

We Need Answers: public inquiry needed over BAME worker deaths



PHE report on COVID impact on BAME communities is a stripped down version – why?

Campaign group We Need Answers has responded to the sudden release of a Public Health England report into the impact of Covid on BAME communities.

Published without press alert after days of prevarication and delays, it has resulted in disappointment and questions about missing detail and a total lack of recommendations.

The news in the Health Service Journal that the Fenton Report has been heavily redacted does not surprise the campaigners in the We Need Answers group.



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[#WeNeedAnswers](#) [#BlackLivesMatter](#) [#OurLivesMatter](#)

Join our call for an independent public inquiry [#BAMEReport](#) It makes no recommendations, offers no remedy, provides no recourse to safety or justice. Sign <https://t.co/QRC5JccLpj> pic.twitter.com/r9Nk7qs3wi

— We Need Answers (@WeNeed_Answers) [June 2, 2020](#)

Given the Prime Minister has also to date failed to respond to the letter sent to him on May 9th with more than 80 respected signatories – many of whom submitted information to the Fenton enquiry which has since been left out – we must yet again call again for a public inquiry into the disproportionately severe impact of Covid on BAME communities in the UK – and which notably is not mirrored in other countries with high black & Asian populations.

Rehana Azam, GMB National Secretary, said:

“The PM has said this virus doesn’t discriminate, but the response to the Covid crisis and the lives lost are both most definitely discriminatory.

“In the context of global events, with the spotlight on structural and institutional racism, the publication of this report which carries no recommendations is just going to heighten distrust of the claim that all lives matter to the Government.

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Either Black and Minority Ethnic lives matter or they don’t, and Ministers have prevaricated in commissioning a report that doesn’t set out how working lives are to be protected.

Rehana Azam, GMB National Secretary

“Matt Hancock has lost valuable time by commissioning a report on facts that were already in the public domain.

“Either Black and Minority Ethnic lives matter or they don’t, and Ministers have prevaricated in commissioning a report that doesn’t set out how working lives are to be protected.



“This report confirms what we already knew – BAME workers have made a disproportionate sacrifice during this pandemic.

“Notably there is a complete absence of any recommendations – we believe this report is a stripped down version of what had been prepared by Dr Fenton. Why would this be?”

Windrush campaigner, Patrick Vernon, said:

“We need a public inquiry with evidence from frontline staff, families and experts to give context to the data and to fully assess the impact of coronavirus on BAME communities.

“The report highlights that BAME lives matter, and the Government should no longer take the colour blind approach any more,

“The Public Health England (PHE) report finds that higher infection and mortality rates in BAME communities could be attributed to poor housing conditions, lower incomes, occupations with higher risk profiles, inadequate access to public services, and a greater risk of underlying health conditions.

“**66** People of Bangladeshi ethnicity have twice the risk of death with coronavirus than those of white British ethnicity, report from Public Health England finds <https://t.co/0m1wlpTtOb>

— BBC News (UK) (@BBCNews) June 2, 2020

“These findings are not new. It showed that people of Bangladeshi ethnicity had around twice the risk of death as people of white British ethnicity, while people of Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, other Asian, Caribbean and black ethnicity had between a 10% and 50% higher risk of death.

“People are dying and Ministers have been too slow to protect lives. They say that this virus doesn’t discriminate, but the response to this virus and the lives it has taken most definitely experienced a discrimination that ended in their deaths.”

Yvonne Field of the Ubele Foundations, who set up a petition and who holds We Need Answers letter on their website, said:

“Following the exposure of vital information being stripped from the report which our letter signatories have taken the time and trouble to contribute, we can now see that no plan is in place that gives confidence that the government is going to protect lives of people disproportionately impacted by this terrible disease.”



Dr Kailash Chand, Hon Vice President BMA, said:

“There is a complete absence of the details which might be expected – e.g. a detailed breakdown of occupations, yet 90% of doctors – including 11 of 12 GPs – lost to Covid are BAME.

“We know that UK health and care deaths are in excess of other countries and our PPE kit lesser standard.

““ Fundamentally, the PM and his Government has completely failed to undertake a proper impact assessment into how Covid-19 has affected BAME groups

Dr Kailash Chand, Hon Vice President BM

“It is also notable that no mention is made of the hard hit Filipino community, nor any reference to how many excess deaths are from BAME communities and where through lack of access to testing, death has been attributed to underlying conditions, where the deceased may in fact have been suffering from Covid.

“Fundamentally, the PM and his Government has completely failed to undertake a proper impact assessment into how Covid-19 has affected BAME groups, or refer to any future dangers ahead and how they can be managed.

“This is also exactly the same appalling treatment as they have taken towards care homes.

“This matter is urgent and needs to be properly addressed.”

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