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Our Ref: MFC/1685

Baroness Janet Whitaker and Kate Green MP
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23 November 2018

Thank you for your letter of 8 November to Chloe Smith, following your meeting with her earlier in the year. I am replying because I have lead responsibility for the Race Disparity Audit in the Cabinet Office.

I agree it is important that we take action to improve the quality and coverage of Government statistics about the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities. The Race Disparity Unit (RDU) is currently undertaking work on this, and planning further work for 2019.

The RDU is reviewing all the sources used to produce the data on the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website, in order to have a definitive list of those which support the detailed 2011 Census classification and so which identify the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities. This will enable the Unit to work with the owners of administrative systems which do not currently collect data for the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities to explore the feasibility of enhancing the data. This work will take account of the ethnicity classification that will be proposed by the Office for National Statistics for use in the 2021 Population Census; the Census White Paper setting out that proposal is expected to be published in the near future.

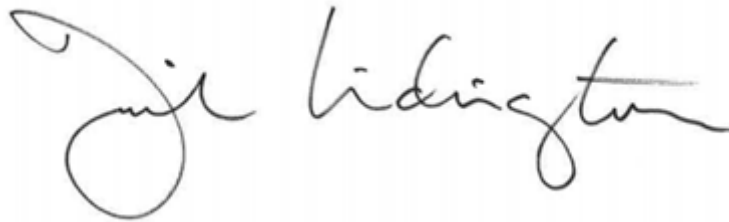
For data drawn from surveys, the RDU will work with the Office for National Statistics during 2019 with a view to developing a new harmonised classification of ethnicity, consistent with the 2021 Census, that is as granular as possible.

Work on the proposed Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) will take place alongside this work on harmonisation. The Unit's initial thinking is that different strands of activity will be required to improve quality at a macro level, and at the level of individual data sets. At the macro level, the Unit will, for example, explore gaps in the statistical evidence base, and then address these unmet needs either by adding data to the website or, if data simply do not exist, by exploring ways in which the data might be collected. Where the website presents data that does not show a breakdown for the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, the Unit will explore the scope to combine samples for a number of years to support robust estimates. However, this is not straightforward - in some cases technical aspects of the survey design and data collection make

it inadvisable to combine data, and where phenomena of interest (such as unemployment, or health outcomes) are relatively infrequent, the statistical problems that arise from the small size of the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities will tend to be exacerbated.

Other elements of the proposed QIP will seek to improve the robustness of data for all ethnic groups - for example, reducing the impact of non-response using statistical techniques. I understand that the Unit is considering recruiting additional staff to enable this work to take place alongside its regular activity of updating existing data on the website.

If you would like to meet officials in the RDU to discuss the work that is under way in more detail, please let me know.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Lidington". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'D'.

Rt Hon David Lidington CBE MP