



Northern Ireland
**Council for
Racial Equality**

NIC107791

15th March 2023

The Right Honourable Baroness
Heather Hallett DBE
COVID-19 Public Inquiry Chair

Dear Heather

Re: COVID-19 Inquiry Northern Ireland Forum

We had a meeting yesterday in Belfast and I would like to draw your attention to the scope of issues under Modules 2:

In NICRE's view structural discrimination and racism are a central and crucial issue in this Inquiry. In our joint submission to Northern Ireland Affairs Committee on the EXPERIENCE OF MINORITY ETHNIC AND MIGRANT PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND INQUIRY, we highlight the fact that disparities and inequalities do persist. Racism and discrimination remain a factor in shaping people's life outcomes, and the adherent attitudes continues in our society's institution and increasingly online. Institutional and Structural Racism continue to add the experience of BME and migrant people living in Northern Ireland.

The McPherson Report defines Institutional Racism as:

"The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional services to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin which can be seen or detected in processes; attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people."

(McPherson Report 1999)

It is well known that the outcomes and mortality rate for black and minority ethnic people during the pandemic were disproportionately higher than other racial groups. The link between structural racism, social exclusion, disparities and inequalities has been long recognised and continues to confront us in our daily lives; employment, education, health and social care, housing, UK's immigration policies, criminal justice system, etc.

We therefore invite the Inquiry to include structural racism and discrimination in its examination of Module 2 issues. We consider there to be a need for an expert in structural racism and discrimination to be instructed. We also include calling of witnesses from the

NICRE
7 Rugby Road, Belfast BT7 1PS
Tel: 028 9031 5784
Charity No.: NIC107791

Email: Secretary of NICRE
patrick@nicre.org
Website: www.nicre.org
FaceBook: NICRE



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bereaved and other Black and Minority Ethnic groups whose experiences of COVID-19 were exacerbated by structural discrimination and racism, as well as by obtaining relevant expert employment, education, health and social care, housing, UK's immigration policies, criminal justice system, etc.

We further invite the Inquiry to include expert evidence in the assessment of proposed policies, decisions etc. on those under equality categories which is under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1997. These evidences include an appropriate Equality Impact Assessment in the circumstances of each decision to be made. We do not know whether the instructions to experts include asking any of them to consider how decisions should have been made with an awareness of equalities issues. We remind the Inquiry that we are under democratic deficit since 2019.

During discussions yesterday, regarding our 9 categories under our Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 highlighted the disadvantage vulnerable groups, such as deaf people with Irish/British sign languages, different age groups such as baby, children, young people/students and elderly people (at home or in care home), ethnic minority interpretation needs with different dialects/writings, women under domestic abuse refuge, LBGTQ..... You have the equivalent different categories of people on protected characteristics which is under Public Sector Equality Duty of Single Equality Act 2010, NICRE suggests the COVID-19 Public Inquiry should identify target groups/categories of people under the remit of the Aims of the Public Inquiry.

Thank you for your attention!

Yours sincerely

Patrick Yu
Secretary of the Trustees Board