

Response to Government Equalities Office on the consultation over scrapping the specific Equality Duties as detailed in the Equality Act 2010

The Government have announced their intention to remove the specific Equality Duties following the implementation on the 6th April of the new Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Consortium of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Trans Voluntary and Community Organisations and some of its members, as detailed at the end of this statement, urge the Government to return to their original intention as published on 12th January 2011 to introduce these specific Equality Duties.

The Government's decision to back-track on the implementation of some of the specific Duties is to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and prevent top-down targets. Sadly, we believe that this will allow Public Bodies to make decisions on issues that affect the LGBT sectors without having to publically evidence how they have come to these decisions. This could close the doors that allow the LGBT sectors to effectively scrutinise decisions and ensure that our communities are treated on a level of equality with others in society, in line with the general Equality Duty.

These Duties are not needless details that create more paperwork for Public Bodies. They are vital processes that will ensure that decisions are made appropriately, fairly and proportionally.

The LGBT sectors have historically found it far more difficult to ensure the issues that affect our communities are heard on a level of equality with others. Despite improvements over the last decade many LGBT organisations continue to find it difficult to engage effectively with Public Bodies and position themselves to be able to provide much needed specialist skills in this area. The introduction of the specific Duties would make it far easier for our sectors to challenge decisions and ensure that where gaps are identified through published information, LGBT organisations can position themselves to provide the strategic direction and delivery that the Coalition Government wants the Voluntary & Community Sectors to provide. If the specific duties are not in place, very few LGBT organisations will have the capacity to identify this missing information and our Communities are far more likely to continue to be marginalised. They will also continue to be disproportionately under-funded to provide specialist equality skills, resulting in a continued decline of LGBT resources across the country.

We urge the Government to reconsider its position in this area and return to its original proposals to encourage all Public bodies to prove their commitments to all the protective characteristics.

Submitted by the following organisations:

Consortium of LGBT VCOs
The Intercom Trust, South West
Schools Out, National
LGBT History Month, National
A Day in Hand, National
Lesbian & Gay Foundation, Manchester
Yorkshire Mesmac
ELOP—East London Out Project
Allsorts, Brighton
Lesbian Community Project, Manchester
Account3, London



LGBT Bristol
Ian Dodds Consulting
TREC (Trans Resource and Empowerment Centre)
Nottingham and Notts Lesbian and Gay Switchboard
Nottinghamshire's Rainbow Heritage
GALOP
Dorset Lesbian & Gay Switchboard
Qwest FtM UK
Stonewall Housing
London Friend
Linda Bellos OBE
Enfield LGBT Network
Gay & Lesbian Humanist Association
Enfield LGBT Network