

**Draft Statement pursuant to a request from
Module 2B of the UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry (“the Inquiry”)
Request for Evidence under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006
Reference for Request - M2B/KS/01**

Background:

1. I write this statement in my capacity as the Chair of the “First Minister’s BAME Covid-19 Scientific Risk Assessment Subgroup” and as a member of the parent Group, “First Minister’s BAME Covid-19 Advisory Group”
2. Towards the end of February 2020 and through March 2020 I and my colleagues became aware of disproportionately high mortality amongst BAME healthcare workers including doctors from South Asian origin and nurses from Black and Philipino communities.

17th April 2020

3. As this trend continued and it became clear that this was no aberration, I wrote to the Chief Executives of all Health Boards in Wales in my capacity as the Chair of BAPIO-Wales (British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin) on 17th April 2020 highlighting the issue and asking for an urgent stratified risk assessment to be put in place to protect the lives of the healthcare personnel.

[Risk Assessment Covid19.pdf - BAPIO](#)

(Enclosure 1) KS/1: INQ000222868

24th April 2020

4. This was followed by a further letter to the Chief Executive of NHS Wales and the Welsh CMO on 24th April 2020 giving further evidence of the disproportionate death rates in BAME communities and laying out a framework of a simple risk assessment tool which would become the basis of the final All Wales Covid 19 risk assessment tool.

[Rsk Assessment recommendations Covid19.doc - BAPIO](#)

(Enclosure 2) KS/2: INQ000222870

Formation of BAME Advisory group and sub groups

29th April 2020

5. Welsh Government formed the, "First Minister's BAME Covid-19 Advisory Group" chaired by Judge Ray Singh CBE and Dr Heather Payne. I was asked the same day to Chair the Scientific risk assessment sub group and tasked to come up with a risk assessment tool at pace. The terms of reference of the scientific sub group are given below. The TORs of the BAME Advisory group and its work is best addressed by the Chair of the group Judge Ray Singh CBE. The work of the socio economic sub group is best addressed by the Chair Prof. Emanuel Ogbonna.

Terms of Reference of the FM BAME advisory Group's Scientific sub group

Co-chairs: Professor Keshav Singhal MBE, Chair BAPIO Wales

Helen Arthur, Director of Workforce and Corporate Business

Aim of the Risk Assessment Sub Group:

A scientific group convened to consider the evolving evidence in order to make recommendations to the First Minister's COVID-19 BAME Advisory Group:

- Workplace risk assessment for frontline health and social care workers in Wales;
- Suggest practical steps to mitigate the risk for the staff identified as vulnerable; and
- Consider the evolving evidence and implications for the wider community.
- To report recommendations to Dr Andrew Goodall CBE, NHS Wales Chief Executive, Chief Medical Officer, Chief Nursing Officer and Albert Heaney, Director of Social Services and Integration, during the Covid crisis.

Membership:

- The membership of the Subgroup is provided at Annexe 2 of the sub group's report.
- The Group will meet by virtual means and report weekly to the Covid-19 BAME Advisory Group during the Covid crisis period.

- Agreed advice or recommendations will be submitted to Andrew Goodall, NHS Wales Chief Executive & be published.

Deliverables

- Recommend appropriate precautionary principles for use by NHS and Social Care employers in Wales, in consultation with WG, employers and unions.
- Recommend a workplace Risk Assessment tool for staff with co-morbidities and encourage BAME colleagues to utilise this route, to promote best practice in health and safety at work.
- Consider approaches under consideration in the other UK countries and recommend any additional interventions to protect against Covid, including implications for workforce and safe, effective PPE usage.
- Recommend ongoing data collection and further analysis to monitor progress and outcomes and learn lessons for the future.

Scientific Subgroup meetings and creation of the risk assessment tool.

5th May 2020

6. The first meeting of the sub group took place and the group agreed to the first draft of the risk assessment tool as given below

Welsh Risk Assessment Tool Covid-19 (WRATC) discussed on 5th May 2020

Risk factor	Score
<u>Age</u>	
50-59	1
60-69	3
<u>Sex at birth</u>	
Male	1
<u>Comorbidity</u>	
Cardiovascular disease (including HTN, previous MI, heart failure)	1
Diabetes Mellitus	1
Chronic pulmonary disease (including asthma, COPD, interstitial lung disease)	1

Risk factor	Score
Chronic kidney disease	1
BAME	1
Obesity (BMI >30)	1

Maximum possible score is 10

Risk Stratification

- 0-3** Low risk - Continue current duties with adherence to infection control
- 4-6** High risk - Consider enhanced PPE & modification of duties
- >7** Very High-Risk - Work from home/ non patient facing roles

Current Duties	Score 0-3	Score 4-6	Score 7 or more
Community	Continue with caution	Enhanced PPE	Very High risk, Work from home if possible
Primary care	Continue with caution	Enhanced PPE	Very High risk, Work from home if possible
Secondary care Non AGP	Continue with caution/Enhanced PPE	Modified duties and enhanced PPE	Very High risk, Work from home only
Secondary care with AGP	Enhanced PPE	Redeploy out of AGP areas	Work from home only

7. Our approach was different to that adopted by the other UK Nations who relied on a data intensive approach. The RA Sub-group was however conscious about the need of developing the RA Tool at pace to save lives and decided to rely on the abundance of data already available to quickly produce a simple to use tool. The guidance provided with the risk tool provided advise about social distancing and use of masks
8. The group met weekly at formal meetings and would work on a daily basis in its urgent efforts to prepare a definitive tool as soon as possible.

13th May 2020

9. The first draft of the risk assessment tool was submitted to the Welsh Government for consideration and discussions continued with various stakeholders including the BMA, Royal College of nursing, community representatives and NHS employers, following which the First Minister released the final version of the risk assessment tool on 26th May through a press release and on 27th May in a written statement and made available to the entire NHS and Social Care sector in Wales.

[Launching risk assessment to support BAME workers | GOV.WALES](#)

Enclosure 3 KS/3: INQ000222872

[First Minister's Statement launching the tool.pdf - Google Drive](#)

Enclosure 4 KS/4: INQ000222873

Roll out of the risk assessment tool to other public sectors

10. Very soon we starting getting inquiries from various other public sector bodies like the Police, Education and higher education and Government departments including the NHS Employers, to whom also the tool was made available and they were given advice on how to modify it as per their specific requirements.

August 2020

11. By August 2020, the tool had been expanded to include a generic version for use in Education, childcare, play work, youth work and further education.
12. The risk assessment tool was also made available on electronic staff record (ESR) and on eLearning Wales platform. By 13th August 2020, 7000 staff had completed the risk assessment on the electronic platform whereas the number as of July 2021 was 10 times more (74,260), in addition to the estimated 45,000 pdf versions downloaded and used for the risk assessment.

Stakeholder engagement August 2020:

13. The Welsh Government facilitated ongoing stakeholder engagement through established advisory groups and took the following actions.
 - HSS animation live on YouTube and publicised Posters for HSS settings on WG website
 - “Key points for managers” flyer on WG website

- Webinars for employers delivered
- Social media plan delivered from @WGHealthandCare supported by @WG_Communities running
- Phase 2 of the social media and display paid for ads drawing to a close stakeholder Toolkit (social media suggested content, poster, animation, GIFs) issued to HSS and equalities stakeholders
- Ministerial column printed in the Wales on Sunday on the day shielding paused promoting and encouraging use of the tool
- Up to date FAQs and guidance live

Forward look August 2020:

- Deputy Minister to record video clip for use on social media on Tuesday 22 September.
- Dependent on qualitative feedback and evaluation being received by policy teams we may have an opportunity for a further comms activity burst if we are able to identify positive case studies
- Evaluation of activity has begun and initial indications show an encouraging picture in terms of awareness of the tool. Report to follow.
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Paper and Electronic versions

14. Initially the tool was released as a pdf version and cascaded to all NHS Wales employees and health boards through staff bulletins and emails. However, the need to cascade the information widely on an electronic platform led to the development of an animation for the public published on YouTube

[Risk Tool animation: YouTube](#)

15. With the waxing and waning of Covid-19 numbers and the onset and subsequent decline of the 2nd wave, there were minor tweaks in the guidance accompanying the tool to ensure that the risk assessment reflected the prevalence of the virus in the society and gave the employees the confidence to keep on working particularly in key services like the NHS and Social care. Despite minor tweaks, there has been remarkably little change between the version released on 7th August 2020 and the one in use today as shown through the following links to the August 2020 and August 2021 versions given below.

All Wales Covid-19 Risk Assessment Tool Version 07/08/2020

[Covid-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool - AMENDED FOR PAUSE IN SHIELDING](#)

Enclosure 5 KS/5: INQ000222874

All Wales Covid-19 Risk Assessment Tool Version 20/08/2021

[Covid-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool 20/08/2021](#)

Enclosure 6 KS/6: INQ000222875

End User feedback

16. In a survey of the end users, of those who gave an affirmative answer (positive or negative, but excluding those who were not sure), over 93% felt that the tool correctly identified their vulnerabilities to Covid-19.

Conclusions

- The Risk Assessment group was able to prepare a evidence based, pragmatic, self-administered and easy to use tool within 3 weeks of its constitution, a tool which has stood the test of time and despite newly emerging evidence, has remained largely unchanged since its launch in May 2020.
- Over 93% of respondents have expressed their confidence in the tool correctly identifying their level of risk from Covid-19.
- Ethnicity data needs to be more robustly collected to identify future health promotion needs of the employees.
- The risk assessment exercise and the tool provides a framework for any future public health emergency and can be rapidly altered at pace.

17. The comorbidity data will provide Public Health Wales data & information to target health improvement measures for improving the health of the NHS and public sector

staff. The tool itself serves as a proxy of the health of the individual and will provide an impetus to the public to tackle their health positively

Final Report October 2021

18. The final report of the subgroup was submitted to the Welsh Government in October 2021 by which time the pandemic was waning and the tool was well established in identifying the vulnerable population.
19. At that point, the meetings of the risk assessment sub group were suspended and the group has not needed to meet formally since.


<https://u.pcloud.link/publink/show?code=XZ18NwVZHbcaT57HmUjpp5jLtd4GXYvf16sy>

Enclosure 7 KS/7: INQ000222876

20. This statement primarily deals with the Welsh Government response to the concerns about the disproportionate mortality and morbidity amongst the BAME population and the efforts of the risk assessment sub group. The matters arising from the deliberations of the First Minister's BAME Advisory Group and the socio economic subgroup are best dealt with by the respective chairs, Judge Ray Singh and Prof. Emanuel Ogbonna.
21. I have not been involved in any decisions regarding lockdown, circuit breakers, home working, travel, school closure, etc, which were dealt with by the Welsh Government.
22. I and to my best knowledge, no other member of the subgroup has been asked to provide evidence to the Welsh Senedd.
23. The advice provided to the Welsh Government primarily pertained to the disproportionate risks faced by BAME populations and the design of a risk assessment tool to mitigate that risk which was accepted by the Welsh Government in its entirety and the risk assessment tool was rolled out on official Welsh Government channels.
24. The Welsh Government accepted the group's recommendations about social distancing, home working for high risk people, mask wearing etc in its entirety as noted in the risk assessment tool guidance. I can not comment on the enforcement of this guidance.

Enclosure 8 KS/8: INQ000222877

Chronology of meetings and events

	Activity
21 April	Minister for Health and Social Services Written Statement: COVID-19 and BAME Communities on the emerging evidence of the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 is having on some individuals from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.
29 April	BAME Covid-19 Expert Advisory Group weekly meetings commence.
1 May	Dr Andrew Goodall CBE , endorses the use of an existing Risk Assessment Tool developed by Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) as an immediate way forward and directs Chief Executives and Chairs in this approach recognising and making clear the expectation that further advice arising from the work of the Risk Assessment Subgroup would be implemented without delay.
2 May	Minister for Health and Social Services Written Statement: COVID and BAME – measures to protect the Health and Social Care workforce welcoming the Joint Statement: made by NHS Employers, the Association of Directors of Social Services, Trade Unions and making clear the need for a precautionary approach as the evidence base for the differential impact of COVID-19 on health and social care workforce continues to evolve.
5 May	Covid-19 BAME Risk Assessment Subgroup weekly meetings commence.
26 May	Minister for Health and Social Services Press release Wales BAME Covid-19 health advisory group takes a cross-Government approach
27 May	First Minister Written Statement: All-Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool The Workforce Risk Assessment Tool is made available as a pdf on WG website, for immediate use across the NHS and social care
10 June	Targeted Digital media campaign commences 
10 June	Links to the pdf version of the Workforce Risk Assessment is included within education guidance published on 10 June. The Risk Assessment used across Wales to support return of staff to schools ahead of re-opening on 29 June.
22 June	The Tool was made available on the Learning@Wales e-learning platform . In the first week around 700 people completed the Risk Assessment The Learning@Wales platform, also provides access to a range of other e-learning modules that are relevant including infection prevention and control.

	Activity
30 June	An animation describing how to use the Tool made available in English and Welsh provided on YouTube shared through BAME networks as well as formal comms channels, this continues to receive much positive feedback. ENGLISH: Risk Tool animation: YouTube WELSH: Risk Tool animation Welsh: YouTube
31 July	Circa 4000 risk assessments completed by NHS Staff in their Electronic Staff Record (ESR). Just 10 days after being made available through ESR. 2500+ risk assessments completed by staff in health, social care and education on the Learning@Wales e-learning platform.
7 Aug	Updated risk assessment tool live (both online & PDF) which has taken account of the changes in shielding advice (paused from 16 August). The WG website also updated to signpost different sectors to the most appropriate format of the tool.
10 Aug	Adapted Tool for Education, Childcare, Playwork, Youth Work and FE Adapted Tool to be used by other workplace settings
19 Aug	Chair of BAME Advisory Group and Chair of Risk Assessment Subgroup attending NHS Chief Executives meeting to discuss the Risk Assessment Tool

This statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Personal Data

21/08/23

Keshav Singhal CBE

Chair Covid 19 Risk Assessment Committee

First Minister's BAME Group