



Government Equalities Office

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I am writing to you as you participated in the stakeholder engagement led by Professor Kevin Fenton that helped to inform Public Health England's work *Beyond the data: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups*.

I would like to start by thanking you for taking part in this exercise and for sharing your insights into the factors that may be influencing the relationship and impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities. If you would like to share any views on future Government engagement in this area, please contact covid.disparities@cabinetoffice.gov.uk.

As you may know, the Prime Minister and the Health Secretary asked me, as Minister for Equalities, to take forward work on this and the accompanying Public Health England review into disparities in the risks and outcomes of COVID-19, *Covid 19: review of disparities in risks and outcomes*. The terms of reference for this work can be found at www.gov.uk/government/news/next-steps-for-work-on-covid-19-disparities-announced.

I am pleased to say that work is well under way on a number of fronts. Officials in the Cabinet Office's Race Disparity Unit (RDU), which is supporting me in this work, are reviewing the current actions that other government departments and agencies are undertaking to lessen disparities in infection and death rates of COVID-19. They are also ensuring that guidance on COVID risks reflects the findings of the PHE review.

The RDU is working closely with colleagues in the Office for National Statistics and the Department of Health and Social Care and others to consider these gaps and how they might be closed. To inform this, I have asked the RDU to explore the availability of data on a series of likely risk factors including occupation, comorbidities, disability, housing conditions, household size/structure, and air quality. The RDU is also engaging with academics to understand more about their future work and how it can fill the existing data gaps. This includes the six new projects to improve our understanding of the links between COVID-19 and ethnicity, which have just received funding from the National Institute for Health Research and UK Research and Innovation.

There are two ways in which I would be particularly grateful for your support going forward:

- First, **I am keen to establish a network of stakeholders that I can communicate with directly**, not only to keep you informed of progress but also to gain further insights into the actions we should be taking to address the disparities identified by the PHE Review. This may take the form of roundtables or less formal means of engagement.
- Second, I have asked officials to be as innovative as they can in communicating important public health messages to all. We have been utilising a broad mix of media outlets, partnering with well-known personalities and those with strong networks and translating content into community languages among other initiatives, to help reach diverse communities, but **I would be grateful for insight into how we could further improve communications.**

If you would like to participate in further engagement, you have any thoughts on how we can further target our communications to reach all groups in our local communities, or are otherwise able to assist in disseminating this vitally important public health messaging to local networks you may have access to, I would encourage you to contact covid.disparities@cabinetoffice.gov.uk. I would be very interested to hear from you.

Kind regards,



**Kemi Badenoch MP
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