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**COVID OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

**24 September 2020**

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**DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTED GROUPS**

**PAPER FROM THE SRO ON DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTED GROUPS AND  
THE COVID-19 TASKFORCE**

1. Certain groups have been disproportionately adversely impacted by COVID-19. These groups include Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups, older people, and disabled people.<sup>1</sup> Preventing transmission of COVID-19 to and within these groups is critical to preventing the spread of the virus both within communities at increased risk, and in the general population.<sup>2</sup> This paper makes pressing recommendations to prevent transmission and reduce mortality among those that have been disproportionately adversely impacted by COVID-19. **Urgent action is needed to prevent the same issues being replicated that we are facing a second wave of infections.**
2. **The data at Annex A shows that ethnic minorities, disabled people, older people and men are at greater risk of contracting, and dying from, COVID-19.** It also shows that young people, women, ethnic minorities and single parents are disproportionately likely to suffer long-term adverse impacts from the measures taken to control COVID-19, including poor mental health. Indeed, Government data shows that between March and May ethnic minorities were issued with fixed penalty notices at a rate of 1.6 times higher than white people at a national level. Despite Home Office work with police councils to reduce disproportionate impacts, we must recognise that as Police engagement and enforcement will often be directed towards the most impacted communities, there

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, older people have been disproportionately subject to shielding; minority groups and disabled people have disproportionately lost their jobs.

<sup>2</sup> Epidemics including TB, HIV and Ebola have disproportionately affected, and disproportionately become entrenched in, vulnerable and marginalised communities.

may be a disproportionate impact on those groups most at risk from the virus.

- 3. The recommendations in this paper would augment and complement the work led by the Minister for Equalities in relation to COVID-19 disparities for BAME groups<sup>3</sup> (commissioned following the Public Health England report published in early June), and address issues outside the remit of that work.**

It will also augment the work that the Paymaster General and the Minister for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health are doing to co-chair a task and finish group to develop a wide, long-term cross-government action plan to prevent, mitigate and respond to the mental health impacts of COVID-19. The Minister for Equalities will shortly submit her first quarterly progress report to the Prime Minister. She is likely to make a number of recommendations including: the need for departments to develop new interventions to address COVID-19 disparities and put in place systems for monitoring the effectiveness of these interventions; and further efforts to improve public health communication, including targeting harder to reach groups. Continuing to collect, analyse and share evidence will be vital to achieve these recommendations, as well as developing a greater understanding of the causes behind these disparities. As departments progress this work, and our understanding of the issues and the policy responses needed develops, we will update and bring recommendations to this Committee.

- 4. Work is occurring across Government on these issues, but there is much more to be done.** Key existing initiatives include the work led by the Chief Medical Officer to develop a clinical predictive risk tool that takes indicators like age, sex, BMI, ethnicity and certain co-morbidities to provide individuals with an assessment of personal risk; asymptomatic testing of people in disproportionately impacted groups to allow earlier identification of potential outbreaks; and ongoing pilots led by NHS Test and Trace to directly or indirectly address the increased risk faced by vulnerable communities from COVID-19. In addition, we have established the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership, which

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<sup>3</sup> The Race Disparity Unit is working closely with academics, scientists and analysts to establish emerging data patterns and trends in regards to the impact of COVID-19 on ethnic minority communities.