

Wednesday 15 July 2020

- 1. Covid-19 has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities** and has disproportionately harmed Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.¹
 - Black men and women are **four times** more likely to die from Covid-19 than white men and women;
 - British-Bangladeshi and British-Pakistani men and women are **1.8 and 1.6 times** more likely to die from the virus respectively.
- BAME children and families are more likely to live in **poverty** and poor quality or crowded accommodation.²
- The unequal impact of Covid-19 on BAME children and families is linked to a number of factors including **structural racism, discrimination, and health inequalities** increasing the risk of serious illness.

- 2. BAME children and young people are facing multiple and overlapping challenges** which have been compounded by Covid-19, including:
 - Experiencing **bereavement** within their family and support networks;
 - Increasing **caring responsibilities** — BAME children were 1.5 times more likely to be a young carer before Covid-19 than their peers;³
 - Increasing **mental health** needs e.g. anxiety, depression — **26.6%** increase in BAME children contacting them with suicidal thoughts;⁴
 - More likely to be **in or leaving care** — BAME children were overrepresented in the care system.⁵
- Additional challenges for specific groups include:
 - Chinese children and young people are at greater risk of **hate crimes and racism**;⁶
 - Black Caribbean and Mixed White British and Black Caribbean children and young people are likely to fall further behind **educationally** — these groups had below-average attainment before Covid-19.⁷

- 3. Evidence from Barnardo's services supporting BAME children and young people:**
 - Those in low-income households **often lack the technology** needed to access education and support (**'digital poverty'**);
 - Experiencing **increased anxiety** as they are at greater risk of Covid-19 due to their ethnicity;
 - Indicators of abuse are more likely to be dismissed as having 'behavioural issues' meaning victims are going unidentified and unsupported;
 - Experiencing **increased racist hostility** such as being photographed and 'shamed' online for legitimately going outside;
 - **Struggling to access specialist food** e.g. halal, kosher;
 - Some support services are **not responding in culturally sensitive** ways — for example, local food banks making up food parcels with tins of corned beef or gelatin products;
 - **The National FGM Centre**⁸ has seen a significant drop in referrals — down by more than three-quarters in March-May 2020 from the same period in 2019.

¹ [ONS, May 2020](#)

² [Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, April 2020.](#)

³ [Barnardo's, April 2019](#)

⁴ Cambell, D. (2020) Covid-19 affects BAME youth mental health more than white peers – study. The Guardian

⁵ [Department for Education, 2019 A.](#)

⁶ [Metropolitan Police, May 2020.](#)

⁷ [Department for Education, 2019 B.](#)

⁸ A partnership between Barnardo's and the Local Government Association

Questions for the Ministers

- What steps has the Health Minister taken to ensure that the public health response and support services available to children and young people during the pandemic are culturally sensitive, accessible and that guidance is available in a wide range of languages?
- What discussions has the Equalities Minister had with the Department for Education about ensuring schools are equipped with the necessary skills, resources and cultural competence to spot the signs and broad indicators of physical, sexual and emotional abuse when they return to school to prevent BAME victims from being dismissed as having 'behavioural issues'?
- How will the Equalities Minister ensure children's views and lived experiences are captured by the new Race Inequality Commission?
- What steps has each Minister taken to engage directly with children and young people — particularly those from BAME communities — as part of their response to Covid-19, and will they work with charities such as Barnardo's to ensure children and families are at the heart of recovery planning?
- What plans does the Housing Minister have to reduce housing inequalities for BAME groups who are disproportionately likely to live in poor quality or cramped accommodation, both during and after the pandemic?

Barnardo's services are responding to the needs of BAME children and young people

1. We have distributed digital devices such as smartphones, tablets and laptops - as well as data - to children and young people across our services who were living in 'digital poverty', including many from BAME communities. For example, our Bradford Employment and Training Support Service has made sure learners can access programmes remotely during the lockdown and beyond.
2. We have distributed emergency culturally-sensitive food parcels to families who have fallen into poverty. For example, our service for care leavers in the London borough of Brent has tailored food drop boxes for BAME care leavers who were struggling to find items that would normally be part of their diet.
3. Barnardo's has been conducting weekly welfare check-ins with young carers and their families — who are disproportionately likely to be from BAME communities⁹, which has helped us identify critical needs such as lack of finance, food, welfare and tech devices.
4. Last month, we launched '[See, Hear, Respond](#)' — a new service delivered by a consortium of national and local community-based organisations across England in response to Covid-19. It supports children and young people from at-risk groups, including BAME children, who are not already receiving statutory support, and are therefore 'hidden' from view.

About Barnardo's

Barnardo's is the UK's largest national children's charity. In 2018/19, we supported around 300,000 children, young people, parents and carers through more than 1,000 services. For more information please contact Emeka Forbes, Public Affairs Officer, at emeka.forbes@barnardos.org.uk

⁹ [Barnardo's, April 2019](#)