

“The Public Sector Equality Duty One Year On”

Date: Wednesday, 25th April 2012

Time: 11.00am – 3.30pm (including networking lunch)

Venue: The Commonwealth Club, Westminster

“They [the public sector] must consider the impact of the cuts they are making and look to make sure that they are fair and that's the point of the equality duty in anything you do. I remind colleagues endlessly.”
- *Lynne Featherstone MP, Equalities Minister, July 2011*

*The House Magazine, written for and by Parliamentarians, is to hold one of its regular **Policy and Practice Briefings**. These aim to provide a forum for practitioners, local policy makers and civil servants to debate key issues with leading figures from within Westminster, Whitehall and local government.*

The Context

The public sector Equality Duty came into force on 5 April 2011 and was followed by Specific Duties Regulations that came into force on 10 September 2011. While the EHRC has worked to produce a Code of Practice to explain the duty in more detail, the Government has decided that this will not be laid before parliament. According to the EHRC “The Government is keen to reduce bureaucracy around the Equality Act 2010, and feels that further statutory guidance may place too much of a burden on public bodies”. Instead a draft code will be issued as non statutory guidance. How has the public sector been affected by the duty, what lessons have been learned so far and what can be expected from the non statutory code?

Key Issue to be Addressed Include:

- What does the Government plan to do to reduce bureaucracy around the Equality Act and how will this affect the Equality Duty?
- What can be expected from the EHRC's non statutory code?
- Too little or too much – what represents the right level of response to the duty?
- How has the duty been enforced to date?
- How will it be enforced in the future?
- Equality Objectives – how might they be used to hold public authorities to account?
- What legal challenges have been brought and how successful have they been?
- Equality in an age of austerity – how can public services demonstrate their cuts are fair?
- How can services ensure that their equality duties are in the minds of all of their employees and not just the ‘enlightened few’?
- How much of an impact has the duty had on the public sector so far?
- Has the UK become more equal since the duty was introduced?

The Event

Delegates in the **morning policy session** will be briefed about and discuss current and future developments surrounding the public sector Equality Duty. The **afternoon policy into practice session** will examine what lessons can be learned a year on from the duty coming into force, looking at emerging examples of good and bad practice. Participants will have the opportunity to engage with the expert panel throughout.

Who Should Attend?

Delegates will be drawn from across the public sector whose work specifically requires them to have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

For further information please see the agenda below

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10.15 *Registration and Morning Refreshments*

11.00 **Chair’s Introduction**

- **Amanda Ariss**, Chief Executive, Equality & Diversity Forum

11.05 **The Government Perspective**

- **Tim Morgan**, Government Equalities Office

11.30 **The Policy Horizon**

- Current & Future Developments

- What can be expected from the EHRC’s non statutory code?
 - How has the duty been enforced to date?
 - How will it be enforced in the future?
 - Equality Objectives – how will they be used to hold public authorities to account?
 - How much of an impact has the duty had on the public sector so far?
 - Has the UK become more equal since the duty was introduced?
- **Macius Kurowski**, Equality & Human Rights Commission
 - **Linda Bellos OBE**, Chair, Institute of Equality and Diversity Practitioners

13.15 *Networking Lunch*

14.15 **Policy Into Practice**

– Lessons Learned So Far

- What legal challenges have been brought and how successful have they been?
 - Too little or too much – what represents the right level of response to the duty?
 - Equality in an age of austerity – how can public services demonstrate their cuts are fair?
 - How can services ensure that their equality duties are in the minds of all of their employees and not just the ‘enlightened few’?
- **Paul Deemer**, Equality and Diversity Manager, NHS Employers
 - **Michael Keating**, Head of Service, One Tower Hamlets, London Borough of Tower Hamlets
 - **Winston Brown**, Brown & Co Solicitors

15.25 **Chair’s Summary**

15.30 **Event Close**

Please note that all speakers and the agenda are subject to change without notice