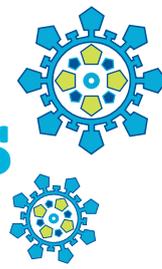


# Coronavirus crisis

## What you need to know: Racial Disparities and Covid 19

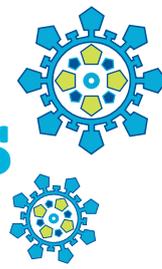


- 1** The Government's plans for a wider opening of schools are reckless and not supported by the NEU. We are calling on the Government to re-think their timetable urgently. The NEU is deeply concerned by the emerging data about the disproportionate effects and number of deaths due to COVID-19 for Black<sup>1</sup> NHS staff and Black populations. The Office for National Statistics' findings show a greater impact of the virus in areas of the country with wider health inequalities and higher rates of poverty and on Black communities even after health and deprivation is accounted for.
- 2** Black staff are more likely to work in schools which serve deprived communities. The NEU wants this unequal level of risk to be a major consideration within the Government's response to Coronavirus and its plans to suppress transmission. Nearly 70% (1733) of Black staff who responded on May 10th to a snap NEU poll, said they would feel 'very unsafe' about returning to the workplace.
- 3** The NEU is engaging with the Department for Education (DfE) about the implications of the evidence on racial disparities, both in terms of the importance for public health of not opening schools until it is safe to do so; and the implications for Black educators, alongside other staff who may be vulnerable. [The NEU petition](#) demanding that schools should not open until safe to do so has attracted more than 400,000 signatures.
- 4** We are discussing with the DfE advice about specific risks for Black staff, which will need to be updated as evidence emerges from the Government's inquiry into these risks.
- 5** The NEU is calling on the Government to share the data and models on which it is evaluating the timeline for commencing a phased return for more students. An essential part of this planning must be to take account of the emerging research findings and ensure risk assessments for Black staff who have underlying health conditions or live with someone who is shielding or who are pregnant. This must remain the case regardless of the Government's announcement about wider opening.
- 6** Black staff with an underlying health condition who are being pressured to go into work (rather than work at home) should speak immediately to the NEU workplace representative or contact the NEU Advice Line. We expect headteachers to continue to negotiate the rotas in use currently with NEU members. We are asking and advising leaders not to start planning for 1 June as we do not think it is safe to do that at this stage and are in urgent talks with the DfE.

<sup>1</sup> Note: The NEU uses the term Black as a political and inclusive term of unity to signify the anti racist organising all people of colour – African, African Caribbean, Asian and all those that face racism as a result of the colour of their skin.

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- 7** The NEU thinks the Government Inquiry into the disproportionate effect and rate of deaths for Black people is necessary and urgent to save lives. The remit of the Inquiry will need to incorporate the role of racism within workplaces and the effect of racism on workers' ability to secure safe working conditions, learning urgently from concerns from some Black staff in the NHS that it was harder for them to obtain PPE than their peers. PPE also needs to be adaptable to fit over turbans, hijabs or beards.
- 8** Black workers regularly face stereotyping, bias and attitudes at work which make it hard to raise concerns or highlight aspects of workplace culture which are exclusionary. It is important that the racial disparities within the pandemic are not discussed in schools in ways which reinforce stereotypes, such as stereotypes about migration or globalisation causing Covid-19. However, this does not mean silence about race or racism is the right way forward - we need to acknowledge the existence of racism in workplaces.
- 9** The NEU thinks that schools need to be alive to the concrete increase of racism during the pandemic and the risk that negative attitudes about race and immigration could grow because of fear and uncertainty. The NEU has published a [poster](#) for schools to share with parents/carers which signposts organisations to which parents or students can get a range of help including where to report racist harassment, incidents or attacks.
- 10** The NEU also wants to capture the hundreds of positive community initiatives which members are leading and co-ordinating. See the NEU's free [Create box](#) idea. We are urging members to share these ideas, and other community responses, across their Union networks to inspire others and share great practice.