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Dear Expert Reference Group co-chairs and members,

I want to thank all of you for the significant work you have put into the initial advice and recommendations the Group has made to the Scottish Government. As the co-sponsor of the ERG, I know that over the past months you have worked tirelessly and at pace to gather and consider a broad range of complex evidence, and to use that evidence to produce this suite of challenging and ambitious recommendations.

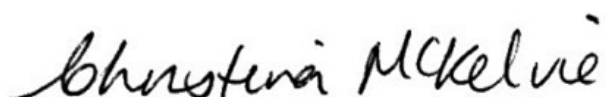
As you will have seen, our Programme for Government reflects your work in a number of areas. Our Programme commits us to prioritising action to promote equality and human rights for minority ethnic people and communities, and includes a range of plans designed to progress that goal. The work of the ERG has been key in formulating a number of those commitments, including that we will: look closely at undertaking a review of our past and current initiatives to tackle systemic racism; make ethnicity a mandatory field for health databases; develop a linkage to the census, and; embed the process of ethnicity data collection in the culture of the NHS in Scotland.

Ministers will now consider your recommendations in further detail and will publish a full Scottish Government response to them in due course. That response will bring together the commitments made and the actions we plan to take forward as a government.

I hope that our response will meet the full scale of the challenge you have set for us with this first set of recommendations and that the ERG will be able to meet again to reflect on it and to identify ways members of the group can continue to offer the necessary support and challenge to ensure that this work progresses effectively.

In the meantime, I want to offer my heartfelt thanks for the considerable thought, time, and effort you have provided up to this point. The work of the ERG has meant that you have all contributed to guidance, advice and challenge that we need to achieve our collective goal of a Scotland that is fairer for all.

Yours sincerely,



Christina McKelvie MSP
Minister for Older People and Equalities
Co-Sponsor of the Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and Ethnicity

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