

Sadiq Khan  
Mayor of London

Sent via email

Thursday 04 June 2020

Dear Sadiq,

Following my letter on 12 May, I am writing to respond to your request that the Equality and Human Rights Commission uses its powers to address the race disadvantages highlighted and exacerbated by coronavirus (COVID-19).

We agree that coronavirus has shone a strong light on long-standing inequalities experienced by many people with protected characteristics, especially those from ethnic minorities, and that there now exists a once in a generation opportunity to begin to address these issues. I am pleased to confirm that our Board is keen to use the full range of our powers to highlight and address these issues, including at least the following:

1. We responded to the Public Health England review, which as you know has now confirmed the disproportionate impact of coronavirus on ethnic minorities, by arguing that the broader structural inequalities contributing

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to these losses can no longer be ignored.

2. We are using our established framework for measuring equality and human rights progress to develop an independent, evidence-based assessment of how coronavirus has deepened entrenched inequalities. We intend to publish this later in the year to highlight the cumulative effects on certain groups, including ethnic minorities, and to develop clear and evidence-based calls for further action.
3. We have been active across a range of issues that have emerged during the pandemic, which are of particular concern to ethnic minorities. This has included working with Ofqual on ensuring some young people are not further disadvantaged by predicted examination grades and with the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on ensuring a proper equality impact assessment of its return to work guidance and other employment policy. We are also examining whether we should bring, or intervene in, any relevant cases in respect of unlawful activity under the Equality Act.
4. We have made a robust series of policy recommendations to the Women and Equalities Committee, and other select committee inquiries into the pandemic, to address emerging concerns on the disproportionate effect of coronavirus on ethnic minorities. We will use our next shadow report on the UK's compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) as an opportunity to bring all of these

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recommendations together.

5. Finally, we believe that we must also look beyond the immediate crisis and take steps to ensure that the entrenched inequality faced by ethnic minorities is addressed meaningfully as we rebuild. We will prioritise the systemic issues already identified in our existing 'Roadmap to Race Equality' by:
  - a. Continuing to support the calls made by Lord Woolley for a coherent post-coronavirus Government race equality strategy.
  - b. Launching a statutory inquiry into one area of key areas identified in our Roadmap. We are in the process of scoping this inquiry, including by convening a meeting with race equality leaders to discuss our proposals and secure relevant intelligence to enable us to prioritise and inform it.

I would be very happy to keep you updated on progress and to meet if you would find it helpful to understand the steps we intend to take to address our shared concerns. My office can be contacted via Alix Luddington ([Alix.Luddington@equalityhumanrights.com](mailto:Alix.Luddington@equalityhumanrights.com)).

Yours sincerely,



David Isaac, Chair

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