



Government
Equalities Office

Putting equality at the heart of government

Delivering the Equality PSA

2008 – 2011



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Introduction by Jonathan Rees



The Government's priorities for 2008-11 were announced by Alastair Darling as part of the 2007 Pre-Budget Report. These priorities are known as Public Service Agreements (PSAs). For the first time, there is a PSA specifically on equalities, demonstrating the Government's commitment to equality.

There are 30 PSAs in all, spanning the whole of the Government's work from improving skills to tackling climate change. Many of these PSAs contain commitments to tackle inequalities. For example, PSA 8 seeks to narrow employment gaps for disadvantaged groups such as disabled people, while other PSAs seek to address inequalities in education and skills, health, criminal justice and other areas.

PSA15 – the Equality PSA – complements action in other areas. The Government Equalities Office (GEO) is the lead department for the Equality PSA. By 2011, this PSA aims to achieve:

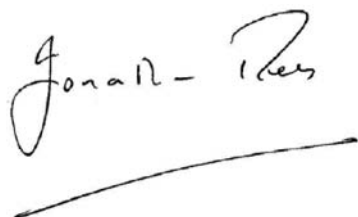
- A reduction in the pay gap for women
- Improved choice and control for disabled people
- Greater participation in public life for disadvantaged groups
- A reduction in workplace discrimination and
- A better understanding of and ability to measure fair treatment in the delivery of public services.

This is a challenging agenda. In many cases, we are tackling deep-rooted problems with a long history. To be successful will require innovation and creativity, and joint working within central government and with a wide range of partners including regional government, local government, and non-departmental public bodies such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Above all, we want to tap into the energy, enthusiasm and expertise of business, trade unions, voluntary sector organisations, the public sector and people who actually experience disadvantage in these areas. We want, therefore, to take forward delivery of this PSA in an open and collaborative way, engaging widely in each of the priority areas.

This summary document sets out our broad plans to deliver the Equality PSA. We are not in any way complacent that the actions set out here will by themselves guarantee success. That's where we need your help. We are setting these plans out publicly so that you can feed in your ideas, and so that we can begin a dialogue on how – working together – we can achieve the aims of this PSA.

Thank you for taking time to read this document. I very much look forward to hearing your thoughts and suggestions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Rees". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a long, thin horizontal line that serves as a signature underline.

Jonathan Rees
Director General, GEO

Priority 1: Narrowing the gender pay gap

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings reveals a gap between the full-time median hourly wage rates of men and women of 12.6%. This has reduced considerably since 1997, but there are signs that the rate at which the gap is closing may be slowing. There is an even bigger gap (39.2%) for those who work part-time.

The causes of the pay gap are complex and include the fact that women are more likely to have breaks in their work histories due to family or caring responsibilities. Women also work part-time more often than men, and are over-represented in low-paid jobs or sectors.

A key element of our delivery plan is to improve the evidence on the pay gap. We will commission new research and undertake further analysis of existing information to:

- Build a stronger picture of what drives the pay gap, how these drivers change over time, and how to influence these drivers
- Improve our understanding of which types of policy interventions are likely to have biggest impact on the pay gap and
- Better understand how to encourage more flexible working.

Key actions over 2008-2011

Over the three years to March 2011, we will:

- Introduce legislation to promote greater transparency in pay
- Work with CBI, unions and others to gather evidence on the effectiveness of pay audits and how best to promote transparency
- Work with the Office for Government Commerce and others to consider how public sector purchasing power can help achieve equality aims in the private sector
- Use the new, expanded single public-sector equality duty to make public bodies more transparent
- Deliver a campaign to raise awareness of the right to request flexible working, as well as extend the right to request to all parents with dependant children under 16 years of age
- Reconvene the Women and Work Commission to review progress on implementing their recommendations and
- Improve opportunities in careers advice, apprenticeships and training.

Priority 2: Increasing disabled people's choice and control

Disabled people do not have the level of choice, control and flexibility which most people take for granted. Among disabled people who require aids or adaptations, for example, more than a quarter say they have never had a choice in how these are delivered. Failure to support independent living imposes social and economic opportunity costs on individuals, and unnecessary burdens on public services.

The Office for Disability Issues (ODI) – part of the Department for Work and Pensions – led a cross-government project ('The Independent Living Review', launched in July 2006) to improve the evidence on independent living and to identify practical solutions to support independent living for disabled people. [Independent Living](#), published in March 2008 by the ODI, sets out the conclusions of this review along with detailed policy commitments that seek to make independent living a reality for more disabled people.

The Green Paper, [No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility](#), published in July 2008 by the Department for Work and Pensions, set out additional proposals to help ensure disabled people have greater control over their lives and the services they receive.

Key actions over 2008-2011

Over the three years to March 2011, the Government will:

- Improve disabled people's access to self-directed support and to information and advice
- Address the issue of disabled people living in housing which does not meet their needs
- Increase the number of buses and trains accessible to disabled people and the number of disabled people using public transport
- Reduce the employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people and
- Take action to increase disabled people's participation in cultural, sporting and leisure activities.

Although this priority focuses on disability, we are also looking carefully at the concept of autonomy and how it applies to all disadvantaged groups and we are seeking to develop best practice in measuring changes over time.

Priority 3: Addressing inequalities in civic participation

All groups within society should have a voice in influencing decisions that affect them, as well as the opportunity to participate in activities which support community life, but this is too often not the case. The Equality and Human Rights Commission recently estimated that it will take 55 years to achieve an equal number of senior women in the judiciary, and around 200 years – another 40 elections – to achieve an equal number of women in Parliament.

The public activities relevant to this PSA include being a local councillor, school governor, or magistrate, and also being involved in civic consultation, participation, activism and both formal and informal volunteering.

Key actions over 2008-2011

More than any other aspect of this PSA, progress on Priority 3 will be driven at a local level, and a high number of areas are prioritising aspects of civic participation through the new Local Area Agreements.

Nationally, over the three years to March 2011, we will:

- Improve the diversity of public appointments
- Increase the number of disabled people taking part in volunteering
- Ensure effective third-sector representation on Local Strategic Partnerships and in public life generally
- Take forward the cross-party Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Women Councillors Taskforce, along with other measures to improve the diversity of local councillors
- Through the Young Advisors Initiative, ensure the voice of younger people can be heard by bodies such as local councils
- Raise awareness of the value of becoming a local magistrate
- Create pathways into the magistracy and other civic institutions for people from ethnic minorities
- Take forward the findings of new research on BAME women's routes into, through, and out of public life and
- Look at what support is available to help women become more active.

Priority 4: Tackling discrimination in employment

Taking action to tackle discrimination in employment will make an important contribution to delivery of the Government's aspiration of full employment. The Fair Treatment survey found that around 1.6 million or 6.9 per cent of employees said they had personally been treated unfairly at work in the last two years, with 70% considering this to be discrimination.

This PSA focuses on perceived discrimination in respect of job entry and progression in work, where current evidence suggests that older people and people from an ethnic minority are the most disadvantaged groups.

As with the gender pay gap, a key element of our delivery plan is to improve the evidence. We will commission new research and undertake further analysis of existing information to:

- Assess the extent of discrimination in employment for different groups
- Improve our overall understanding discrimination in the workplace and
- Improve our understanding of what drives perceptions of discrimination

Key actions over 2008-2011

Over the three years to March 2011, the Government will:

- Introduce new legislation to ensure that a strengthened, streamlined legal framework is in place
- Extend the right to request flexible working to parents of children up to the age of 16, and deliver a campaign to raise awareness of the right to request flexible working
- Review the case for a default retirement age based on the evidence of operation since 2006
- Consider how public-sector purchasing power can help achieve equality aims in the private sector
- Actively promote the business case for non-ageist employment practices to the business community and employers through the *Age Positive* initiative and
- Engage employers to improve their understanding of disability and attitudes towards disabled people.

Priority 5: Understanding and addressing unfair treatment

Dignity and respect are recognised as key determinants of an individual's wellbeing. As a moral and ethical principle, fair and equal treatment is one to which we should all aspire. But the low self-esteem and sense of identity that unfair treatment can create impacts on all areas of daily life, including economic and civic participation, mental wellbeing and social relationships.

Key actions over 2008-2011

The Government Equalities Office will lead a project to align the approaches taken by different departments on data collection of the experiences of unfair treatment, focusing particularly on public service delivery but taking other settings such as the workplace into account.

The project will have four elements:

- A survey of the main data sources available to government which cover issues about unfair treatment or experience of service delivery
- Identifying best practice on measuring dignity and respect and unfair treatment
- Understanding what drives perceptions about both unfair treatment and dignity and respect, as well as 'what works' in terms of improving perceptions about treatment and
- Reviewing different approaches to tackling unfair treatment and reporting on best practice in this field, taking into account work in all departments as well as at a local level, focusing particularly on areas which have prioritised this issue in their Local Area Agreements.

A key aim of this project will be to enable government to target and monitor progress more effectively on this issue in the future through its performance frameworks.

Looking ahead

We need to plan for the future now, and we are working with the Equality and Human Rights Commission to develop a comprehensive framework for assessing progress towards our goal of a fairer and more equal society.

As well as making inequality more visible, this framework will become a powerful and robust 'diagnostic tool' that will help us know whether our policies are focused in the right areas and whether they are dealing effectively with the problems. This will help inform future performance frameworks.

In addition we are setting up a new National Equality Panel, chaired by Professor John Hills, to look at the best available evidence on the relationship between people's age, gender, ethnicity, disability and so on and other dimensions of (in)equality such as where you live, your family background or how much you have to spend. The Panel will engage widely and report in late Autumn 2009.

We will also take forward the recommendations of the Office for National Statistics in their '*Review of Equality Data*', to fill the remaining data gaps and continue to improve the quality of equality data.

In considering how to reflect the new data and information we have in future performance frameworks, we will work closely with all our delivery partners, as well as people with direct experience of different aspects of inequality.

Getting in touch

Please e-mail Donna Rigsby with your thoughts and suggestions on delivering PSA15. Donna's e-mail address is donna.rigsby@geo.gsi.gov.uk.

Alternatively, you can write to us with your views at the following address:

Equality PSA team
Government Equalities Office
5th Floor, Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

Annex A: Measuring progress

Successful delivery of this PSA will be measured using the following statistical indicators. More information about these can be found in the delivery agreement for PSA15 which is available via the HM Treasury website.

Indicator 1: Narrow the gender pay gap

For this indicator, we will measure the gap in full-time median hourly wage rates between men and women using the Annual Survey of Hourly Earnings. Full-time work refers to 30+ hours per week and the data refers to employees only (and therefore excludes the self-employed). A statistically significant change would be 0.8 percentage points in either direction.

Indicator 2: Increase disabled people's choice and control

This indicator relates to self-reported choice and control in terms of the assistance and equipment that enable independent living. We will measure progress using responses to questions in the ONS Omnibus Survey.

Indicator 3: Address inequalities in civic participation

For this indicator, we will measure the relative participation rates for equality groups (in activities such as include being a local councillor, school governor or magistrate, and also civic consultation, participation, activism and formal volunteering) using responses to questions in the Citizenship Survey. The indicator itself is a composite measure of the disadvantaged groups.

Indicator 4: Tackle discrimination in employment

This indicator measures whether people feel they have been discriminated against when seeking employment or promotion in the workplace using responses to Citizenship Survey questions. Again, the indicator itself is a composite measure of the disadvantaged groups.

Indicator 5: Understand and address unfair treatment by public services

The GEO will lead work to develop a better understanding of whether people feel they have been treated with dignity and respect when accessing a range of key public services.

