



Equality Hub

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30 March 2021

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your letter of 12 February 2021, in which you requested information on the structure and function of the Equality Hub as part of your Committee's inquiry into the work of the Government Equalities Office.

Please find enclosed responses to the various questions.

I look forward to working together on this inquiry and beyond.

Best wishes,

MARCUS BELL
Director, Equality Hub



Equality Hub

Women and Equalities Committee's Inquiry into the role of the GEO: 'Embedding equalities across government' - information on the Equality Hub, as at 30 March 2021

Q. 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.

The new Equality Hub, in the Cabinet Office, brings together the Disability Unit (DU), Government Equalities Office (GEO), Race Disparity Unit (RDU) and, from 1 April, the sponsorship of and secretariat to the Social Mobility Commission (SMC).

GEO's remit relates to gender equality, LGBT equality and the overall framework of equality legislation for Great Britain. The other units' areas of focus are on cross-government disability policy, ethnic disparities and social mobility respectively. The units that make up the Equality Hub work closely together, under a single Director.

The SMC and the Equality and Human Rights Commission are both independent statutory bodies sponsored by the Equality Hub and the Minister for Women and Equalities. The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities is also independent, working at the request of the Prime Minister and with oversight from the Minister for Equalities, supported by a secretariat of RDU officials; it will submit its final report to the Prime Minister shortly, to which the Government will respond in due course.

The Office for Tackling Injustices has not been progressed and does not form part of the Equality Hub.

An organogram for the Equality Hub is attached and reflects these various relationships.

Q. 2: Which Cabinet Committee oversees the Equality Hub's remit? How regularly are Equality Hub matters on the agenda of that committee or others?

Cabinet and its committees provide a framework for Ministers to consider and make collective decisions on policy issues, covering the full range of government business, including issues of equality and fairness.

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.

Q. 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?

The Equality Hub has a key role in driving the Government's priorities on equality and opportunity. It has a particular focus on improving the quality of evidence and data about disparities and the types of barriers different people face.

The Equality Hub is leading on several cross-cutting areas, including work related to equality and the Coronavirus pandemic, race and ethnic disparities, women's economic empowerment, LGBT equality and the National Strategy for Disabled People. We will also use the UK's role as President of the G7 to ramp up work on championing freedom, human rights and the equality of opportunity.

All departments are responsible for ensuring that equality considerations are at the heart of their decision-making and for complying with the law on equality. Officials in the Equality Hub provide advice to departments to assist with this as required. In particular, the Equality Hub runs a cross-government network to identify and promote best practice on complying with the public sector equality duty. The network comprises equality leads across Whitehall and meets several times a year. GEO commissioned the Behavioural Insights Team to develop a series of tools to help departments comply with the equality duty and identify potential equality impacts in their policy work. BIT are currently delivering training sessions to help departments adopt the new tools and improve capability across their organisations.

We also work with other departments to ensure they publish substantive equality objectives, as part of their departmental plans. The new Outcome Delivery Plans (ODPs) aim to improve and build on previous Single Departmental Plans. Departments have been asked to include reference in their ODPs to several specific and measurable equality objectives relating to policy and/or service delivery. Publishing equality objectives as part of core departmental planning processes means that performance against these objectives is measured, transparent, and that we are advancing equality across government.

Q. 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?

The Equality Hub's strategic objectives are included in the Cabinet Office's Outcome Delivery Plan, which will be reviewed quarterly. The 21/22 plan is currently being reviewed by Cabinet Office Ministers and we anticipate the finalised version will be available early in the financial year, with a summary due to be published on gov.uk later in the Spring - along with ODPs for all departments. We can alert the Committee clerks ahead of publication if that would be helpful.

The Equality Hub is included in the Cabinet Office’s Annual Report and Accounts, and we have recently submitted our data for financial year 20/21 for inclusion in this year’s publication, due early July 2021.

Q. 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?

The Cabinet Office has announced that Glasgow will be the location of its new secondary headquarters with further growth also planned in York. Alongside Glasgow and York, the Cabinet Office will continue to have a presence in other locations across the country, including Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Milton Keynes, Newcastle, Newport, Norwich and Manchester, whilst also maintaining our presence in London. This will enable the Cabinet Office to retain our great people and experience, recruit new and more diverse talent and create more opportunities for career progression in all locations.

As part of these plans, the Equality Hub has already shifted a number of roles to Manchester and other northern cities and we intend to further grow our presence outside London in line with Cabinet Office plans.

Q. 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.

Currently we have redeployed a number of staff elsewhere in the Government, on a temporary basis, to assist with the response to the pandemic. We are also going through a process to combine the central functions of DU, GEO and RDU into one Hub. Given these two factors, we are not able to provide workforce data at this level at this time, however the accompanying organogram includes a breakdown of SCS roles.

The Hub’s establishment is 163.5 full-time equivalent (FTE), with staff in post as at 31 January currently allocated to units as follows.

	FTE in post (Jan 21)
Disability Unit	16
Government Equalities Office	73
Race Disparity Unit	23
Cross-Cutting*	31

* Some core services work across the Hub including Operations, Communications, Digital, Strategy, Parliamentary support

Q. 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.

At this point in 2020 the total number of FTE in the Hub was 148. We have redeployed 46 people in total to assist with the response to Covid-19 and other priorities over the past year.

Q. 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.

Please see the accompanying organogram to see areas of work across the Hub. Please find below the split of budget across Equality Hub units for the financial year 20/21.

Financial Year 20/21	Budget (£m)		£m
	Admin	Programme	Total
Disability Unit	1	0.5	1.5
Government Equalities Office*	5.5	11.5	17
Race Disparity Unit	0	1.5	1.5
Total	6.5	13.5	20

* GEO budget includes some core services which work across the Hub including Operations, Communications, Strategy, Parliamentary support

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

The Equality Hub and its Ministers are accountable to Parliament in a number of ways, including:

- questions and inquiries from the Women and Equalities Committee
- ad hoc inquiries from other relevant Committees e.g. the Joint Committee on Human Rights
- our Accounting Officer (that is, the Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary) is responsible for ensuring standards of regularity, propriety, value for money and feasibility expected by Parliament and the stewardship of public resources. They are held to account by the Public Accounts Committee which scrutinises public spending for value for money

- written Parliamentary questions
- oral questions in the House of Lords
- a dedicated Commons oral questions session on a wide range of equality issues, including topical questions, around every 5 weeks.

The final point above contrasts with most other oral questions sessions which are allocated for entire departments, rather than business units of the Equality Hub's scale. Similarly, in terms of Select Committees, there are Commons Committees for each department plus the Women and Equalities Committee - the latter provides the greatest amount of scrutiny of the Equality Hub's work, with involvement as appropriate of the relevant parts of the Equality Hub. Some Women and Equalities Committee inquiries relate more to equality issues in other departments, in which case the Hub maintains some overall oversight but the appropriate department is allocated to lead.

The Equality Hub also responds to other committees as needed e.g. the Joint Committee on Human Rights, particularly in respect of inquiries/issues relating to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and other Commons or Lords committees conducting inquiries relating to disability, ethnicity, gender, LGBT or equality legislation.

Q. 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?

The Equality Data Programme will work in partnership with the Centre for Equalities and Inclusion - the Equality Hub and ONS will collaborate on data acquisition, projects and pieces of analysis as part of this work.

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

The Equality Hub has responsibility for oversight of the UK's international commitments that arise by virtue of our ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

These conventions are applicable across the UK, including the devolved administrations, and across a range of departmental responsibilities. In the Equality Hub we work closely with other government departments and the devolved administrations to ensure we provide accurate information and meet our treaty commitments to the UN. For example, where treaties reference violence against women and girls, we engage with colleagues in the Home Office and FCDO.

The Equality Hub was responsible for the production of the report for the UN setting out our progress towards the [implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2020](#) (the 25th anniversary).

In addition to ensuring the UK fulfils its obligations under the above international treaties, the Equality Hub also engages with other international work. For example, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the second largest UN conference and the biggest event of

the global calendar on women's rights and gender equality. We support ministerial presence at the CSW each year, and liaise closely with civil society organisations, including consulting them in negotiating the outputs from the CSW.

There are other relevant international commitments that are coordinated by other parts of government - for example, ILO conventions and agreements are overseen by DWP, liaising with the Equality Hub on gender and other equality aspects as appropriate.

MARCUS BELL
EQUALITY HUB DIRECTOR

DISABILITY UNIT
Hannah Rignell
National Strategy for Disabled People, Evidence and Insight, Assistive Technology, Covid-19 impact

RACE DISPARITY UNIT		
Richard Laux	Summer Nisar	Jags Parbha
Data and Analysis	Stategy, Policy & Engagement, Covid-19 impact, CRED secretariat	Digital

GOVERNMENT EQUALITIES OFFICE														
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Cross-Hub: LEGAL
Amanda Garner-Patel

* EQUALITY & HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

* SOCIAL MOBILITY COMMISSION
Sasha Morgan

March 2021