



Home Office

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CTS Reference: M6226/00

13 July 2020

Dear Mr Khan,

Thank you for your letter of 26 May 2020 regarding your concerns in relation to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and the fact that ethnicity is not collected at death registration in England and Wales.

The Government recognises the need to better understand these impacts and on 2 June 2020 Public Health England (PHE) published a report entitled 'Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19'. The Secretary of State for Health has also announced more work is needed and he has asked the Minister for Equalities to work alongside PHE on this. The report can be found on the website at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-review-of-disparities-in-risks-and-outcomes.

I note you have convened a panel to discuss ethnicity issues and the lack of reliable data has been raised as a concern.

By way of background, the information currently recorded at a death registration is prescribed by law and there is currently no provision to collect ethnicity at a death registration. All data collected is provided to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which has the responsibility to confirm, analyse and publish statistics relating to deaths within England and Wales. The ONS has been able to analyse the available data against the 2011 Census data held and published its ethnicity findings, which include some regional analysis. The latest figures can be found at on their website at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsregisteredweeklyinenglandandwalesprovisional/weekending26june2020>

Ethnicity is self-declared and collecting such information at the time of the registration places the responsibility for declaring the deceased individual's ethnicity on the informant, who may not be willing or able to accurately provide such information. We also need to consider that the deceased, when alive, may have refused to declare their ethnicity for all other purposes.

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As you highlight, in Scotland ethnicity data is collected at death registration. However, the National Records of Scotland (NRS) have stated although an ethnicity question has been included since 2012, the data is incomplete and has limited value for calculating reliable mortality rates for most ethnicities.

The Home Office is working with other departments to determine how best to capture and record ethnicity data and how such data can then be effectively used in helping to address the issues raised within the 'disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19' report. However, at the current time it is not possible to directly capture such detail at death registrations.

Yours sincerely,

Personal Data

Kevin Foster MP
Minister for Future Borders and Immigration