

Professor Emeritus Kevin Hylton
Sheffield Race Equality Commission
Sheffield City Council, Town Hall, Sheffield, S1 2HH

Thursday 17 September 2020

Sent via email

Dear Professor Hylton,

I have been proud to represent Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough as Member of Parliament since 2016, it is a diverse area with people of many nationalities, ethnicities, immigration statuses and religions living here. It is also an area that faces many challenges, challenges that are only made greater because of the many issues highlighted by the Black Lives Matter movement. Whether this is institutional or interpersonal, it is a barrier to equality and its cause and effect must be challenged.

Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough is home to a higher than average population of people identified as being Asian (10.5% compared to 6.9% nationally), Black (6.5% / 3%), Other (4.4% / 0.9%) and Mixed (3.3% / 2%), with a lower than average population of people identified as being White (75.3% / 87.2%).¹ This is also the case for Yorkshire as a whole.

I receive a large amount of correspondence, as you can imagine it reflects a wide range of views and opinions on all matters. While I unfortunately often receive offensive correspondence, it was pleasing to see in June many people showing their support for the Black Lives Matter movement.

In this submission I hope to broadly outline my concerns around the following areas, Economic Impacts (including access to jobs and education), Health Inequalities, Community Cohesion, Housing, Air Quality and Democracy. While my submission to the commission does not contain any new evidence or data, it is a reflection of the challenges I believe Brightside and Hillsborough and Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic people living this area face. It is also based on the correspondence I receive from constituents, organisations and my knowledge of the area after representing it in various capacities for the past 15 years and living in the constituency all my life.

Ending race inequality and racism is an objective that must be at the forefront of all our minds now and always. I look forward to following the work of the commission, including the appointment of commissioners, and doing what I can in my role as a local Member of Parliament to support the aims and objectives that come forward over the next year.

Yours sincerely,

Gill Furniss MP
Member of Parliament for Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough

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Written Submission to the Sheffield Race Equality Commission

- Employment
- Education
- Community
- Health
- Housing
- Air Quality
- Democracy

Employment

Brightside and Hillsborough has seen consistently higher rates of unemployment than both the Regional and UK wide average. Currently this stands at 6,897 people, or 9.9% of residents aged 16-64, after having almost doubled due to the COVID-19 outbreak. However, before this unemployment was still relatively high, standing at 5.5% in January 2020.¹

While easily available employment data by ethnicity does not go down to constituency level, Government data shows that across Yorkshire and the Humber Asian (57%), Black (70%), Mixed (69%) and Other (53%) ethnicities were all below the regions average employment rate as a whole (74%).

Recently published analysis by the Guardian shows that BAME workers will be disproportionately impacted by the economic decline as a result of COVID-19. They found that amongst the sector that had announced the most redundancies, transport and storage, BAME workers account for 18% of the jobs in this industry, despite representing 12% of the UK workforce. There is a similar picture in accommodation and food services, wholesale and retail.²

A report by the House of Commons library also found that BAME workers were disproportionately impacted by the lockdown, as there was an above average number of BAME workers in the sectors which were temporarily shut down.³

As noted in a Public Health England report earlier this year, BAME people are also more likely to work in jobs that expose them to higher risk. Nationally amongst nursing staff who tested positive for COVID-19 a higher proportion were from Asian ethnic groups (3.9%) and Other ethnic groups (3.1%) that White ethnic groups (1.5%) and Black and Mixed ethnic groups (1.7%). Other occupations with increased risk also have proportionately higher number of BAME workers. Jobs with public facing roles were particularly susceptible, such as care, retail, hospitality, transport and security workers.⁴

¹ UK Parliament, House of Commons Library – *Constituency Dashboard* – [link here](#).

² The Guardian – *BAME workers disproportionately hit by UK Covid-19 downturn, data shows* – [link here](#).

³ UK Parliament, House of Commons Library – *Coronavirus: Impact on the labour market* – [link here](#).

⁴ Public Health England – *Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19* – [link here](#).

GOV.UK – *Employment by sector* – [link here](#).

Young BAME workers are also more likely to be in less stable employment than their white peers, across England they are 47% more likely to be on zero-hours contracts and have a 10% greater chance of having a second job in order to make ends meet. The report by the Carnegie UK Trust and Operation Black Vote made recommendations to improve access to good work and called for audits to be completed on race disparity by employers.⁵

A person's ethnicity is also likely to impact their wages. While the median hourly wage for a White British worker was £12.03, this figure dropped to £10.92 for Black/African/Caribbean/Black British person, £10 for a person of Pakistani heritage and £9.60 for a person of Bangladeshi heritage. Introducing ethnicity pay gap figures was recently called for by the Labour Party in Parliament, as a way of holding companies and public bodies accountable for the disparity we currently see in pay.⁶

Education

Level of attainment, particularly at GCSE level, has a large impact on people's life chances and outcomes. Many jobs require a minimum of Grade 5 (Grade C) in English and Maths just to submit an application. Data published by the Department for Education shows that in primary education, 55% of Black Caribbean students reach the expected standard in reading, writing and maths compared to 65% of White British students, at GCSE level attainment of Grade 5+ in English and Maths is 26.9% amongst Black Caribbean students while it is 42.7% for White British students, and for A-Levels, those achieving A or above in three subjects is 3.5% of Black Caribbean students compared to 10.9% of White British students.⁷

Data shows a close relationship between free school meals eligibility and educational underachievement. ONS data shows that the highest percentages of free school meal eligibility by ethnicity is amongst minority groups: 56% of Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils, 39% of Gypsy/Roma pupils, 26% of pupils of Bangladeshi heritage and 20% of pupils of Pakistani heritage were eligible, significantly higher than the national average of 14%.⁸ It is important to note the Institute for Fiscal Studies has found that the scandalous changes to the threshold for free school meals in 2018 mean that around 160,000 pupils who were eligible under the previous system are not any longer. Hence measuring childhood poverty by free school meals does not capture as wide an image of deprivation.⁹

Schools in Brightside and Hillsborough have diverse cohorts and are largely situated in areas with higher rates of poverty, amongst 40% of children in the constituency are growing up in poverty, across the city this accounts for more than 40,000 children.¹⁰ This occurs at the same time that 80% of schools in Sheffield will have less money in 2020, in real terms, than they did five years ago.¹¹

Challenging the disparities in educational attainment begins with well-funded schools. Despite having greater challenges to overcome, schools in Brightside and Hillsborough have had real

⁵ Carnegie UK Trust – *Race Inequality in the Workforce* – [link here](#).

⁶ Office for National Statistics – *Ethnicity pay gaps in Great Britain: 2018* – [link here](#). (Latest published data).

⁷ GOV.UK – *Black Caribbean Ethnic Group: Facts and Figures* – [link here](#).

⁸ Office for National Statistics – *Child Poverty and Education Outcomes by Ethnicity* – [link here](#).

⁹ BBC News – *Free school meals are changing but will children lose out?* – [link here](#).

¹⁰ The Star – *More than 40,000 children in Sheffield living in poverty, new figures show* – [link here](#).

¹¹ The Star – *Sheffield schools continue to suffer due to funding cuts despite Government plan to boot budgets, analysis reveals* – [link here](#).

term cuts of 10.8% in funding since 2013-14, teachers and teaching assistants in these schools are passionate about their pupils and work hard to raise aspirations and outcomes.¹²

Across the UK, exclusion rates are also an important factor in education settings, permanent and temporary exclusions impact on a child's education. Gypsy and Roma, and Travellers of Irish Heritage pupils had the highest exclusion rates both for temporary and permanent exclusions. With 36 exclusions per 10,000 pupils in 2017/18 compared to 10 per 10,000 amongst White British pupils.¹³

Ensuring representative uptake of skills-based education, such as through an apprenticeship is an important part of reducing the ethnicity attainment gap and ensuring equal access to education. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority undertook a comprehensive report on apprenticeships and diversity and their findings included that while the ethnicity gap was more acute between younger apprentices, it grew larger at higher qualification and age of entry. I would value the Commission taking a similar look at skills-based learning in Sheffield by working closely with the Mayor of Sheffield City Region and other stakeholders.¹⁴

Community

Community cohesion is essential to creating a sense of belonging within society. Cuts to funding by central government have seen the availability of ESOL classes reduced, removal of measures to help public services such as the Migration Impact Fund and the wider impacts of austerity have created an environment in which opportunity is lacking. There is a lack of focus on community cohesion and integration and the Commission may wish to create a cohesion strategy that can be put to Government and addresses many of the disparities we see.

It is well known that BAME communities are more heavily policed, a key example of this is the disproportionality between BAME people and white people when looking at instances of stop and search powers being used. In South Yorkshire a BAME member of our community is 1.6 times more likely to be stopped and searched. If this is broken down further by ethnicity a black person is 2.5 times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police, an Asian person is 1.5 times more likely and a person from a mixed ethnicity is 1.3 times more likely.¹⁵ Arrest rates following a stop and search in South Yorkshire were 14%, slightly less than the average for England and Wales (15%).¹⁶

We also know that black people are more likely to be arrested than white people, across England and Wales no single police force reported an arrest rate of less than 20 for every 1,000 black people, while no single police force reported an arrest of more than 20 for every 1,000 white people.¹⁷

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a report by Liberty and The Guardian found that BAME people were more likely to be fined for breaching the lockdown regulations, of the 18 forces

¹² House of Commons Library – *Constituency Dashboard* – [link here](#).

¹³ Gov.uk – *Pupil Exclusions* – [link here](#).

¹⁴ Greater Manchester Combined Authority – *Apprenticeships and diversity in context in Greater Manchester* – [link here](#).

¹⁵ South Yorkshire Police – *Data, Outcomes and Disproportionality* – [link here](#).

¹⁶ Home Office – *Police powers and procedures, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2019* – [link here](#). (Latest published data).

¹⁷ As above.

that responded to their Freedom of Information Requests, all showed signs of disproportionality. Data published by the National Police Chiefs' Council showed 22% of fines went to BAME people, who make up 15.5% of the population.¹⁸

For policing to be effective, it must hold the trust of the communities it serves. The over policing of BAME communities has led to a breakdown of trust and rebuilding this trust must be the highest priority for the police service, including ensuring that police officers are representative of the communities they serve.

I must say I am very happy with the way South Yorkshire Police has handled local issues and am pleased that the Chief Constable has reinstated a community based model, however cuts to their budgets have hampered their ability to serve the community in the way they would like.

Health Inequalities and Disparities

COVID-19 has highlighted the vast health inequalities that exist in our country, Public Health England's report *Disparities in the risk and outcomes COVID-19*, have highlighted the heightened risk and outcomes across a wide range of factors. The probability of death for people from BAME backgrounds when compared to white British people was staggering, with deaths from COVID-19 being significantly higher in BAME communities.¹⁹

During the peak of the outbreak, data showing COVID-19 deaths between March and July revealed that the MSOA (Middle Layer Super Output Area) Crabtree and Firvale had the highest rate of deaths, with 67 reported in the data. While the large number of care homes in this area account for around two-thirds, the area would still be amongst those with the highest rates if deaths in care homes were not included.

Crabtree and Firvale is a diverse area and is surrounded by similarly diverse areas²⁰. All of these have higher levels of deprivation and poverty, with home ownership and education attainment levels lower than the national average. I wrote to senior figures in Sheffield at the time the data was published calling for a unified approach to address the inequality that exists in our city (a copy can be found as Annex A) and a push for the funding required to address this inequality.

My letter also details the deeply concerning fact that these six MSOAs accounted for a quarter of all the COVID-19 deaths outside of hospital recorded over that period in Sheffield. This area is home to the Northern General Hospital and 19 care homes and other places of work that are high risk. People with Asian, Black or Other ethnicities disproportionately work in the NHS (people with an Asian ethnicity make up 10% of the NHS workforce, compared to 7.2% of the working age population as a whole, people of a Black ethnicity 6.1% compared to 3.4% and Other ethnicity 2.3% compared to 1.1%) and other healthcare roles and many local residents from these diverse communities work in the hospital, care homes and other high risk jobs.²¹

¹⁸ Liberty – *Police Forces in England and Wales up to seven times more likely to fine BAME people in lockdown* – [link here](#).

¹⁹ Public Health England – *Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19* – [link here](#)
ONS – *Coronavirus related deaths by ethnic group, England and Wales: 2 March 2020 to 15 May 2020* – [link here](#). (Latest published data).

²⁰ Note: MSOA's Crabtree and Firvale, Burngreave and Grimesthorpe, Southey Green East, Firth Park, Sheffield Lane Top and Longley Park, and Shirecliffe and Parkwood Springs.

²¹ GOV.UK – *NHS Workforce* – [link here](#).

More widely, the higher levels of deprivation and poverty feed health inequalities across the city. Sheffield is not unlike other major cities and towns in this respect. There are broad challenges to be faced in this respect and a legal obligation under the Equality Act for these inequalities to be addressed.

We do not need to look far to find the passion, understanding and knowledge needed to tackle health inequalities in our city. Sheffield is home to world leading universities, specialist hospitals and passionate people from all walks of life. A collaborative approach to identify the causes, effects and solutions to health inequalities should be a priority for the commission.

Housing

The shortage of newly built housing has caused a significant increase in the number of people renting privately. Nationally people with a Black African (20%) or Arab (17%) ethnicity were statistically far less likely to own their own homes, people with an Arab ethnicity were also significantly more likely to rent privately (51%). All ethnicities other than Indian (7%), Chinese (10%) and White British (11%) were more likely to rent in social housing, while White British households from all income bands were less likely to rent social housing than all other ethnicities.²²

Housing is a basic human necessity; this necessity can unfortunately lead to exploitation and see people forced to live in poor quality housing. All ethnicities other than White British are more likely to live in overcrowded housing, most are more likely to live in housing with damp and most are more likely to live in 'non-decent' homes.²³

The effects of poor housing on health has been studied for generations, although housing charity Shelter note that the evidence linking poor housing to ill health is not as wide as many may think. Reports from the charity do evidence that poor conditions 'such as: overcrowding; damp/mould; indoor pollutants/infestation; cold/low temperature has all been shown to be associated with physical illnesses including respiratory disease, asthma, eczema, hypothermia and heart disease.' Although there are many good landlords in Sheffield, there are too many rogue landlords who exploit tenants, provide poor quality housing and fail to provide them with support and assistance when they require it. To tackle this, the council and police should have the powers and funding to deal robustly with this issue if we are to improve our communities for everyone. Given the evidence base, the Commission may wish to consider further investigation of the condition of housing in Sheffield and the impact this has on our BAME residents.²⁴

Air Quality

Sheffield is proud to be the greenest city in Europe, with 2/3 of the city being countryside or national park. While many get to enjoy clean air in our more rural areas, more urban areas such as those I represent live amongst higher levels of air pollution and live with the damaging effects of this.

A study conducted by researchers at Imperial College London found that deprived and diverse communities are worst affected by air pollution. They note the link between air pollution and ill health. The Campaign group Burngreave Clean Air have regularly campaigned about air

²² GOV.UK – *Housing* – [link here](#).

²³ As above.

²⁴ Shelter – *People living in bad housing – numbers and health impacts* – [link here](#).

pollution in the area, they have highlighted the disproportionate impact upon BAME and poorer communities. The Commission may wish to consult with the group if looking at the environmental impact on health.²⁵

The importance of air quality is also relevant to the COVID-19 outbreak. The ONS has detailed that greater exposure to air pollution increases the risk of breathing difficulties and long-term conditions in the lungs and heart and how deaths from COVID-19 were more common in more polluted areas. They also note that BAME people are more likely to live in inner city areas, that are more polluted, and that this could be a contributing factor to the higher COVID-19 death rate.²⁶

Democracy – Access and Participation

The Black Lives Matter movement has highlighted the importance of representation and engagement in our democratic process. Councils, Parliament and the Government should reflect the people that elect representatives to them.

Ensuring access and participation in the democratic process is a vital and necessary process to achieving equality and progress. The Runnymede Trust's analysis of *Ethnic Minorities at the 2017 British General Election* shows that in 2015 24% of eligible voters who were black and 20% who were British Asian were not registered to vote, while amongst white people this was only 15%.²⁷

More recently published data from the Electoral Commission shows that “25 per cent of black voters in Great Britain are not registered. It also says that 24 per cent of Asian voters and almost a third (31 per cent) of eligible people with mixed ethnicity are not yet registered, compared to a 17 per cent average across the population.”²⁸

Organisations such as Operation Black Vote have been established to ensure that specific and tailored information and support is given to increase democratic understanding and participation amongst black voters. Working with partners such as this to widen democratic participation – including standing for public office – is vital in ensuring that a wide spectrum of voices and experiences are heard at all levels of our democratic structures.

Recent proposals from the Government to impose checks at polling stations would be a backwards step. In the USA, where similar policies have been implemented studies have found that BAME people are more likely to be disenfranchised as a result and that this outcome would also be seen in the UK. The Commission may wish to look at the impact this would have in Sheffield.

Conclusion

Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough is an area that has particularly felt the brunt of ten years of austerity at the hands of successive Conservative governments. The previous decade has

²⁵ Imperial College London – *Associations between air pollution and socioeconomic characteristics, ethnicity and age profile of neighbourhoods in England and the Netherlands* – [link here](#).

²⁶ Office for National Statistics – *Does exposure to air pollution increase the risk of dying from the coronavirus (COVID-19)?* – [link here](#).

²⁷ Runnymede Trust, The – *Ethnic Minorities at the 2017 British General Election* – [link here](#).

²⁸ Electoral Commission, The – *1 in 4 black and Asian voters are not registered to vote* – [link here](#).

seen schemes and projects designed to lift people out of poverty scrapped, or with their budgets seriously reduced. At the same time the council has also had its ability to provide community services significantly reduced due to central government cuts.

Ultimately, too many people of all ethnicities live in poverty in Brightside and Hillsborough, my overall ambition is, and has always been, to improve the quality of life for all my constituents. Challenging and aiming to eliminate poverty in areas like Brightside and Hillsborough is an important part of reducing and removing the disparities I have detailed above. If we are able to lift people out of poverty and prioritise effective public services, we will see communities and people, of all ethnicities, have an improved quality of life with better outcomes.

The significant gap in educational achievement and access to skills provision in the constituency compared to the UK average is staggering. This is true across all ethnicities, opportunity and educational outcome across the constituency. This cycle must be broken, and I believe the Commission should look at how to bridge the attainment gap and improve access to further and higher education in Sheffield as well as quality skills-based learning. Tackling these inequalities will also have a beneficial impact on access to secure and stable employment.

There are also significant inequalities in the provision of housing, this is something I am familiar with in my constituency as far too many houses are in poor condition. There are also issues of higher levels of air pollution in the urban constituency. Ensuring that social and privately rented housing is of a safe and habitable condition and that the council and police take a robust approach to tackling rogue landlords who exploit tenants and take no responsibility for them, their welfare or the wider community. Measures should also be put in place to tackle air pollution. Both these things would improve the quality of life for those living in cramped urban space and would have a lasting impact on health outcomes.

I believe it would be beneficial for the Commission to further explore the areas I have highlighted in this submission as these areas have a direct and often tangible impact on the inequality BAME residents of our city and beyond experience on an all too common basis. There is not a significant amount of local data around these issues, exploring and understanding the impact on a localised scale would be beneficial in putting forward recommendations to reduce inequalities in our city.

I look forward to following the progress of the Commission and doing what I can with my Labour colleagues in Parliament to push the Government to offer every assistance to achieve a more equal and fairer Sheffield.

Please note all data and information used was the latest released data at the time of submission.



Annex A

Gill Furniss MP

Member of Parliament for Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough

Cllr Julie Dore
Leader, Sheffield City Council

Greg Fell
Director of Public Health, Sheffield City Council

Our Ref: GF/W/BW

Tuesday 16 June 2020

Dear Julie and Greg,

Coronavirus Deaths in Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough

I am writing following the publication of data by the ONS covering deaths involving COVID-19, specifically regarding the deaths by Middle Layer Super Output Areas.

As you will be aware, the MSOA Crabtree and Firvale has the highest rates of deaths involving COVID-19 in the UK, where sadly 66 people have passed away since 1 March. This area is also amongst one of the most diverse in Sheffield and one of the most deprived areas across the UK. Within this area is also much of the Northern General Hospital.

In the MSOAs around the Northern General Hospital (either covering, neighbouring or close to) there has been 138 deaths involving COVID-19, this represents a quarter of all COVID-19 deaths in Sheffield using ONS data. These are namely; Burngreave and Grimesthorpe (17 reported deaths), Southey Green East (8), Firth Park (15), Sheffield Lane Top and Longley Park (11) and Shirecliffe and Parkwood Springs (21).

All these areas are home to some of the most diverse communities in Sheffield and are amongst the most deprived areas in the UK. Many of the disparities in risk and outcome highlighted in the report from Public Health England released earlier this month apply to these areas.

Austerity measures imposed on councils has led to consistent underfunding in programmes and schemes designed to address deprivation, poverty and community cohesion in these areas and have created an area that was a bound to be a breeding ground for COVID-19.

The areas will also be home to many who work in Northern General Hospital, the 19 care homes in those areas and other high-risk jobs.

It is now crucial that we work together to assess those deaths and reviews in full the array of data that is available to highlight the factors that have contributed towards the high death rates in these areas. This should factor in people's ethnicities, nationalities, gender and occupation - particularly given that the further publication

from Public Health England, *Beyond the data: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME ground*, did not account for the effect of occupation.

I would welcome such an assessment and review of the data and proposed recommendations as to how the council can begin to address the deprivation and inequality that exists in these areas of Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough.

As the Public Health England report states 'this is a once in a lifetime chance we must come together to act – we are committed and want to work together'.

We are at an important juncture and by working together we can build a case to put to Government and show that the serious inequality that runs rife in many of our communities must be addressed. Through lobbying for the short- and long-term funding we need to tackle the inequality that led an area of our city to have the highest COVID-19 death rate in the country by a significant margin.

I look forward to your response and I am sure we can work together constructively on this.

Yours sincerely,

Gill Furniss MP
Member of Parliament for Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough
Shadow Minister of State for Women and Equalities

CC

Lord Blunkett
Charlie Adan, Interim Chief Executive
Cabinet of Sheffield City Council
Cllr Jackie Drayton
Cllr Terry Fox
Cllr Mazher Iqbal
Cllr Bob Johnson
Cllr Mark Jones
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