

Speech: PM words at Race Disparity Audit launch: 10 October 2017

Thank you very much everybody for being here. I'm really pleased to welcome you to Downing Street today. I think this is a very significant day for our country in terms of what we're publishing today.

I think when it comes to the health of our economy and the performance of our health service, or the results of our education system we've got plenty of data to show us where things are working well and where things are not working in the population as a whole. But what we're publishing today, I think, is data that fills a glaring gap, by analysing how a person's ethnicity affects their experience in public services and how that affects their lives. And that holds a mirror up to our society and I think establishes a new and permanent resource for our country.

I think this is important and launching this piece of work was one of the first acts that I did as Prime Minister and it is a personal priority to me because I absolutely, passionately believe that how far you go in life, should be about your talents and your hard work and nothing else.

We know that Britain today in the 21st Century is a diverse multi-ethnic democracy. Diversity is a source of strength and pride for us. But when one person works just as hard as another person – and has got the same ambitions and aspirations – but experiences a worse outcome solely the grounds of their ethnicity, then this is a problem that I believe we have to confront.

And that was the approach that I took when I was Home Secretary and I looked at the issue of stop and search and saw the significant disparity in stops and searches – far more young men from black and minority ethnic backgrounds being stopped and searched. But the number of incidents didn't actually equate to that and justify that. We knew there was an injustice there and we had to act and that's why we shook the system up and I am pleased to say the number of black people being stopped and searched has fallen by two thirds. I think that's the difference that we can make when we identify the problem properly and then actually confront injustice and I hope that this audit will empower us to tackle many more of these issues.

I think the data we're releasing today and the online platform that presents it, should quickly become to be regarded as the central resource in the battle to defeat ethnic injustice. It's a world first, no country has ever produced a piece of work looking at the lived experience of people of different ethnicities which is as extensive and ambitious as this and I want to give a huge vote of thanks to everybody who's worked so hard on putting this together and helped us in what we're doing.

But it is not a one-off event this is a first but it's not something that's only going to happen today and the data sets and the online platform that we're launching are now a permanent resource. I think that's really important

they will be updated and new data will be added and we're fully committed to this for the long-term. And of course, as you know, as you look at the data much of it has existed for years but it's been spread across the government system. It's been difficult to access, perhaps it hasn't been looked at through this particular prism before, and now it will be easily available and people can look at the data, they can look at the methodology for putting the data together, they can interrogate that data, they can measure our progress and they can focus our minds.

Overall the findings will be uncomfortable but it's right that we've identified them, shone a light on them and we need to confront these issues that we have identified. So we are going to take action, for example in relation to the issue of unemployment for people from particular BAME communities we will be identifying hotspots where we will be putting particular extra work in to help people into the workplace.

The Ministry of Justice is going to take forward with recommendations from the Lammy Review that includes performance indicators in prisons to assess the quality of outcomes for prisoners of all ethnicities; committing to publish all criminal justice databases held on ethnicity by default; and working to ensure that the prison workforce itself is more representative of this country as a whole.

In schooling, the Department for Education is taking forward a review on external exclusions. Again, there is some significant differences shown from this data on exclusions. This will share best practice nationwide and will focus on the experiences of groups who are disproportionately likely to be excluded. And the team in the Cabinet Office, which has been working on this, will be continuing its work in the future.

I know that people around this table – I've worked with some of you over the years – have devoted many years working on these issues and we're keen to hear from you about your thoughts on the audit, your own experiences and the experiences of the people that you're representing.

I was with a group of young people yesterday at a school in south London and hearing from them, their direct experiences, absolutely tapped into the sort of information that we are seeing in this audit and the impact. It wasn't just their immediate experience, it was the impact on their aspiration and where they thought their life could go and I think this is really important,

I think what this audit shows is that there isn't anywhere to hide. And that's not just for government, it is for society as a whole actually. The issues are now out in the open and we all have a responsibility to work together to tackle them.

So I think the message is very simple; if the disparities can't be explained, they must be changed. Britain has come a long way, we must recognise that we've come a long way, in promoting equality and opportunity. But what the data published today shows is that we still have a way to go if we're truly going to have a country that does work for everyone.

So thank you very much everybody for coming today and I am looking forward to hearing your views in due course.