



16 May 2020

Dear Friends and Fellow Citizens

The Effect of Covid-19 on Black and Minority Ethnic Communities

A recent report from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has made it clear that people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds are much more likely to die from the coronavirus than white people.

The Government has opened an Inquiry into this matter and the Labour Party has initiated a Review under Baroness Doreen Lawrence. We will be feeding into the Government Inquiry and the Labour Party Review.

Meanwhile, we have been listening to friends and colleagues from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities and our priority is to ensure that their voices are heard. I am writing to you today, to highlight a few of the concerns that they have raised with us.

1. Understanding the Complex Issues

This is a multi-faceted problem. No single issue should be overplayed or underplayed. While geography, age, gender and underlying conditions each has its place, there are other factors like poverty, housing, and employment which contribute to the vulnerability of Black and Minority Ethnic Communities. We must seek to understand this complexity, including:

a). Black and Minority Ethnic groups are more likely to be employed as essential workers such as bus drivers, care workers, shop workers, cleaners, nurses, etc. They tend to work in jobs that take care of others - a vocation rather than just a job. However, these are often low-paid jobs, which then mean poorer living conditions. Why are more black people in these jobs and what can we do to improve their pay and living conditions? How do we address the wider inequalities in the population?

b). Knowing that Black and Minority Ethnic people are among those more vulnerable to Covid-19, why were they not given priority testing, why were they not moved from frontline jobs especially where there was poor/no PPE? Many work in Care Homes without proper preparation and too often without PPE.

c) How can we support families and those with post-traumatic stress - eg those who have witnessed people dying of Covid-19 and also those who have not been free to have the normal funeral services with the support of church families.

2. A Multi-Faceted Action Plan

Research will be of greater value if it is accompanied by well thought through and well planned strategies. We need a comprehensive Action Plan, which clearly states how things will be done, where and when.

a). In the short term, we must support Black and Minority Ethnic people who are in situations that make them particularly vulnerable.

b). Longer term, we must act to improve the fundamental inequality experienced by many in our Black and Minority Ethnic communities: income, education, housing, employment, etc must be prioritised.

We would like to see an Action Plan with structures and strategies that are timed and fully funded with qualified personnel. Whilst not set in stone, we would not want this to be simply a paper exercise that collects dust on a government shelf.

3. Bringing about fundamental Change

If we genuinely believe in improving the socio-economic conditions of all these citizens, then experts should be employed to monitor the Action Plan and make any necessary adjustments if, when and where required. Regular reports should be sent to a responsible Minister within Government. Results should be published.

As society tries to address these important issues, we in CARJ intend to continue listening to Black and Minority Ethnic Communities and to make every effort to ensure that their voices are heard. We hope you will use any influence you have to ensure that these issues are seriously addressed by Government and others.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Yogi Sutton
Chair of CARJ