

## Information and Advice for Managers and black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Colleagues During COVID-19

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on how line managers can support black, Asian and minority ethnic employees who have concerns during COVID-19.

Network Rail employees have been confirmed as key workers as part of the national effort to protect the public and colleagues from COVID-19. Key workers are required by government policy to come into work where it is not practicable to work from home.

Managers will already have BAME team members who have received a shielding notice/letter from public health authorities and these team members will be shielding or working from home. This guidance applies to BAME team members who have not received a letter and are working normally.

Network Rail is actively monitoring the UK Government's advice on how COVID-19 affects the BAME population and will implement all appropriate advice as soon as it is published.

The information below is provided alongside the advice from the NHS, Public Health England, Public Health Wales and Health Protection Scotland, which provides the most up to date advice from the UK Government on what everyone should do following the outbreak of the COVID-19. Advice from these bodies will continue to be reviewed for any changes affecting our colleagues.

### Current Information

Data from the UK and overseas shows that the COVID-19 virus has a disproportionately significant impact on people from ethnic minority backgrounds.<sup>1</sup> NHS England said 16.2% of COVID-19 deaths up to 17 April were of people from a BAME background.<sup>2</sup> This is higher than the UK population from a BAME background which is approximately 13%<sup>3</sup>.

The reasons for this effect on people from a BAME background are complex and not yet fully understood. Underlying health conditions, eg higher levels of diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, alongside gender, physiological, and socio-economic factors, need to be considered together with science. To date the evidence on the infection rates and adverse health impacts of COVID-19 on people from a BAME

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-52219070>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-52366390>

<sup>3</sup> UK census 2011

background is inconclusive. To address this gap in understanding, the NHS and Public Health England have announced a review, which is now underway.

Network Rail will continually review the latest Government and Public Health England guidance, and once published, will respond to the findings of the UK government's report. In the interim, this document offers guidance on what line managers can do to support a discussion with BAME employees using the information that is available at the moment.

## Advice

Current guidance does not mandate self-isolation for people from a BAME background at this time, however, working from home where possible and putting social distancing into practice in the workplace should be followed.

As with all employees, line managers are encouraged to be conscious that BAME employees in their team may be worried about their own and their family's health in the light of the information published about COVID-19 and the impact on people from a BAME background. Black, Asian and minority ethnic colleagues are likely to be aware of family and friends that have been affected by COVID-19.

Line managers should have a conversation with their BAME team members to understand whether there are any concerns related to the impact of COVID-19 on their lives. This conversation can begin with line managers acknowledging that the reasons for the significantly higher impact on people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds are not fully understood, that it will be different for each person and the absence of a full explanation may give some people an additional cause for concern. Line managers can ask what support an individual needs. Please see the support section below for further advice.

Where possible and practicable, working from home may be authorised. Where this is not possible, employees should be given tasks that they can undertake using the current guidance for key workers. It is unlikely that there will be a need to change duties where social distancing is possible. However, diligence in achieving social distancing should be monitored along with regular thorough hand-washing, the cleaning of work areas, flexibility in start and finish times to allow for social distancing on journeys, and the use of personal protective equipment where appropriate. Further information can be found on the [Guidelines for key workers - Social Distancing in the workplace](#)

Where it is not possible for an employee to work from home, or return to work with their previous duties, it may be practicable for the employee to remain in work and undertake alternative duties. In cases where there is ongoing employee concern, or tasks involving

working within 2m and no additional controls can be put in place, then advice should be sought from the Optima Health clinical team.

Optima Health will conduct triage assessments and give a clinical view on the level of vulnerability of the individual, considering all factors. Optima will advise employees and line managers accordingly

## Support

- Line managers and employees can find support on [MyConnect](#) via the Corona Virus hub.
- Optima Health are available for employees on 0330 008 5972 to discuss any health concerns relating to COVID-19.
- HR Direct are available for support and advice for line managers on 0800 0 546 547.
- Please remember that our Validium support team are on hand to help and can be contacted on 0800 358 4858 to support to anyone who is experiencing stress or anxiety.
- There are also toolkits such as Every Mind Matters for looking after your wellbeing, which can be found [here](#).
- Additionally, there are guidelines available for all line managers and employees detailing our support in times of need in the Compassionate and bereavement leave policy [here](#)
- Line managers should familiarise themselves with the '[Everyone Guide to supporting bereaved employees](#)' which offers guidance on how to support employees who have been bereaved. This is particularly important as some employees may be experiencing multiple bereavements during this time. They may also be experiencing additional challenges with funeral arrangements and getting emotional support from friends and family due to social-distancing measures.
- For more guidance about having discussions about ethnicity Business in the Community (BiTC) have produced 'Let's Talk About Race', <https://networkrail.sharepoint.com/sites/DiversityAndInclusion/SitePages/Everyone-Matters-Resources.aspx>
- Cultural Fusion is our employee network for black, Asian and minority ethnic employees and can be contacted on [CulturalFusion@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:CulturalFusion@networkrail.co.uk)
- For further support and guidance contact the diversity and inclusion team [DiversityandInclusion@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:DiversityandInclusion@networkrail.co.uk)