



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Baroness Merron
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State*

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Dear colleagues

I am writing to thank you all for your interest and contributions to the Oral Questions debate on the important issue raised by Lord Farmer, on 20 January, namely the health and social impacts of first-cousin marriages.

I would like to take this opportunity to make a minor clarification on a statistic regarding the incidence for British Pakistani couples in Bradford who are first cousins. The incidence had in fact reduced from 39% between 2007 and 2010 to 27% between 2016 and 2019 – not *by* 27% as I cited erroneously. I apologise for any confusion.

I am also keen to follow up on some of the helpful questions raised in the debate. Firstly, Baroness Udin, asked about what we might learn from other countries, including Pakistan, Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia, about awareness campaigns in those countries. As I noted in the debate, while such discussions have not taken place to date, if an appropriate opportunity arises, I would be more than happy to raise the issue and learn from those countries, though I note that such campaigns are by their nature likely to be country specific and that it is therefore equally important to engage with these communities in this country, as we are doing.

Lord Foulkes also asked about plans for any discussions with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office about the data for and experience in some of our overseas territories, particularly Tristan da Cunha and St Helena. I have asked my officials in the Department of Health and Social Care to engage with FCDO on this at working level in the first instance.

I hope this follow up is helpful and look forward to engaging with you all on this issue again in the future. I am copying this letter to all who spoke and will deposit in the House Library.

All good wishes

BARONESS MERRON