

From: Rachel Travers [Rachel@amazebrighton.org.uk]
Sent: 11 April 2011 10:39
To: Specific Duties
Subject: Comment on draft regulations - Equality Act 2010
Dear Sir/Madam

I write on behalf of Amaze a charity working with the parents and families of children with disabilities here in Brighton and Hove. We run a telephone helpline (logging over 3,000 calls per year) and provide 121 casework on benefits and education advice as well as provide training and consultation. We have about 1,500 children and young people on our database.

Brighton and Hove NHS (formerly PCT) currently commissions us to engage with our service users and to provide them with feedback on a variety of issues. Whilst we agree with the need to reduce some of the bureaucracy around equality and diversity practice we are alarmed at the proposals to

- Remove the requirement for organisations to evidence any engagement with any stakeholders (staff; patients; public; voluntary sector; protected characteristic communities) in determining and developing their policies – this includes service design; tendering; decision making etc.
- Remove the requirement to evidence engagement when organisations are choosing their priority equality objectives (equality objectives replace equality Schemes and action plans)
- Removing requirement to evidence where information or consultation has taken place to inform equality analysis

We believe that unless there is a duty to evidence this engagement then it will be avoided. Communities of interest need to have a voice and need opportunities to engage in several different ways. If this does not happen services will not be designed or developed in a way to meet their needs and so many people will end up disengaging with these public services and dissatisfaction rates will increase.

What remains as obligations for organisations, chiefly to:

- Develop a minimum of one equality objective to work towards every 4 years
- Provide evidence that an organisation is meeting the general duty to promote equality; eliminate discrimination; and foster good relations between groups
- Provide information relating to employees (for organisations with 150 or more staff) and others affected by policies and practice (service users)

seem very light touch. This can be illustrated by this consultation process itself – which does not seem to actively seek the views or responses from particular communities of interest which these changes will ultimately affect.

I would urge you to reconsider the removal of duty to evidence the much needed engagement and ensure that public bodies are required to continue to do this in a meaningful way.

Yours faithfully,

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Amaze, Chief Executive
(I work part time on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays)
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Amaze

Working with parents of children with special needs

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