

# THE EQUALITIES REVIEW

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11 October 2005

Dear Colleague,

## **EQUALITIES REVIEW Call for Evidence**

The Government is committed to building a society where every person has an equal chance to achieve their potential not limited by prejudice and discrimination. Building on over thirty years' experience of equality legislation, a comprehensive programme of reform is underway that will create a new framework to challenge discrimination and inequality.

As part of this programme of reform the Prime Minister asked Trevor Phillips to chair the Equalities Review Panel. He is joined on the Panel by Dame Judith Mayhew Jonas, Carol Lake, Nick Pearce and Sir Bob Kerslake. I am writing to ask you to submit initial evidence to help guide the Panel in this work. This will feed into the interim report for publication in early 2006 which will be the subject of a full public consultation.

### **Background to the Review**

Significant progress has been made in addressing inequality and prejudice since the first Race Relations Act was introduced in 1965. Since then, Governments have legislated to protect people from discrimination on the basis of gender and disability, and more recently on the basis of sexual orientation and religion or belief, and soon age. But despite substantial progress during the last 40 years, there remains evidence of deep-seated patterns of disadvantage in our society.

For example, disabled people are at far greater risk of poverty than non-disabled people. Educational attainment for black Caribbean boys consistently falls below that of their female and white peers. The unemployment rate of Bangladeshis and Pakistanis is 2.5 times greater than that of the white population. The pay gap between men's and women's earnings remains. Someone made redundant after 50 is eight times less likely to return to work than a younger person. And incidences of hate crime threaten the security of many different minority groups.

Existing work to tackle inequality has focused on particular groups. We need to build on this to develop a better understanding of the long term and

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underlying barriers to opportunity so that we can identify the tools that are effective in improving individual outcomes while balancing the needs of business and employers for a regulatory regime consistent with continued wealth creation.

That is why the Prime Minister asked the Panel to undertake a fundamental review of equality of opportunity. This review will identify the interaction between socio-economic inequalities and the position of disadvantaged groups, and propose changes – both to the legislative framework and more widely – that can transform people's life chances. The work will provide a firm foundation for the work of the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights, as well as providing recommendations for the Government, the wider public sector, employers and trade unions, civic society and the voluntary sector.

Trevor Phillips wrote to a number of individuals and organisations on 22 July, asking for some initial input. Thank you to all those who have responded. I am writing now, on behalf of the Panel, to formally request your help in setting out a comprehensive picture, and in understanding the issues facing people and groups across England, Wales and Scotland. This will feed into our interim report in the winter.

### **Focus for the review**

Given the breadth of the challenge facing the Panel it has decided to have a clear focus on the long term and on those areas that, despite Government efforts, progress remains too slow, or where things have got worse.

The Panel will therefore look back over the last 60 years and ahead to the next 40 years to set priorities. We are working with academics and researchers to try and understand from the data what the most intractable areas are, but we are also keen to hear what you think are the most intractable problems.

### **Call for evidence**

This call for evidence is split into a number of different sections and sub-sections.

First it focuses on getting your views on where we are – the progress that has been made, looking at what the intractable problems are and the inter-relationships between poverty, class and discrimination.

Second it asks about what you or your organisation do to tackle inequality - what are the barriers, what interventions work, what are the gaps. Where possible we would like you to relate this to your specific work, or services that you have experienced.

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Third it asks you to tell us where you think Great Britain should be in the future, and asks you to help us set the priorities for this work.

The Panel would like to hear from individuals and groups including:

- Organisations that work to reduce inequalities;
- Organisations that provide advice on equality and human rights;
- Organisations that provide services to people experiencing inequality, discrimination or disadvantage;
- Staff delivering these services at the frontline;
- People experiencing inequality, discrimination or disadvantage;
- Organisations that represent these people;
- Organisations, academics and think tanks who undertake research into equality and human rights.

### **What to include and by when**

The Panel wants to hear your views about the priorities and focus for tackling inequalities. In addition, it would be helpful to hear about:

- Examples of good practice, including examples from other countries;
- Case studies that show how services helped people or highlight problems facing service users;
- Projects that you think we should know about, including contact details if you can;
- Research, please provide full references where possible.

We are sending this letter to organisations across England, Wales and Scotland that we think will want to contribute to the Review. However if there are other people that you think may want to respond please let them know. This letter is on our website [www.theequalitiesreview.org.uk](http://www.theequalitiesreview.org.uk). You can contact the Equalities Review Team on 020 7276 3813.

Please send your responses to: [equalitiesreview@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:equalitiesreview@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk) or to The Equalities Review Team, 3.32, 22-26 Whitehall, London SW1A 2WH. The closing date is **26 November**. Please also let us know if you would like to come and talk to the Panel or the Team to give evidence in person.

Yours sincerely

Rosie Seymour  
**Equalities Review Team**

### Your response to the Equalities Review Team.

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<b>Position (if applicable)</b>	Head of Equalities

### Data Protection

Under the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, it is our normal practice to let people who ask see all responses.

- If you would prefer us not to give out your answers please check this box.
- We also sometimes quote from the information we get in published reports. If you do not want us to quote your answers please check this box.

Amicus is the UK's largest private sector trade union and the fastest growing union in the public sector. With over 1.2 million members Amicus has members in a range of industries including, financial services, manufacturing, print and media, the voluntary and non-profit sectors, local government and NHS health professionals. In responding to this consultation our main comments and evidence will be confined to the labour market and the workplace.

### Questions

#### 1. Where are we?

- (i) What progress do you think has been made over the past 60 years to reduce inequalities?

There has been significant progress over the last 60 years, but we have not achieved an equal society and many people face persistent discrimination. The main approach taken by Governments has been to introduce equality legislation with the aim of preventing discrimination, rather than introducing positive measures to reduce inequalities. Achieving equality requires a

systematic approach to tackling all factors that lead to inequalities. Strong equal rights legislation is an important aspect of this, but much more needs to be done.

To achieve equality in this country it is vital that we work towards a more equitable labour market. The review needs to gather evidence on the labour market in relation to equality across all the strands, identify the issues and barriers and make clear proposals for action to achieve equality at work. This action plan would need to be reviewed on a regular basis and further recommendations for action made if necessary.

However, what is imperative, is that progress on equality needs to be measured in terms of outcome, not in terms of equality of opportunity. We have had equality legislation and equal opportunity policies in many organisations for many years, but we are a long way from achieving equality in the workplace for disadvantaged groups in society.

(ii) What helped in making that progress?

It is very difficult to quantify the factors that have aided progress on equality at work. However, the main factors in reducing inequalities in the labour market have been anti-discrimination and family friendly legislation with support and guidance given to employers by ACAS and the existing equality Commissions on complying with the legislation and best practice on equality. Equally, society has changed and as a result discriminatory attitudes have modified towards disadvantaged groups of in the workplace, although there is still much work to be done in this area. Recently Government policies have included a number of measures, such as the public sector duties, which are welcomed as they involve the public sector taking positive action to reduce inequalities at work.

All the above are useful and necessary if we are to achieve equality, but much more needs to be done which we detail in Section 3 on ***Where do we want to be?***

(iii) What do you think are the most persistent and stubborn inequalities?

Again it is difficult to measure the most persistent and stubborn inequalities at work and we would not wish to encourage a hierarchical approach to equalities. Inequalities occur because of class, lack of education and qualifications, poor health and discrimination. Statistical evidence supports the inequalities in the labour market for women, certain Black and ethnic minority groups and the disabled.

The gender pay gap is persistent and in particular, the part-time pay gap of nearly 40% is not closing and must be addressed. This links in to sex discrimination and the role of women in society. Black and minority ethnic groups (BME), particularly those of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, have lower qualifications, higher unemployment and lower pay than their white counterparts. Race is a complex area of social policy and there are differing

views on how to achieve race equality. This has not aided a comprehensive and coherent approach on how to achieve race equality. Disability discrimination is endemic. Disabled people have high unemployment, lower pay and face constant discrimination in the workplace. The focus has been on making physical changes at work to accommodate disabled workers. This is necessary, but the approach needs to move to the social model of disability if real progress is going to be made for disabled people.

Attitudes to LGBT people are deeply ingrained in society and very difficult to change, although there has been progress in this area in recent years. Various legislation has been introduced to improve the rights of LGBT people in recent years but, there is still much to be done to combat homophobia in the workplace. Many employers and workers are not aware of LGBT legal rights and LGBT workers face harassment and discrimination in the workplace. As a result many LGBT workers have to seek to avoid discrimination by concealing their sexual orientation.

Age can be an issue and is coming to the fore because of the introduction of the Age Discrimination Regulations in 2006. There is evidence that older workers, particularly those over 50, are more likely to be made redundant. Equally, there is an issue with attitudes, with some people viewing older workers as resistant to change and slow to learn new skills. Younger workers are often viewed as being unreliable.

## **2. What happens currently?**

### **(i) What are the barriers to improving equality?**

There are different barriers to improving equality, which are both complicated and inter-related. Equality of opportunity can differ throughout life. Social status and poverty have a big impact on inequality. Poor people have less access to decent housing, education, transport and employment and are more likely to suffer poor health. A disproportionate amount of women, (particularly women who are lone parents or pensioners), BMEs and disabled people are poor. Government action and support needs to be targeted at socially and economically disadvantaged people to improve their housing, health, education and work opportunities.

Another issue is that many people think that equality has been achieved in this country with the mistaken assumption that everyone has equal access to education and employment. There is a lack of understanding that wealth and social status are mainly inherited and if you are born into poverty it is very difficult to improve your economic and social status.

Employers do not prioritise equality in the workplace and many are not convinced of the business case of equality. The major focus of private sector companies is profit, with the public and voluntary sectors often under financial constraints. This focus takes precedence over the achievement of equality which in the short-term costs money and resources. Additionally, much of the

training on equality in the workplace is focussed on complying with the legislation, rather than looking at targets and outcomes for achieving equality. Long working hours is one of the major barriers to women's choices at work. Women with caring responsibilities find that they are unable to work the long hours required for many managerial and professional roles. This results in the majority of women not progressing in the workplace and many men working long hours. Men are unable to take a greater role in domestic responsibilities with the burden falling on women, thus a vicious circle is established. This could be broken if both work organisation and the culture of workplaces were addressed. Increased flexibility in the workplace and the reduction of working time should form a vital component towards equality in the workplace.

The Government also needs to address the low value attached to certain sectors and occupations which are dominated by women and in some areas BMEs. It is not enough to increase the number of people in higher paid occupations. Firstly, because there is evidence that if women move into traditional male roles than the occupation becomes devalued. This happened in clerical work and more recently in HR. Equally, even if more women, disabled and BME move into higher paid occupations someone still has to do the lower paid jobs.

(ii) What interventions have worked in tackling those barriers?

This is difficult to quantify. As previously mentioned discrimination and family-friendly legislation, changing attitudes and the public sector duty have had some impact on tackling the barriers. Amicus has some concerns about the public sector duty on race which according to the CRE is in need of revision and is not bringing about as much change that is needed for BMEs to achieve equality in the public sector workforce. Government initiatives such as targeted education, training programmes, the union learning services and the New Deal are all useful in progressing equality in the workplace.

In 2003 Amicus decided that it needed to take action on disability in the workplace and launched the Disability Champions at Work project with the help of funding from the European Year of Disabled People. It has been a very successful project and Amicus is building on that success. The project identified and trained Amicus shop stewards and representatives to become Disability Champions in their workplaces. The aim is to encourage better employment opportunities and fairer treatment for disabled employees. Amicus now has 150 Disability Champions throughout the country and they are making a real difference to the working lives of disabled people.

(iii) Where are the gaps in intervention?

Existing discrimination law needs to be strengthened to ensure improved social mobility. Many of those who are discriminated against are unaware of their rights and do not know who to approach for advice or representation. It is vital that there is support for the individual through collective bargaining to address inequality in the workplace. Specifically, Amicus is calling on the Government to:-

- Introduce a Single Equality Act
- introduce mandatory equal pay audits for all employers in the public, private and voluntary sectors;
- that employers should take and report action on equal pay and equality in their annual reports;
- extend the duty to promote equality in all sectors;
- extend protection from discrimination on grounds of goods, facilities and services to transgender :
- introduce the right for trade unions to take class action on behalf of a group of members;
- lead on tackling inequality through public procurement
- restore national collective bargaining ;
- increase the minimum wage;
- strengthen the flexible working regulations and;
- introduce statutory union equality representatives.

### **3. Where do we want to be?**

#### **(i) What would success look like? *In one year?***

In one year Amicus believes that that there should be a clear strategy for action from the Government and others who are in a position to influence and make change. This must include the commitment to introduce the above recommendations as listed above.

#### ***In three years?***

The above recommendations should be in place and on the statute book with clear and comprehensive guidance available for both workers and employers. Training will need to be carried out for all those involved in giving advice and providing representation, as well as employers, service providers and others.

#### ***In 10 years?***

Amicus would want to see a significant reduction in inequality at work, but circumstances may change hugely over a ten year period, so we would recommend that progress should be reviewed in 5 years, then plan ahead for the next five years.

#### ***In 40 years?***

See answer to question about 10 years.

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(ii) What should our top three priorities be for this review?

The Review should recommend strong measures and action to achieve equality of outcome; public understanding and support for the Review; and allocation of sufficient funding and resources.

(iii) What are the priorities for the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights?

The priorities are ultimately for the CEHR when appointed. However, the Government must ensure sufficient funding and resources – without this the CEHR will not operate effectively and there is already concern that the funding suggested by the Government is not sufficient; that the composition of the workforce has a real understanding of equality issues; and that all strands of equality are given equal status and resources. Additionally, there should be an equal number of CEHR commissioners who are representative of trade unions as those for employers. It is also vital that equality is mainstreamed within all Government departments with a responsibility to interact with the CEHR.

(iv) What are the priorities for Government? Other sectors?

It is for the Review to determine the priorities for the Government after full consultation and to ensure that the Government takes action to address equality as a result of the Review.

Please note response should reach the Equalities Review team by Friday 26 November. Send your responses to: [equalitiesreview@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:equalitiesreview@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk) or to The Equalities Review Team, 3.32, 22-26 Whitehall, London SW1A 2WH.

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### Please tick the box which best describes your organisation

- Voluntary sector/charity
- Public sector
- Private sector
- Other (please specify) .....

### Which area does your organisation cover?

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Race or ethnicity
- Religion or faith
- Sexual Orientation
- Transgender
- Other (please specify) .....