# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Response to the BAME Covid-19 Health Advisory Sub-Group** **Socio-economic Report** |
| **DATE**  | **24 September 2020** |
| **BY** | **Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister** |

The coronavirus pandemic has had an adverse and disproportionate impact on the health and wellbeing of people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in Wales and across the UK. They have experienced higher levels of illness and, sadly, death rates have been higher than among the white population.

We continue to learn more about coronavirus with every passing week and month, including why people from BAME communities have a higher risk of being affected by coronavirus. Our understanding has been aided by the work of the BAME Covid-19 Advisory Group, which was led by Judge Ray Singh, and its two sub-groups chaired by Professor Keshav Singhal and Professor Emmanuel Ogbonna.

Professor Singhal’s group, which examined the immediate risk to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic health and social care workers during the pandemic, led to the development of the two-stage self-assessment risk assessment tool. This is now in widespread use in the NHS and social care in Wales and is helping to safeguard people’s health and wellbeing. The Tool is now being used more extensively in the wider Public Sector.

Professor Ogbonna’s group examined the socio-economic factors, which contributed to this disproportionate impact. Its report highlighted the entrenched inequalities experienced by Black, Asian and minority ethnic people and which Covid-19 has highlighted in the most tragic and worrying of ways.

I want to put on record again my thanks to Professor Ogbonna and the socio-economic sub- group for undertaking this work, under enormous pressure. The Welsh Government has welcomed findings of this challenging and hard-hitting report.

Today, we publish our detailed response to the report’s many recommendations: <https://gov.wales/covid-19-bame-socio-economic-subgroup-report-welsh-government-response>

The recommendations from this report will form an integral part of our Race Equality Action Plan for Wales which is being developed at pace. I am grateful Professor Ogbonna has agreed to provide his continued support through co-chairing the Steering Group for this work, alongside the Permanent Secretary.

However, we will not wait for a plan to tell us what to do. We are reconfirming our long-held commitment to advancing equality for all; our response today is just part of our approach towards strengthening equality and human rights in Wales.

Professor Ogbonna’s report is a sobering and a powerful one – it speaks of people’s lived experiences of racism, an existing culture of racial discrimination and structural inequalities in Wales today. We will use the experience and evidence it provides – particularly that gathered over the course of the pandemic – to inform our work as we strive to embed wide scale, systemic changes necessary to create the equal Wales we all want to be part of.

The hard work and passion shown by members of the sub-group has been crucial in helping us reach this point today. I hope we will be able to call on the group’s continued support as we drive this work forward towards our ambition of an equal Wales, free from discrimination and inequality.