

Disproportionate impacts of covid on disabled people

Directors meeting, Friday 30 October (11-12), MS teams

Overview

1. You are attending this Director level meeting from OGDs. NR (MHCLG) is in the chair (in Emran Mian's absence). This note includes suggested things to say / push for in this initial meeting.
2. Other confirmed OGD attendees include Angus Gray (DWP) either Antonia Williams or Fiona Walshe (DHSC) and Lorna Gratton (DCMS). All are aware of the CDL letter, how the meeting will be framed by that and of the products required for subsequent covid O meeting (data deck illustrating differential impacts and policy proposal paper).

Purpose

3. The purpose is to discuss (i) data HMG has on disability and COVID-19, and then to (ii) consider interventions that HMG could seek to implement xGovernment to tackle the disproportionate impacts COVID-19 has on disabled people.
4. This follows a steer from the Prime Minister for much greater ambition from this work, and subsequent commissions from Emran Mian (Senior Responsible Officer for Disproportionately Impacted Groups across Whitehall) and a letter from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (see annex A and B respectively).

DU proposals

5. You are invited to outline several possible Disability Unit led proposals on
 - **data** (more detailed commission to understand factors driving increased mortality risk - improving on data collected by the ONS),
 - **engaging disabled people** impacted by COVID to improve our interventions (a National Panel of disabled people to influence HMG COVID policy)
 - **improving communications to disabled people across all of our messaging and guidance from HMG** (an HMG focal point tasked with dissemination of relevant guidance, in situ BSL interpretation at Prime Ministerial 'addresses to the nation' a Covid guidance repository with pop-up BSL interpretation via 'Signly' on .gov)
 - **improving digital accessibility** for disabled people (an assistive tech centre).

Data

6. The ONS have analysed deaths by disability status and published a series of social impact reviews focussing on how the pandemic is affecting an estimated 13.7 million disabled people across the UK. All confirm that disabled adults' experience was quite different:

- Whether there is plan for how these say care centres can continue to be delivered and adapt to Covid pressures – these needs resource, flexibility of commission and financing (as well as access to PPE and testing as above). Current guidance hasn't been clear and resources not available.
- If the pilot of using 250,000 clear masks within NHS trusts and social care providers across the UK is delivering promising results, is there a potential to scale these as part of the covid O response?

Annex A: Emran Mian commission

Dear colleagues

While the immediate focus is on the impacts experienced by ethnic minorities, in the discussion with the PM we committed to future work on impacts experienced by other groups, as well as longer-term impacts. To set up this next phase of work CDL and the Minister for Disabled People have asked for action on the issues below. **We will set up a meeting in w/c 19 October with key departments. It would be helpful if you could consider these questions, alongside other areas to prioritise, in advance of our discussion.**

- **Data:** Improving data collected on disabled people by ONS, which should include a breakdown of types of impairment associated with
 - o an increased risk of infection from COVID-19 and
 - o an increase in the risk of poorer outcomes from COVID-19 (e.g. death). (DU / DHSC)
- **Engaging disabled people** and other affected groups impacted by COVID to improve our interventions. (DU/CO)
- **Reviewing and improving communications** to disabled people across all of our messaging and guidance from HMG. (DU/ DHSC / DfT / CO COVID comms team).
- **Improving digital accessibility** for disabled people. We know that disabled adults are less likely than the rest of the population to have access to the internet. (DU / DCMS)
- Providing a package of **financial support** to address the disproportionate impacts on disabled people. (DWP/HMT)
- Reviewing existing **health and social care support** for disabled people living both in institutions as well as in the community, to ensure it provides appropriate levels of care. (DHSC)

Annex B: Letter from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Cabinet Office 70 Whitehall
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Our reference: MC2020/14649 October 2020

Dear Colleagues,

I had planned to use Friday's COVID-19 Operations Committee (COVID-O) to discuss an ambitious package of interventions to tackle the disproportionate immediate health impacts (transmission and mortality) from COVID-19 on certain groups. As departments have not been able to meet the required ambition, I have taken the difficult decision to pull this Friday's discussion.

It will not now be possible to announce an ambitious package of interventions in the Minister for Equalities' oral statement, scheduled for next week, in which she will announce publication of her first quarterly report on progress to address the disparities highlighted by the Public Health England review. This is a terrible missed opportunity.

You will remember the hard-hitting data COVID-O discussed on 24 September, and the package of measures we agreed. When the Prime Minister saw the data and the agreed package, he gave the clear steer that the package of measures was not good enough, and urgent work was needed to develop a much more ambitious package of measures that could, truly, turn the tide on and avoid a replication of the disproportionate impacts seen in the first wave. He was clear that he is particularly concerned about improving immediate health outcomes for ethnic minorities.

Following this, Emran Mian, Senior Responsible Officer for Disproportionately Impacted Groups across Whitehall issued a clear commission to all your departments, asking you to consider what more could be done on this issue. I am deeply disappointed in the responses from your departments. Several departments have not responded to the commission; other returns lack ambition. I will remind colleagues of the facts.

- Black and Asian ethnic groups have recorded higher case rates throughout the pandemic, and Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi communities continue to record particularly high death rates.
- Eight out of the ten occupations with the highest death rates among men have higher than average proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) representation.
- Seroprevalence data shows that the larger the household size the greater likelihood of inhabitants testing positive for COVID-19 antibodies.
- 59.2% of those who have died from COVID-19 have been disabled

- COVID-19 mortality rates correlate with deprivation: men and women from the most deprived areas have double the mortality rates of those in the least deprived areas.
- Working age men are twice as likely to die as working age women.

I have re-attached the data on disproportionate impacts, which we went through in our 24 September meeting. You and your officials will want to review this in detail, to consider recommendations that your department can make. Given these statistics, we need to demonstrate urgency and action on this important issue. Time is running out to mitigate risks for these groups in the second wave.

I have rescheduled the discussion on Disproportionately Impacted Groups, at which COVID-O will consider and agree more ambitious proposals to prevent disproportionate impacts, for Wednesday 28 October. We cannot afford for this to slip, and I urge you to impress this urgency upon your departments. I have reattached Emran's commission, which has been updated and includes a revised deadline of the end of the day on Wednesday 21st October.

In addition to his headline ask for more ambition, I want to draw your attention to his request to departments to consider options for improving outcomes for those with disabilities, ahead of a future COVID-O discussion. This is also extremely important work. I expect Secretaries of State to work with their departments to bring much more ambitious and far-reaching proposals to that discussion, as per the Prime Minister's steer. The Prime Minister has clearly directed his Ministers to engage with this issue fully, and develop a strong package of interventions. If we do, then I have complete confidence that this committee and our Government can move the dial and prevent a replication of disproportionate impacts in the second wave.

With every good wish,

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office