

Government must act now to protect deprived areas with “community shields”



1 May 2020

The Green Party has urged the government to protect the poorest areas of the country through a strategy of “test, trace and isolate” to stop the spread of coronavirus.

Responding to the latest Office for National Statistics figures, which shows Covid-19 deaths are twice as high in the most deprived parts of England and Wales [1], the Greens have said it is vital to develop a network of community-based protection schemes, or “community shields”, to detect, test, isolate and treat every case and trace every contact. [2]

Green Party deputy leader Amelia Womack said:

“The latest figures from the ONS are an awful reminder of the impact of inequality in our society and comes on top of shocking data on the high proportion of health and care workers who have died coming from BAME communities.

“We have seen in other countries how effective a strategy based on testing, isolating and tracing contacts can be and it is not too late for the UK government to adopt this policy also.

“We have set out a comprehensive plan for how this can be achieved, in line with the World Health Organisation’s recommendations. The government has already squandered vital time and it would be criminally negligent if this error was compounded by not following the best advice.

“We need to prepare now to have the proper structures in place before we see any lifting of the lockdown and these efforts must be focused in the communities that need it most.”

Notes

1

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-death-rate-uk-deprived-inequality-ons-latest-a9493716.html>

2

These “shields”, coordinated by Public Health England’s regional Outbreak Management Teams, would use systems including the NHS 111 phone service, GP surgeries and local authority public health teams to identify those with

symptoms, arrange for their testing and then trace all their contacts in order to stamp out outbreaks of the virus in the communities where it's happening.

<https://coronavirus.greenparty.org.uk/>

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