



Equality Hub

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Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your letter of 27 April 2021, in which you requested written evidence as part of your Committee's inquiry into the work of the Government Equalities Office.

1. Current priorities as Minister for Equalities

The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities

Following publication of the independent Commission's report on 31 March 2021, the Prime Minister issued a statement making clear that the Government will consider the Commission's recommendations in detail and will respond in full in due course. In recognition of the extensive scope of recommendations, as I set out to the House on 20 April, the Prime Minister has established a new Inter-Ministerial Group chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to review the Commission's recommendations. I attend this group to coordinate cross-government progress.

The Government is now considering the report in detail and assessing the next steps for future government policy. I, and the entirety of government, remain fully committed to building a fairer Britain and taking the action needed to address negative racial and ethnic disparities wherever they exist.

COVID-19 disparities work

As you know, in June last year the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care asked me to lead cross-government work to address the findings of the Public Health England review of disparities in COVID-19 risks and outcomes. As part of this year-long project, and in line with the [terms of reference](#), I have submitted two [quarterly reports](#) to the Prime Minister. The third report is due to be published shortly.

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You will be aware that before the MHRA approved any vaccine for deployment in the UK, I joined a COVID-19 vaccine trial at Guys and St Thomas' hospital and wrote to every MP, encouraging them to promote ethnic minority participation in these trials. From my engagement with stakeholders, drives like this are clearly one of the best long-term ways to build community confidence in vaccine safety.

To inform my broader COVID-19 work, I have gone further leading a programme of engagement both within government and with external stakeholders, commissioning new research from Public Health England and appointing new independent expert advisers. In recent months, the focus of my work has turned to promoting vaccine uptake among ethnic minority groups because this is the best practical way to address poor outcomes from COVID-19. Alongside the Minister for COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment Nadhim Zahawi, I participated in a virtual oral evidence session on 10 March to assist with your Committee's inquiry into vaccine uptake among ethnic minority groups and women, as part of my wider work in this area. I also gave evidence to your Committee, alongside the Minister for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care and the Minister for Housing on 15 July, as part of your sub-inquiry looking at the unequal impact of COVID-19 on ethnic minority people.

Looking ahead, my focus is now on the fourth and final report on COVID-19 disparities. This will include updating on the latest findings including on how the impact of the virus has changed over time, summarising progress in mitigating the disparities, and setting out a way forward. This will also take account of the findings of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, particularly in relation to tackling health disparities.

Working with the FCDO to deliver a global LGBT conference

The Government is committed to delivering its first global LGBT conference. 'Safe To Be Me: A Global LGBT Conference' will take place on 27-29 June 2022, to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the first London Pride. The event will deliver on the UK's twin international commitments; as co-chair of the Equal Rights Coalition alongside Argentina and co-host of the European LGBT+ Focal Points Network's IDAHOT+ Forum alongside Cyprus. I am working closely with the Minister for Women and Equalities, the Foreign Secretary, the Minister for European Neighbourhood and the Americas and Lord Herbert of the South Downs in his roles as Special Envoy for LGBT rights and Chair for the International Conference. Together, we want to ensure the event is ambitious and cements the UK's standing as a global force for good.

In the meantime, to celebrate this year's International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, I will be co-hosting a virtual Forum alongside Cyprus on 18 May which brings together European partners, civil society and businesses to share best practice on LGBT equality.

Implementing the gender recognition process improvements

I am committed to ensuring that the process of applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) should be as straightforward and dignified as possible and I am pleased that we have already delivered on our pledge to reduce the fee of applying for a GRC. Applicants will now only be required to pay £5, making the process more affordable and remedying one of the key issues that was identified by trans people in the Gender Recognition Act consultation and the National LGBT Survey. Officials are also progressing work to digitise the process to relieve the administrative burden also identified as a barrier.

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Ending conversion therapy

As set out in the Queen's Speech, we will bring forward legislation to ban conversion therapy. We are determined to stop these practices and ensure they are rooted out once and for all. We will ensure the action we take to stop this practice is proportionate and effective, with no unintended consequences. Particularly, we will ensure parents, teachers and medical professionals continue to be able to have open and honest conversations with people.

We will also launch a consultation before details of the ban are finalised to hear from a wide range of voices on how best to protect people from conversion therapy. I am pleased to confirm that we will also be putting new support in place for victims of conversion therapy.

As you know, we have undertaken research to understand practices, experiences and impacts associated with conversion therapy and will publish this in due course. Officials are also in discussion with international policy counterparts, to fully understand the detail and impact of other jurisdictions' measures, in order to inform our next steps.

Equality Hub Reform and Levelling Up

A key ambition of the Government is to Level Up across the country, expanding opportunity and improving outcomes. The Equality Hub has recently integrated the Government Equalities Office, the Race Disparity Unit, the Disability Unit and the Social Mobility Commission into one unit within the Cabinet Office, to help deliver cross-government action and achieve these aims.

We are currently undertaking a far-reaching Equality Data Hub Programme to identify disparities and inequalities and create targeted cross-government interventions. This work takes into account the 9 protected characteristics as set out by the Equality Act 2010, in addition to socio-economic and geographical factors. As Minister for Equalities I have oversight of this work, alongside the Minister for Women and Equalities.

2. How much of your working time as a Minister is devoted to your equalities role? In a typical month how much time do you devote to this role, compared to your role in HM Treasury?

We take a whole government approach to improving equality of opportunity and improving the lives of those in the UK, and this ambition informs all the work I carry out. Around 50-60% of my time is spent on specific equalities work and meetings, although this can vary and is subject to priorities at any given time.

As part of a small Ministerial team with a high profile and cross-cutting remit such as equalities, a significant proportion of my time is spent fulfilling Parliamentary obligations. This includes regular appearances for oral and urgent questions, statements to the House on the important COVID-19 disparities work, and providing evidence to Select Committee inquiries, including as set out above.

3. How do you divide your working time between specific equalities policies or projects and stakeholder engagement? How many equality stakeholder meetings do you attend in a typical month?

Stakeholder engagement is a fundamental part of policy development and delivery and I do not consider the working time to be separate. This is particularly the case with regards to my work on COVID-19 disparities. I meet regularly with relevant stakeholders, both planned and in response to

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emerging issues, examples of which include keynote speeches and roundtables on issues like maternal health outcomes, the impact of COVID on the security industry, the challenges faced by the National Pharmacy Association, the experiences of conversion therapy survivors, or with doctors and medical professionals on vaccine uptake. The frequency of meetings varies month to month, and depends upon not only current priorities, but also the type of engagement. For example, I may be meeting with one or two different organisations, holding 1:1 conversations, or hosting roundtables with a range of attendees. Further meetings are led and attended by my officials.

4. Which Inter-ministerial Groups do you attend at which equalities issues are addressed? How often do these groups meet?

The Minister for Women and Equalities and I are core members of the new Inter-Ministerial Group on the Commission for Racial and Ethnic Disparities, focused on developing the cross-government response to the Commission's recommendations.

More broadly, equality and fairness are an integral part of our policy-making and decision-making processes, with the public sector equality duty applying across government. My attendance at formal Inter-Ministerial Groups or other Ministerial meetings is therefore dependent upon need and the particular focus of policy issues to be discussed.

As part of my role as Minister for Equalities, I also regularly meet with other Government Ministers to discuss areas of shared concern and priority, such as with Ministers in the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) in relation to COVID-19 issues, and the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) on matters of LGBT equality as outlined earlier in this letter.

5. How often have you met with the Minister for Women and Equalities to discuss progress across government in relation to your equalities brief?

I meet regularly with the Minister for Women and Equalities. These meetings take place both formally, as well as informal discussions depending on priorities and emerging issues.

6. How often have you, the Minister for Women and Equalities and the Minister for Women met as a ministerial team to discuss equalities issues and priorities for your respective equalities briefs?

I am in frequent contact with the Ministerial team, meeting formally to review progress on a regular basis, in addition to frequent informal contact. This is notwithstanding meetings with cross-government Ministerial colleagues ahead of the 5-weekly Women and Equalities Oral Parliamentary Questions.

7. How many staff, at what grades, and in which departments, support you in your equalities role?

I am supported in my role by a dedicated Assistant Private Secretary on the equality brief. It is not really possible to give an absolute figure on staffing in relation to my own priorities, as many staff in the Hub deliver work across units and/or projects, and I am pleased to say staff deployment is flexed around priorities - for example, a new team has recently been established to support my work on the Government response to the CRED report. For an overall picture of Hub resourcing, I have set out below the numbers by grade:

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Equality Hub Staff by Grade (not including SMC secretariat)

SCS2: 1

SCS1: 9

G6: 15

G7: 39

SEO: 34

HEO: 28

EO: 19

Faststream: 2

I meet with Equality Hub officials at least weekly to discuss priorities. This is supplemented by additional meetings depending on current work and a bi-weekly meeting with the Director of the Equality Hub.

The cross-departmental nature of much of the Equality Hub's remit means that officials in other Government departments are involved in developing and delivering on equality priorities, liaising closely with Equality Hub staff. For example, my recent work on outcomes for maternal health was supported by DHSC staff, and the planning and delivery of the International LGBT conference is being led by staff in both the Equality Hub and FCDO.

8. How will the equalities agenda be driven by the new No. 10 Delivery Unit?

The new No.10 Delivery Unit was established in response to a review led by Sir Michael Barber, and will ensure that we deliver on our commitments to unite and level up the country, spreading opportunity to make a real difference to people's lives. The Unit will be headed up by Dr Emily Lawson, who has led on the operational delivery of the vaccination programme in the NHS, and will be supported by a team of both officials and others with key skills, such as auditors and data scientists.

The Equality Hub as part of the Cabinet Office will work closely with the Unit along with other Government departments, and beyond, to ensure that we are improving policy and delivering our commitments to build back better from COVID-19.

Thank you once again for your letter, and I hope this information is helpful. I look forward to continuing to work together on this inquiry and beyond.

Yours sincerely,



KEMI BADENOCH MP

Minister for Equalities and Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury

May 2021