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**Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP**  
Chancellor of the Exchequer  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

**Sent via email**

17 February 2022

Dear Chancellor of the Exchequer,

### Re. Funding for ONS infection survey

We are writing to you to express concern about the reported winding down of the ONS COVID-19 infection survey.

We would urge you to ensure that the infection survey has sufficient funding to continue with its vital work. The ONS infection survey uses a fraction of the NHS Test and Trace budget but is widely regarded as the 'gold standard' in COVID-19 prevalence reporting.

With the Government having ended PCR testing for symptomatic patients, we are already unable to rely on the daily published new cases data to reflect circulating levels of community infection. Furthermore, with the removal of restrictions, we know that there is a lack of systematic lateral flow testing amongst the public or of self-reporting of results on the NHS App.

The ONS data is therefore the only source of information that can provide us an accurate picture of the true prevalence of Covid-19 in the community and to alert us of trends, including variation in infection rates in different parts of the country. It is vital to inform public health policy, as well as serving as an early warning should infection rates rapidly rise, to enable timely interventions to reduce subsequent increases in serious ill health and hospital admissions.

COVID-19, even as the Omicron variant, is not a mild illness for many and should be monitored closely and stringently for experts to be able to make evidence-based decisions to protect the public's health, especially for those who are most vulnerable. I would urge you to look closely at this decision.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr Chaand Nagpaul CBE**  
BMA council chair

**Chief executive officer:** Tom Grinyer

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**CC. Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care**