



Equality Hub

Kemi Badenoch MP
Minister for Levelling Up Communities and Equalities
Government Equality Hub
c/o Sanctuary Building
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Caroline Nokes
Chair of the Women and Equalities Select Committee

19th November 2021

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your letter on 29th October regarding the Government Equalities Office (GEO) finances.

As you will know, the GEO now forms part of the Equality Hub, which brings together the expertise of the Disability Unit (DU), GEO, Race Disparity Unit (RDU) and, most recently, the Social Mobility Commission (SMC) secretariat. In line with decisions by Ministers, we are committed to ensuring the Equality Hub takes a broader view of equality issues and is a central hub for tackling inequalities. I have therefore addressed the questions set out in your letter from an Equality Hub perspective, showing GEO and other unit figures where these can be disaggregated.

This information can be found at Annex A.

Yours sincerely,

Kemi Badenoch MP
Minister for Levelling Up Communities and Equalities



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Annex A - responses to questions

- 1. The Government Equalities Office's (GEO) Resource DEL outturn in 2019-20 was £16.7 million as reported in the Cabinet Office 2019-20 Annual Report and Accounts, which was a reduction from the prior year spending of £18.4 million as disclosed in Department for International Development's (DFID) 2018-19 Annual Report and Accounts. The GEO's outturn was not reported in the Cabinet Office 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts. What was the GEO's outturn in 2020-21?**

Prior to the 2020-21 financial year, GEO's budget was noted separately in departmental accounts. Since the 2020-21 financial year the GEO budget has been agreed as part of the Equality Hub. For the 2020-21 financial year, the Equality Hub had a combined budget of £20.6m with the following split:

- Admin: £13.2m
- Programme: £7.4m

The Equality Hub then undertook its own business planning exercise to fund staffing and programme activity across the separate business units of the Hub. The outcomes are set out in more detail in the response to question 4. It's important to note that the Social Mobility Commission secretariat was not part of the Cabinet Office prior to 1st April 2021.

- 2. The GEO's budget allocations have fallen from £47 million in 2014-15 (per the 2010 Spending Review settlement) to £18 million in 2019-20 (per the GEO Strategy Document for 2019-20). Could you explain why?**

As your question references, the [2010 Spending Review](#) shows the GEO baseline to be £69m in the 2010-11 financial year, with a planned reduction to £47m by the 2014-15 financial year. That Spending Review figure incorporates the GEO and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) budgets in one sum. GEO's [2010-11 Annual Report](#), the last year GEO was a standalone department and required to produce an annual report, shows grant in aid payment to the EHRC as £50.8m.

The Department for Media, Culture and Sport's [annual report and accounts](#) for the 2014-15 financial year shows the break down in figures:

- GEO
 - RDEL: £12.1m
 - Administration: £3.2m
- EHRC
 - RDEL: £19.4m
 - Administration: £15.6m
 - Capital DEL: £0.4m



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- Combined GEO & EHRC budget 14/15:
 - RDEL: £50.3m
 - CDEL: £400k

3. Can you confirm that the GEO will benefit from the Chancellor's announcement that there will be a real term rise in overall spending for every single department? If so, what will the actual settlement be?

The Spending Review provided an overall settlement for the Cabinet Office which the Equality Hub is part of. The Equality Hub budget for the Spending Review period will be agreed through the Cabinet Office business planning process ahead of the 2022-23 financial year.

4. In 2018-19, £10.8 million (59%) of GEO's budget was spent on programme or 'front-line' activities. What was the split between admin and programme spending in 2019-20, and 2020-21?

In the financial year 2019-20 GEO had a budget of £18.8m. In 2020-21 the Equality Hub had a budget of £20.6m. The splits of these budgets are as below.

Business Unit	Budget (Programme)	Budget (Admin)	Outturn (Programme)	Outturn (Admin)
2019/20				
GEO	£12.2m	£6.7m	£9.7m	£6.8m
2020/21				
GEO	£10.9m	£6.4m	£5.6m	£6.1m
RDU	£2.1m	£0	£3m	£0
DU	£0.7m	£1m	£0.9m	£1m

5. Is the GEO's budget separate to other units within the Equality Hub, such as the Race Disparity Unit? If so, what is the budget for the Equality Hub and its constituent parts?

6. What is the budget for 2021-22, and how will this be allocated between administration and programme?

We have grouped our responses to questions 5 and 6. From 1st April 2021, the Equality Hub received a budget settlement covering all units, including the Social Mobility Commission. This settlement for the 2021/22 financial year was £18.6m, of which £6.6m is administration and £11.9m is programme.



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The £18,6m budget for 2021-22 was allocated to individual units as follows:

- GEO: £8.3m
- RDU: £0.7m
- DU: £3.6m
- SMC: £2.6m
- Cross-Hub: £3.4m

This settlement is enabling us to deliver our priorities in 2021/22 including delivering the National Strategy for Disabled People, tackling racial and ethnic disparities, supporting the COVID-19 recovery, developing the Equality Data Programme and banning conversion therapy.

7. Of the administration budget, could you provide a breakdown of staff costs including any contingent labour, temporary staff and consultancy costs?

Staff costs on the Equality Hub administration budget total £4.3m. We do not have any contingent labour, temporary staff or consultancy costs aligned with the administration budget. Programme budget costs for contingent labour, temporary staff and consultancy costs total £0.6m for the year.

8. How many staff (full-time equivalent) are permanently employed by the GEO?

9. How many staff have a portfolio which involves carrying out the work of the GEO?

There are currently 161 FTE permanently employed in the Equality Hub. This can be broken down as follows:

- GEO: 73.2
- RDU: 18
- DU: 21.4
- SMC: 13.4
- Cross-Hub: 35

Cross-Hub staffing refers to provision of streamlined services across the Hub in the areas of operations (finance, business support, correspondence), communications, strategy and digital.

10. The DfID 2018-19 Annual Report and Accounts noted that the 'assurance on [the GEO's] activities was gained through a combination of the DfE annual assurance framework and direct engagement by DFID officials to gain an overview of the systems and processes in place. Overall, the GEO maintains good corporate governance processes, and is in the process of implementing a number of recommendations to enhance its effectiveness. On 1 April 2019, new arrangements were established for the GEO within the Cabinet Office and its Permanent Secretary assumed accountability for its operations.' How was assurance gained on the GEO's activities in 2019-20 and 2020-21?



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In both 2019-20 and 2020-21 GEO completed a Corporate Management Statement which is a comprehensive Cabinet Office audit of governance, financial and corporate areas of risk. This will be completed as an Equality Hub requirement in 2021-22. Additionally, the Equality Hub reports quarterly on risk and performance to the Cabinet Office performance team, and twice-yearly faces questioning by the Cabinet Office Performance and Risk Committee.

- 11. The GEO had its own Estimate Line in DfID's Annual Report and Accounts which allowed for greater transparency about the office's spending. Does the Cabinet Office intend to provide a similar level of transparency in its future Annual Reports and Accounts?***

The Government Equality Hub follows the same financial reporting processes as other business units within the Cabinet Office. There are no plans to give it a discrete line in Estimates.