



Women and Equalities Committee

Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey MP
Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Via email

12 October 2022

Dear Thérèse

Health inequalities white paper

I am writing to you regarding recent media reports that the Government will no longer be publishing the much-anticipated health disparities White Paper.

My Committee has taken evidence on a broad range of equalities issues since we were constituted in 2020. We note a consistent theme has been inequality in access to healthcare and in health outcomes; whether it be mental health support for men and boys, black maternal health, menopause or waiting lists at gender identity clinics—healthcare is an issue which affects many groups due to their shared protected characteristic. We have recently been contacted by organisations supporting women who have experienced abuse, exploitation and trauma. They have found patterns with women struggling to access appropriate GP appointments (e.g. with a female practitioner), as well as negative assumptions about the reasons for their health problems.

We have also seen that existing inequalities were exacerbated by the pandemic. We conducted several inquiries on the Unequal impact of Covid-19; for those with disabilities,^[1] people from different minority ethnic backgrounds^[2] and the gendered economic impact.^[3] Each of these reports, as well as evidence to our umbrella inquiry, made recommendations to Government designed to help mitigate these unequal effects.^[4]

We had hoped the Government's review and White paper would tackle some of these issues, and that we might engage with Government as part of that process. Having acknowledged that Covid-10 "shone a light on the unacceptable disparities in health outcomes",^[5] it would be deeply concerning if these plans were now abandoned.

We look forward to your response, and to working with you and your Department on some of our active inquiries.

Yours ever

Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP
Chair, Women and Equalities Committee

^[1] [Unequal impact? Coronavirus, disability and access to services: full Report, December 2020](#)

^[2] [Unequal impact? Coronavirus and BAME people, December 2020](#)

^[3] [Unequal impact? Coronavirus and the gendered economic impact, January 2021](#)

^[4] [Unequal impact: Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) and the impact on people with protected characteristics](#)

^[5] [Health Disparities, Volume 708: debated on Friday 4 February 2022](#)