

# The Equality Bill

## Summary and a Discussion of Likely Impact

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# The Equality Bill – Framework for a Better Future

- Published in June 2008
- EHRC response July 2008
- Announced in Queen's speech December 2008
- Due to be made law Spring 2010?

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# Equality Bill - Background

- Over the last ten years the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976, and Disability Discrimination Act 1995 have been strengthened and expanded.
- New laws have also been introduced to cover discrimination on grounds of religion or belief, sexual orientation and age.
- In February 2005 the government announced the arrival of the Discrimination Law Review (DLR).
- The DLR initially ran alongside the Equalities Review, which published its final report in February 2007.

# Equality Bill - Background

- The Government's DLR team published a green paper in June 2007, setting out its recommendations for a single equality act for Great Britain.
- There was then a period of formal consultation with stakeholders, whose responses are now being considered by the government team, as they work towards an equality bill, and eventually, the act itself.

# Legislative Context

- Currently nine major pieces of discrimination legislation
- Around 100 statutory instruments setting out connected rules and regulations
- More than 2,500 pages of guidance and statutory codes of practice

# The UK Today!

- The UK has a population of 60.8 million – 51 per cent women and 49 per cent men
- Of the total workforce, 45.8 per cent is female compared to just 38 per cent in 1971
- About 10 million people, or 1 in 6, are disabled; (1 in 8 people in the workplace)
- The ethnic minority population of the UK is forecast to grow from 9 per cent to about 11 per cent by the end of the next decade
- In 2021, the number of people aged 65 and over in the UK is expected to exceed the number aged under 16.

# The UK Today!

- 45.8 per cent of people identify themselves as having no religious belief , while 46 per cent say they are Christian, 3.3 per cent are Muslim, 1.4 per cent Hindu, 0.5 per cent Jewish, 0.2 per cent Sikh, 0.2 per cent Buddhist and 1.4 per cent other ‘non-Christian’ religions.
- About 6 per cent of people are attracted to people of the same sex (lesbians and gay men) or both the same and opposite sex (bisexual people).
- No accurate figures exist for the number of trans people in the UK, but it could be as many as 5,000

# Equalities in the UK – The Problem

- A woman's full time pay is on average 12.6% less per hour than a man's. Women working part-time are paid around 40% less per hour
- If you are disabled, you are still two and a half times more likely to be out of work than a non-disabled person
- If you are from a minority ethnic group, you are 15.5% less likely to find work than if you are white.
- 6 out of 10 lesbian and gay schoolchildren experience homophobic bullying
- People from lower socio-economic backgrounds make up around one half of the population of England, but were just 29 per cent of young, full-time, first-time entrants to higher education in 2006/7
- In 2006, Muslim men were more than twice as likely to be unemployed as Christian men

# Equalities in the UK – The Problem

- There is a 30 year gap in ‘healthy life expectancy’ – the age before ill-health strikes – between parts of the south of England and areas in the north (86 years in Didcot, Oxfordshire, and 54.9 years in parts of Middlesbrough)
- People from minority ethnic groups account for a significantly greater proportion of the prison population (23 per cent) than their proportion in the general population (9 per cent).
- Black people are five times more likely to be stopped and searched in the Gwent police area (which includes the city of Newport) – the highest proportion of any police force in England and Wales

# Equalities in the UK – If We Do Nothing!

- The pay gap between men and women will not close until 2085
- It will take almost 100 years for people from minority ethnic groups to get the same job prospects as white people
- Disabled people will probably never get the same job prospects
- it will take 20 years for women to achieve equal representation in the Senior Civil Service
- It will take 80 years to elect a representative House of Commons

# The Equality Bill - Aims

“The aim of the Equality Bill is to fight discrimination in all its forms and help to make equality a reality for everyone”

Specifically the Bill will.....

# Strengthen the law by:

- Banning age discrimination
- Allowing for multiple discrimination
- Increasing transparency and reporting
- Extending the scope for positive action
- Extending the period during which women-only shortlists are allowed
- Strengthening enforcement, for example, by allowing tribunals to make wider recommendations in discrimination cases

# Streamline the law by:

- Distilling nine pieces of legislation into a single Act
- Creating a single new Equality Duty on public bodies
- Simplifying the definition of disability discrimination

**Support** wider work to promote equality which includes:

- Ensuring the public sector has due regard to equality when buying goods and services
- Support trade unions to create a more equal workforce
- Support the work and enquiries of EHRC
- Taking steps to understand other forms of inequality, and the role they play in determining people's chances in life.

**Next steps:**

**Further consultation, discussions and considerations**

**There are objections to the  
Bill's content !!**

## Some think:

- Inadequate consideration of transgendered people
- HR Leads “dismayed” at new legislation
- The Bill should link more with other work to increase “fairness” in society (i.e. other legislation & policy)
- Private sector can opt out -voluntary codes

# The Equality Bill

What does it mean to you ?

Discuss

Thank You For Listening