



BME National Statement on the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities Report

Our overall feeling on reading the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (or Sewell) Report is of disappointment and disbelief. The report is at heart incoherent and inconsistent.

Disappointment that it views racism through a particular political lens, and disappointment that it adds nothing to the debate about tackling racism, and takes a discredited and uninformed view of the problems in our society.

Disbelief as it cherry-picks data to suit an ideological narrative, and, dismisses the lived experience of many. At a time of a global pandemic which has disproportionately claimed the lives of thousands of people from minority backgrounds, it downplays and minimises the effect of structural and institutional racism which has already been acknowledged as having a significant negative impact in the previous Macpherson, Lammy, Marmot, Williams reviews.

Although the report was commissioned following the Black Lives Matter Protests and the racial inequalities highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic it does not make any useful contribution to these issues.

The Sewell Report dismisses the racial inequalities highlighted by the Black Lives Matter protests, doesn't include the brutal evidence of the Covid-19 pandemic, and denies that the UK still has systems rigged against people from ethnic minorities. This is not the experience of BMENational and its members and indeed our mission is to improve the lives of our communities and tackle major housing inequalities including:

- One in three homeless households are from ethnic minority backgrounds compared to one in seven from the general population;
- 2% of White British households are overcrowded compared with 24% of Bangladeshi households; 18% of Pakistani households and 16% of Black African households;
- Ethnic minority households are more likely to live in older and fuel poor accommodation, and in flats and terraced homes in the most deprived neighbourhoods and worst living environments, including lack of access to green space.
- The poverty rate for ethnic minorities groups is almost twice that for the White population and has been exacerbated by welfare reforms that penalise young people and larger households, through the use of benefit caps.

The report only touches on housing slightly and (as is usual) examines home ownership rather than looking at wider tenures of social and private rented sector housing where

inequalities are also exacerbated. However, our view has always been that ethnic minority households are under-concentrated in home ownership generally, and outright home ownership specifically. This puts them at a disadvantage in terms of wealth and asset accumulation, in society where unprecedented house price growth has fuelled family wealth.

Of critical importance to us is what is missing. Nothing on building cohesive communities and breaking down concentrations of deprivation, nothing on the housing crisis and market failure, one mention of the Grenfell Tower tragedy (and nothing about the racial disparities highlighted there), inclusive leadership and governance is only mentioned in passing in terms of the education sector, and there is nothing there about organisations reflecting the communities that they serve.

We believe that this report could have been a call to action to help tackle major racial injustices in a society that is ready for change. Instead it retreats into denial and is a missed opportunity.

About BMENational:

BME National is a collective of over 45 housing associations working in some of the most disadvantaged parts of the country. Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) housing associations were set up in the 1970s and now manage over 65,000 homes and act under the auspices of the National Housing Federation, as well as collaborating with the Federation to influence national housing policy, BME National also provides a consultative and promotional platform for BME housing issues. BME National aims to highlight the contribution BME housing associations make to successful, vibrant and integrated communities while promoting equality and diversity in the delivery of housing and support services.

Contact

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We are also hosting a webinar on the Sewell Report jointly with HDN on 4th May at 2pm. Link to book is [here](#).