



Minutes

Title of meeting	Windrush Cross-Government Working Group Meeting		
Date	20 th September 2023	Time	12:00-13:30
Venue	2 Marsham Street		
Chair	Home Secretary, Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP and Bishop Derek Webley OBE DL	Secretary	Stacie Rogers
		Copies to	Members of the Cross-Government Working Group

Welcome and opening remarks

1. The Home Secretary welcomed attendees to the final meeting of this working group which follows the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the HMT Empire Windrush. The Home Secretary underlined that the meeting provides an opportunity to look back on how this important anniversary had been marked, as well as to review progress of delivering the Wendy Williams Lessons Learned Review (WWLLR).
2. She stated the Group has been pivotal to shape, challenge, and improve how the Home Office had implemented those lessons and that the Department would continue to drive changes, including a cultural change working towards a Home Office that is progressive, inclusive, efficient and outcome focused. The Home Secretary expressed pride in what has been achieved and reflected that there is still more work to be done.
3. The Home Secretary put on record her thanks to Bishop Webley for his excellent continued work, stewardship, and representation. She also expressed thanks to the Group and her interest in continuing relationships.
4. Bishop Webley added the meeting offers an opportunity to celebrate the remarkable contribution of the Windrush generation, to look back on how far we've come, the lessons that have been learned and to look to the future.
5. Bishop Webley extended his thanks to the Home Secretary and to the dedication of the Group, noting that they have worked tirelessly to ensure progress.

Feedback on Windrush 75 events

6. The Home Secretary outlined that a great set of events took place, including a reception at No.10.
7. **Home Office** – Gabi Monk began by quoting Lord Murray from the Windrush 75 debate he led in the House of Lords on 7 July 2023 highlighting that “The Windrush generation and its children and grandchildren have enhanced and enriched our society in myriad ways.” Gabi Monk added that the Home Office worked hard to strike a balance between formal set pieces and events that truly reflected the amazing contributions to society. Events included championing diversity, understanding individual contributions, celebrating vibrant history and traditions, as well as reflecting on influences to culture, including arts, food and music.
8. **Department for Work & Pensions** – Simon Townsend updated that a series of events were held, which welcomed colleagues from other Government departments, with colleagues’ experiences and stories also shared on their intranet. The Department is building from this work with activities set to mark Black History Month.
9. **Ministry of Defence** – Air Commodore Wendy Rothery said that she believed that The Department had met their aims of both suitably commemorating the huge sacrifices of the Windrush Generation, and also inspiring future generations to consider the Armed Forces as a career choice. The Air Commodore shared that the Department had taken a twin track approach, which was both commemorating and inspiring. There were several events held which were successful, including a gala dinner and commemoration event which tied in with Armed Forces Week and Veteran's Day. The funeral earlier this year of Flight Sergeant Philip Brown, the last surviving Caribbean veteran of WWI had served to highlight the enormous sacrifice made by Caribbean people, and those from across the Commonwealth, in support of a war of national survival.
10. **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office** – Scott Adams shared two main strands to their approach: communicating appreciation for the contributions of the Windrush generation, and engaging communications overseas. The department will use its platform in Kingston to continue a programme of radio and newspaper adverts, to locate and inform remaining affected persons in Jamaica. A blog was also published on the intranet, which included reporting on work done to address barriers ethnic minorities face in the UK.
11. **Cabinet Office** – Dominic Smales highlighted work on advising on the implementation of recommendations and supporting improvements to the Compensation Scheme. In addition, a communications campaign which included social media videos speaking to the contributions of the Windrush communities and representing their views, which Duwayne Brooks had been closely involved with.
12. Secretary’s note: **Department for Levelling up Housing and Communities (DLUHC)** were not represented in person, though sent a written update that was shared with the meeting. Five iterations of the Windrush Day Grant Scheme had been delivered since 2019 with over 200 projects supported. This year £750,000 had been specially awarded to 45 community groups, local authorities and charities to coincide with the Windrush 75 celebrations. DLUHC had this year also allocated £50,000 to develop an educational component for the National Windrush Monument website. A further £12,000 in funding had been allocated to charitable organisation

Speakers for Schools designed to help young people understand the impact that the Windrush Generation has had on the UK. DLUHC confirmed that they would continue to deliver Windrush Day celebrations beyond the 75th anniversary.

Home Office media activity

13. The Home Secretary noted the Department's ongoing commitment to ensure positive news stories are shared widely to reflect the tangible progress made, though recognised the media narrative is still a challenge.
14. Hannah Franke-Seaton (Head of Media, Safe and Legal Migration) updated on the WR75 communications strategy focused on encouraging balance in the media coverage. Key successes were the Sheffield Windrush Compensation Scheme media visits. Following this, the Guardian had published a balanced piece. A background briefing with the Times was also arranged, which further added balance. Hannah expressed the importance of engaging with media outlets, to ensure understanding of progress.
15. Hannah noted work on identifying positive case studies to be used in the media, of three potential claimants, one had been spoken with by the Guardian. Hannah expressed the need to review process to see if it's the best way to get across our messaging.

Future planning and embedding lessons learned

16. **Home Office** - Jason Dewhurst (Director Home Office Science, responsible for Windrush Business of State Team) outlined that the Business of State Team sits in an ideal position, allowing for interaction with the Home Office 'Missions' and 'Capabilities'.
17. He noted the Home Secretary spoke of values which are important to embed and explained the Group has been key to enabling a continuous evidence-based feedback loop.
18. Jason spoke of future priorities to ensure that correct governance and ethical decision frameworks and structures are in place to continue to hold the Home Office to account. He added that although formal structures of the Group will end, the relationships will not. He continued that we will bring in the voices we need, maintaining rich and powerful conversations both at senior level and across teams.
19. Jason added progress can be measured in business units and KPI's. Additionally, utilising existing governance structures with the Permanent Secretary to ensure accountability.
20. Blondel Cluff responded that a crucial KPI would be satisfaction of the public to avoid division between public perception and HO successes. Gabi Monk agreed to take the suggestion away.
21. **Department for Work & Pensions** - Simon Townsend provided updates on the Department's race plan, including ensuring inclusive recruitment processes, developing the workforce, and strengthening leadership behaviours.

22. **Ministry of Defence** - Air Commodore Wendy Rothery added that the Ministry of Defence have published a Race Action Plan and have developed KPI's around recruitment.
23. **Cabinet Office** - Dominic Smales shared that they are due to publish the second report of their written action plan by March/April 24.
24. **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office** - Scott Adams updated that there is a current focus on three key areas - promotion and progression, employee experience and culture alongside finding remaining victims.
25. **Open discussion** - Blondel Cluff raised a concern that certain countries had not been receiving pension inflation uplifts and emphasised the importance of a cross-government approach. Simon Townsend agreed to relay and discuss with colleagues. Hannah Franke-Seaton will also consider from a communications approach.
26. Bishop Webley added that mental health challenges are gaining momentum due to the impact on individuals and that a proactive response is important. Nigel Hills outlined that the Compensation Scheme has the dedicated Vulnerable Persons and Complex Team which offer signposting to critical services, and post award calls to offer financial and emotional support. The teams do not offer wider counselling or mental health services. Nigel added the Scheme has worked with the Samaritans to train staff, recognising that more can be done.
27. Bishop Webley expressed that there are individuals in the community who can be of great value to the Home Office. He added we have a duty of care to those who have raised the issue. He emphasised we should not be solely reactive and make efforts to see what can be done.
28. Lord Murray assured that the Scheme is addressing the issue in two ways, through training for caseworkers to appreciate the impacts of trauma on individuals, together with active engagement with stakeholders and community groups.

Update on the Windrush Schemes

29. The Home Secretary expressed her commitment to continue support to individuals through the Schemes. She noted that she is pleased with the increase in the number of claims decided following the surge in caseworkers, as well as the significant reduction in time to allocate claims for a substantive casework consideration. The Home Secretary reaffirmed her absolute focus on ensuring that every individual who applies to the Windrush Compensation Scheme would receive the compensation to which they are entitled, as quickly as possible.
30. Nigel Hills updated on the latest figures to the Windrush Schemes, over 16,400 individuals had been issued with documents and over £67 million had been paid to claimants. He added 72% of claims have now had a final decision. The Scheme had also significantly reduced the period claimants await allocation to a substantive caseworker from 18 months to 4 months.
31. Paulette Simpson highlighted the importance that the public is aware of progress and suggested a focus on the accessibility of processes within the Schemes, and

highlighting wider improvements. She added the Windrush Day Grant Scheme 2024 is approved and should go live end- October.

32. Nigel Hills updated on customer support and engagement efforts, including an outreach event he had attended in Birmingham accompanied by Martin Levermore with around 160 attendees, and an event in Wolverhampton which had been attended by MP Jane Stevenson. Nigel underlined the importance of forward-facing contact, which enabled individuals to see that teams are people who care, not just a faceless Home Office. Events had been designed to raise awareness and to demonstrate that individuals can talk to us about their experiences and accessing the Scheme.
33. Nigel Hills provided a further update on stakeholder relationships. These have improved significantly with many groups and have allowed for some difficult but constructive conversations which had both shape and improved policy and processes.
34. **Open discussion** - Kunle Olulode alluded to the continued calls to remove the Compensation Scheme from the Home Office. He stated that to address media perceptions there is more to be done around sharing numbers, time frames and processes. He stressed that the data needs to be part of a continuing media campaign. Nigel Hills agreed that this is a fair challenge and believes the media visits to the Sheffield office are an example of some success. Nigel noted that the Scheme publishes granular data regularly, accompanied by a Fact Sheet to draw out the key elements.
35. Lord Murray stated that the Compensation Scheme will remain with the Home Office and invited Nigel to expand on the point. Nigel outlined the practical implications and challenges of removing the Scheme from the Home Office, and highlighted the positive progress that had been made. The Home Secretary added that from an accountability standpoint, the Home Office can be held to account by Parliament, public, and the press.
36. Martin Levermore noted that as the Scheme has been consolidated, confidence and trust has been built with stakeholders. He stated that it would be an undue injustice to remove it from the Home Office and underlined the importance of the consistency in the continuation of the work of the engagement team.
37. Blondel Cluff asked is there is a visual for the geographic spread for the documentation and compensation schemes, to see the concentration across various communities. Nigel Hills agreed to consider further.
38. Duwayne Brook asked about the starting and end points relating to the figure of 72% of claims having received a final decision. Gabi Monk clarified that it is a cumulative total of all the claims received that had received a final casework decision on their claim.

Community Engagement Fund and Outreach

39. The Home Secretary introduced this item by sharing that the Community Engagement Fund had been re-launched on 1st August 2023, with applications submitted by end of August.

40. Nigel Hills confirmed that a number of information sessions had been held for stakeholders, so they know what's expected, and how to apply.
41. In terms of outreach work, Nigel stated the key points had been covered in the previous item.

Windrush Working Group reflections

42. The Home Secretary noted that she had met with the Working Group 7 times since it had been established in 2020 and expressed her pride in the contributions and progress made by the Group. She recognised that the Working Group had played a pivotal role in a number of ways. These included working tirelessly to promote the Schemes in the UK and overseas, providing feedback to support the redesign of compensation claim forms and policy, and playing an instrumental role in the launch of the Community Engagement Fund.
43. The Home Secretary extended her thanks to Bishop Webley for sitting on the panel to recruit the Independent Person, officials for their ongoing work, and Lord Murray for his attention to detail.
44. Martin Levermore shared his reflections, stating that the Group had helped to bring light and shade, and without it changes may not have borne fruit. He stated that constructive listening has been evidential, and the outcomes reported are evidence of meaningful cooperation and collaboration. He added whilst there have been challenges, it had been through the diversity and clarity of thinking around the Group that had empowered bold steps to be taken on behalf our Society in correcting a 'Wrong'. He concluded that the Group had enabled knowledge exchange in a tangible and purposeful manner that exemplified the meaning of 'Seva' – 'Selfless Service' in the conduct of its business.

Final closing remarks

45. Following an invitation from Bishop Webley to members of the Working Group to share their reflections, Kunle Olulode stated that Windrush is one of the most difficult issues of British politics. He stated that the Group has demonstrated a keenness and desire to make things right and have not been overcome by negative media.
46. Paulette Simpson stated that it has been a delight to influence a process as significant as this. She reflected that the Group has been able to bring different skills and experiences to the table and have been effective in holding officials to account. Paulette added that she can see input has been valued, which is encouraging. She would like to see the work of Windrush continued in relevant territories overseas, as that appears to be a weak area.
47. Loanna Morrison reiterated her passion for ensuring effective communication and stated that she is keen to see positive messages to pre-empt negative media narratives. Loanna noted that the negative narrative is now embedded, making it much more challenging to overcome. She recommended using data and statistics to pre-empt stories, and sending out a short press release each month, so media have the facts.

48. Duwayne Brooks echoed his fellow members sentiment and offered his thanks to a range of participants, including officials and the former Home Secretary. He extended special thanks to Bishop Webley for his guidance and leadership.
49. Blondel Cluff noted that she has been a member of the Working Group from its inception. She reflected that the work of the Group does signify that change can happen, and it is an approach that should be used across Government. The work has been towards building a more equitable society, and Blondel offered her thanks to all for being included.
50. Bishop Webley reflected that the last 3 years have been challenging and expressed all had collectively worked very hard to right as many wrongs as possible in the time available. Bishop Webley put on record his thanks to the two Home Secretaries – Priti Patel and Suella Braverman for their support, and to his fellow members who had dedicated their energy, time and commitment.
51. He expressed that he is particularly proud of the time taken to celebrate the important moments and pay homage to the courage, faith and hope that each and every Windrushian demonstrated 75 years ago. He continued, the unveiling of the Windrush Monument by the (now) Prince and Princess of Wales was a special moment for all of us, not just to pay tribute to those who came before us, but also to serve as an educational and informative reminder for our children and grandchildren and all those who will come after us.
52. He added the advice and counsel the Group have given each other was invaluable to the successes we have been able to achieve, and has positively impacted the lives of many, many people.
53. Bishop Webley expressed that it had been an honor to serve on the Windrush Working Group. He concluded that although there is more to do, he trusts that the Home Office will continue the good work, and collectively we can leave knowing that things are better now than when we started.
54. The Home Secretary reflected on her own, as well as her families' personal experiences, which brought home the challenges faced by many individuals and concluded the meeting.