Government
Equalities Office

Putting equality at the heart of government

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A Fair and Equal Society For All

Making Equality Law Work

Jonathan Rees

25 November 2009

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Government Equalities Office

- **Established as a separate Department in October 2007 working to Harriet Harman, supported by Vera Baird, Maria Eagle and Michael Foster:**
- **Aim: Improve equality and reduce discrimination and disadvantage**
  - **Strengthen and streamline legislative framework**
  - **Improve equality at work:**
  - **Open up opportunities in public life:**
  - **Improve life chances and public services**
  - **Promote physical safety**
- **Sponsor Equality and Human Rights Commission and Woman's National Commission**
- **Work Closely with OGDs, public, private and voluntary sectors**

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What are the challenges

- **Pay: Gender Pay Gap** **22.0%**
- **Employment: BME gap** **13%**
  - **Disabled gap** **26%**
- **Public Life:** **200 years before an even gender split in H of C**
- **Life Chances:** **poor bright children overtaken by age 5**
- **Society:** **6 out of 10 children suffer homophobic bullying**
  1 in 5 older people can't get travel insurance

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EQUALITY BILL PACKAGE

Streamlining

- **Distilling 9 Acts into 1**

Strengthening

- **New Single Public Sector Duty**
- **End to Age Discrimination in Goods, Facilities and Services**
- **Gender Pay Reporting**
- **New "Socio-Economic" Duty**

Supporting

- **Promote procurement, positive action, better enforcement and guidance**
- **Read-across to draft EU anti-discrimination directive under negotiation**

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Territorial Scope

- **Nearly all the Bill is GB-wide (England, Wales, Scotland)**

Except for

- **Socio-Economic Duty: England and Wales but not Scotland**
- **Public Sector Specific Duties: Scotland (as now) and Wales (New) Ministers to impose specific duties on their purely national authorities and devolved functions of certain cross border authorities**
- **Northern Ireland: <u>all</u> devolved save for all women shortlists.**

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Improving Life Chances

- **New Socio – Economic Duty**
  - **Strategic: aimed at prioritisation**
  - **Targeted: limited number of public bodies**
  - **Complementary: no new individual rights**

- **National Equality Panel**
  - **Understanding Connections**
  - **Report January 2010**

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Fairer and More Responsive Public Services

- **New Single Streamlined Duty**
- **Wider Scope (New: age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and gender reassignment.**
- **Key Principles: evidence, involvement, transparency, and capability**
- **Eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations**
- **Want culture change and engagement not tick box**
- **Government policy statement scheduled for January 2010**

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Ending Age Discrimination

- **Already banned in workplace (with review in 2010)**
- **Evidence of problems in health, social care, financial services**
- **Our approach based on following principles**
  - **fair**
  - **proportionate**
  - **clear and transparent**
  - **practical and realistic**
- **South West Review published October 2009**
- **Government policy statement: January 2010**

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Fairness at Work

- **Committed to narrowing gender pay gap and BME/disability employment gaps**
- **Introducing Gender Pay Reports**
  - **EHRC private sector consultation**
  - **GEO public sector proposals**
- **Banning Secrecy Clauses on Pay**
- **Investigating Problem Sectors – EHRC inquiries**
- **Using Public Procurement**
- **Exploring an Equality Standard**
- **Tackle Root causes**
  - **Reconvened Women and Work Commission**
  - **January 2010 Women and Employment Strategy**

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Opening Up Opportunities

- **Extend Scope To Use Positive Action**
- **Promoting More Diverse Political Representation**
  - **Women Only Shortlists**
  - **Speaker's Conference**
  - **BAME Councillor's Taskforce**
- **New Targets and Action Plan on Public Appointments**
- **Senior Civil Service: Practising what we preach**
- **Woman on Private Sector Boards: Cranfield research**

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Making It Work

- **Strengthening Employment Tribunal Powers**
- **Support for Equality Representatives**
- **Dual Discrimination**
- **EHRC Leading on Improved Guidance**
- **"Integrating" – eg** **Skills White Paper**
  Employment White Paper

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WHAT'S IT MEAN FOR YOU?

- **Builds on what's good already**
- **Some areas to consider:**
  - **Gender Pay Reporting**
  - **Positive Action**
  - **Procurement**

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What Happens Next

- **Bill completed in Commons Committee: report 2 December**
- **House of Lords: 5th Session (Dec 2009 +)**
- **Enacted: Spring 2010**
- **Consultations on Secondary Legislation: summer 2010**
- **Enter into Force: Autumn 2010 and Later**
- **EU Directive Agreed: Unlikely before summer 2010**

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Final Messages

- Generic all strand approach: break down silos
- Recognition of differential need (eg women prisoners)
- Recognition of socio-economic factors
- Emphasis on equality data and evidence
- Emphasis on community and user participation
- Move from process to outcomes
- Move equality from margins to mainstream

- Keen to develop Bill and make it work

- If you want to know more, go to www.equalities.gov.uk