



Government
Equalities Office

Kemi Badenoch MP
Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury &
Minister for Equalities
Government Equalities Office
c/o Sanctuary Building
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Anil Bhanot
By email at: Anil.Bhanot@emfoundation.org.uk

Our ref: COGEO-003122

September 2020

Dear Anil,

Thank you for your letter of 16 June 2020, addressed to the Prime Minister, about equality and diversity during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am replying as the Minister for Equalities. Please accept my apologies for the delay in doing so.

In response to the concerns described in your letter, particularly concerning COVID-19 disparities, the Government's actions have included targeted testing of occupations and groups at higher risk; guidance for NHS organisations on how to enhance their existing risk assessments, particularly for potentially at-risk groups within their workforce; and translating the latest information into multiple languages and forms to meet accessibility needs.

In addition to these measures, on 4 June I announced the Government's next steps to address the disparities identified in the Public Health England (PHE) Report "COVID-19: review of disparities in risks and outcomes". I am working with the Race Disparity Unit (RDU) and the Department for Health and Social Care to carry forward this vital work.

In parallel, PHE engaged with a significant number of individuals and organisations within BAME communities to hear their views, concerns and ideas about the impact of COVID-19. This separate report, '*COVID-19: Understanding the impact on BAME communities*', was published on GOV.UK on 16 June 2020.

The recommendations from this qualitative report are being taken forward through the Terms of Reference published on 4th June. This includes steps to assess and improve the quality of data collected by ethnicity; and strengthening and improving public health communications to ensure they can reach and inform all communities across the country.

With the support of the RDU, I am also currently reviewing the effectiveness and impact of current actions being undertaken by relevant government departments and their agencies to directly lessen disparities in infection and death rates of COVID-19.

On the other issues that you raised in your letter, the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities has now been established and is examining all aspects of continuing racial and ethnic inequalities in Britain. The Commission aims to set out a new, positive agenda for change - balancing the needs of individuals, communities and society, maximising opportunities and ensuring fairness for all. It will build on the work of the Race Disparity Unit.

The Commission will carry out a deeper examination of what the causes of these disparities are, and seek to establish what works to address them effectively. The Commission is reviewing inequality in the UK, focusing on areas including education, employment, health and the criminal justice system. The Commission will look at outcomes for the whole population. The Commission is separate to the work being done to act on the coronavirus health inequalities highlighted by the PHE Report. However, the work being done to take forward the findings of that Report will feed into this Commission's work.

I hope this information is helpful.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kemi Badenoch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kemi Badenoch MP
Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury &
Minister for Equalities