

Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP
First Minister of Scotland



Scottish Government
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Rt Hon Theresa May
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
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29 October 2016

Dear Theresa

Thank you for your letter inviting the Scottish Government to participate in the Race Disparity Audit.

I am deeply concerned about the rise in inequality and racism across the UK. These issues are serious and it is vital that we respond appropriately.

I welcome the focus the Cabinet Office is placing on race at this time. However, on the basis of the information to hand about the purpose of the project and how it would operate, I am not persuaded that the Race Disparity Audit is the right approach for Scotland. I agree that data is important but fundamentally it is how we listen to people impacted by these injustices and use data to make coherent policy decisions, that will make the difference in the longer term.

The Scottish Government has made very public our commitment to equality and to safeguarding rights and fair outcomes for all. We have strengthened legislation and introduced specific measures to shift attitudes and support inclusion. I am pleased that recent evidence shows that attitudes in Scotland are shifting for the better, but I am keenly aware that Scotland still faces challenges which need to be addressed – outcomes for some individuals and communities are not shifting fast enough. That is why we published the Race Equality Framework in March this year which commits us to action in areas like health, education and employment. We involved people with direct experiences of racism and race inequality in its development and are now accountable to them for its delivery. Alongside our Race Equality Framework we have also just published our Fairer Scotland Action Plan.

The Scottish Government is fully committed to the Equality Act 2010 and the public sector equality duty it introduced. Scotland's additional legal framework sets out requirements for public authorities to set equality outcomes and to undertake equality impact assessments alongside the collection, publication and use of diversity data. In 2017 we will go even further

when we commence the socio-economic duty in the Equality Act. Together, these duties ensure that information about who experiences inequalities and what these inequalities are, is at the top of the agenda whenever public bodies make decisions.

Officials from the Cabinet Office and Scottish Government are meeting to share perspectives and approaches. I also understand that Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities is hosting a meeting in London in December that my colleague Angela Constance, Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities will be attending. Although I am unsure about the merits of this specific scheme I am grateful for the opportunity for further dialogue. These meetings allow us to go into these matters in more detail.

Best Wishes
Nicola

NICOLA STURGEON