

1 June 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Independent Inquiry: Coronavirus (Covid-19) and the impact on people with protected characteristics

As you are aware, COVID-19 has had a devastating effect on all our communities in the U.K., much more than was expected. And within the communities the most damaging impact has been on the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) group of people, both in the general population as well as amongst NHS and Care Home staff.

BAPIO has had a close interest in this issue, with a large number of actions undertaken by the Central Executive team and our members during the pandemic. Many have also either been ill with Covid themselves or seen someone gravely ill or passing away as a result of being infected by the virus..

Early on, BAPIO received confidential reports from members and their colleagues regarding the lack of personal protection equipment (PPE), the inability to maintain social distancing, inability to comply with self-isolation for those with co-morbidity and cases of intimidation and reprimand when raising concerns. Increasingly, there were anecdotal reports from members on the rising levels of anxiety and stress in relation to the risk to them and their families from treating patients with COVID-19, and the fear of consequences when raising their concerns to senior managers. BAPIO was the first organisation to write to the government on 7 April 2020 about the disproportionate deaths of BAME doctors.

The Prime Minister has finally announced that there will be an independent inquiry. The purpose of any such inquiry is to determine four key questions:

1. What happened?
2. Why did it happen?
3. Who is responsible?
4. How can we prevent this from happening?

However, as has been typical for this government, there has been no sense of urgency to act on anything to do with Covid19 (except the vaccinations, which perhaps is the only 'good story'), and so he has signaled that the inquiry will take place in the Spring of 2022.

The contention of BAPIO is that we really need to have this inquiry this year, as otherwise we will be hit by another wave. And in this context there has been a

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slowness to act on the 'delta' strain of Covid19, which we might yet feel the full strength of in the coming weeks.

So, we have assembled key people to ask pertinent questions:

1. Should BAPIO add a voice to an urgent inquiry, and if so within what time frame?
2. What should be the proposed terms of reference for the inquiry?
3. Does this group have a view on who we should put forward as heading the inquiry?
4. If there is the scope, should we propose a suggested membership?

Structure of meeting:

1. Opening remarks – Ramesh Mehta
2. Introductions
3. Consider this occasional paper
4. Concluding remarks

Ramesh Mehta and JS Bamrah

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