



House of Commons  
Women and Equalities  
Committee

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**Levelling Up and  
equality: a new  
framework for change**

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**First Report of Session 2021–22**

*Report, together with formal minutes relating  
to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
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## Women and Equalities Committee

The Women and Equalities Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Government Equalities Office (GEO).

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## Summary

Our inquiry, *The role of the Government Equalities Office (GEO): embedding equalities across government*, examined the structures and mechanisms that underpin the Government's equalities agenda, and how effectively the GEO, and wider Equality Hub, is delivering on its responsibilities.

We welcome the recent expansion of the Government's approach to equalities to include more focus on socio-economic inequality and geographic disparities—part of the “Levelling Up” agenda. We readily accept our role in scrutinising the Government's Levelling Up and social mobility policies, while continuing to have a cross-government scrutiny role in relation to conventional equality issues, as defined by the Equality Act. The Government should bring forward a revised House of Commons Standing Order to better reflect our expanded remit. We have been consistently disappointed with the Government's engagement with our scrutiny to date, and it is particularly disappointing that its apparent unwillingness to be openly scrutinised was reflected in this inquiry, which is at the core of our remit. We hope its response to this Report can be a watershed in its approach to open scrutiny of its equality policies.

The lack of a cross-government, pan-equalities strategy, backed up by annual Action Plans with clear and measurable objectives, is the key weakness in the Government's approach to equality issues. Without an overarching strategy or Action Plans, there is a risk of going backwards on important and hard-won rights for groups of people protected by the Equality Act. The new Equality Data Programme should be seized as an opportunity for the Government to set out, together with its proposed Levelling Up policies, a cross-departmental pan-equalities strategy based on data on the full range of factors, including protected characteristics under the Equality Act and the intersections between them and socio-economic and geographic disparities. Levelling Up and equality should be complementary, high priority agendas, driven by a full-time Secretary of State for Equalities and Levelling Up and a new Cabinet Committee.

The establishment of the Equality Hub, and its permanent place in the Cabinet Office, is positive, but the potential benefits are yet to be realised. The Government's equalities machinery remains fragmented, with ministers dispersed across several disparate departments, and its approach to equality issues lacks coherence. The Equality Hub's structure and objectives are unclear, and it lacks public profile, transparency and accountability. This is unacceptable and must be addressed through regular publication of corporate information and increased public and civil society engagement. Issues including Gender Recognition Act reform and communication of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities' findings have emphasised the need for more effective civil society engagement on sensitive and delicately balanced rights issues. The Government should invite the Equality and Human Rights Commission to lead this work. The Equality Hub should conduct a review of the Government's communications on, and management of, sensitive and balanced rights issues.

The Equality Hub should have been better able to anticipate and mitigate the unequal effects of the pandemic, some of which were predictable. The lessons from this must be learned through the work of the statutory public inquiry next year. The pandemic has demonstrated the vital importance of Equality Impact Assessments, for which

the Equality Hub should be a strong advocate across government. The Equality Hub must have a key role in the development of the next National Risk Register, so that the equality implications of future crises are more effectively managed.

# Levelling Up and equality: a new framework for change

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## Our inquiry and this Report

1. We launched our inquiry, *The role of the Government Equalities Office (GEO): embedding equalities across Government*, in January 2021. This was during the third national Covid-19 lockdown and after extensive evidence had emerged showing that the pandemic had exacerbated pre-existing inequalities.<sup>1</sup> In this core scrutiny inquiry (see para 14, Our scrutiny role, below), we set out to examine how the GEO was delivering on its responsibilities and how effectively its structures and its place in government were enabling it to do so.<sup>2</sup> The first part of this Report sets out the key areas of inquiry that we focussed on, and examines the evidence we received. The second part of the Report includes our conclusions and recommendations.

2. We received around 50 written submissions from a range of individuals, including two former Ministers for Women and Equalities, The Rt Hon Theresa May MP and The Rt Hon Baroness Morgan of Cotes (Nicky Morgan), academic experts and equality stakeholder organisations. We heard oral evidence from the Institute for Government, the equality and human rights stakeholder network, Equally Ours, The Equality Trust, former Minister for Women and Equalities and campaigner for social mobility, Justine Greening, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the then Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade, and Minister for Women and Equalities, The Rt Hon Liz Truss MP, now Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs. We commissioned YouGov to conduct polling on public awareness of the Government Equalities Office and its work, details of which are included in an Annex to this Report. We also conducted an online survey of our stakeholders, to gauge their views on the effectiveness of the Government's engagement with them about the equality issues they care most about.<sup>3</sup> We are grateful to everyone who contributed evidence or took part in the surveys. A full list of witnesses is included at the end of this Report. We also thank our Specialist Adviser, Janet Veitch, an independent equalities consultant and former senior civil servant, for her insightful advice throughout our inquiry.

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1 See, for example, our Covid-19 related Reports: Women and Equalities Committee, First Report of Session 2019–21, [Unequal impact? Coronavirus, disability and access to services: interim Report on temporary provisions in the Coronavirus Act](#), HC 386; Third Report of Session 2019–21, [Unequal impact? Coronavirus and BAME people](#), HC 384; Fourth Report of Session 2019–21, [Unequal impact? Coronavirus, disability and access to services: full Report](#), HC 1050; Fifth Report of Session 2019–21, [Unequal impact? Coronavirus and the gendered economic impact](#), HC 385

2 Women and Equalities Committee press release, "[How can we put equalities at the heart of Government?](#)", 13 January 2021

3 Women and Equalities Committee online survey, 'How engaged do you feel the Government is with the work of your organisation?', launched 21 May 2021, accessed 2 August 2021 (now closed)

## The Government Equalities Office's place in government

3. As our predecessor Committee set out in a Report in 2018, the GEO's status and place within the machinery of government has evolved considerably since a unit was first established in 1997, in the then Department of Social Security, to support the work of the first Minister for Women, The Rt Hon Harriet Harman QC MP.<sup>4</sup>

4. The GEO now has a much broader remit to reduce inequalities for all, including by taking the lead across government on the Equality Act 2010. The Act gives everyone legal protection from discrimination and confers a positive duty on public bodies to take steps to advance equality and foster good relations across nine “protected characteristics” (people's age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership status; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation).<sup>5</sup> The GEO has in recent years been particularly focused on women's equality and issues for people who are lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgender (LGBT). While the GEO, as government lead on the Equality Act, has an important role coordinating equality issues across government, other departments have lead responsibility for specific issues. For example, the Home Office leads on tackling violence against women and girls; the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (from 19 September, rebranded the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities)<sup>6</sup>, is responsible for issues of community integration, race and faith; the Department for Work and Pensions leads on enabling disabled people's full participation in society; and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy oversees a number of employment policies with equality implications, such as maternity, paternity and shared parental leave, and flexible working.<sup>7</sup> The GEO is responsible for reporting, at UK state level, implementation of international equality conventions and treaties, notably the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).<sup>8</sup> Other government departments oversee the implementation of other UN Conventions in the UK (see para 47, International equality commitments, below). In December 2020, the Minister for Women and Equalities signalled the Government's intention to focus more on socio-economic and geographic inequality across the UK (see para 17, Socio-economic and geographic equality and Levelling Up, below).<sup>9</sup>

5. Our predecessor Committee's Report described the GEO's itinerant history, during which it moved frequently between government departments, depending on which Cabinet minister was appointed to the dual role of Minister for Women and Equalities (see para 25, The role of Minister for Women and Equalities, below). The Committee noted then that the policy function for women and equalities had been passed between eight different government departments since 1997. The GEO had been based in three different departments in the preceding two years alone. Our predecessor Committee described the highly disruptive nature of this departmental and ministerial “churn”, while noting that any potential benefits, such as synergies between departmental policies and the Government's equality objectives, had been “incidental and short-lived rather than part of a planned strategy.” It recommended the GEO's next move be a permanent one

4 Women and Equalities Committee, *The role of Minister for Women and Equalities and the place of GEO in government*, Second Report of Session 2017–19, HC 356

5 Equality and Human Rights Commission, ‘[Protected characteristics](#)’, accessed 27 July 2021

6 ‘[Ambitious plans to drive levelling up agenda](#)’, GOV.UK press release, 19 September 2021

7 For a more complete list of equality issues and responsible government departments, see ‘[About Us](#)’, Government Equalities Office (accessed 31 August 2021)

8 GOV.UK, ‘[Government Equalities Office: About Us](#)’, accessed 27 July 2021

9 CAPX, ‘[The new fight for fairness – Liz Truss' speech at the Centre for Policy Studies](#)’, accessed 28 July 2021

and considered that the natural home for the GEO's cross-cutting equalities function was close to the coordinating centre of government, in the Cabinet Office.<sup>10</sup>

## Establishment of the Equality Hub

6. In November 2018, the then Minister for Women and Equalities, The Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP, announced that the Government accepted the Committee's recommendation, and that the GEO would move into the Cabinet Office permanently, from April 2019.<sup>11</sup> The GEO moved into the Cabinet Office to sit alongside the Race Disparity Unit, which had been established following the Race Disparity Audit of October 2017.<sup>12</sup> From November 2019, the Office for Disability Issues transferred into the Cabinet Office from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and was renamed the Disability Unit.<sup>13</sup> It still, however, has a DWP minister and reports to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions at Cabinet level (see para 32, The junior ministerial roles, below). From around this time, ministers began referring to these three previously distinct units - the GEO, the Race Disparity Unit and the Disability Unit - collectively as "an equalities hub" within the Cabinet Office.<sup>14</sup> More recently, the Government began referring to it as "the Equality Hub", although the Hub is yet to establish a public-facing or corporate identity of its own, or set out clearly its structures and objectives.<sup>15</sup> Alongside the Government's intention to focus more on socio-economic inequality, the Minister for Women and Equalities announced in December 2020 that the Social Mobility Commission's government sponsorship would pass from the Department for Education to the Equality Hub.<sup>16</sup>

## Rationale, transparency and accountability

7. There was broad support from expert witnesses to our inquiry for the GEO's move into the Cabinet Office.<sup>17</sup> The Institute for Government (IfG) was clear that a permanent move had the potential to overcome the considerable practical challenges experienced during the GEO's itinerant phase:

Constant relocation of staff within Whitehall resulted in many prosaic practical issues: difficulty accessing new IT systems and offices, regular disruption to working practices and the challenge of adapting to new environments and departmental cultures. Nicky Morgan [The Rt Hon Baroness Morgan of Cotes, who was Minister for Women and Equalities, 2014–16] described the move from DCMS to DfE as "quite tricky and quite traumatic". IfG work has found that departmental restructures are costly and time-consuming for the ministers and officials involved, distracting them from their day jobs.<sup>18</sup>

10 Women and Equalities Committee, *The role of Minister for Women and Equalities and the place of GEO in government*, Second Report of Session 2017–19, HC 356, para 27

11 HC Deb, 15 November 2018, [col 430](#)

12 GOV.UK, 'Race Disparity Unit', accessed 26 July 2021

13 HC Deb, 25 June 2019, [col 30WS](#)

14 See, for example, HC Deb, 1 July 2019, [col 906](#)

15 See, for example, HC Deb, 6 May 2020, [col 542](#); The Equality Hub ([GEO0042](#))

16 CAPX, 'The new fight for fairness – Liz Truss' speech at the Centre for Policy Studies', accessed 28 July 2021

17 See, for example, [Q1](#) [Tansy Hutchinson]; [Q2](#) [Tim Durrant]; Women's Aid Federation of England ([GEO0007](#)); Equality and Human Rights Commission ([GEO0044](#)); Equally Ours ([GEO0047](#)); Letter dated 3 September 2021 from The Rt Hon Baroness Morgan of Cotes

18 Institute for Government ([GEO0049](#))

8. However, there was much less certainty about the rationale for the Equality Hub and its constituent units, their respective objectives and the Government's overall strategy for equalities as defined in the Equality Act. The Equality and Human Rights Commission and others noted that the Government had not yet set out a clear rationale for including specific focus on some equality issues (women's equality; LGBT rights; disability rights; and racial and ethnic disparities) within the Hub, while excluding others.<sup>19</sup> The Centre for Better Ageing and Equally Ours both noted the lack of attention given to age discrimination, for example.<sup>20</sup> As noted above, and emphasised by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, issues of religion and belief currently sit outside of the Equality Hub, in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities', Faith Team.<sup>21</sup> The Equality Hub's written submission made no reference at all to age discrimination, issues of religion or belief or to the equality implications of marriage and civil partnership status.<sup>22</sup>

9. Witnesses to our inquiry, as in 2018, argued that the lack of a published cross-government equalities strategy, accompanied by a regularly updated Action Plan, was a key weakness in the Government's approach.<sup>23</sup> The GEO last published a strategic plan in July 2019, covering 2019/20.<sup>24</sup> The Equality Hub has not yet published a strategy, or any corporate documents, of its own. It is unsurprising, therefore, that very few people are aware of the Equality Hub or its work (see Annex A).

10. The Cabinet Office's Outcome Delivery Plan for 2021/22, published in July after we had finished hearing evidence, includes a section on the Government's broad cross-government equality "delivery milestones", which are reproduced below in their entirety. They are very broad, lacking detail about what the Government intends to do to meet them, and lack targets against which to measure success:

- Lead work to analyse and tackle disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 for ethnic minority and disabled people;
- Examine inequality in the UK, across the whole population through delivery and responding to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities;
- Improve the quality of evidence and data in government about the types of barriers different groups face through the Equality Data Programme;
- Work with DWP to implement the National Strategy for Disabled People;
- Promote gender equality in the COVID-19 recovery, by working to increase women's economic participation, and reduce occupational segregation;
- Legislating to ban conversion therapy, including consulting widely, and putting in place support for victims;
- Reduce bureaucracy in the gender recognition process through digitisation and reducing the fees for GRC application;
- Promote international action to protect and promote the rights of LGBT people,

19 Equality and Human Rights Commission ([GEO0044](#))

20 The Centre for Better Ageing ([GEO0018](#)); Equally Ours ([GEO0047](#))

21 Equality and Human Rights Commission ([GEO0044](#))

22 The Equality Hub ([GEO0042](#))

23 See, for example, [Q5](#) [Tansy Hutchinson]; [Q6](#) [Justine Greening]

24 GEO, [GEO Strategic Plan: 2019/20](#), July 2019

including through successful delivery of an international conference; and

- Through the work of the Social Mobility Commission, assess progress on improving social mobility, provide published advice to ministers, and carry out social mobility advocacy.<sup>25</sup>

11. It is not clear from the above the extent to which the Government remains committed to longer-term policies and plans announced under the previous administration, notably the 2018 LGBT Action Plan and the Gender Equality Roadmap published in 2019.<sup>26</sup> These policies were central elements of the GEO’s Strategic Plan for 2019/20, which has not been updated.<sup>27</sup>

12. The Equality and Human Rights Commission reported there had been “no substantive progress” on the Gender Equality Roadmap since 2019.<sup>28</sup> In oral evidence before us on 25 May, the Minister for Women and Equalities indicated that the Government did not feel bound by the LGBT action plan, as it had been developed and published under the previous administration. The LGBT Action Plan resulted from a national survey of 108,000 LGBT people and set out 75 commitments to help improve their lives, across key areas including health, rights and the law, representation, and education. It committed the Government to provide us with regular updates on implementation, but to date we have not received any. When we asked the Minister whether the Government remained committed to the entirety of the Action Plan, she would only emphasise two current priorities—organisation of an international LGBT conference to be held in London in summer 2022 and a commitment to ban “conversion therapy”, subject to consultation. Asked why the Government had not provided us with any updates on progress on the Action Plan as a whole since July 2018, she said “it is probably because there is a new Government in place under the leadership of Boris Johnson.”<sup>29</sup>

13. Many key witnesses were concerned that there was no clear overarching rationale for the Government’s approach and called for a much clearer, cross-government equalities strategy.<sup>30</sup> Tim Durrant, an Associate Director at the IfG, noted simply that “you cannot hold any part of Government accountable to what it is going to do unless it says what it is going to do.”<sup>31</sup> Justine Greening, a former Minister for Women and Equalities and campaigner for social mobility, said an overarching strategy was “crucial”; without one the Government was “not going to get anywhere” with its Levelling Up or equalities agendas.<sup>32</sup>

## Our scrutiny role

14. The Women and Equalities Committee was first appointed by the House of Commons after the 2015 general election. Initially established for the 2015 Parliament, it became a permanent Select Committee after the 2017 general election. We and our predecessors

25 GOV.UK, ‘Cabinet Office Outcome Delivery Plan: 2021 to 2022’, section 5, accessed 26 July 2021

26 GEO, *LGBT Action Plan: Improving the lives of Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender People*, July 2018; HM Government, *Gender equality at every stage: a roadmap for change*, July 2019

27 GEO, *GEO Strategic Plan: 2019/20*, July 2019

28 Equality and Human Rights Commission ([GEO0044](#))

29 [Qq 63–5](#)

30 See, for example, Centre for Ageing Better ([GEO0018](#)); Equality and Human Rights Commission ([GEO0044](#)); Stonewall ([GEO0046](#)); Equally Ours ([GEO0047](#))

31 [Q6](#) [Tim Durrant]

32 [Q6](#) [Justine Greening]

have been appointed as a departmental Select Committee under the House of Commons' Standing Order 152, to "examine the expenditure, administration and policy" of the GEO and associated public bodies, including the Equality and Human Rights Commission.<sup>33</sup>

15. Our categorisation as a departmental Select Committee has always been anomalous because the GEO was only a very small government department in its own right from 2007–11.<sup>34</sup> We and our predecessors have tended to interpret our remit broadly, in effect functioning as a cross-cutting committee in a similar way to committees such as the Environmental Audit Committee. Now that the GEO is part of the Equality Hub, which in turn is a small part of the Cabinet Office, our categorisation as a departmental Select Committee, rather than a cross-cutting Select Committee, is even more tenuous. As noted above, the Equality Hub has not published any plans, policy or corporate documents for us to scrutinise. Before we launched our inquiry, we did not have even the most basic information about its budgets and allocation of resources.<sup>35</sup> The Cabinet Office's Annual Report and Accounts for 2020–21 does not break this information down to the level of the Equality Hub and its constituent units.<sup>36</sup> Its Outcome Delivery Plan for 2021–22 shows the total budget for improving levels of equality across the UK is £19.6 million, with a total full-time equivalent workforce of 162 people.<sup>37</sup> The only breakdown to the level of the Equality Hub's constituent units is provided in the Equality Hub's supplementary written evidence to this inquiry, which we had to specifically request.<sup>38</sup>

### *The Government's engagement with our scrutiny*

16. In a written submission dated 30 March 2021, Marcus Bell, the Equality Hub's Director, confirmed his understanding of our central role in scrutinising the Equality Hub and cross-government equalities work.<sup>39</sup> However, we have been consistently disappointed with the GEO/Equality Hub's engagement with our scrutiny in this Parliament, to the extent that our Chair felt it necessary to raise concerns first directly with the Minister for Women and Equalities and then with Mr Speaker, the Leader of the House and the Chair of the Liaison Committee of Select Committee Chairs.<sup>40</sup> It is particularly disappointing that the Government's broader level of engagement with our work was reflected in its apparent unwillingness to be fully and openly scrutinised in this inquiry, which is at the core of our remit. Its initial written response to our call for evidence was a perfunctory six paragraphs, which, while providing some useful information, did not directly address our terms of reference. Our Chair wrote twice to Marcus Bell for further information, which was only partially provided. Information that had been provided to our predecessors was withheld from us (see para 35, A Cabinet Committee for equalities, below).<sup>41</sup> We requested

33 [Addendum to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, 152 \(2\)](#), 3 June 2015; [Addendum to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, 152 \(2\)](#), 19 October 2017

34 The GEO was formally constituted as a government department by the [Transfer of Functions \(Equality\) Order 2007](#), before being once again subsumed into a larger government department, initially the Home Office, from April 2011. See also, Women and Equalities Committee, [The role of Minister for Women and Equalities and the place of GEO in government](#), Second Report of Session 2017–19, HC 356, para 5

35 The only published breakdown of staffing and resources to the level of the Equality Hub's constituent units is provided in written evidence to our inquiry: Equality Hub ([GEO0053](#))

36 Cabinet Office, [Annual Report and Accounts 2020–21](#), July 2021

37 GOV.UK, '[Cabinet Office Outcome Delivery Plan: 2021 to 2022](#)', Breakdown of resource by work, accessed 26 July 2021

38 Equality Hub ([GEO0051](#))

39 [Letter dated 30 March 2021 from Marcus Bell, Director of the Equality Hub, to the Chair of the Committee](#)

40 Letters dated 30 June 2021 from the Chair of the Committee to: [Mr Speaker](#); The Rt Hon Jacob Rees-Mogg MP, [Leader of the House of Commons](#); and Sir Bernard Jenkin MP, [Chair of the Liaison Committee](#).

41 Letters from the Chair of the Committee to Marcus Bell, Director of the Equality Hub, dated [12 February](#) and [27 April 2021](#).

the appearance of all three GEO ministers (see para 32, The junior ministerial roles, below) to give oral evidence, but despite three months' notice and six proposed alternative dates, the Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch MP, and the then Minister for Women, Baroness Berridge of the Vale of Catmose, did not appear before us, citing difficulties in coordinating their diaries. We had to write to each minister to ask for information we needed; again, it was only partially provided.<sup>42</sup>

## Socio-economic inequality, geographic disparities and Levelling Up

17. The Minister for Women and Equalities' speech of 17 December 2020, entitled the "new fight for fairness", signalled an expansion of the Government's equalities agenda.<sup>43</sup> The speech took a stance against "those who believe people are defined by their protected characteristics", and argued that the equalities sector had become dominated by the "loud voices" of lobby groups supporting "fashionable" causes. The Government's new approach would "go well beyond the narrow focus on protected characteristics" and look to tackle socio-economic and geographic inequality by "levelling up opportunity" across the country. She announced a new Data Equality Programme, which would produce "a new life-path analysis of equality from the perspective of the individual, not groups."<sup>44</sup>

18. There was a mixed response to the speech. There was widespread support from key witnesses for the broad aim to address socio-economic and geographic inequality. For example, Equally Ours welcomed bringing social mobility into the broader equalities framework and Justine Greening emphasised that place and socio-economic status "really does matter" when thinking about equalities.<sup>45</sup> However, some witnesses reacted strongly against what they believed was an unnecessarily divisive tone. We heard evidence from Jayne Ozanne, after she had resigned from the Government's LGBT Advisory Panel, claiming that ministers were "ignorant" of key issues and creating a "hostile environment" for LGBT people.<sup>46</sup> She believed the Minister's comments in December 2020 were "directly aimed" at the Panel. She argued that:

We are not campaigning for protected characteristics, but for protections of people who are, frankly, some of the most vulnerable and most unrepresented in our society. That just showed me that she did not understand the people who she was there to champion. We need a Minister who truly understands and wants to stand and be our voice in Government for the concerns that we have. If anything, we were seeing the very opposite of that.<sup>47</sup>

The race equality think tank, the Runnymede Trust, also felt the Minister's criticisms were unfairly aimed at organisations like theirs and took issue with the apparent description of race equality as a "fashionable" cause.<sup>48</sup>

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42 Letters from the Chair of the Committee dated 27 April 2021 to Baroness Berridge of the Vale of Catmose, [Minister for Women](#), and Kemi Badenoch MP, [Minister for Equalities](#); replies dated 17 May 2021 from the [Minister for Women](#) and the [Minister for Equalities](#)

43 CAPX, 'The new fight for fairness – Liz Truss' speech at the Centre for Policy Studies', accessed 28 July 2021

44 CAPX, 'The new fight for fairness – Liz Truss' speech at the Centre for Policy Studies', accessed 28 July 2021

45 [Q10](#) [Tansy Hutchinson]; [Q11](#) [Justine Greening]; see also [Q26](#) [Melanie Field]

46 See, for example, "[Jayne Ozanne: Government equality adviser quits over 'hostile environment' for LGBT people](#)", *Sky News*, 10 March 2021

47 Oral evidence taken on 19 May 2021, HC (2021–22) 163, [Q13](#)

48 See, for example, "[Backlash as ministers vow to ditch focus on 'fashionable' fight against inequality](#)", *Independent*, 17 December 2020; Runnymede Trust, [Facts Don't Lie: One Working Class - Race, Class and Inequalities](#), February 2021

19. Some witnesses argued that there was an “oven-ready” solution to addressing socio-economic inequality.<sup>49</sup> The Equality and Human Rights Commission, The Equality Trust, Equally Ours and others called for enactment of section 1 of the Equality Act 2010, known as the “socio-economic duty”. Enactment in England would require all public authorities, when making strategic decisions, to have:

[...] due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage.<sup>50</sup>

In written evidence, the Equality and Human Rights Commission argued that the socio-economic duty was a potentially “powerful tool”, which, were it to be enacted in England, would:

[...] complement [...] the [Equality Act’s] Public Sector Equality Duty [...], which requires public bodies to have “due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities” on the grounds of the nine listed protected characteristics.<sup>51</sup>

In oral evidence, Baroness Falkner of Margravine, Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, was more qualified in her support for enactment of the duty in England, noting a lack of concrete evidence of its effectiveness (see para 22, below).<sup>52</sup>

20. All UK governments since the 2010 coalition have been opposed to the framing of the socio-economic duty in terms of equality of outcome, rather than equality of opportunity.<sup>53</sup> In January 2021, a GEO spokesperson said:

The policy objectives of the socio-economic duty do not align with the government’s agenda for greater social mobility, and there are no plans to implement the socio-economic duty for English and cross-border bodies.<sup>54</sup>

Answering a Parliamentary Question on 29 April 2021, the Minister for Equalities replied:

We have stated on many occasions that this duty [...] would be ineffectual. As merely a “due regard” duty, it requires no specific action from the public body concerned, and risks becoming a tick-box exercise, complied with to minimise the risk of litigation rather than to promote real change in society. The duty is also wrongly focussed on equalising socio-economic outcomes rather than opportunities. The Government’s preferred approach is to progress specific policies and practical actions that will deliver real change.<sup>55</sup>

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49 See, for example, [Q12](#) [Dr Wyporska]  
 50 Equality Act 2010, [section 1](#)  
 51 Equality and Human Rights Commission ([GEO0044](#))  
 52 [Q28](#)  
 53 See, for example, HM Government, *The Equality Strategy: Building a Fairer Britain*, December 2010, which included a commitment to repeal the socio-economic duty; HC Deb, 15 May 2012, [cols 28–9WS](#); PQ [24226](#) [on equality], 3 March 2020  
 54 “[Government urged to extend Equality Act to cover economic inequality](#)”, *The Independent*, 25 January 2021  
 55 PQ [186244](#) [on equality: public sector], 23 April 2021

21. The socio-economic duty has been in force in Scotland since April 2018 and was enacted in Wales from 31 March 2021.<sup>56</sup> Several English local authorities, notably Newcastle City Council and the North Tyne Combined Authority, have voluntarily decided to take decisions as if it were in force.<sup>57</sup>

22. As noted by Baroness Falkner, there is little evidence about the real-life effects of the duty in improving the lives of people on low incomes. In March 2021, the Equality and Human Rights Commission published a research paper, which found that most public authorities in Scotland and Wales believed that the duty already does, or will in the future, ensure inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage are considered in strategic decision-making. The Commission's paper noted that some Scottish authorities reported that the duty had "begun to influence and change the outcomes of decisions" but several reported that it had not, and nor had it "been used to set or tackle specific priorities to date."<sup>58</sup> The Commission found that "providing real and measurable improvements to people's lives was considered a longer-term aspiration for the duty in Scotland and Wales."<sup>59</sup> Justine Greening believed the socio-economic duty "could be part of the solution", alongside "systematic strategies to really drive change on the ground".<sup>60</sup>

23. A range of witnesses expressed a balanced view, arguing that it was only possible to understand and tackle the root causes of inequalities by considering the interaction between the whole range of factors, including socio-economic and geographic and those related to one or more protected characteristics and the "intersections" between them.<sup>61</sup> Baroness Morgan noted that "the discussion around intersectionality is growing" and argued that "modern equality policy must reflect that [...]".<sup>62</sup>

24. Given the existing legal framework, we wanted to know how the Minister's stated intention to focus on "individuals not groups" could align with its continuing lead role across government in relation to the Equality Act, and its protections for groups of people based on the nine characteristics. Marcus Bell told us the new Equality Data Programme was looking at a very wide range of large data sets available across government, to "look at as many factors as possible" and analyse their "relative importance". He told us:

The Secretary of State said to me fairly early on, when we were scoping the project, that she wanted to know more about whether race or socioeconomic background are more important in driving particular outcomes. That is precisely the kind of thing we are trying to get into.<sup>63</sup>

## The role of Minister for Women and Equalities

25. Since the establishment of the Minister for Women post in 1997 the role evolved to become Minister for Women and Equality from 2007 under Labour's Leader of the House of Commons, The Rt Hon Harriet Harman QC MP. The current job title, Minister for Women and Equalities, was established under the coalition government in 2010. The role

56 Equality and Human Rights Commission, *Evaluating the socio-economic duty in Scotland and Wales*, March 2021

57 *Ibid.*

58 *Ibid.*

59 *Ibid.*

60 [Q12](#)

61 See, for example, Women's Aid Federation of England ([GEO0007](#)); Nordic Model Now! ([GEO0010](#)); Equally Ours ([GEO0047](#)); Business Disability Forum ([GEO0048](#))

62 Letter dated 3 September 2021 from The Rt Hon Baroness Morgan of Cotes

63 [Q92](#)

has been held as an additional responsibility by several female Cabinet ministers: The Rt Hon Theresa May MP, Home Secretary (Minister for Women and Equalities, 2010–12); The Rt Hon Maria Miller MP, Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport (2012–14); The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP (now The Rt Hon Baroness Morgan of Cotes), Secretary of State for Education (2014–16); The Rt Hon Justine Greening MP (stood down as an MP in 2019), Secretary of State for Education (2016–18); The Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP, Secretary of State for International Development then Secretary of State for Defence (2018–19);<sup>64</sup> and The Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP (stood down as an MP in 2019), Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (July to September 2019).<sup>65</sup> The incumbent is The Rt Hon Liz Truss MP, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, who, at the time of our inquiry held the role as Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade.<sup>66</sup>

26. Our predecessor Committee’s recommendation in 2018 was that “the next Minister for Women and Equalities should have the job on a full-time basis and be part of the Cabinet Office team, with the right to attend Cabinet.” Its view was that the way the role was allocated, as an additional responsibility of a female Cabinet minister with another portfolio, “makes the role look like an afterthought” and that “any postholder with a demanding ‘day job’ would struggle to give it the attention it needs.”<sup>67</sup>

27. Witnesses expressed similar views in our inquiry, often noting the recently expanded remit of the Equality Hub and the particularly demanding nature of the incumbent’s then Cabinet brief as Secretary of State for International Trade in the context of the UK’s withdrawal from the European Union.<sup>68</sup> While noting that dual ministerial roles were well-established in government and not “inherently problematic”, the IfG warned that:

[...] there is always a risk that when a minister has two portfolios, the larger one takes over. Nicky Morgan has spoken of her concern about “a real danger that women and equalities would get squeezed out” when she held the role. Harriet Harman, who held the role twice, described how her private office in 1997 was concerned that she had “enough on her plate” and tried to prevent her from “engaging in it at all in order not to be distracted from my ‘main’ job”.<sup>69</sup>

28. There was some support for maintaining the dual role, particularly from witnesses who were in favour of Liz Truss’s “new fight for fairness” approach or supported her position on Gender Recognition Act reform from the perspective of women’s sex-based rights (see para 50, A refreshed approach to stakeholder engagement on balanced rights issues, below).<sup>70</sup>

64 Women and Equalities Committee, *The role of Minister for Women and Equalities and the place of GEO in government*, Second Report of Session 2017–19, HC 356, p 6

65 GOV.UK, ‘[The Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP](#)’, accessed 2 August 2021

66 GOV.UK, ‘[The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP](#)’, accessed 17 September 2021

67 Women and Equalities Committee, *The role of Minister for Women and Equalities and the place of GEO in government*, Second Report of Session 2017–19, HC 356, para 22

68 See, for example, Nordic Model Now! ([GEO0010](#)); Mermaids ([GEO0014](#)); Northern Ireland Women’s European Platform ([GEO0020](#)); Business in the Community ([GEO0028](#)); Fawcett Society ([GEO0032](#)); Equality and Human Rights Commission ([GEO0044](#)); Stonewall ([GEO0046](#)); Equally Ours ([GEO0047](#)); Business Disability Forum ([GEO0048](#))

69 Institute for Government ([GEO0049](#))

70 See, for example, Keep Prisons Single Sex ([GEO0004](#)); Ms Mary Buttolph ([GEO0027](#)); Ms Sarra Real ([GEO0034](#))

29. We heard evidence that the dual role could work well where there were clear policy synergies between a Secretary of State’s departmental role and equality objectives to which the minister was personally committed. Justine Greening, who held the post while Secretary of State for Education in 2016–18, described policy synergies between her education brief, for example the Opportunity Areas programme, and social mobility and equality objectives.<sup>71</sup> As such, she believed she was able successfully to “bring the two roles together”.<sup>72</sup> Baroness Morgan also felt she had successfully combined the role with her briefs in HM Treasury and then the Department for Education. She was “sceptical” about the benefits of having a full-time equalities minister at Cabinet level but emphasised that it was essential for the holder of the dual roles to “make the [equalities] brief a personal priority and make sure it is given sufficient weight in their meetings, policy discussions and other commitments [...]”.<sup>73</sup> The Rt Hon Theresa May MP did not believe the dual nature of the role impeded the GEO from “driving policy change” but emphasised that “it is vital the government of the day is committed to progressing the equalities agenda.”<sup>74</sup> She also noted statutory limitations on the number of Cabinet and paid ministerial posts.<sup>75</sup>

30. The Government’s position now, as in 2018, is that the Minister for Women and Equalities role works best when embedded with a Cabinet minister’s departmental responsibilities. In her December 2020 speech, Liz Truss said:

It is fundamentally important that the role of equality minister is held by someone who also has another cabinet job, as I do with trade. This ensures equality is not siloed, but is instead the responsibility of the whole government and all our elected representatives.<sup>76</sup>

In oral evidence on 25 May, she told us she believed her dual roles were “very compatible” but did not give specific examples of how she had used her international trade brief to advance the domestic equalities agenda.<sup>77</sup> Equally Ours emphasised the Minister’s relative lack of visibility in her equalities role, noting that she had made “only one significant speech [...] in the past year despite the inequalities exposed by the pandemic.”<sup>78</sup> Survey evidence shows that public awareness of Liz Truss as Minister for Women and Equalities is very low; 93% of respondents to our YouGov survey could not name Liz Truss as the minister and only 5% were able to correctly identify her (see Annex A).

31. Witnesses believed the relative lack of clear crossover between the domestic equalities agenda and international trade was potentially problematic.<sup>79</sup> Equally Ours told us:

We do not feel that the role is currently operating as a strong champion for equality across government. This may be due to the dual nature of the

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71 See GOV.UK, ‘[Policy paper: Opportunity areas](#)’, accessed 29 July 2021

72 [Q22](#)

73 [GEO0056](#)

74 [GEO0057](#)

75 [GEO0057](#); see also *Limitations on the number of Ministers*, Standard Note [SN03378](#), House of Commons Library, August 2021

76 CAPX, ‘[The new fight for fairness – Liz Truss’ speech at the Centre for Policy Studies](#)’, accessed 27 July 2021

77 [Q48](#)

78 Equally Ours ([GEO0047](#))

79 See, for example, [Q18](#) [Tim Durrant]

role: International Trade is a significant policy area, particularly following Brexit. Whatever the reason, it has led to feedback from our members that they feel action on equality has been lacking priority in government.<sup>80</sup>

### **The junior ministerial roles**

32. Since July 2017, the Minister for Women and Equalities has been supported by junior ministers, one with a brief for women and one leading on broader equality issues. Both are roles held in addition to their existing portfolios by ministers in different departments. In 2018, our predecessor Committee noted that the difficulties for the Minister for Women and Equalities in making an impact across government in her part-time role could to some extent be mitigated by support from the junior ministers, but that “they too have their hands full with departmental roles.”<sup>81</sup>

33. During our inquiry, the Minister for Women was The Rt Hon Baroness Berridge of the Vale of Catmose, who was also Minister for the School System in the Department for Education.<sup>82</sup> On 17 September, she was replaced by Baroness Stedman-Scott OBE DL, a Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Work and Pensions.<sup>83</sup> The Minister for Equalities is Kemi Badenoch MP, Minister of State in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (rebranded the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities from 19 September)<sup>84</sup> since the ministerial reshuffle of 16 September, who at the time of our inquiry held the role as Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury.<sup>85</sup> The Disability Unit, while part of the Equality Hub in the Cabinet Office, has a DWP Minister, the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, at the time of our inquiry Justin Tomlinson MP, now Chloe Smith MP.<sup>86</sup> A Cabinet Office Parliamentary Secretary, Julia Lopez MP, oversaw staffing of the Equality Hub until 16 September, when she was promoted to a Minister of State role in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.<sup>87</sup> At the time of writing her Equality Hub role had not been filled. On 19 September, the Government announced that The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP would take on the Levelling Up brief, with a new job title of Secretary of State for Levelling Up at the newly named Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Neil O’Brien MP, who in May was tasked with developing a Levelling Up White Paper before the end of the year, was appointed as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the new department.<sup>88</sup> On 21 September, Mike Freer MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Department for International Trade, was appointed to a role in the Equality Hub, working with the Minister for Equalities.<sup>89</sup> The Equality Hub’s ministerial team and civil service support is therefore fragmented across several disparate departments.

80 Equally Ours ([GEO0047](#))

81 Women and Equalities Committee, [The role of Minister for Women and Equalities and the place of GEO in government](#), Second Report of Session 2017–19, HC 356, para 21

82 GOV.UK, ‘[Baroness Berridge of the Vale of Catmose](#)’, accessed 2 August 2021

83 “[Ministerial appointments: September 2021](#)”, GOV.UK press release, 15 September 2021 (updated 19 September 2021)

84 “[Ambitious plans to drive levelling up agenda](#)”, GOV.UK press release, 19 September 2021

85 GOV.UK, ‘[Kemi Badenoch MP](#)’, accessed 17 September 2021

86 GOV.UK, ‘[Justin Tomlinson MP](#)’, accessed 2 August 2021; GOV.UK, ‘[Chloe Smith MP](#)’, accessed 17 September 2021

87 GOV.UK, ‘[Julia Lopez MP](#)’, accessed 17 September 2021

88 “[Ambitious plans to drive levelling up agenda](#)”, GOV.UK press release, 19 September 2021; “[Government to publish Levelling Up White Paper](#)”, GOV.UK press release, 4 May 2021; “[Ministerial appointments: September 2021](#)”, GOV.UK press release, 15 September 2021 (updated 19 September 2021)

89 “[Ministerial appointments: September 2021](#)”, GOV.UK press release, 15 September 2021 (updated 21 September 2021)

34. We wanted to get a sense of how ministers and their civil service teams could coordinate effectively in this structure. Despite the establishment of the Equality Hub within the Cabinet Office, we did not get a clear picture of a closely functioning cross-departmental team, even among the GEO's three ministers. For example, ministers did not provide a clear picture of how often they met as a team to discuss equalities issues and priorities for their respective equalities briefs. The Minister for Women and Equalities told us that “roughly speaking” she met with the Minister for Women and the Minister for Equalities weekly but that “every week is different in politics”.<sup>90</sup>

## A Cabinet Committee for equalities

35. In 2018, our predecessor Committee concluded that bringing the GEO into the Cabinet Office was not sufficient on its own to ensure continuity and profile for the Government's equalities work. It recommended the Government establish a Cabinet sub-Committee, chaired by the Minister for Women and Equalities, to develop a formal, written cross-departmental equalities strategy and drive progress across government, with contributions from all departments.<sup>91</sup> This recommendation has not been taken forward.

36. Expert witnesses stressed that a Cabinet Committee would not necessarily be enough to drive the Government's equalities and Levelling Up agendas but could be an important part of effective equalities machinery in government. Tim Durrant of the Institute for Government emphasised that it would only be effective if it were chaired by a committed minister who convened it regularly. He argued that, with the drive of a committed Cabinet minister as Chair, it could “absolutely be a force for change”.<sup>92</sup> Baroness Morgan argued that Cabinet Committees “have their place”, particularly where they focus on “a specific issue or legislative reform” rather than “endless high-level discussions without conclusion [...]”.<sup>93</sup> Justine Greening argued that the Committee that should be driving the equalities and Levelling Up agendas was the Cabinet itself, led by the Prime Minister.<sup>94</sup>

37. We wanted to know which, if any, current Cabinet Committees considered the Equality Hub's remit and how regularly they met to discuss the Government's cross-government equalities agenda.<sup>95</sup> We were surprised and disappointed to receive a reply from the Equality Hub stating:

It is a long-standing convention that information relating to the frequency, agenda and content of Cabinet and its Committees is not made public. For context, the concern is that the release of that information could undermine the principle of collective agreement and the ability of Ministers to openly debate policy in a confidential manner before accepting collective responsibility for a decision made at Cabinet or its Committees.<sup>96</sup>

38. Our Chair wrote again, noting that in 2018 our predecessor Committee had requested similar information about the roles of Cabinet Committees in equalities issues, which

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90 [Q55](#)

91 Women and Equalities Committee, *The role of Minister for Women and Equalities and the place of GEO in government*, Second Report of Session 2017–19, HC 356, para 29

92 [Q4](#)

93 [GEO0056](#)

94 [Q4](#)

95 [Letter dated 12 February from the Chair of the Committee to Marcus Bell, Director of the Equality Hub](#)

96 [Equality Hub \(GEO0051\)](#)

had been willingly provided, and repeating our request for the information we needed.<sup>97</sup> Again, it was not provided. Marcus Bell told us that “issues of equality and fairness are considered as part of the broader collective decision-making process in Government” and:

In addition, our Ministers attend Inter-Ministerial Groups (IMGs) and Cabinet Committees as and when appropriate, including standing membership of the new IMG on the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparities and of the IMG on Disability.<sup>98</sup>

## Lessons learned from the pandemic response

### *The importance of Equality Impact Assessments*

39. We spent much of 2020 and the early part of this year considering the unequal effects of the coronavirus pandemic on groups of people with protected characteristics. A key lesson we believe the Government must learn from its pandemic response is the vital importance of Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) of government policies, which we believe should be published. For example, in our Report on the unequal economic effects of the pandemic on women, we concluded that the design of the Government’s Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CRJS, or furlough) and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) “overlooked [...] the specific and well-understood labour market and caring inequalities faced by women”. Our view was that publishing EIAs would have better protected already disadvantaged groups from unequal effects of general pandemic response policies and could inform more effective responses to future crises.<sup>99</sup>

40. We were disappointed by the Government’s response to this recommendation, which stated that the Government had received advice from officials, including an analysis of unequal effects on people with protected characteristics, in line with its obligations under the Equality Act’s Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), but that it would not routinely publish EIAs. It noted that this had been the position of successive governments. Its argument against publication of EIAs was that “there needs to be adequate space for officials and Ministers to share and discuss in confidence all aspects of policy advice.”<sup>100</sup> This appears to depart from the Equality and Human Rights Commission’s guidance to public authorities that:

Publishing the results of assessment increases transparency and accountability. We recommend that you publish the results of your assessment of the equality impact as soon as possible after deciding to implement your policy.<sup>101</sup>

41. Our view, as expressed by our Chair in a letter last year to the Minister for Women and Equalities calling for publication of an EIA of the Coronavirus Act, was, and remains, that robustly conducted and published EIAs have much broader benefits, allowing “experts,

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97 [Letter dated 27 April from the Chair of the Committee to Marcus Bell, Director of the Equality Hub](#)

98 [Equality Hub \(GEO0053\)](#)

99 Women and Equalities Committee, [Unequal impact? Coronavirus and the gendered economic impact](#), Fifth Report of Session 2019–21, HC 385, paras 16–7

100 Women and Equalities Committee, [Unequal impact? Coronavirus and the gendered economic impact: Government response to the Committee’s fifth report of Session 2019–21](#), First Special Report of Session 2021–22, HC 134, Table A, recommendations 1 and 2

101 [‘Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) and the equality duty’](#), Equality and Human Rights Commission, accessed 31 August 2021

interest groups and, crucially, those most affected to help shape the Government's plans to mitigate impacts." Publication also "allows those who may be particularly affected by a policy or legislation to better understand what might happen to them as a result."<sup>102</sup>

42. The lack of published EIAs for major pandemic response policies was again identified by witnesses to this inquiry as a weakness in the Government's approach.<sup>103</sup> While the law does not require government departments to conduct and publish EIAs in order to meet the PSED, and, since 2011, the Government has not required departments to do so for all policies, the courts "place significant weight on the existence of some form of documentary evidence" of compliance.<sup>104</sup> Robustly conducted, published EIAs could be considered the amongst the best and most transparent evidence that the PSED has been met.

### *The statutory inquiry*

43. A range of witnesses were critical of the GEO/Equality Hub's effectiveness in anticipating and mitigating the unequal effects of the pandemic. Women's Aid Federation of England, for example, reported that "the GEO has been absent" in the response to the "predictable" increased domestic abuse against women during lockdowns.<sup>105</sup> While the first national lockdown commenced in March 2020, pandemic-related guidance on domestic abuse was not published by the Ministry of Justice until May.<sup>106</sup> Several witnesses endorsed the findings of our Report on the gendered economic effects of coronavirus, which concluded that key policies had overlooked the needs of women, and believed the GEO should have been "on top of these issues from the start" and "pointing out that this was going to happen".<sup>107</sup> Others believed the GEO had "done little or nothing" to protect transgender people or promote transgender equality during the pandemic.<sup>108</sup> Mencap believed there were several policy areas in which "the PSED has not been met".<sup>109</sup> The Equality Hub's written evidence revealed that around a third of its staff, including its Director, Marcus Bell, had been redeployed to other departments at the height of the pandemic.<sup>110</sup> In oral evidence, Marcus Bell confirmed that the redeployment of staff had necessitated some pieces of equality work being "paused".<sup>111</sup>

44. The Government has announced that there will be a statutory public inquiry into the UK's handling of the coronavirus pandemic. It will begin its work in the spring of next year.<sup>112</sup>

102 [Letter dated 29 April 2020 from the Chair of the Committee to The Rt Hon Liz Truss MP, Minister for Women and Equalities](#)

103 See, for example, Nordic Model Now! ([GEO0010](#)); Northern Ireland Women's European Platform ([GEO0020](#)); Business in the Community ([GEO0028](#)); Fawcett Society ([GEO0032](#)); Equally Ours ([GEO0047](#))

104 *The Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Impact Assessments*, Briefing Paper [06591](#), House of Commons Library, July 2020

105 Women's Aid Federation of England ([GEO0007](#))

106 '[COVID-19 funding for domestic abuse and sexual violence support services](#)', GOV.UK, accessed 31 August 2021

107 Mrs Eileen Higham ([GEO0011](#)); see also, for example, Northern Ireland Women's European Platform ([GEO0020](#)); Fawcett Society ([GEO0032](#))

108 See, for example, Ms M Bartlett ([GEO0008](#))

109 Mencap ([GEO0031](#))

110 Equality Hub ([GEO0051](#))

111 [Qq81-2](#)

112 See, for example, ["Covid: Lessons to be learned from spring 2022 public inquiry - PM"](#), BBC News, 12 May 2021

## National Risk Register

45. Equally Ours called for learning from the pandemic to include how equality considerations can be built into preparedness for future crises. In line with the conclusions in our Covid-19 Reports, it emphasised that “people and communities who are already experiencing discrimination and inequality are disproportionately impacted in emergencies.” It recommended that “the GEO and Equality Hub should be fully engaged in all lessons learned exercises, contingency planning and the development of the next National Risk Register.”<sup>113</sup>

46. In his letter dated 27 May, Marcus Bell told us that the Cabinet Office was currently reviewing its methodology for the National Security Risk Assessment, and that Equality Hub officials “have been involved in early thinking around the impact of risks on vulnerable groups”, which would “ultimately inform the next National Risk Register.”<sup>114</sup>

## International equality commitments

47. The GEO’s Strategic Plan for 2019/20 included an objective to be “an international trailblazer and exceed the UK’s international commitments on equality”.<sup>115</sup> It has a direct oversight role in relation to the UK’s implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The Disability Unit in the Equality Hub oversees UK implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Oversight of the UK’s other international equality commitments is fragmented across three other departments, outside of the Equality Hub: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)); Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)); and the Ministry of Justice (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the UK’s participation in the Universal Periodic Review process).<sup>116</sup>

48. The Equality and Human Rights Commission emphasised that there were outstanding concerns highlighted by our predecessor Committee in 2018 about the UK’s implementation of CEDAW, most fundamentally that the UK lacked a “comprehensive implementation strategy”. The UK’s Gender Equality Roadmap omitted to address how the UK Government will “implement the specific recommendations made by the CEDAW Committee in 2019.”<sup>117</sup> Other witnesses also reported concerns about the GEO’s implementation of CEDAW.<sup>118</sup> Melanie Field, the Equality and Human Rights Commission’s Executive Director for Policy, Strategy, Legal and Wales, told us that she was not aware of any specific work to implement SDG 5, the specific goal in which the UK has committed to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls by 2030.<sup>119</sup>

49. More broadly, Baroness Falkner of Margravine, Chair of the Equality and Human

113 Equally Ours ([GEO0047](#)); see also, [Q7](#) [Tansy Hutchinson]

114 Equality Hub ([GEO0055](#))

115 GEO, *GEO Strategic Plan: 2019/20*, July 2019

116 Equality and Human Rights Commission ([GEO0044](#))

117 *Ibid.*

118 See, for example, Nordic Model Now! ([GEO0010](#)); Labour Women’s Declaration ([GEO0010](#));

119 [Q36](#)

Rights Commission, noted the UK Government lacked a strategy for implementation of UN human rights and equality conventions, which was particularly problematic because oversight was fragmented across several departments. The Equality and Human Rights Commission called for a National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up, which would:

[...] strengthen the Government's commitment to international human rights. It would ensure a joined-up approach to implementing, including CEDAW. [...] there needs to be a single go-to place that does the necessary work in that regard. At the moment, it sits in a very disparate framework across Departments.<sup>120</sup>

## A refreshed approach to stakeholder engagement on balanced rights issues

50. We conducted a short online survey of around 100 of our stakeholder organisations that had signed up to receive our monthly newsletter. We wanted to know how regularly and how effectively our stakeholders believed the UK Government engaged with them on the issues they cared about, and their views about the Government's contribution to progress on those issues. Of the 41 organisations that responded, only two, a pan-equalities network and an organisation advocating for LGB rights, reported that the Government engaged with them often. 11 organisations, whose interests ranged across age (younger people), sex equality, gender reassignment and broader transgender issues, pregnancy and maternity, race, and religion/belief, told us the Government engaged with them occasionally. Most respondents, 25 (61%) of the 41 organisations who took part in the survey, told us the Government did not engage directly with them at all. Most organisations (29, 71% of respondents) told us the Government was either not making any progress on the issues they cared about (9, 22% of respondents) or contributing to the situation getting worse (20, 49% of respondents). Only two organisations, one advocating for LGB people and one grassroots women's rights group, reported that the UK Government was contributing to a lot of progress.<sup>121</sup>

51. A lack of effective engagement with different groups at different times during the protracted, acrimonious and sometimes violent debate around reform of the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) was a theme both in this inquiry and our concurrent inquiry into GRA reform.<sup>122</sup> Organisations campaigning for women's sex-based rights complained of a lack of constructive engagement around the time of the Government's LGBT survey, Action Plan and its GRA reform consultation, launched in 2018.<sup>123</sup> More recently, transgender rights groups have noted a lack of engagement from current GEO ministers, since the Government announced in September 2020 that it did not intend to make legislative changes in response to the consultation.<sup>124</sup> In our oral evidence session examining the suspension of the GEO's LGBT Advisory Panel, the LGBT Foundation told us that early

120 [Q38](#) [Baroness Falkner of Margravine]

121 Women and Equalities Committee online survey, 'How engaged do you feel the Government is with the work of your organisation?', launched 21 May 2021, accessed 2 August 2021 (now closed)

122 For evidence of violence resulting from the debate see, for example, "[Transgender activist Tara Wolf fined £150 for assaulting 'exclusionary' radical feminist in Hyde Park](#)", *Evening Standard*, 13 April 2018; see also evidence to our inquiry into [Reform of the Gender Recognition Act](#).

123 See for example, oral evidence taken on 21 April 2021, HC (2019–21) 884, [Q126](#) [Dr Williams]

124 See, for example, Oral evidence taken on 19 May 2021, HC (2021–22) 163, [Qq4–5](#); [Q18](#) [Paul Martin]; [Q5](#) [Ellen Murray]; [Q27](#) [Jayne Ozanne]

in her tenure the current Minister for Women and Equalities had been clear “she was not looking to engage with individual identity groups or stakeholder groups”.<sup>125</sup> When we questioned the minister about this, she emphasised that the issue was “fundamentally a difference of opinion” on GRA reform.<sup>126</sup>

52. Specific recommendations following on from our inquiry into GRA reform will be made in our forthcoming Report. However, witnesses to this inquiry believed there were broader lessons to be learned by the Equality Hub in relation to stakeholder engagement, particularly on delicately balanced equality issues. Melanie Field of the Equality and Human Rights Commission said:

In the context of a very divisive debate, it is very difficult [...] what is important is that we hear and understand the different perspectives in those divisive debates, we are evidence-based, rational and rooted in the law, and we come to our own independent view. It is really important that stakeholders feel confident that they are being heard, even if they do not necessarily get the result that they particularly want. It is really important to give that space for people to be heard and respect different positions, while also coming to an independent view.<sup>127</sup>

Tansy Hutchinson of Equally Ours reported that the Government’s engagement with stakeholder organisations had “fallen away” in recent years, perhaps due to the political turmoil of the UK’s withdrawal from the European Union and the general elections of 2017 and 2019. She believed that the Equality Hub needed to establish “a more coherent and permanent system of engagement with civil society.” She argued that a key lesson from the experience of GRA reform was that a core objective of the Equality Hub should be constructive and open dialogue with diverse stakeholder groups, particularly those concerned about issues in which a balance of rights was key.<sup>128</sup>

53. As noted above, some stakeholders who focus on racial and ethnic disparities were deeply concerned about the Minister for Women and Equalities’ apparent description of them as “loud voices” supporting “fashionable” causes.<sup>129</sup> This unease was compounded by a perception that the Government’s communications about the findings of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities deliberately downplayed the extent of racism and ethnic disparities in the UK.<sup>130</sup> On 27 May, we heard oral evidence from Dr Tony Sewell CBE, Chair of the Commission, who acknowledged that the way the communications around the release of his report were handled may have contributed to this perception.<sup>131</sup>

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125 Oral evidence taken on 19 May 2021, HC (2021–22) 163, [Q19](#) [Paul Martin]

126 [Q62](#)

127 [Q33](#)

128 [Q9](#)

129 CAPX, ‘[The new fight for fairness – Liz Truss’ speech at the Centre for Policy Studies](#)’, accessed 28 July 2021

130 See, for example, ‘[Campaigners criticise government race report](#)’, *BBC News*, 31 March 2021

131 Oral evidence taken on 27 May 2021, HC (2021–22) 227, [Q19](#)

## Conclusions and recommendations

Our conclusions are set out below in **bold text** and our recommendations in *bold italic text*.

### Equality Hub: transparency and accountability

54. Since 2019, the Government has referred to an Equality Hub within the Cabinet Office but to date the Hub has not published any corporate documents. Its structure remains unclear, and it lacks transparency and accountability. This is unacceptable. *The Cabinet Office must publish annual information on staffing and funding of the Equality Hub, its constituent units (the Government Equalities Office, the Disability Unit, the Race Disparity Unit and the Social Mobility Commission), broken down by administration, projects and programmes. This could be either in its annual Outcome Delivery Plans or in a separate Equality Hub document, but the information must be proactively published in the interests of transparency and accountability.*

### Our scrutiny role and the Government's engagement with our work

55. We welcome the Equality Hub's understanding of our central role in parliamentary scrutiny of its administration, policy and expenditure, and that of its constituent units, including the Government Equalities Office, the Disability Unit, the Race Disparity Unit and its latest addition, the Social Mobility Commission. We readily accept responsibility for this expanded scrutiny role.

56. *We recommend the Government bring forward a revised Standing Order, to make the Women and Equalities Committee a cross-cutting Select Committee of the House of Commons, appointed to examine cross-government policy on pan-equalities issues, and socio-economic inequality, geographic disparities and social mobility.*

57. It is deeply disappointing and unacceptable that officials and ministers were unwilling to be openly scrutinised in this inquiry, which is at the core of our remit. We hope this inquiry and Report can be a watershed in the Government's approach to open scrutiny of its equality policies. *We ask that the Government set out in response to this Report a renewed commitment to engage properly with our work, including through timely submission of written evidence systematically addressing our terms of reference, a renewed acceptance by ministers of their public duty to give oral evidence as invited with reasonable notice, and by responding fully and constructively to our Reports within the conventional two months of publication.*

### Coherent strategies and Action Plans for equalities and Levelling Up

58. The Government Equalities Office's move into the coordinating centre of government, in the Cabinet Office, and the potential expansion of its coordinating role with the inception of the Equality Hub, is positive but the benefits are yet to be fully realised. We strongly welcome the intended permanence of the move, which will avoid much of the unnecessary and costly disruption of departmental and ministerial churn experienced during its history as an itinerant unit within government. However, elements of the Government's equalities machinery remain too fragmented and lack

coherence. The Government is pursuing elements of the previous administration's plans on equalities while dropping others, with no coherent rationale. Above all, the lack of a published cross-departmental pan-equalities strategy and Action Plan is a key weakness.

59. We welcome the Government's intention to focus more on socio-economic and geographic inequality and look forward to the publication of its Levelling Up White Paper. *While enactment of the socio-economic duty, section 1 of the Equality Act, is unlikely to be a panacea, we recommend the Government commission a pilot to establish the costs and benefits of different approaches to voluntary adoption of the duty in England.*

60. Given some of the Minister for Women and Equalities' comments in her "new fight for fairness" speech about not focusing on groups, we are concerned about a risk of going backwards on important, long-established equality issues for groups of people protected by the Equality Act. *The Equality Data Programme should be seized as an opportunity for the Government to set out, together with its proposed Levelling Up policies, a cross-departmental pan-equalities strategy based on data on the full range of factors that drive disadvantage, including protected characteristics under the Equality Act and the intersections between them and other factors. We recommend the Equality Hub publish a cross-departmental pan-equalities strategy by the end of the first quarter of 2022, covering the period to at least the end of this Parliament. To raise its profile and inform the longer-term development of its strategy, we recommend the Equality Hub publish a schedule of public and stakeholder events covering a range of equalities issues. We further recommend it publish annual Action Plans, setting out specific and measurable steps it will take in each financial year to meet its strategic equality objectives.*

## Ministerial roles and equalities machinery in government

61. In 2018, our predecessor Committee found that allocation of the Minister for Women and Equalities role as an additional responsibility of a Cabinet Minister was sub-optimal. The role was susceptible to Cabinet reshuffles and its allocation seemed like an afterthought. Any benefits from policy synergies with a Secretary of State's departmental policy priorities were incidental rather than being part of any planned strategy. These problems persist, as clearly demonstrated by allocation of the role in 2019 to the then Secretary of State for International Trade (The Rt Hon Liz Truss MP, now Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs), a particularly demanding and time-consuming brief in the context of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, and one which lacks clear crossover with the domestic equalities agenda. We note the Government's allocation of the Levelling Up brief to The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State in the newly named Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, ahead of publication of its Levelling Up White Paper. It is not clear what place, if any, he will have in the Government's equalities machinery. *We recommend the Government create a new full-time Cabinet level role of Secretary of State for Equalities and Levelling Up, to drive implementation of the expected Levelling Up White Paper and a new cross-departmental pan-equalities strategy. These should be considered complementary, high priority agendas, which should be driven from the heart of government. Consideration should also be given to bringing the more junior*

*roles of Minister for Women, Minister for Equalities and Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work into the Cabinet Office on a full-time basis.*

62. *We note both the current absence of a cross-departmental equalities strategy and strong coordinating machinery to drive it forward. We therefore recommend the Government establish a dedicated Cabinet Committee for Equalities and Levelling Up, to add further drive to both agendas across government.*

## Learning lessons from the Government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic

63. Our Reports on Covid-19 have demonstrated that the pandemic has had unequal effects on some groups, including women, disabled people and some Black and minority ethnic groups, and exacerbated existing inequalities. The equalities machinery within government has not been sufficient to anticipate and act to mitigate unequal effects across the Government's policy responses to the pandemic. Three steps are required to ensure that lessons are learned from this:

- *The pandemic has clearly demonstrated the need for robustly conducted and published Equality Impact Assessments of general policies which could have significant unequal effects on groups who already face disadvantage in society. The Equality Hub must be a strong advocate across government for this and, with the support of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, proactively provide expert advice to departments on effective use and publication of Equality Impact Assessments;*
- *The Government must ensure that its effectiveness in anticipating, recognising and mitigating inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic is included in the terms of reference for the statutory public inquiry due to begin its work in 2022; and*
- *The Equality Hub must be given a central role in the development and ongoing review of the National Risk Register, with the aim of ensuring equality issues are fully considered, at the earliest possible stage and based on robust data, in future emergency responses.*

## Oversight and implementation of the UK's international equality commitments

64. International conventions, including the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) impose long-established legal obligations on achieving equality domestically. *The new equalities strategy and annual Action Plans should set out actions to be taken to meet the UK's international equality commitments. Further, the Government should, as recommended by the UN and the Equality and Human Rights Commission, establish a National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up, to ensure the most effective possible engagement with international equality and human rights conventions and treaties. Consideration should also be given*

*to restructuring current processes, which are fragmented across several departments, and bringing oversight into a single international compliance team in the Equality Hub.*

### **A refreshed approach to stakeholder engagement and communications on sensitive issues**

65. Equality for different groups can raise difficult, balanced rights issues, for example race or religion and belief can sometimes conflict with equal rights on the grounds of sex or sexual orientation. There are lessons to be learned from recent delicately balanced rights questions, perhaps most notably Gender Recognition Act (GRA) reform, the public debate around which has become protracted and acrimonious. The equalities machinery must adapt to better engage with civil society organisations and experts from all perspectives and seek common ground on the most difficult balanced rights questions. *We recommend the Government invite the Equality and Human Rights Commission to engage with a range of stakeholders to seek common ground on the most difficult balanced rights issues. The new equalities strategy should set out a programme of such stakeholder engagement on the most pressing issues, for example the interplay between options for GRA reform and women's rights to single-sex spaces, services and sports. It should also set out clear principles to underpin the choice of ministerial advisory panels and on which issues they should be appointed to advise.*

66. *The Equality Hub should conduct a review of the Government's communications on, and management of, sensitive and balanced rights issues, drawing in particular on lessons learned from the Gender Recognition Act reform process since 2018 and the Government's approach to communicating the findings of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities.*

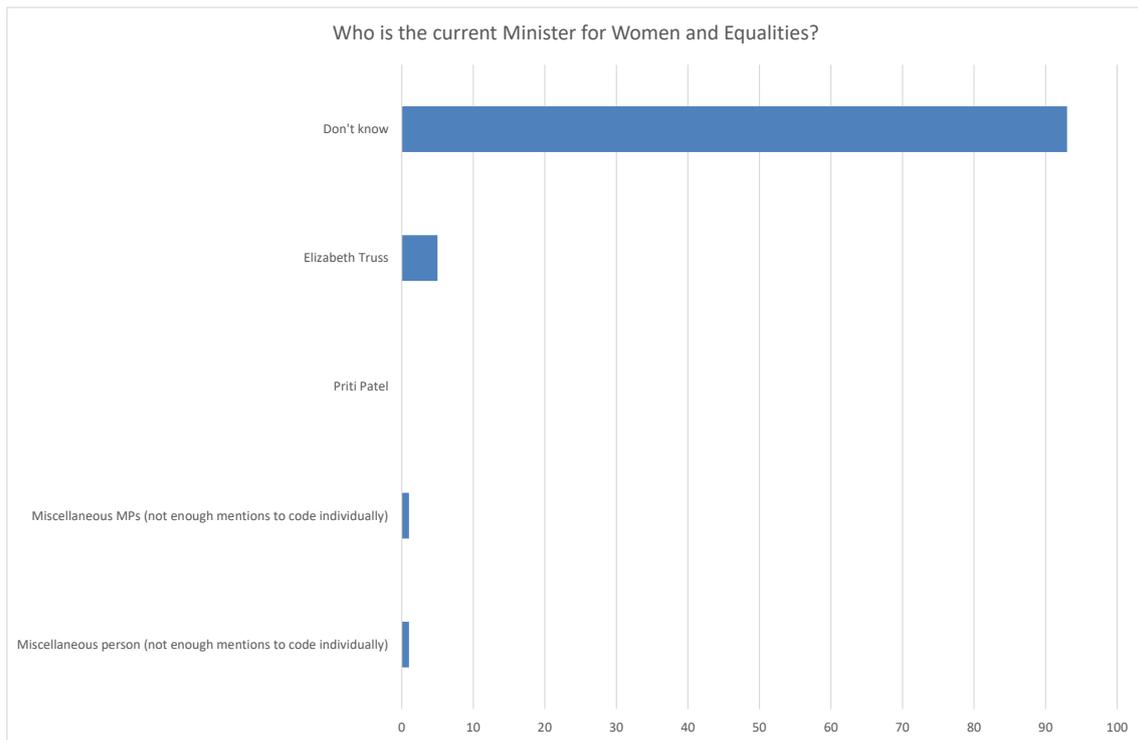
## Annex: Survey of public awareness

We commissioned YouGov to conduct polling on public awareness of: the Government Equalities Office, the wider Equality Hub and its work (compared to large well-known departments, the Department for Health and Social Care and the Cabinet Office); government work on equalities issues during the pandemic; and the current Minister for Women and Equalities. YouGov surveyed a representative sample of 1,750 adults across Great Britain on 19/20 May. The results are summarised below.

### Public awareness of the current Minister for Women and Equalities

Respondents were asked if they could name the current Minister for Women and Equalities. A very large majority (93%) could not name Liz Truss as the current Minister. Only 5% could name Liz Truss as Minister for Women and Equalities.

Public awareness of Liz Truss as Minister for Women and Equalities was higher in London (named by 9% of respondents) and the south of England (6%) than in other regions of England and in Scotland and Northern Ireland (all 4%).

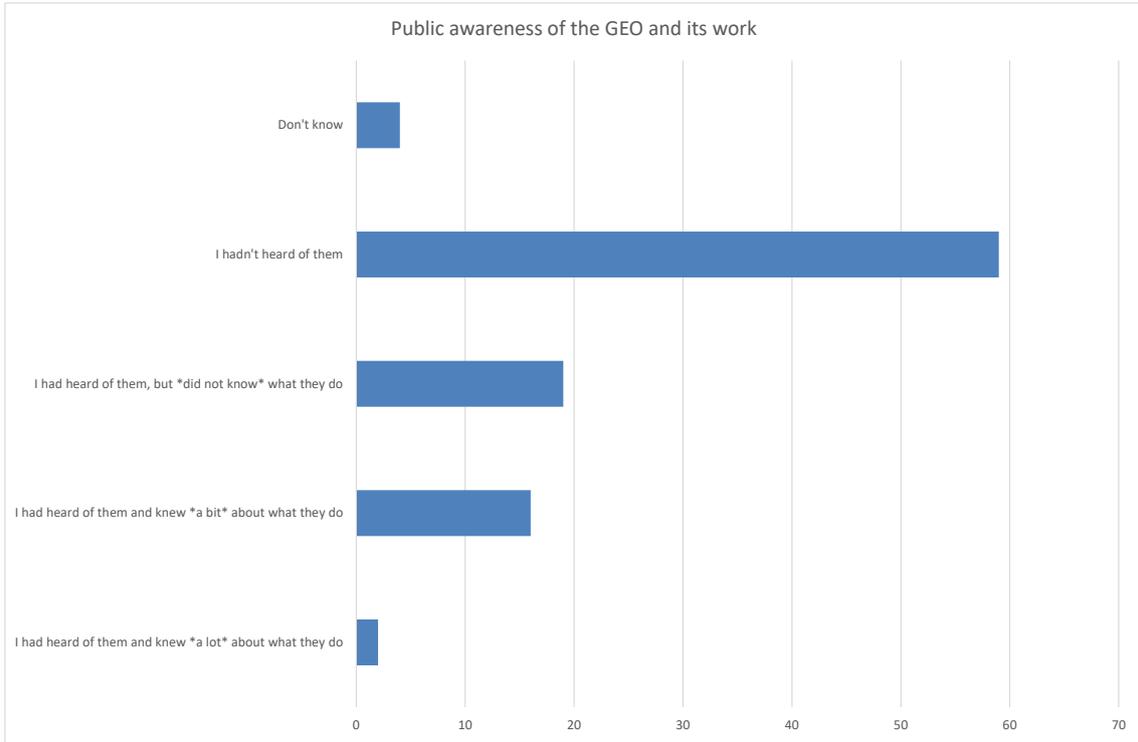


### Public awareness of the GEO and its work

Most respondents (59%) had not heard of the GEO. 19% had heard of the GEO but did not know about its work. 16% had heard of the GEO and knew a little about its work. 2% had heard of the GEO and knew a lot about its work.

Awareness of the GEO was higher in older age groups, for example 47% of people aged 65+ had some level of awareness, compared to 34% in the 18–24 age group. Awareness of the GEO was significantly higher in Northern Ireland (54%) than in Scotland (41%) and English regions. The region with the lowest awareness of the GEO was the north of

England, where 33% of people had some level of awareness.

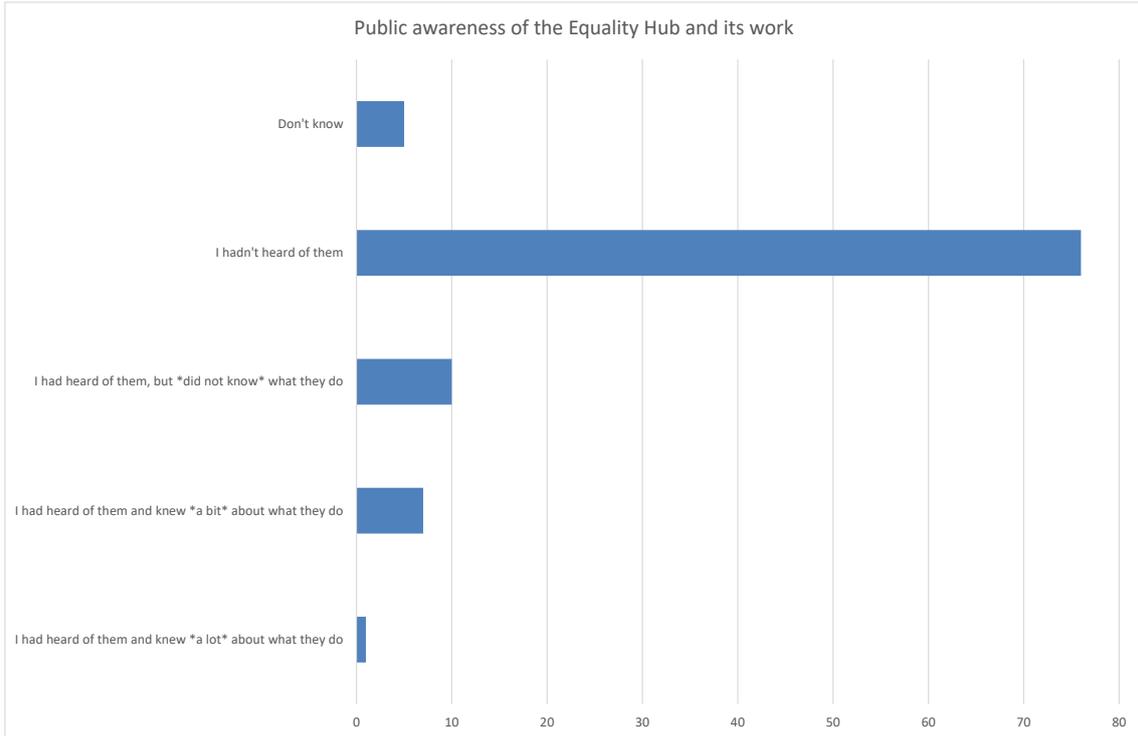


### Public awareness of the Equality Hub and its work

Public awareness of the Equality Hub and its work was very low. 76% of respondents had not heard of the Equality Hub. Of those who had some level of awareness (18%), most (10%) had heard of the Equality Hub but did not know what it did. 7% of people had heard of the Hub and knew a little about its work. Only 1% had heard of the Hub and knew a lot about what it did.

Awareness of the Equality Hub was slightly higher in London (23% of respondents had some level of awareness) and the south of England (22%) than in other regions and nations of GB. Awareness of the Equality Hub was lowest in Northern Ireland, where 83% of respondents had not heard of the Hub.

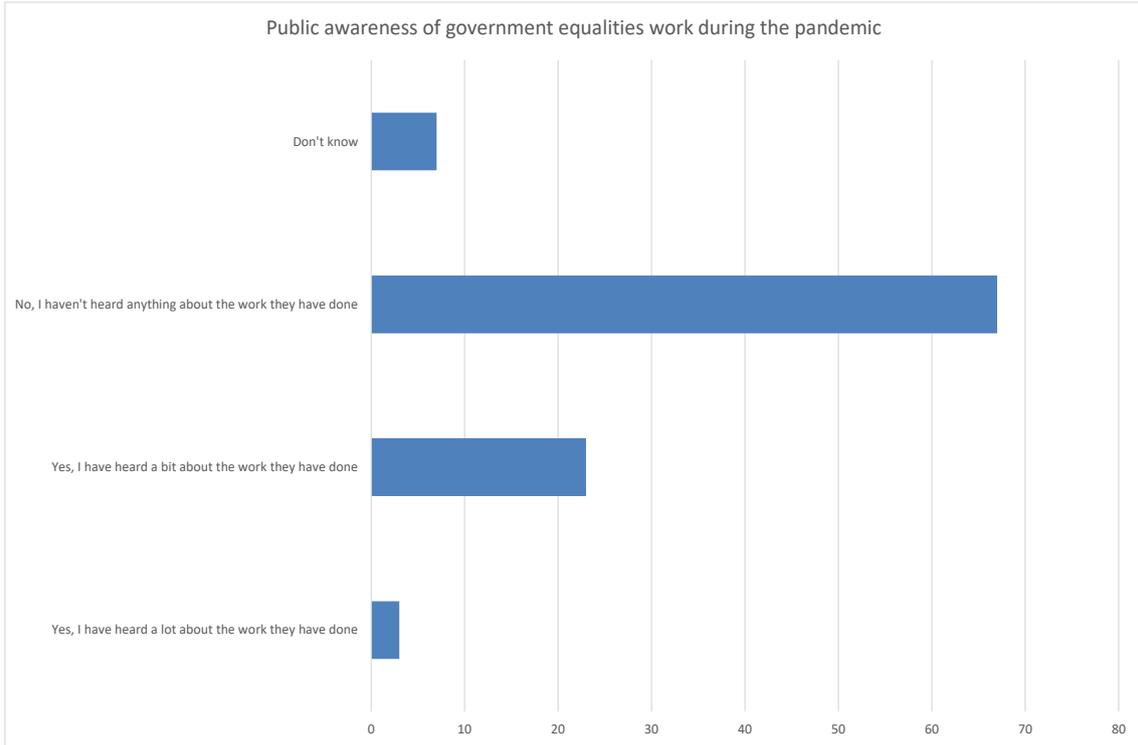
Public awareness of the GEO and Equality Hub was much lower than that of the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Cabinet Office. A large majority of people had some level of awareness of the DHSC (89%) and the Cabinet Office (90%).



### Public awareness of the Government’s work on equalities issues during the pandemic

Most people (67%) had not heard anything about the Government’s work to address equalities issues during the pandemic. 23% of people had heard a little about it. Only 3% of respondents had heard a lot about it.

Public awareness of the Government’s equalities work during the pandemic was greater in London (36% had some level of awareness; 6% had heard a lot about this work) than other regions and nations of GB. People in London had significantly greater awareness than those in the rest of the south of England, where 26% of respondents had some level of awareness and 3% had heard a lot.



# Formal minutes

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**Wednesday 22 September 2021**

Members present:

Caroline Nokes, in the Chair

Theo Clarke    Anne McLaughlin

Eliot Colburn    Kate Osborne

Kim Johnson

Draft Report (*Levelling Up and equality: a new framework for change*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 66 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

A paper was appended to the Report as Annex A

*Resolved*, That the Report be the First Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

[Adjourned until Wednesday 20 October at 2 p.m.]

## Witnesses

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The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Wednesday 14 April 2021

**Dr Wanda Wyporska**, Executive Director, The Equality Trust; **Tim Durrant**, Associate Director, Institute for Government; **Tansy Hutchinson**, Head of Policy, Equally Ours; **Rt Hon Justine Greening**, Former Minister for Women and Equalities and co-founder, Social Mobility Pledge

[Q1–24](#)

**The Baroness Falkner of Margravine**, Chair, and **Melanie Field**, Executive Director for Strategy and Policy, and Wales, Equality and Human Rights Commission

[Q25–45](#)

### Tuesday 25 May 2021

**The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP**, Minister for Women and Equalities, Government Equalities Office; **Marcus Bell**, Director, Equality Hub

[Q46–109](#)

## Published written evidence

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The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

GEO numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Alliance, UK CSW ([GEO0045](#))
- 2 Amnesty International UK ([GEO0026](#))
- 3 Badenoch, Kemi (Minister for Equalities, Government Equalities Office) ([GEO0054](#))
- 4 Bartlett, Ms M (Ambulance Care Assistant, NHS) ([GEO0008](#))
- 5 Bell, Marcus (Director, Equality Hub) ([GEO0055](#))
- 6 Bell, Marcus (Director, Equality Hub) ([GEO0053](#))
- 7 Berridge, Baroness (Minister for Women, Government Equalities Office) ([GEO0052](#))
- 8 Business in the Community ([GEO0028](#))
- 9 Business Disability Forum ([GEO0048](#))
- 10 Buttolph, Ms Mary ([GEO0027](#))
- 11 Centre for Ageing Better ([GEO0018](#))
- 12 Centre for Social Justice ([GEO0003](#))
- 13 Christian Concern ([GEO0015](#))
- 14 Conservatives For Women ([GEO0033](#))
- 15 Core Issues Trust (CIT); and International Federation for Therapeutic Choice (IFTCC) ([GEO0016](#))
- 16 Core Issues Trust; and International Federation for Therapeutic and Counselling Choice ([GEO0022](#))
- 17 Cotes, Baroness Morgan of ([GEO0056](#))
- 18 Devine, Cathy ([GEO0039](#))
- 19 Earl, Ms Sarra ([GEO0034](#))
- 20 Equality Hub ([GEO0042](#))
- 21 Equality and Human Rights Commission ([GEO0044](#))
- 22 Equally Ours ([GEO0047](#))
- 23 Fair Play South ([GEO0043](#))
- 24 Government, Equality hub and ([GEO0051](#))
- 25 Government, Institute for ([GEO0049](#))
- 26 Higham, Mrs Eileen ([GEO0011](#))
- 27 Just Fair ([GEO0024](#))
- 28 Keep Prisons Single Sex ([GEO0004](#))
- 29 LGB Alliance ([GEO0036](#))
- 30 LGBT Foundation ([GEO0040](#))
- 31 Labour Women's Declaration ([GEO0010](#))
- 32 Lawson, Dr Annette (Ambassador, NAWO - also Chair, the Judith Trust) ([GEO0035](#))

- 33 Mencap ([GEO0031](#))
- 34 Mermaids ([GEO0014](#))
- 35 Milner, Professor Susan (Professor, University of Bath) ([GEO0023](#))
- 36 Nokes, Caroline ([GEO0050](#))
- 37 Nordic Model Now! ([GEO0009](#))
- 38 Northern Ireland Women’s European Platform ([GEO0020](#))
- 39 Safe Schools Alliance UK ([GEO0029](#))
- 40 SightSavers ([GEO0038](#))
- 41 Stonewall ([GEO0046](#))
- 42 The Fawcett Society ([GEO0032](#))
- 43 The Rt Hon Theresa May MP ([GEO0057](#))
- 44 Women’s Aid Federation of England ([GEO0007](#))
- 45 Member of the public ([GEO0013](#))

## List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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All publications from the Committee are available on the publications page of the Committee's website.

### Session 2019–21

Number	Title	Reference
None	Easy Read: Unequal impact? Coronavirus, disability and access to services: full Report	HC 1050
None	Easy read: The Coronavirus law, treating disabled people unfairly? Interim Report on temporary provisions in the Coronavirus Act	HC 386
1st	Unequal impact? Coronavirus, disability and access to services: interim Report on temporary provisions in the Coronavirus Act	HC 386
2nd	Appointment of the Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission	HC 966
3rd	Unequal impact? Coronavirus and BAME people	HC 384
4th	Unequal impact? Coronavirus, disability and access to services: full Report	HC 1050
5th	Unequal impact? Coronavirus and the gendered economic impact	HC 385
6th	Changing the perfect picture: an inquiry into body image	HC 274