



Government Equalities Office

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Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP
Chair, Women and Equalities Committee
House of Commons
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Our ref: 010520HC

1 May 2020

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your letter of 29 April, about the equality assessments of the Coronavirus Act 2020.

As I explained during my recent session with your committee, the assessment undertaken in respect of the Coronavirus Act 2020 is the responsibility of the Department for Health and Social Care, and I am therefore copying this letter to the Health Secretary.

In my role as Minister for Women and Equalities, it is not my intention to relieve other departments of their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), as they are experts in their areas and should continue to apply the Duty as part of their responsibilities.

It is vital that our response to COVID-19 takes account of the different needs of people depending on their circumstances. Lawyers advising my department lead the Government Legal Department's centre of excellence for PSED, and due to the unprecedented nature of the current situation, my policy officials are providing even more advice to other departments where required to support their decision-making and response.

As I said on 22 April, it is my view that if we were required to publish all equality impact assessments, it would have a chilling effect on the candour of advice officials prepared. Government absolutely has a role in keeping the public informed, and especially those directly affected by particular policies, but I do not agree that publishing internal assessments are the correct way to do this.

Your letter also rightly draws attention to the need to engage individuals, expert groups, charities and other organisations in policy development. This is happening across government, and indeed many departments have set up specific COVID-19 response panels or stakeholder forums in order to gather the most current and complete information about the impacts of their policies on COVID-19 on specific groups. My Cabinet colleagues

and I welcome contributions from anyone that feels their concerns have not been heard, or wish to describe what impact these policies are having on them.

Many thanks for your letter.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Truss', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'E' and 'T'.

THE RT HON ELIZABETH TRUSS MP
Minister for Women and Equalities

cc. Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care