



Equality Hub

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Dear Ms Nokes,

Thank you for your letter of 27 April 2021, in which you requested further 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. I have responded to your questions in turn.

1. Grades and contract types of staff who remain in the Equality Hub - when such information is expected to be available, and when and where it will be published?

The Hub's establishment is 163.5 full-time equivalent (FTE), with staff in post as at 31 March currently allocated to units as below, which also includes the recent addition of 14 posts in the Social Mobility Commission secretariat.

	FTE in post (Mar 21)
Disability Unit	18
Government Equalities Office	86.5
Race Disparity Unit	28
Cross-Cutting*	31

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

Written evidence submitted by the Director of the Equality Hub [GEO0053]

Equality Hub and Government Equalities Office, c/o Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT

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A detailed breakdown of Equality Hub staff (not including SMC secretariat) by grade is below:

Breakdown of Hub Staff by Grade (31 March 2021)

SCS2: 1

SCS1: 9

G6: 15

G7: 39

SEO: 34

HEO: 28

EO: 19

Faststream: 2

As of 31 March 2021 1.3% of the Hub workforce was made up of contingent labour.

2. Redeployment of staff to help the pandemic effort

- **From which of the Equality Hub's units were these 46 staff redeployed? What are their grades?**
- **To which government departments have they been redeployed?**
- **Do you expect some or all of these people to return to the Equality Hub and, if so, when?**

In my previous letter I said that 46 staff members from the Equality Hub were redeployed outside of the Hub to help the pandemic effort. This data inadvertently excluded redeployments from the Race Disparity Unit, and so the correct total figure of redeployments is 51. This number includes my own redeployment to a pandemic-related role in the Government Digital Service between March and May 2020.

Full details of redeployed staff:

By Grade

SCS2: 1

SCS1: 0

G6: 5

G7: 16

SEO: 12

HEO: 14

EO: 3

Department deployed to:

FCO: 13

DHSC: 10

HMT: 2

CO: 23

MHCLG: 3

All bar 6 staff members have now finished their redeployments, for the most part returning to take up roles within Hub.

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

As noted in my earlier response, issues of equality and fairness are considered as part of the broader collective decision-making process in Government. The full list of Cabinet Committees, including those which the Minister for Women and Equalities attends, is set out here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-cabinet-committees-system-and-list-of-cabinet-committees

Beyond the Cabinet Committee structures, the equalities Ministerial team regularly meet to

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review progress on priorities and wider cross-government activity. 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.

The nature and scope of the equality portfolio, together with their other Ministerial briefs, means our Ministers regularly engage with counterparts in other Government departments. This can cover both our planned activities and in response to emerging issues. Further details on cross-government working are provided in the written evidence from the Minister for Women and the Minister for Equalities, relating to their specific portfolios.

4. What staffing (numbers and grades) and financial resources are allocated to the Equality Hub's cross-departmental coordination role?

A whole-government approach to equality and fairness means that a significant proportion of our work involves cross-departmental working and coordination to deliver our priorities, on policies ranging from LGBT to our COVID-19 disparities work. Most staff in the Hub are involved in the co-ordination of cross-departmental work as an element of their job and it is difficult to quantify. I hope the following detailed examples of how we engage with other Departments are however useful to the Committee.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Our cross-departmental coordination work includes a cross-government Public Sector Equality Duty Network which aims to identify and promote best practice in complying with the duty. The network comprises equality leads across Whitehall and is led by Hub officials who coordinate regular meetings and facilitate sharing best practice. We recently worked with the Behavioural Insights Team to develop a 'train the trainer' approach to help departments take a dynamic, evidence-based approach to equality in policy-making using techniques from their Behavioural Government report¹.

A small virtual project team within the Hub are working with other departments to review and provide feedback on Outcome Delivery Plans for 2021/22 to ensure they include substantive equality objectives. These plans will be published on gov.uk shortly.

Disability Strategy

The National Strategy for Disabled People, due to be published later this year, aims to tackle barriers and transform the everyday experiences of disabled people, in all aspects and phases of life. Its development has entailed extensive engagement with external stakeholders, including disabled people, and has required strong and sustained cross-government working, led by the Disability Unit.

Through our work, every key Government department has identified a Ministerial Disability Champion, responsible for driving ambition and progress in their department. The Minister for Disabled People has convened meetings of the Champions at key points, through the IMG mentioned above.

At official level, Permanent Secretaries were each asked early on to appoint departmental leads, and this network, with the relationships established through it, has been a key aid to engagement and to achieve reach across departments. It has helped to compile a wide-ranging set of policies for the Strategy. The Disability Unit will continue to lead and co-ordinate this cross-government approach following publication, to oversee progress on commitments and on the application of key principles for inclusive policy development in the

¹ www.bi.team/publications/behavioural-government/ - July 2018

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future, which have been agreed by departments.

COVID-19 disparities work

Policy officials have been actively working with colleagues across ten Whitehall departments to assess the effectiveness of existing policy and influence the development of new policy to mitigate the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on ethnic minorities. A cross-Whitehall working group comprising leads from these ten departments meets regularly to assess progress.

Equality Hub officials work closely with the COVID-19 Taskforce to drive a joined-up approach to policy and communications to address COVID-19 disparities on race, disability and gender. Equality Hub officials also sit on a number of cross-Whitehall groups, including the Vaccine Deployment Equalities Committee, the Risk Stratification Steering Group and the COVID-19 Disproportionately Impacted Groups Steering Group.

Since the Minister for Equalities' COVID-19 work began, analysts in the Hub have collaborated with the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Department of Health and Social Care, and Public Health England to improve the recording of ethnicity data in health records and the quality of vaccination uptake data for different ethnic groups. This and wider cross-government work is reflected in the Minister for Equalities' quarterly reports - which are submitted to Parliament and published at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/race-disparity-unit.

Similarly, the impact of COVID-19 on disabled people, and those with health conditions, continues to be monitored across government using a range of sources, including an evidence programme with the ONS, and regular engagement with disabled people and disability stakeholders, to ensure the needs of disabled people are considered in the Government's response to, and recovery from COVID-19.

The Equality Hub has also coordinated and informed cross-government policy on other aspects of equality. For example, our COVID-19 Research Observatory has played a key role in collating and sharing the latest evidence across government on the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 on gender as well as other characteristics. We have worked with the ONS to ensure that time use data captures the differential impacts on caring for men and women. And we have used our knowledge and evidence to inform cross government policy - for example in collaboration with the COVID-19 taskforce and other government departments amending guidance to allow the provision of informal childcare, to limit the burden placed on parents.

5. A list of meetings with CSOs attended by each of the three GEO ministers in the last year; a schedule of such meetings planned in the next 12 months and a description of how the schedule of ministerial meetings with CSOs is planned.

Ministers and officials in the Equality Hub regularly meet with external stakeholders, ranging from 1:1 meetings to hosting roundtables and discussions with civil society organisations. As noted by the Minister for Women and Equalities at her previous appearance in front of your Committee, our Ministers do not always make an absolute distinction between external discussion on their equality and other portfolios; there are areas of helpful cross-over and they therefore reflect their equality priorities in contacts with a range of stakeholders.

Engagement with civil society organisations takes place both proactively, for example as part of the work on conversion therapy and LGBT policy, as well as reactively in response to emerging issues, where the Equality Hub can play an important role. During the past year, the pattern of Ministerial stakeholder meetings has been heavily influenced by the pandemic and the Government response. As reflected in the examples of cross-government working above, this has included roundtable discussions with civil society to better understand the impact of

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COVID-19 on women, as well as meetings with stakeholders on the important COVID-19 disparities work led by the Minister for Equalities.

Some examples of recent engagement with stakeholders include:

- Meeting with conversion therapy survivors and subject matter experts.
- Meetings with LGBT organisations such as Stonewall and the LGBT panel.
- Meetings with senior business leaders of the Women's Business Council, as well as other business representatives such as the CBI.
- Meetings with women's organisations such as the Fawcett Society.
- Roundtables to hear women's experiences of COVID-19.
- Roundtables on ethnic disparities in maternal health care and vaccination uptake.
- Meeting with industry representatives on COVID-19 disparities.
- Meetings with leading figures and experts on socio-economic and geographic disadvantage to reflect the Equality Hub's new focus in this area.
- Workshops and roundtable meetings bringing together disabled people, their organisations, businesses and business organisations, regulators, academia, professional bodies.
- Attendance at the Disability Charities Consortium; the Disabled People's Organisations Forum and a Regional Stakeholder Network on matters of disability.

Civil society engagement is also an essential part of our international work; this year a number of civil society members represented the UK and shared their ideas at the interactive dialogue sessions as part of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in March. The global LGBT conference 27-29 June 2022 will also bring together government representatives, businesses, civil society and international parliamentarians to address the safety of LGBT people at home and abroad.

The Prime Minister has also appointed Lord Herbert of South Downs as Special Envoy for LGBT rights. In his role, Lord Herbert will focus on progressing LGBT equality both internationally and domestically. Ministers and Equality Hub officials will be engaging with him regularly.

More widely, over the next year, Ministers will continue to engage with civil society organisations and other external stakeholders in the development of overall priorities and on individual issues and workstreams. Both the Minister for Women and the Minister for Equalities have set out their current priorities in written evidence to the Committee, which we hope will assist the Committee in developing a better sense of the Hub's upcoming work and engagement with stakeholders.

All Ministerial meetings and external engagements are routinely published on gov.uk: www.gov.uk/government/government-efficiency-transparency-and-accountability#transparency

I hope the information in this letter is helpful to the Committee, and I look forward to the opportunity to attend the upcoming evidence session along with the Minister for Women and Equalities on 25 May.

Yours sincerely



MARCUS BELL
Director, Equality Hub

May 2021