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Sent: 21 April 2011 10:06

To: Specific Duties

Cc: Foster, Russell, 14125

Subject: feedback on new draft specific duties

To: Harshbir Sangha, GEO

Please find my response as Force Diversity Adviser at Derbyshire Constabulary to the Policy Review paper.

9. The revised draft regulations will require public bodies to:

1. publish equality objectives every four years;
2. publish information annually to demonstrate their compliance with the general Equality Duty;
3. in particular publish information relating to their employees (for bodies with 150 or more staff) and others affected by their policies and practices (such as service users).

I believe that the above proposals of 17 March which are a reduction in the requirement of public authorities in relation to the specific duties contradict the principles outlined by the coalition government in their Equality Strategy - Building a Fairer Britain. In particular, in the strategy the government stated they want to ensure accountability by making public authorities transparent about their decision-making. However the reduced specific duties will limit the ability of the public to scrutinise and challenge the performance of the public authorities on equality, as the public authorities would no longer be required to publish who they consulted with to help inform their decisions, and no longer publish what equality analysis has been undertaken when considering the impact of their decisions.

The specific duty 'publish information annually to demonstrate their compliance with the general Equality Duty' is so generic it is confusing and unhelpful and will lead to the withering of any equality momentum in the public sector.

I believe the specific duties outlined on 12 January are not onerous or bureaucratic but will provide the public with an audit of our equality considerations in key decisions and outline our commitment to diversity. Derbyshire Constabulary believes these duties are best practice and in the spirit of the Equality Act. We will still work towards these as they provide a more consistent framework for us and public authorities to work to and will provide the necessary information to the public who have a vested interest in the service we provide thereby ensuring our transparency about our performance and therefore make us more accountable.

In summary, I believe the draft specific duties of 17 March are a retrograde step for equality and diversity in the workplace and communities. I strongly support the continuance of the specific duties issued on 12 January.

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