

Written evidence from Debbie Hudson (COV0106)

My name is Debbie Hudson and I am an ordinary young woman who cares about all the suffering that people are enduring as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic. This is the reason for my submission.

- What steps need to be taken to ensure that measures taken by the Government to address the COVID-19 pandemic are human rights compliant?

The government has a duty to protect our health and wellbeing. It can only do this if it puts human rights at the centre of all prevention, lockdown and treatment efforts, in order to best protect public health, welfare and supporting those most at risk of COVID-19.

All this must be done with care to protect and respect our human rights and quarantines need to be compatible to human rights and laws.

The government needs to do more to protect those who are already highly vulnerable, as well as those who may become so in the weeks and months ahead.

The impact of this crisis risks has hit women and girls. Measures taken to tackle the crisis must be designed to mitigate this, rather than contribute to it.

It is vital that any restrictions on human rights are lawful, both as a matter of international human rights law and national law. Measures to address COVID-19 should be targeted, time-limited, and subject to regular review to ensure they remain necessary as a response to the Pandemic.

- What will the impact of specific measures taken by Government to address the COVID-19 pandemic be on human rights in the UK?

This is a human rights crisis in the most immediate sense – and a reminder of our common humanity and that we are all equal in dignity and human rights.

People across the world are being impacted in quite a devastating way. It is having an impact on families, friends and communities, and will do for the foreseeable future.

People have had to stop going to work.

Our freedom to travel anywhere in the world has been stopped.

The lockdown has forced people to stay indoors and not go out.

Children have had to stop going to school and school leavers could not take their O'levels and A'levels and their futures look uncertain.

People have not been able to get married.

People have not been able to go to church.

However, some of these measures have potentially profound effects on individuals and societies, and impact on people's enjoyment of their human rights.

The lockdown stopped us from having leisure time outside and going out and about.

A lot of people have lost their jobs.

People's mental health has been affected and people who were waiting to have operations have had those operations delayed. People who have been waiting for saving operations such as organ transplants have had these put on hold.

- Which groups will be disproportionately affected by measures taken by the Government to address the COVID-19 pandemic?

Certain groups appear to be at greater risk of severe illness and death. Older people and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease) are more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with coronavirus.

People living in poverty and homelessness will find it much harder to access preventive measures. They may be working on zero-hour contracts, reliant on benefits and subject to punitive measures under the system of Universal Credit.

The poor have been hit the most.

We have seen how, in countries which have already been in lockdown, refuges and women's organisations have been raising awareness of an increase in domestic abuse. Women have had to stay in with men who are abusing them.. In the UK organisations working on domestic violence are chronically underfunded and, to date, no additional provision has been made to cope with the impact of coronavirus. Victims with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' face additional barriers and insecurity as they cannot access life-saving refuges and are barred from other forms of public support.

A shortage of care services (childcare, healthcare, elderly care) will have a disproportionate impact on women as providers of unpaid care work. Coronavirus will exacerbate a situation where cuts to public spending have already fallen on women. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has reiterated its previous concern (dating back to 2009) about the disproportionately negative impact of austerity measures on women, who constitute the vast majority of single parents and are more likely to be engaged in informal, temporary or precarious forms of employment.

In 2018, Professor Philip Alston – UN expert on extreme poverty and human rights – visited the UK and reported how 14 million people are living in poverty, dependent on food banks and charities for their next meal. He documented the plight of homeless people, some of whom don't have a safe place for their children to sleep.

People with disabilities are finding it difficult as they lost their support packages. People with autism are especially being affected. They do not like change so all this has caused a high anxiety level.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Ethnic minorities

Migrant Workers

Women

Children due to their education being disrupted.

School Leavers

Care Homes

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