



Race Disparity Unit

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Meg Hillier MP
By email

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COVID-19: Ethnic Minority Disparities Urgent Question

In the debate following Marsha De Cordova's Urgent Question on 1 March, you asked whether any of the £4.5m in funding for new research on COVID-19 and ethnic minority groups would be put towards considering the impact on the career paths of those who have had to be removed from frontline duties.

The four new projects were announced by UK Research and Innovation on 9 February. These include two large consortia projects which will investigate the wider social, cultural and economic impacts of the pandemic on ethnic minority groups in Britain. In the first (which may be of most relevance to your question), researchers led by a team from the University of Manchester will assess the impact of COVID-19 across a broad spectrum of issues including health, housing, welfare, education, employment and policing. In the second, a consortium led by the University of Leeds will investigate the combined impact of COVID-19 and racial discrimination on wellbeing and resilience across ethnic minority families and groups in the UK. Further details on all four projects can be found [here](#).

In my response to your question last week, I noted that I had discussed with colleagues at the Department for Health and Social Care the issue of ethnic minority healthcare workers moved from frontline duties. Redeployment and/or reallocation of duties are a local matter for each individual NHS employer. NHS Employers have issued a range of guidance to all NHS organisations on the need to risk assess staff and to deploy them safely, and the possible implications of redeployment from frontline duties. This includes [guidance](#) published last August that concluded: "It is important to ensure that staff do not suffer discrimination (direct or indirect) or additional disadvantage as a result of being temporarily redeployed through the COVID-19 risk reduction process".

There are a range of steps NHS employers have taken to mitigate risk. These include enhanced health and wellbeing support, additional infection prevention and control

assurance such as prioritisation for fit testing, rota adjustments, and regular health checks. Maintaining and continuing risk assessments is an important aspect of workforce planning, and NHS leaders have consistently emphasised this via pandemic response guidance.

Thank you for raising this important issue. I am placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kemi Badenoch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kemi Badenoch MP
Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury &
Minister for Equalities