

Friday 5th June 2020

Position statement on the publication of ‘Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19’ report by Public Health England – (published on 2nd June 2020)

The Caribbean and African Health Network (CAHN) welcomed the initial Government announcement of review into the disproportionate impact and deaths from COVID-19 in the Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community. The report published on 2nd June broadly explored the risk and outcomes of COVID-19.

However, the report has not taken a deep dive into why black and minority ethnic groups have been disproportionately affected by coronavirus. Government promised us a review into BAME deaths, but we have been provided with a generic review. This review has not given the attention needed to the BAME community and only brings into sharp focus the stark health inequalities we have known about for decades. It does not highlight systemic racism as a cause or race as a social determinant of health that we reported on during the round table discussions with Professor Kevin Fenton.

This report does not go anywhere near far enough as it does not investigate the causes of death in COVID-19 in the BAME community and fails to make recommendations to ensure immediate protection or next steps for BAME communities. This report does nothing to build trust between BAME communities and the Government.

At a national level would like to see the Secretary of State for Health Matt Hancock and the Equalities Minister Kemi Badenoch MP work with BAME-led organisations and professionals to co-produce useful tools to reduce any disparities in experience and outcomes for BAME communities right across all sectors of society. CAHN supports the call for a COVID-19 Race Equality Strategy led by Lord Simon Woolley.

As Greater Manchester has always led the way, CAHN is calling on the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Greater Manchester Health & Social Care Partnership to undertake a review into:

1. The impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities in Greater Manchester and what lessons could be learned from the resilience and response.
2. How the long-entrenched health disparities in the region would be addressed in line with commitments to becoming a Marmot City Region. We explicitly request the review to determine how proportionate universalism will be implemented in practice.
3. Racial disparities across public sector including political leadership in the City region with the view to developing a Race Equality Strategy which is resourced by GMCA.

We propose that the above review is undertaken jointly with BAME-led organisations across the region to ensure that the BAME community is an equal partner in developing solutions.

Note to editors:

The Caribbean & African Health Network Greater Manchester CIC is a non-profit organisation with a mission of reducing health inequalities in a generation for the Caribbean & African community. We recognise there are structural inequalities in our society and working with cross sector partners to influence policy and practice. More information – www.cahn.org.uk Please forward any enquiries to mediaenquiries@cahn.org.uk or call 07575 579377.

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