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Dr Kathryn Cobain
Director of Public Health
Worcestershire County Council
County Hall
Spetchley Road
Worcester WR5 2NP

12 June 2020

Dear Kathryn

Public Health England Review - Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19

I refer to Public Health England's recently published review examining the "Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19" by a number of different factors. Those factors included:

- Age and sex
- Geography
- Deprivation
- Ethnicity
- Occupation
- Inclusion health groups - including those born outside the UK, vulnerable migrants and those who are homeless
- Care home residents
- Comorbidities

Public Health England reports that the impact of COVID-19 has replicated existing health inequalities and, in some cases, particularly for people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups, it has exacerbated them.

As you will be aware, Sir Michael Marmot, in the report Fairer Society, Healthy Lives¹, asserts that "*inequalities in health arise because of inequalities in society - in the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age*". However, they are not inevitable and tackling health inequalities, and the factors that contribute to these inequalities, are at the heart of the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board.



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For our part Healthwatch Worcestershire has been running a Survey to find out people's experience of health and care services in the County during this Covid-19 pandemic. We have already produced some "headline" findings drawn from over 2000 responses to date which have been fed back to commissioners, providers and regulators for early consideration.

These are not yet in the public domain as the Survey is still open. We are continuing to promote the Survey in the following ways:

- pro-actively encouraging people from Black, Asian and Minority Communities locally to complete the Survey
- targeting communications about the Survey to geographical Districts where the Survey response was lower
- providing paper copies of the Survey to encourage its completion by anyone unable to access the Survey electronically, and specific groups such as the homeless/rough sleepers who may require support to complete the survey
- engaging with people with a learning disability, and the organisations who work with them to ask about their experiences and have them complete an Easy Read version of the survey

I note Public Health England's Review says:

"The results of this review need to be widely discussed and considered by all those involved in and concerned with the national and local response to COVID-19. However, it is already clear that relevant guidance, certain aspects of recording and reporting of data, and key policies should be adapted to recognise and wherever possible mitigate or reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the population groups that are shown in this review to be more affected by the infection and its adverse outcomes.

*As the numbers of new COVID-19 cases decrease, monitoring the infection among those most at risk will become increasingly important. It seems likely that it will be difficult to control the spread of COVID-19 unless these inequalities can be addressed."*²

In the light of this It is my intention to raise the Review at the Health and Wellbeing Board on 14 July 2020 for a discussion focused on the following issues:

1. How the findings of the Review are reflected in Worcestershire
2. And, if appropriate to identify the actions which will be taken to address any risks to specific population groups that are identified in Worcestershire.

In order to inform that discussion please can you provide Healthwatch Worcestershire with information about how the findings of Public Health England's Review are reflected in Worcestershire for each of the population groups identified in the Review as being most at risk from Corvid - 19.

² Marmot M, Allen J, Goldblatt P, Boyce T, McNeish D, Grady M, Fair Society, Healthy Lives: The Marmot Review. London; 2010.

² PHE, Disparities in the risk and outcomes from COVID-19, pg. 5, PHE, June 2020

If you wish to discuss my request in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to receiving your response in advance of the publication of the agenda and papers for the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting on 14 July 2020.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Pinfield". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and a long, sweeping underline.

Peter Pinfield,
Chair
Healthwatch Worcestershire