



# Women and Equalities Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

Tel 020 7219 6123 Email [womeqcom@parliament.uk](mailto:womeqcom@parliament.uk) Website [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)

From the Chair

Marcus Bell  
Director, Equality Hub  
Cabinet Office  
By email

12 February 2021

Dear Marcus,

## **Inquiry into the role of the GEO: Embedding equalities across government**

As you know, the Women and Equalities Committee was established in 2015, in part to examine the policy, administration and expenditure of the Government Equalities Office (GEO). Machinery of government changes since 2019, in particular GEO's move into the Cabinet Office and the establishment of the Equality Hub, may have implications for the GEO's status and role. My Committee looks forward to receiving the Government's written submission to its current inquiry into the role of the GEO and its cross-government equalities functions.

In the meantime, I would be grateful if you would respond to the questions below to help the Committee, and the public more widely, better understand the governance and operation of equality policy across government:

### Structure

1. Please provide organograms of a) the Equality Hub, showing the relationships between GEO, the Race Disparity Unit, the Disability Unit, Office for Tackling Injustices and other parts of government, and b) the relationships between the Equality Hub and its units and external organisations, including the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Social Mobility Commission, and the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities.
2. Which Cabinet Committee oversees the Equality Hub's remit? How regularly are Equality Hub matters on the agenda of that committee or others?
3. GEO's last published strategic plan (2019-20) states that its first objective was "putting equality at the heart of government". Does GEO maintain the role of coordinating equalities policy across government? Are there named equality leads in each government department, and how is their work coordinated across departments?
4. Status of GEO:
  - Will GEO publish a strategic plan in future?
  - Will GEO continue to be included in a distinct section of the Cabinet Office's single departmental plan?
  - Will GEO publish annual reports and accounts in future? If not, where will its budget and resourcing information be published?



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## From the Chair

### 5. Moving the Equality Hub to the north of England:

- When will the move happen?
- How many staff, from which roles/units and at what grades, will this affect?
- What were the findings of the equality impact assessment carried out on this?

## Resourcing

6. Please provide information on staffing of the Equality Hub, including how many staff work in each of the individual units. Please state whether these are permanent, temporary or secondees, and the grades of all staff.

7. Please provide us with the above information for 12 months ago and provide figures for staff redeployed to other units/government departments in the last 12-month period.

8. According to the gov.uk website, GEO is responsible for:

- improving equality and reducing discrimination and disadvantage for all in the UK; improving people's life chances at work, and in public and political life
- taking the lead on the Equality Act 2010 and being the lead department on gender, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB&T) issues in government including the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013, and Civil Partnership Act 2004
- supporting and implementing international equality measures in the UK, including our international commitments to: the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Please set out the staffing and financial resourcing allocated to each of these areas of responsibility.

## Parliamentary accountability

9. What is your understanding of the Equality Hub's accountability to Parliament? In particular, where does it fit in the Select Committee system?

## Function

10. How will the new Equality Data Programme, announced by the Minister for Women and Equalities in December, work with the ONS' Centre for Equalities and Inclusion? What are the separate and overlapping remits of these initiatives?

11. How does GEO coordinate responses to international treaties on equality?

I look forward to your reply. I would be grateful if you could respond by Friday 12 March.



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From the Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Caroline".

**Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP**

**Chair, Women and Equalities Committee**