

MAYOR OF LONDON

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0EU

Date: 7 May 2020

Dear Matt,

I am writing to seek the Government's urgent action to introduce routine ethnic data collection within death registrations in England.

As you will know, evidence has been emerging of how black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities may be disproportionately affected by COVID-19 including, sadly, deaths from or complicated by this deadly virus. The increased impact on these communities has become increasingly clear, with the Institute of Fiscal Studies estimating that hospital death rates are highest among those with Black Caribbean, Pakistani and Black African heritage. I look forward to the outcome of the Government's review into the disproportionate number of deaths in the BAME community from COVID-19.

I am concerned, however, that the lack of ethnic data recording in death registrations is holding us back from getting a full picture of the differential impacts COVID-19 is having on Londoners.

We know that the NHS and social care are trying hard to improve the quality of ethnic reporting in their services, however, we will not know the full picture of how disproportionately this disease is affecting our communities. The Government's own report in 2017 highlighted the problem of not recording ethnic data at death registration. *"The report highlights some key gaps in data by ethnic group. In particular, that ethnicity is not available at death registration. It is, therefore, not possible to calculate life expectancy estimates or mortality rates based solely on death registration data."* (PHE, 2017)

It is vital that the Government finally, after many years of lobbying, takes steps to introduce ethnic data recording within death registrations. This is a standard part of data and intelligence in Scotland, where they have been collecting this data since 2012, demonstrating it is possible to deal with technical data collection issues with self-declaration. As a result, they have access to the sort of reliable health data any modern healthcare system must have to ensure services are delivered and health improvement happens equitably across all of society.

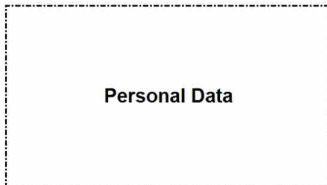
We need this data to help us to take the right steps to tackle the inequalities we are seeing in our communities right across the country. At City Hall we are also now analysing available data to improve the understanding of this disproportionate impact, looking into the social and economic factors behind infections and deaths, and its impact in other ways, including education, employment and welfare.

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The race and health equality sector has been making these asks for over 20 years now. We cannot ignore such a serious issue. We need change now.

I would be grateful if you could push for this urgent change with your cabinet colleagues and inform me as to how you will be progressing this issue specifically as well as wider action to tackle this trend, as soon as possible please.

Yours sincerely,



Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London

Cc: Paul Scully MP, Minister for London
Sir Edward Lister, 10 Downing Street