

Next steps for work on COVID-19 disparities announced

News story

Following the release of the Public Health England review into disparities in the risks and outcomes of COVID-19, the Government's Equality Hub is today (4th June 2020) setting out how this work will be taken forward.



The work will be led by the Equalities Minister, Kemi Badenoch, and supported by other government departments and agencies.

Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch, said:

“This government is rightly taking seriously the initial findings from the PHE report published earlier this week. However, it is also clear that much more needs to be done to understand the key drivers of the disparities identified and the relationships between the different risk factors.

“That is why I am now taking this work forward, which will enable us to make a real difference to people's lives and protect our communities from the impact of the coronavirus.”

The full terms of reference for this work will be as follows:

- Review 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. Factors to be considered – but aren't limited to – should include age and sex, occupation, obesity, comorbidities, geography, and ethnicity;
- Modifications to existing, or development of new policy, should be considered and discussed with the relevant Ministers responsible. This ongoing work will include looking at the extensive guidance that is already currently available;
- Commission further data, research and analytical work by the Equality Hub to clarify the scale, and drivers, of the gaps in evidence highlighted by the Report;

- Consider where and how the collection and quality of data into the disparities highlighted can be improved on, and take action to do so, working with the Equality Hub, government departments and their agencies;
- Lead engagement on the disparities highlighted with Departmental Ministers;
- Build on and expand the stakeholder engagement undertaken by PHE, to consolidate and develop the qualitative insights gained and how they may support further actions that should be taken to address the disparities highlighted;
- Strengthen and improve public health communications to ensure they can reach all communities across the country;
- Provide quarterly updates to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on progress being made to address health inequalities by departments and their agencies.

Earlier today, the Minister for Equalities answered an Urgent Question in the House of Commons before answering detailed questions from members on a range of issues related to the PHE review.

Further Information:

- To support the Minister for Equalities in fulfilling these Terms of Reference, the Race Disparity Unit in the Equalities Hub (Cabinet Office) will work with MfE directly. They will be supported by officials in PHE and other departments or agencies as relevant to take this forward.
- The Equality Hub sits in the Cabinet Office and is made up of officials working for the Government Equalities Office, Race Disparity Unit and Disability Unit
- The full PHE review can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-review-of-disparities-in-risks-and-outcomes>

Published 4 June 2020