

6) Response from NRS on use of census data: <https://bemis.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/NRS-Correspondence-Ethnic-Minority-National-Resilience-Network-Response-30-October-2020-1.pdf>

5. The view of the organisation or body as to whether the group(s) it supports or represents was adequately considered when decisions about the response to Covid-19 were made by (i) the UK Government; and/or (ii) the Scottish Government.

We had a mixed experience with the Scottish Government in covid response. Initially partnership work facilitated successfully that enabled us to create bespoke interventions on mental health, sustenance fund, transition fund and inclusive vaccinations fund. However our experience as part of the Expert Group on Covid and Ethnicity was significantly harder.

There was no consensus on the group as to what constituted an “ethnic minority” and who our assessment and recommendations to Government and following actions should be directed towards. BEMIS argued strenuously at meetings and in written communications that recognition of ethnicity for the group must be linked to the Equality Act 2010 definition of Race (Colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin).

This was not accepted by the co-chairs or Scottish Government. Thus, we raised and continue to have significant concerns about how recommendations of the ERG were formed and the policy work that has now been embedded in Scottish Government as a consequence. One of the main problems was that the group had very little engagement with rights holders, actual community members. The recommendations made by us as a group member following significant consultations with communities across Scotland were not referenced or acknowledged at all in the ERG final reports to government. On the contrary much effort was dedicated to reflecting the personal interests of academic on the group rather than the impact of covid on communities in Scotland.

Over the last 24 months the Scottish Government has been progressing the recommendations of the ERG that have been narrowed down to focus solely on “communities of colour”. For example, the creation of an anti racism observatory as a legacy of pandemic experience will be solely for “people of colour”. We consider this to be unjustifiable given when we know happened during the pandemic, before it and what was discussed and agreed by the ERG. At no point was it agreed that our recommendations would solely focus on colour or that the policy legacies of the pandemic would also take this approach. We have multiple examples of raising concerns about the impact of such an approach over the last 2.5 years.

6. Whether the organisation or body raised any concerns about the consideration being given to the group(s) which it supports or represents with the (i) the UK Government; and/or (ii) Scottish Government, when the Government and/or Executive were making decisions about their response to Covid-19. Please provide a list of any such correspondence or meetings with (i) the UK Government; and/or (ii) the Scottish Government, including the dates on which the body or organisation wrote or such meetings were held, to whom the correspondence was addressed or with whom the meeting was held, and any response received from the UK Government or the