strategy to life, the Taskforce has identified a number of ‘priorities for action’, which it believes are the next steps for addressing race inequality across the region. These ideas have been developed through the Taskforce’s own activity, its community listening event and workshops with public service leaders. The Taskforce recognise that this set of actions may need to be updated to make sure that everyone is working on the right challenges with the right people in the right way to make collective change.

Theme / mission	Priorities for action
<p>'Remove barriers and build inclusive <b>jobs, skills and education</b> pathways that support people into meaningful careers and better living standards.'</p>	<p>Develop targeted jobs and careers pathways.</p> <p>Invest in community innovation hubs to connect people to high growth sectors.</p> <p>Create a task and finish group to tackle underemployment.</p> <p>Shape what 'good work' looks like.</p> <p>Promote cultural intelligence in schools.</p>
<p>Champion culturally intelligent <b>health and wellbeing</b> practices</p>	<p>Engage with health partners to understand existing activity and where further action can be taken, e.g., around improving maternal care and Integrated Care System equalities strategy.</p> <p>Support regional health literacy to help communities navigate support.</p> <p>Take forward action in Mental Health, through reviewing services and creating a community campaign.</p> <p>Support activity to encourage healthier behaviours, such as developing culturally appropriate health incentives.</p> <p>Contribute to the Taskforce's cross cutting priorities around building cultural intelligence resources and exploring the potential of a West Midlands ethnicity data standard.</p>
<p>Listen to communities to develop equitable access to <b>housing</b> choices and build homes and neighbourhoods that enable people to flourish.</p>	<p>Develop a culturally sensitive resource to help communities navigate housing choices.</p> <p>Explore the value of regional guidance on social housing allocations.</p> <p>Investigate race inequality in homelessness, with the WMCA Homelessness Taskforce.</p> <p>Identify opportunities to increase the supply of homes that meet the needs of racialized communities.</p> <p>Explore the potential to use the West Midlands Design Charter to address race inequality.</p> <p>Identify and leverage opportunities to take action on race disparities in housing.</p>

<p>Connect lives through a sustainable and accessible <b>transport</b> network.</p>	<p>Strengthen equality and community voice within decision making.</p> <p>Explore how race-based budgeting could work in transport across our region.</p> <p>Experiment with better transport for all, by testing ways to improve travel for racialised communities.</p>
<p>Level the scales of justice and create a fairer <b>criminal justice</b> system that actively considers race and makes every community feel safe.</p>	<p>Strengthen equality impact assessments with community voice.</p> <p>Help to build trust in the justice system.</p> <p>Track and tackle disproportionality in youth justice.</p> <p>Improve data sharing to drive action.</p> <p>Implement race recommendations.</p> <p>Prevent race related hate crime.</p> <p>Target efforts to reduce reoffending.</p>
<p>Cross cutting priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Data and evidence</li> <li>- Leadership diversity</li> <li>- Cultural intelligence</li> </ul>	<p>Develop more consistent, granular and intersectional <b>data</b> on race inequalities and deepen our understanding of what works for racialized communities.</p> <p>Build and <b>diversify leadership</b> capabilities across the West Midlands, so that communities are represented in power and therefore feel more empowered.</p> <p>Build cultural <b>intelligence</b> to improve the system's ability to understand and actively think about cultural differences, so that their decisions and activity work for racialized communities.</p>

## 5. Next steps towards delivery

- 5.1 The Taskforce's independent strategy is a call to action for the whole West Midlands. Next steps will concentrate on securing support from a wide range of partners and organisations to deliver change, and the Taskforce will regularly monitor, review and update its action plans and progress.
- 5.2 To fast track next steps, the Taskforce have participated in an action planning workshop with the Combined Authority's Executive Board on 15 February 2023. This was used to identify where the Combined Authority (as an organisation) can commit to taking action towards the delivery of the Taskforce's strategy in the next 12 months, and where the Taskforce needs to engage with other partners. Commitments have been identified across Jobs and Skills, Housing,

Transport, data, leadership diversity and cultural intelligence, and will be refined to form an action plan.

5.3 Other workstreams are being taken forward in different ways, for example:

- Criminal Justice: this workstream will continue to be led by the West Midlands Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, who will convene a workshop with system partners to shape next steps.
- Health and Wellbeing: the Combined Authority's wellbeing team will take a joined-up approach to bringing recommendations from the independent Race Equalities Taskforce, independent Mental Health Commission and WMCA supported Health of the Region activity to partners across the health system.
- Homelessness: the Chair and members of the Taskforce met with the Independent Chair and Members Advisory Group Chair of the WMCA Homelessness Taskforce to explore the potential for joint work. Officers will prepare potential options to share with the Taskforces.
- Cultural Intelligence: the Taskforce and Combined Authority's activity towards this workstream will be to support Birmingham City Council's Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review programme.

## **6. Asks of the WMCA Board and other partners**

6.1 The Taskforce are clear that they cannot tackle race inequality alone, and that their strategy aims to outline a vision for the whole WMCA (as a region and regional partnership). Members of the WMCA Board are asked to:

- Endorse the development and principle of the Taskforce's strategy.
- Provide a response from their authority to the Taskforce's independent strategy. The Taskforce would particularly welcome offers from partners to support or take leadership of different priorities within their strategy.
- Continue to actively support the Taskforce. This includes continuing to participate in activity through their nominated member on the Taskforce, 'subject matter experts' and elected representative on the Members Advisory Group.
- Collectively commit to more deliberately addressing race inequality through WMCA policy, delivery and devolution activity.
- Reflect and share learnings on how their authority can better contribute to the mission of addressing race inequalities.

- 6.2 When establishing the Taskforce, the WMCA Board agreed it should be guided by a 'Members Advisory Group' (MAG) of elected members. This follows the successful model of the WMCA Homelessness Taskforce, which has a proactive MAG who play a vital role in connecting it to local activity and 'unblocking' barriers to change. Members of the WMCA Board will be asked to nominate members of their cabinets to join the Taskforce's MAG. The Taskforce will also welcome additional nominations of members from underrepresented groups, to help advance leadership diversity, and look to connect the MAG with other WMCA advisory and decision making bodies.

## **7. Financial implications**

- 7.1 This report does not seek additional resources to support Taskforce activity beyond the funding already approved for 2023/24.
- 7.2 The Taskforce recognises that its role is not to deliver new or independent activity but rather help the WMCA, its partners and other organisations to reposition and improve their existing work. As such, it is anticipated that much of the Taskforce's activity will be delivered through existing programmes and capacity. The Taskforce may additionally develop business cases or seek external funding for proof of concept activity in the future, as its work matures.

## **8. Legal Implications**

- 8.1 There are no immediate legal implications from this report. However, it is essential that the WMCA continues to meet the Equalities Act legislation and the Taskforce may offer additional support and challenge in ensuring best practice towards this duty.

## **9 Equalities implications**

- 9.1 The establishment of the Taskforce and the development of its independent strategy is intended to make a positive (indirect) impact on racialised communities across the West Midlands, by supporting and challenging the Combined Authority and other organisations to more actively tackle race inequality through their work. Within their strategy, the Taskforce recognise the importance of building a more granular and intersectional understanding of race disparities, and the value of coproducing activity with communities. This evidence-based approach and commitment to coproduction needs to guide the design of different activities that result from this strategy. It is recommended that separate Health and Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken for the Taskforce's future projects.



## **10. Inclusive Growth Implications**

- 10.1 Inclusive Growth is about making sure that improvements in our economy benefit all of our communities. The Taskforce will help to strengthen and deliver on the 'equality' and 'power, influence and participation' fundamentals of the Inclusive Growth Framework, by encouraging the WMCA's delivery directorates to actively address inequality and include community voice within decision making, as highlighted in paragraphs 4.2 and 4.4. A good example of this is how the Taskforce's and Inclusive Growth considerations will be built into the design of Trailblazer Devolution Deal activity. Looking ahead, the Taskforce's focus on the need for more granular data may also be explored within the WMCA's Inclusive Growth work, for example, ensuring that race inequalities are measured through the region's outcomes framework, which is aligned to the Inclusive Growth fundamentals.

## **11. Background papers and appendices**

'Race Equalities Taskforce', report to the WMCA Board, 23 July 2021.

Appendix A: West Midlands Race Equalities Taskforce – Independent Strategy.

Additional appendices, available on request:

- 'Listening Together', West Midlands Race Equalities Taskforce community listening event, 2022. This report will later be published online at: <https://www.wmca.org.uk/LTWRET>
- 'Rapid Baseline Report for Racial Inequalities', independent paper by The Equal Group, 2022. Available on request.