



Government
Equalities Office

Putting equality at the heart of government

**Business Plan
2009/10**

May 2009

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Foreword

Jonathan Rees
Director General, GEO



I am delighted to introduce the Government Equalities Office's (GEO's) Business Plan for 2009/10. In our first full year as a separate Department, we have made a good start. For instance, in June 2008, we announced a major new package of proposals to strengthen and streamline equality legislation; in July 2008, we began a major new programme to increase the number of black, Asian and minority ethnic women councillors; in September 2008, we published our first Public Service Agreement Delivery Plan; and, in January 2009, we set out plans for a new duty on key public bodies to tackle social and economic disadvantage.

We have also responded flexibly to changing economic circumstances: in March 2009, we produced *Real Help Now for Women* and held a summit of women leaders on how to support women and families in the recession and help them come through stronger into the new economy.

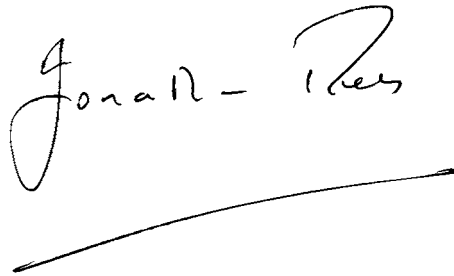
In last year's Business Plan, we set out our ambitions to build a stronger evidence base across all of the equality strands and to engage widely. In autumn 2008, we established the National Equality Panel under Professor John Hills to provide Government for the first time with evidence on the interactions between people's equality status and other factors such as their background and where they live. We have also worked closely with partners, holding monthly meetings of 'key stakeholders' as we prepare the Equality Bill and a major conference with over 200 partners to help shape this Plan.

We have also built a new Department from scratch, establishing new structures, systems and processes, as well as meeting in full our accountability obligations to Parliament. We work closely with the two bodies we sponsor. We have appointed a strong, new, independent Women's National Commission, under Joyce Gould, with increased funding. We have also funded the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and sought to help them as they create a new organisation.

2009/10 promises to be an equally busy and challenging year as we introduce a major new Equality Bill to strengthen and streamline the law; continue our work on supporting women and other groups through the economic downturn and into the new economy; drive forward our efforts to open up opportunities for all in economic participation, public life and public services; improve life chances, receiving and responding to the report of the National Equality Panel; and continue to work to promote freedom from violence and to provide support for those who suffer it.

We look forward to working with other parts of Government, unions, business and the voluntary sector to help achieve our goal of a fair and equal society for all.

I should like to end by paying tribute to all the staff in GEO, and our legal colleagues, for their huge commitment, expertise and passion.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Rees". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right below the name.

Jonathan Rees
Director General, GEO

Executive summary

This is the Government Equalities Office's (GEO's) second Business Plan. It sets out who we are, the issues we are tackling, some achievements over the last year and our priorities for 2009/10.

Our vision is a fair and equal society for all. Our overall aim is to improve equality and reduce discrimination and disadvantage. We seek to achieve this at work, in public and political life, in public services and in life chances.

Over the next year, our priorities include:

- **modernising, strengthening and streamlining the legislative framework** through the introduction and passage through Parliament of a major Equality Bill, and negotiations in the European Union (EU) on a draft Equal Treatment Directive;
- **improving equality at work and economic participation for all**, providing real help for women and families through the recession and into the new economy, reducing the gender pay gap, supporting families, balancing work and family life, reducing discrimination and promoting best practice in the workplace through legislative measures, using public procurement, and promoting greater transparency;
- **opening up opportunities in public and political life**, promoting positive action, supporting Departments to deliver on new targets to improve diversity on public Boards, encouraging more black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) women to become local councillors, and greater participation by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in civic society;
- **improving life chances and public services by:**
 - driving forward our Public Service Agreement (PSA) work on independent living for disabled people, pursuing better outcomes for all in health and transport;
 - supporting effective use of the Gender Duty and planning for the new expanded single Equality Duty, tackling socio-economic disadvantage through the report of the National Equality Panel and the introduction of the new strategic duty on public bodies; and
 - working with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) on supporting female prisoners, working with the Department of Health (DH) to tackle age discrimination for older people, and working with the Cabinet Office to help the Civil Service be an exemplar; and

- **promoting physical safety and freedom from violence**, supporting the Home Office in production of a new cross-Government strategy on violence against women, and working to ensure the sustainability of critical voluntary sector groups.

In all these tasks, we will continue to work closely with the two public bodies we sponsor: helping the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) implement its new three-year Strategic Plan, and work with the Women's National Commission (WNC) as it celebrates its 40th anniversary.

We will also continue to develop our broader international strategy, working closely with partners in Europe on the draft Equal Treatment Directive, on the new gender roadmap, and on plans for equal pay. A priority will also be to engage with international partners on how to help women and families in the recession, and to come through stronger into the new economy.

As the lead department across Government for sexual orientation and transgender equality, we will continue our work to tackle discrimination, particularly through a better understanding of the barriers lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people face in their daily lives.

Finally, we will also work to improve continually GEO's performance as a new Department, focusing particularly on enhancing our evidence base, improving our engagement with stakeholders, and enhancing our efficiency and value for money.

I. Introduction

This is GEO's second Business Plan as a separate Department. It sets out:

- who we are;
- our vision and aims;
- the issues we are tackling;
- key achievements over our first year; and
- our priorities for 2009/10.

Who we are

GEO is a small policy Department employing just over 100 staff (excluding our legal advisers based at the Treasury Solicitor's Department). We report to three Ministers: Harriet Harman QC MP (Leader of the House of Commons, Lord Privy Seal and Minister for Women and Equality), Vera Baird QC MP (Solicitor-General – leading on the Equality Bill) and Maria Eagle MP (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at GEO and the MoJ, and also sponsor Minister for the EHRC and WNC). We have responsibility within Government for equality strategy and legislation and take the lead on issues relating to women, sexual orientation and transgender equality matters.

Our role

GEO is responsible for the Government's overall strategy and priorities on equality issues. We aim to improve equality and reduce discrimination and disadvantage for all – at work, in public and political life, and in people's life chances.

Our commitment to equality is based on the belief that equality is not just right in principle, it is necessary for:

- **individuals:** everyone has the right to be treated fairly and to have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. To achieve this we must tackle inequality and root out discrimination;
- **the economy:** a competitive economy draws on all talents and ability – it is not blinkered by prejudice; and
- **society:** a more equal society is more cohesive and at ease with itself.

We believe that fairness and equality are the hallmarks of a modern, outward-facing and confident society.

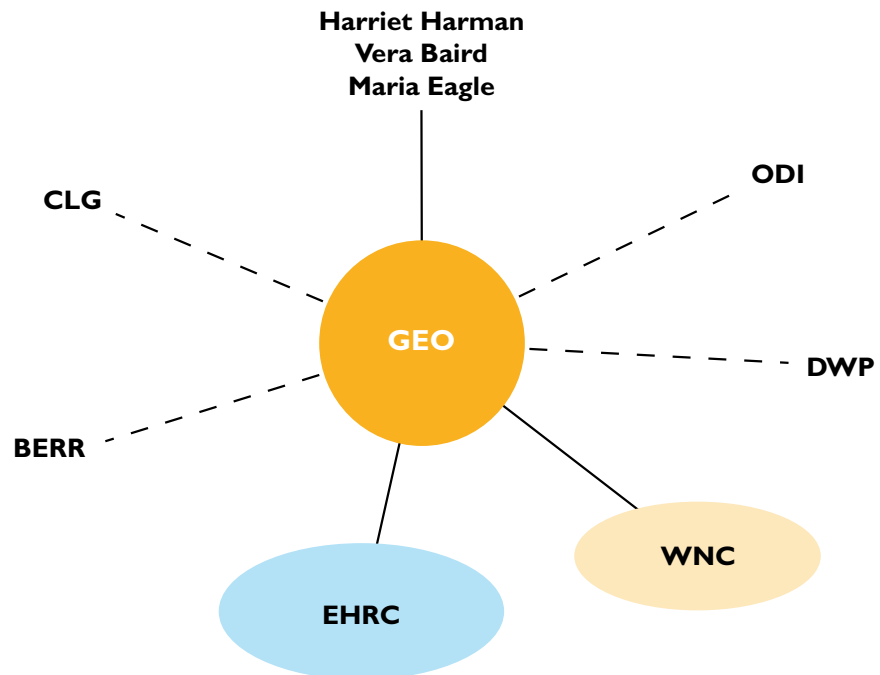
We lead on gender issues, seeking to ensure the integration of gender equality policy in all Government policy. We are in particular responsible for delivering the Minister for Women's priorities:

- Supporting families, particularly as they bring up children and care for older and disabled relatives.
- Tackling violence against women and improving the way we deal with women who commit crimes.
- Increasing the representation of black and minority ethnic women in public life.

GEO also leads on the Government's international obligations to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the Government's obligations to implement the EU Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men.

GEO leads across Government on sexual orientation and transgender equality policy. This includes our responsibilities for the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007 which protect people from being discriminated against because of their sexual orientation in the provision of goods and services; the protections under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 for transgender people in employment, goods and services; and our ongoing work across Government and through the forthcoming Equality Bill to ensure the continued protection for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual (LGBT) people against discrimination. We continue to work closely with the MoJ on gender recognition and civil partnerships and with the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) on employment protection for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. In extending GEO's role to include transgender equality, we will work further with the relevant stakeholder groups, exploring the specific needs of, and considering how to best support, the trans community.

Government equalities – who does what



PSA 15 – Equality

The Government's priorities for 2008–11 were announced by Alastair Darling as part of his 2007 Pre-Budget Report. These priorities are referred to as PSAs and have the same status as White Paper commitments.

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 tackling inequalities. For example, PSA 8 seeks to narrow employment gaps for disadvantaged groups, while other PSAs seek to address inequalities in health, criminal justice and other areas.

GEO is the lead Department for PSA 15 – the Equality PSA – which is an important part of the overall suite. Over the three years from March 2008 to March 2011, this PSA aims to:

- narrow the gender pay gap;
- increase disabled people's choice and control;
- address inequalities in civic participation;
- tackle discrimination in employment; and
- improve understanding and address unfair treatment.

GEO cannot achieve its aims alone. The causes of inequality are complex. Government Departments, public services, the private sector, voluntary groups and individuals all have a role to play in working towards a more equal society. To make progress, we therefore need to use a range of different approaches and work with a wide range of partners both within and outside Government. Strengthening the legislative framework will be a key focus of our work this year. However, alongside this, we will continue to:

- work closely with other Government Departments to develop effective policy approaches to promote equality and tackle barriers;
- develop the evidence base on equality through our research strategy;
- work with our partners to identify, develop and disseminate good practice;
- provide support and help to tackle problems, for example through guidance or through targeted funding of key projects; and
- promote awareness and understanding of equality issues.

Within Government, we work particularly closely with other Government Departments that have the lead on particular equality grounds: the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on age and disability, and Communities and Local Government (CLG) on race, religion and belief, and cohesion.

We sponsor two non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) in support of our aims. On gender issues, we work very closely with the WNC, which has been promoting women's interests for 40 years. It currently has a network of over 500 women's organisations.

We also sponsor the EHRC, providing £60 million of funding and appointing its Board. We work closely with them while seeking to put as few constraints as possible on what they do and say. GEO's prime emphasis is on setting the Government's policy agenda and legislative framework. The EHRC in turn has a complementary key role as a regulator (of the public sector duties, for instance) and as an independent champion for disadvantaged groups. This Business Plan and the EHRC's new three-year Strategic Plan support each other.

Our vision and aims

GEO's vision: A fair and equal society for all.

Overall aim: Improve equality and reduce discrimination and disadvantage.

Specific aims:

- Modernise, strengthen and streamline the legislative framework.
- Improve equality at work and economic participation for all, particularly focusing on supporting parents and others caring for families and friends to balance work and caring responsibilities.
- Improve equality of representation and involvement in public and political life.
- Tackle barriers that limit people's choices and opportunities through:
 - ensuring that public policies and services promote equality and improve life chances; and
 - ensuring fair access to and treatment by services (in both the public and private sectors).
- Promote physical safety and freedom from violence, by tackling hate crime, harassment and victimisation, and improving support for victims.

These aims reflect GEO's Departmental Strategic Objectives and PSA (see Annex A).

The issues we are tackling

There has been legislation on equality issues and equal pay for nearly 40 years. And much has been achieved. But there is still much to do. Society has changed enormously over the last few decades and is continuing to change: society is more diverse, and the population is ageing. This brings both new opportunities and new challenges to tackle. A recent 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 per cent considering this to be discrimination.

Gender pay gap

Although down from 27.5 per cent in 1997, overall women are still paid 22.6 per cent less per hour than men; last year, for the first time in seven years, the gap widened. Narrowing this gap is a priority for GEO.

Employment

There are still marked inequalities in outcomes in employment. People from a BAME background are still 13 per cent less likely to be in work than their white counterparts. If you are disabled, you are still two and a half times more likely to be out of work than a non-disabled person. Sixty-two per cent of over-50s feel they are turned down for a job because they are considered to be too old. And only 12 per cent of directors of our top companies are women.

Public life

Women, ethnic minorities, disabled people and others are still under-represented in many areas of public life. For instance, in the House of Commons, it would take 200 years at the present rate of progress for women to reach parity; in local government, there are fewer than 150 BAME women councillors (and none at all in Wales or Scotland), whereas we might expect to see over 1,000 in order to be representative. In 2008, women held 33.3 per cent of public appointments, a decline from 34.4 per cent in 2007. In 2008, disabled people held 5 per cent and people from minority ethnic backgrounds held 5.7 per cent of appointments. There is still only one 'out' lesbian in Parliament.

Life chances

The most disadvantaged in society include many disabled people and BAME people. It is also the case that an individual's life chances depend on where they live or their social background. For instance, in education, a bright child from a poor background can be overtaken by a less gifted child with rich parents by the age of five.

Society and violence

Women with histories of violence and abuse are over-represented in the criminal justice system. Around half of the women in prison report that, prior to imprisonment, they had experienced abuse of some sort; a third reported that they had been sexually abused, and a fifth had been in care. Six out of ten lesbian and gay schoolchildren experience homophobic bullying.

Some achievements from our first year

In its first year, GEO has worked to create a cross-cutting and strategic approach to tackling these issues. A full account will be given in our Annual Report, but some highlights include:

Modernising, streamlining and strengthening the legislative framework

- We published in June 2008 major proposals to strengthen and streamline the legislative framework. In July 2008, we published the Government's full response to the Discrimination Law Review consultation; in April 2009, the Equality Bill was introduced in Parliament.
- We began negotiations on a proposed EU Equal Treatment Directive and wide consultation with interested partners.
- We implemented the EU Gender Directive through regulations to strengthen protection against sex discrimination and discrimination against transsexual people in goods and services.

Improving equality at work and economic participation for all

- We announced new proposals to extend the positive action provisions in the law.
- We worked closely with BERR to give 4.5 million parents of children aged 6 to 16 the right to request flexible working from 6 April 2009.
- We reconvened the Women and Work Commission (WWC) under Baroness Prosser to assess the progress made against its 2006 recommendations: the Commission will report further in summer 2009.

Opening up opportunities in public and political life

- We set up a new Taskforce to increase the number of BAME women councillors. This has held 11 events involving over 600 women. A new mentoring scheme is in place.
- We launched the first national councillors' shadowing scheme for BAME women on 24 April 2009 with a further training scheme in community leadership.
- We submitted the Government's evidence to the Speaker's Conference which has been established to address under-representation of women, disabled people and people from minority ethnic backgrounds in the House of Commons.

Improving life chances and public services

- We set up the National Equality Panel under Professor John Hills to examine the relationships between different aspects of inequality in determining people's economic positions and prospects. This will report by the end of 2009.

- The *New Opportunities* White Paper set out plans for a new duty on public authorities to tackle socio-economic disadvantage.
- GEO also published its delivery plans for the Equality PSA, the first of its kind. The PSA focuses on fairer access to public services and employment, as well as more choice for disabled people, a reduction in the gender pay gap, and action to engage younger people, disabled people and ethnic minorities in public and civic activity.

Promoting physical safety and freedom from violence

- We set up a cross-Government fund to help victims of rape. Twenty centres received grants, ensuring that they were able to remain open and support victims.
- We have sponsored capacity-building projects with the Sexual Violence Voluntary Umbrella organisations to help support the valuable services they provide.
- We produced a cross-Government narrative setting out the range of activities across Government to tackle violence against women.

Our priorities for 2009/10

Over the next year, our priorities are as follows:

- **Modernising, streamlining and strengthening the legislative framework**

The centrepiece is the new Equality Bill which was introduced on schedule on 24 April 2009 and we hope will be agreed by Parliament by spring 2010.

In parallel, we will be consulting on key aspects of the proposals (such as the shape of the new public sector Equality Duty and the protections from age discrimination in goods and services), and working with the EHRC on much improved guidance for business and citizens.

We will also continue negotiations in the EU on the draft Equal Treatment Directive.

- **Improving equality at work and economic participation for all**

A PSA priority is to narrow the gender pay gap. We are taking forward a package of measures: new provisions in the Equality Bill; using the Government's procurement power; working with the private sector on

gender pay reports; and working with the EHRC to look at problem sectors. In parallel, we will use the existing Equality Duties to improve the public sector's performance as an employer.

We will be doing considerable work on improving the position of women – supporting them through the recession and helping them come through stronger into the new economy; looking at skills, career advice, childcare, quality part-time work and access to finance; and reducing barriers to women in senior positions and professions. We will be responding to the further report from the WWC which will include recommendations on these issues.

We will seek to support families balancing work and family life, for instance by running a campaign to ensure that parents and carers understand their extended rights to request flexible working, and researching the concerns of the 'sandwich generation' who balance the need to care for older relatives and children.

We will also seek to reduce discrimination and promote good practice in the workplace, working with the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) to use public procurement to promote equality, exploring a possible kite-mark scheme, and supporting the Trades Union Congress (TUC) evaluation of trade union equality representatives.

- **Opening up opportunities in public and political life**

We intend to use the Equality Bill to extend the possibilities for positive action.

We will focus GEO's own efforts on opening up more opportunities at national and local level, through our work on the Speaker's Conference, BAME Women Councillor's Taskforce, and with the Cabinet Office on public appointments; and we will explore ways to increase the participation by LGBT people in civic society, including increasing the number of role models.

- **Improving life chances and public services**

We will use the findings of the National Equality Panel to assess the relationship between the different equality strands and other key dimensions of equality. This will help shape our policies to improve life chances and access to public services.

We will improve our understanding of how to measure inequality in the UK following our work with the London School of Economics (LSE), Oxford University and the EHRC to establish an Equality Measurement Framework.

We will use the Equality Bill to introduce a new strategic Duty on public authorities to consider how to reduce socio-economic disadvantage.

We will work towards improving public services, working with DWP on improving choice and control for disabled people; with DH on tackling inequality in the health and social care sectors, especially for older people; and with the Department for Transport (DfT) on better access to transport. Across all services, we will plan the introduction of the new single Equality Duty, building on the existing Race, Disability and Gender Duties to ensure that public services meet the needs of LGBT people and people of all ages and all religions or beliefs.

We will also work closely with the Cabinet Office and the Civil Service Diversity Board to help the Civil Service be an exemplar employer.

We will also work closely with the EHRC on ensuring that the existing Gender Duty is understood and properly applied, and with the MoJ and others on implementing the Corston agenda on women offenders.

- **Promoting physical safety and freedom from violence**

We will work with the Home Office, MoJ and others to pull together and implement a new cross-Government strategy on violence against women. In particular, we will work closely with the voluntary sector to maintain provision of support for women who experience sexual violence, including rape. We will also work with the Home Office and MoJ to tackle transphobic and homophobic hate crime, and with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to tackle transphobic and homophobic bullying in schools.

The rest of this document sets out our plans in more detail, including the important work we still have to do on improving our systems as a new Department, on building our evidence base, enhancing our capability, improving our engagement with stakeholders, and working internationally.

2. Modernising, strengthening and streamlining the legislative framework

Specific aim

Modernise, strengthen and streamline the legislative framework.

Why is this a priority for GEO?

Over the last four decades, discrimination legislation has played an important role in helping to make Britain a more equal society. However, the legislation is extremely complex: there are currently nine major pieces of legislation and around 100 statutory instruments setting out the provisions. And, despite the progress that has been made, inequality and discrimination persist and progress on a number of issues remains stubbornly slow.

Following extensive consultation on the review of discrimination law in 2007, the Government announced last year that it would bring forward a new Equality Bill to streamline and strengthen legislation.

What do we want to achieve?

The Equality Bill is aimed at achieving a simple, modern, effective and accessible framework of discrimination law which provides individual rights and promotes a fairer and more equal society. It is against this standard that we will measure our success.

The Equality Bill

The Equality Bill was announced in the Queen's Speech in December 2008, and was introduced in Parliament on 24 April 2009. The Bill will strengthen and streamline the law in the following ways:

- **It will bring together 40 years' worth of Acts and Regulations into a single statute**, providing a simpler legal framework which will help people understand their rights and responsibilities under the law.
- **It will place a new, strategic Duty on Government Departments and other key public bodies to consider how to reduce the disadvantage associated with socio-economic inequality** by narrowing the gaps in outcomes between people from different backgrounds.

- **It will ban harmful age discrimination.**

It is wrong that people are discriminated against because of their age. With the number of people aged over 85 set to double over the next 20 years, we need to ensure that older people are treated fairly in all walks of life so they can play a full part in society.

Age discrimination in the workplace was prohibited in 2006. The Bill will make it unlawful to discriminate against someone because of their age outside the workplace – when providing goods and services or exercising public functions. This is not about stopping older people enjoying free bus passes; it is about tackling unjustifiable age discrimination where it has negative consequences, such as a refusal to provide medical treatment to someone just because of their age.

This summer, we will consult on the specifics of the new law, which will be set out in secondary legislation.

- **It will introduce a new single Equality Duty on public bodies.**

The Bill will deliver a major extension of the legislation through a new Equality Duty, which will replace the existing Race, Gender and Disability Duties and will also cover age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity explicitly, and gender reassignment in full. The new Duty will provide a more streamlined and effective framework for public bodies to use to help them proactively tackle discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and promote good community relations. We will consult on how the new Duty will work in summer 2009.

- **It will make our workplaces more transparent to root out persistent inequality.**

We cannot tackle inequality if it is hidden. The Bill will increase transparency by:

- banning secrecy clauses which prevent people from discussing their pay with colleagues;
- providing powers to require public bodies to report on important equality issues such as their gender pay gap and employment rates for minority ethnic and disabled people;
- encouraging private sector organisations employing more than 250 people to report on their gender pay gap, and providing a power to require them to do so if insufficient progress is made by 2013; and

– making it clear that the £175 billion purchasing power of the public sector can be put to good use to deliver our equality targets.

- **It will open up the range of positive action that can be taken.**

A more diverse business is a stronger business. The Bill will extend the scope for positive action. Positive action will give employers the chance to pick someone for a job from an under-represented group when there are two or more equally suitable candidates. The Bill will also help us make our democratic institutions more diverse. It will extend the permission to use women-only shortlists until 2030 to help to increase the representation of women in Parliament.

- **It will improve compliance and enforcement.**

The Bill will allow employment tribunals to make recommendations in discrimination cases which benefit the workforce beyond the individual claimant who has suffered discrimination. This will help employers learn from their mistakes and improve their practices, so that the whole workforce can benefit from improvements after an individual wins a discrimination claim and the employer can avoid future claims.

To support the changes in the law that the Equality Bill will bring, GEO will work with the EHRC to ensure the development of guidance that will give clear, practical advice to show people what the law does and does not allow and what best practice looks like.

EU Directive

The European Commission published a draft Anti-discrimination Directive in July 2008. GEO is leading on the negotiations. The draft Directive proposes to make it unlawful to discriminate against or harass someone on grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation in both the public and private sector in relation to:

- social protection, including social security and health care;
- social advantages;
- education; or
- access to and supply of goods and services which are available to the public, including housing within the limits of the powers conferred upon the European Community.

We will be consulting on the Directive in spring 2009. The UK Government is supportive of the aims of the Directive. We wish to draw on our experience of existing domestic discrimination law, which already goes much further than EU law currently requires, to work with partners to develop a Directive that is strong and workable and that avoids unintended consequences.

During 2009/10, we will:

Equality Bill

- introduce the Equality Bill in Parliament in April 2009 and support consideration by Ministers and others in Parliament;
- consult widely on the future shape of the new single public sector Equality Duty, including publishing a consultation document by the summer;
- consult widely on the detailed proposals for prohibiting age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services and exercising public functions, including publishing a consultation document by the summer;
- develop our plans for the implementation of the Bill;

EU Directive

- undertake (by summer 2009) a public consultation on the proposal for a new Equality Directive;
- participate in negotiations on the draft Directive, to help reflect UK interests, and keep UK partners informed of progress;

Maintaining an effective legislative framework

- ensure that GEO meets its commitments on better regulation, and publish (by winter 2009) our latest plans for meeting our simplification targets;
- put in place procedures to appoint new lay race assessors and ensure that information about assessors is available in the courts by summer 2009;
- support the independent review of the impact of the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007 on faith-based adoption services, and monitor the operation of the relevant legislative provisions; and
- work with the MoJ and others on the case for introducing representative actions in discrimination cases.

Communication

Underpinning all our work on the Equality Bill will be extensive engagement with our stakeholders and active communication to explain what the Bill will mean for people's lives. We will:

- actively promote the Bill in national, regional and specialist media when it is introduced and at other key points when appropriate;
- ensure that our partners and other stakeholders are kept informed as the Bill progresses through Parliament;
- conduct important consultations on age discrimination and the public sector Equality Duty using a variety of mechanisms, including specially organised events, regular formal meetings of the Senior Stakeholder Group, informal meetings and presence at other appropriate events throughout the year;
- use additional communication channels such as the GEO website to ensure that information about the Bill is widely available, in formats that are accessible to a diverse range of people; and
- support the work on the EU Directive by conducting a consultation, giving stakeholders the chance to feed in their views as we develop a negotiating position in Europe.

Resources

- **Our people**
Twenty-eight per cent of GEO's staff costs is devoted to modernising, strengthening and streamlining the legislative framework.
- **Other Government Departments**
We work closely with all Whitehall Departments on the development of the Equality Bill – as equality is a cross-cutting priority. We work particularly closely with those Departments with clauses in the Equality Bill, including DWP, DfT, DCSF, the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), BERR and the WNC.
- **Our Commissions**
We are working closely with the EHRC on the production of timely and fit-for-purpose guidance on provisions within the Equality Bill.

Work programmes and projects

- Equality Bill programme.
- Maintaining the legislative framework.
- Negotiations on draft EU Directive on Equality.

3. Improving equality at work and economic participation for all

Specific aim

Improve equality at work and economic participation for all, particularly focusing on supporting parents and others caring for families and friends to balance work and caring responsibilities.

Why is this a priority for GEO?

Notwithstanding the recession, the UK still has one of the highest employment rates in the world's major economies; this has resulted in increased economic independence and prosperity for many families. However, major inequalities remain in access to jobs, career progression, pay and experience of discrimination or harassment for many groups in the labour market today, including disabled people, people from ethnic minorities, gay and lesbian people and older workers. Those with caring responsibilities, still predominantly women, face particular barriers to combining work and caring roles and, although the overall gender pay gap has fallen steadily in recent years, it still stands at 22.6 per cent and is now increasing again.

Those inequalities matter for individuals but they also matter for the UK economy. Research shows that diverse organisations are more effective and productive. And when women return to work after career breaks for caring they often move into lower-skilled jobs which means that their experience and qualifications are not being used to the full in the workplace.

We will therefore continue to focus this year on promoting equality in the workplace, narrowing the gender pay gap through a range of measures, including improvements in equality reporting. We will support families caring for children and for other relatives and friends. We will work with partners to understand the ways in which the current recession is affecting different groups, and to ensure that equality perspectives are built into support strategies and planning for the recovery and a strong future economy.

During 2009/10, we will:

Women in the new economy

- work closely with the EHRC and DWP to monitor and develop a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the economic downturn on women and other groups;
- follow up the Women's Summit of March 2009 and proposals made there, in particular on:
 - quality, accessibility and affordability of childcare;
 - skills, training and careers advice for women;
 - guidance and advice for women entrepreneurs;
 - provision of quality part-time work; and
 - reducing barriers to women in senior positions and professions;
- work with international partners to support the post-recession economy (see Section 8, Working internationally, for details);

Reducing the gender pay gap (PSA)

- work on the areas set out in the published PSA Delivery Agreement 15 to achieve reduction of the gender pay gap (Objective 1);
- use the *Female FTSE Report 2009* to work with partners to increase understanding of the impact of diversity in UK boardrooms;
- examine in more detail the impact that equal pay job evaluation audits have had and their value to organisations that carry them out;
- support the reconvened WWC (due to report in summer 2009) and respond to its recommendations (by the end of 2009);
- introduce a new power in the Equality Bill to require large private sector employers to report on their gender pay gap if insufficient progress is made on voluntary reporting by 2013;
- work with the EHRC, Confederation of British Industry, TUC and others to improve equality reporting by both public sector bodies and larger private companies;

Supporting families balancing work and family life

- complete and evaluate results of the flexible working awareness campaign based around the April 2009 extension of the right to request flexible working;

- work closely with other Departments and the childcare sector to assess specific issues affecting the growth, affordability and accessibility of the childcare sector;
- define the nature and extent of the 'sandwich generation' problem (parents having to support both children and elderly relatives) through policy development and an equality seminar, and determine any gaps in current policy by the end of 2009;

Reducing discrimination in the workplace and encouraging employer equality best practice (PSA)

- work with the OGC to make more effective use of public procurement to promote equality;
- support TUC evaluation of trade union equality representatives (evaluation to be completed by the end of 2009);
- enable employment tribunals through the Equality Bill to make recommendations to improve equality practice in employers where discrimination has been found;
- widen the scope of positive action through the Equality Bill, increasing opportunities for people from disadvantaged or under-represented groups;
- working with businesses, the EHRC and others, complete (by spring 2010) an assessment of the feasibility of an Equality Standard;
- fund and liaise with Cranfield University and fund the publication of the annual *Female FTSE Report* by the end of November 2009;
- develop a pilot to explore the impact of target-setting on corporate boards and possible lessons from public sector senior appointments practice; and
- work in partnership with other Government Departments to explore what further action could be taken to reduce transphobic and homophobic bullying in the workplace and lead across Government in reviewing what barriers need to be overcome to support employers to develop LGBT-friendly workplaces.

Communication

We cannot improve equality at work if the problems are hidden, and if the opportunities already available to people to improve their job prospects are not known to them. That is why we need to raise awareness of the issues, the rights people have and where they can go for help and support. We will:

- promote flexible working through a targeted four-month PR campaign coinciding with the extension of the right to request on 6 April 2009. We will work closely with BERR and the team at Directgov to ensure that all promotional work across Government is complementary;
- work with partners in other Government Departments and outside – particularly DCSF, DIUS and the Learning and Skills Council – to raise awareness through the media, advertising and other channels of the training that people – particularly women – can access to improve their skills and prospects in the labour market;
- work with partners in other Government Departments to ensure that there is targeted advice to help people during tough times. This includes updating our existing sources of targeted guidance, such as *Real Help Now for Women* at appropriate points; and
- work with BERR to help raise awareness of the help available to women wishing to start a business.

To tackle the barriers that prevent people fulfilling their potential in life, we need to work closely with our partners both inside Government and outside. We will ensure that the WNC, the EHRC and other advisory bodies such as Acas (the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) are closely in touch with our work through both the Senior Stakeholder Group and other channels.

Resources

- **Our people**

Eleven per cent of GEO's staff costs is devoted to improving equality at work and economic participation for all.

- **Other Government Departments**

We will work with:

- DWP (labour market participation, disability employment issues, carers);
- DIUS (skills, apprenticeships);
- DCSF (careers service, childcare);
- BERR (women's enterprise, flexible working, maternity/paternity rights);
- CLG (communities and regional economic issues); and
- Cabinet Office (National Economic Council Secretariat).

- **Our Commissions**

The reconvened WWC is currently assessing the Government's response to its *Shaping A Fairer Future* report from 1996.

Work programmes and projects

- Women in the new economy.
- Reducing the gender pay gap.
- Supporting families balancing work and family life.
- Reducing discrimination in the workplace and promoting employer equality best practice.

4. Opening up opportunities in public and political life

Specific aim

Improve equality of representation and involvement in public and political life.

Why is this a priority for GEO?

All groups should have a voice to influence decisions that affect them and opportunities to be involved fully in public and political life. Too often this is not the case. Our society and our institutions are strengthened by reflecting diversity of the population and the range of perspectives that individuals from different groups can bring. Yet women, disabled people and people from ethnic minorities are still significantly under-represented in Parliament, in local councils, in many professions and in public appointments. And locally there are inequalities in the extent to which different groups get involved in being school governors, magistrates or volunteering.

In 2009/10, we will continue our work on increasing civic participation, which is one of our PSA indicators, and our particular focus on increasing the number of BAME women who are councillors. Our new projects this year will include contributing evidence to the Speaker's Conference, which is looking at increasing diversity in Parliament, and delivering a programme of support to help Departments across Government to increase diversity in the public appointments that they make.

During 2009/10, we will:

- deliver the current BAME Ethnic Women Councillors Taskforce work programme, including completing the national outreach by July 2009, a media campaign, and the mentoring and shadowing scheme by spring 2010;
- produce a report on the Taskforce's progress by summer 2009 one year on;
- provide analysis and assessment to Ministers, Government and stakeholders on the position of women's representation in society, including producing a series of fact sheets and publications;
- enhance political representation by leading on the Government's input into the Speaker's Conference;
- through the Equality Bill, make provision for single-sex shortlists to be allowed until 2030 and for a range of other positive measures to increase diversity among political candidates;

- in partnership with the Cabinet Office, increase the diversity of those holding public appointments by publishing new targets and producing and delivering a cross-Government action plan which includes:
 - increased information about public appointments through an awareness campaign (commencing summer 2009);
 - a package of support for Government Departments (from May to August 2009);
 - establishing a mentoring scheme (August 2009); and
 - established, robust networks and communications channels to promote public appointments (autumn 2009);
- review the barriers that act to prevent LGBT people from becoming role models in civic society and engage with those working on increasing diversity in civic society to include a focus on factors which will support the participation of LGBT people; and
- through the Equality Bill, increase the scope for positive action to allow under-representation to be considered as a tipping factor where there are equally suitable candidates.

Communication

Encouraging diversity in public and political life is key to creating the fair society we are working towards. Lack of understanding about what is involved in being a councillor or MP, coupled with a lack of confidence to volunteer can mean that women, people from minority ethnic groups, disabled people and others are not putting themselves forward. We will:

- actively promote the work of the BAME Women Councillors Taskforce. We will publicise every regional event to raise the profile of the Taskforce and the work it is doing, and will seek national coverage at appropriate points; and
- raise awareness of the existence of public appointment opportunities among a more diverse range of people, equipping them with the information to understand what a public appointment would mean for them. We will work closely with colleagues in the Cabinet Office and Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments to take this forward.

Resources

- **Our people**

Six per cent of GEO's staff costs is devoted to opening up opportunities in public and political life.

- **Other Government Departments**

We will work with:

- CLG, which has lead responsibility on community empowerment. The Taskforce is a key delivery action in the empowerment action plan; and
- Cabinet Office, as joint partners on the public appointments project. Key Departments in the delivery include Home Office, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, CLG, DH and MoJ.

- **Our Commissions**

GEO is leading this work area with some EHRC and WNC support.

Work programmes and projects

- **Minister for Women Strategic Priority 3:**

- BAME Women Councillors Taskforce;
- diversity in public appointments; and
- Government's lead for the Speaker's Conference.

- Addressing inequalities in civic participation (PSA indicator).
- Increasing the number of LGBT people in civic society, including an increase in role models.

5. Improving life chances and public services

Specific aim

Tackle barriers that limit people's choices and opportunities through:

- ensuring that public policies and services promote equality and improve life chances; and
- ensuring fair access to and treatment by services (public and private sectors).

Why is this a priority for GEO?

Access to the right services and support is crucial to ensuring that individuals have the chance to realise their potential and the opportunity to play a full part in the workplace and wider society. Public services providers affect people's day-to-day lives through the policies they make, the services they deliver, their spending decisions and their roles as major employers. Access to services delivered by the private sector – including financial services, transport and leisure services – can crucially affect the choices and opportunities open to people to participate in everyday activities and in society.

In 2009/10 we will work with Departments across Government to promote good practice in embedding equality in policy making. As we set out in Chapter 2, we will bring forward legislation in the Equality Bill to introduce a new Equality Duty and to extend protection against discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services to cover age. Taking forward our gender lead role we will contribute to cross-Government work with the Home Office and other partners to develop improved ways of supporting women offenders through more effective services.

Disadvantage is associated not only with the grounds that are addressed by discrimination legislation, but also with wider factors such as family and social background and income. In 2009/10, we will extend our work on the interaction between these different factors. The Equality Bill includes a new duty on public authorities to have regard to tackling socio-economic disadvantage and associated inequalities.

What do we want to achieve?

We want to see:

- public services integrating equality considerations throughout their core business, so that policies and services take account of different needs, reduce inequalities in outcomes, and tackle barriers and discrimination that limit people's opportunities and choices;
- an effective legislative framework that removes obstacles to fair access to private and public sector services for all; and
- improvements in choice and control and fair treatment by public services, as measured through the Equality PSA.

During 2009/10, we will:

Socio-economic disadvantage

- support the work of the National Equality Panel and publish its report in January 2010;
- bring forward a new duty on public authorities to tackle socio-economic disadvantage, and reduce inequalities associated with this, in the Equality Bill;

Public services

- ensure that the action set out in the Equality PSA Delivery Plan is taken forward in respect of the two indicators:
 - fair treatment by public services, working particularly with DH and DfT and taking forward a project to improve data collection across Government on experiences by different equality groups; and
 - choice and control for disabled people (DWP lead);
- work with the EHRC, CLG, DWP and other partners to monitor and understand the impact and effectiveness of the current public sector equality duties;
- introduce a streamlined and expanded public sector Equality Duty in the Equality Bill. We will consult on policy underpinning the secondary legislation to support this to ensure that it will produce improved outcomes while minimising bureaucracy;

- promote best practice in applying the public sector duties to help ensure that the Civil Service is an exemplar;
- fund the Civil Service Rainbow Alliance to develop work-based programmes to support the Civil Service-wide group for LGBT members of staff, including research into the barriers to career development and the production of supporting guidance;
- work with OGC to promote best practice in the use of procurement across the public sector, including through production of a toolkit;
- build upon the stakeholder workshops to work with sentencers to improve confidence in alternatives to custody for women offenders;
- work with the EHRC and WNC to increase the understanding of the Gender Equality Duty;

Age discrimination

- bring forward primary legislation, as part of the Equality Bill, to end discrimination in the supply of goods, facilities and services;
- consult on policy underpinning the secondary legislation to support this and issue a consultation document by summer 2009; and

Corston Review

- support delivery of the Corston Implementation Plan, ensuring that women who are not dangerous or serious offenders are diverted from custody by promoting the Gender Equality Duty through the delivery of stakeholder workshops by June 2009 and co-funding the evaluation of conditional caution pilots for women by autumn 2009.

Communication

To tackle the barriers that prevent people fulfilling their potential in life, we need to work closely with our partners both inside Government and outside. We will:

- publicise the work we are doing to understand and improve people's life chances, which includes both research – for example through the National Equality Panel – and other action such as the production and promotion of a procurement toolkit with OGC;
- ensure that the WNC, EHRC and other advisory bodies such as Acas are closely in touch with our work through both the Senior Stakeholder Group and other channels, so that we can explore opportunities to work collaboratively; and
- support the delivery of Corston-related stakeholder workshops with targeted promotional activity.

Resources

- **Our people**

Four per cent of GEO's staff costs is devoted to improving life chances and public services.

- **Other Government Departments**

We will work with:

- DWP (improving choice and control for disabled people);
- DH (tackling inequality in the health and social care sectors, especially for older people);
- DfT (better access to transport);
- Cabinet Office (helping the Civil Service to be an exemplar on equality issues); and
- MoJ (implementing the Corston agenda).

Work programmes and projects

- Socio-economic disadvantage.
- Public services.
- Age discrimination in the public and private sectors.
- Implementation of the Corston Review.

6. Promoting physical safety and freedom from violence

Specific aim

Promote physical safety and freedom from violence, by tackling hate crime, harassment and victimisation and improving support for victims.

Why is this a priority for GEO?

Violence against women, in all its forms, is unacceptable and the Government is committed to taking action to end it. Although good progress has been made in improving protection and support to victims and bringing offenders to justice, women are still substantially more likely to experience domestic violence than men, and newer forms of violence, including trafficking, have emerged. Tackling violence against women was one of the priorities identified by the Minister for Women for Government action in 2007, and we will continue our work on it this year.

In our role as the lead within Government on discrimination law we also have responsibility for aspects of the legislative framework that affect people's wider safety and freedom from harassment and violence. The Equality Bill will include a number of measures to strengthen protection in this area.

During 2009/10, we will:

- challenge attitudes, myths and stereotypes which underpin violence against women by leading the violence against women cross-Government communications project, which will identify and share best practice by autumn 2009;
- establish and deliver a new £1.6 million fund for the sexual violence voluntary sector, working with umbrella groups, which will help address the stability and sustainability of the violence against women voluntary sector via commissioned research, sponsorship of the Improvement and Development Agency workshops on commissioning, and co-ordination of a cross-Government working group;
- work closely with the Home Office on the current consultation on violence against women;
- continue to work closely with the Women's Institute and others to monitor the effectiveness of a voluntary ban on adverts for sex by summer 2009;

- tackle trafficking for sexual exploitation by sponsoring stakeholder-led prevention work in source and transit countries to be launched in autumn 2009;
- publish targeted information to raise awareness of sensitive subjects such as female genital mutilation (first factsheet by summer 2009); and
- work with and through other Government Departments, including the Home Office, the MoJ and DCSF, to reduce homophobic and transphobic hate crime and bullying.

Communication

It is crucial to challenge attitudes if we are to make a lasting difference to the lives of the many women who suffer the terrible effects of violence against them, and communication has a significant role to play here. We will:

- work with colleagues across Government to collate best practice and produce a guide to ensure consistency when producing materials, particularly advertising, that is designed to change attitudes to violence against women;
- work with colleagues outside Government, particularly the WNC and the EHRC, to ensure that we take a more co-ordinated approach to communicating the effect of violence against women; and
- work with stakeholders in the sexual violence voluntary sector to promote the benefits of the additional Government funding to the sector once the money has been distributed.

Resources

- **Our people**

Six per cent of GEO's staff costs is devoted to promoting physical safety and freedom from violence.

- **Other Government Departments**

GEO feeds into the inter-Ministerial groups on trafficking, sexual violence and domestic violence and the National Crime Reduction Board. The Home Office leads these.

- **Our Commissions**

The WNC is supporting the Home Office consultation on violence against women. The EHRC is supporting the End Violence Against Women Coalition by publishing the Map of Gaps and, following this, by enforcing the Gender Equality Duty.

Work programmes and projects

- Tackle violence against women (a Minister for Women priority).
- Support voluntary sector sustainability.
- Work with other Government Departments to reduce homophobic and transphobic hate crime and bullying.

7. Improving our evidence base

Our strategic goal is to produce cutting-edge research across the full range of equality issues, as well as to improve the analysis of inequality more broadly.

Development of a medium-term research strategy

A key aspect of fulfilling this goal is to build up a research infrastructure that meets the needs of the Department. The objective for the coming financial year is to develop a structured medium-term research strategy that will assess priorities, the evidence needed to support them and the gaps in the evidence. The five specific policy aims set out in this Business Plan will be the main blocks of the research strategy.

Our current main work programmes are:

Women and other groups in the recession and the new economy

We will be building on initial research and survey work to enhance our understanding of how women and other equality groups are being affected by the economic recession and how best to formulate a policy response that helps to build their position in the new economy that follows. We are working with other Government Departments, the EHRC and other partners on joint analysis, and considering where best we can add value through our own research projects.

The National Equality Panel

The National Equality Panel was set up under the Chairmanship of Professor John Hills to assess the best available evidence on the relationship over time between equality strands and income, class and wealth. The Panel will publish its report in January 2010 and will continue to engage with a wide range of Government Departments and stakeholders in the coming months, holding a further seminar on emerging findings in summer 2009.

Improved evidence base on GEO-led equality strands, particularly sexual orientation

We are working with the EHRC, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and other stakeholders to examine the existing and the emerging evidence base on the LGBT population, including an exploration of the barriers to more accurate monitoring.

Development and use of an Equality Measurement Framework

We are working with the LSE, Oxford University and the EHRC to establish a comprehensive and robust framework for the measurement of inequality in the UK. We aim to publish the framework in spring 2009.

In addition, a wide range of research projects are under way or planned for 2009/10 supporting specific GEO policy work programmes described elsewhere in this Business Plan. These include:

- developing impact assessments for the Equality Bill and for the EU Equal Treatment Directive;
- improving the evidence base for legislation to tackle age discrimination in the supply of goods, facilities and services;
- exploring equality reporting in company annual reports;
- exploring the sustainability of the violence against women voluntary sector;
- an assessment of the drivers of the gender pay gap and how these have changed over time; and
- evaluation of the success of the BAME Taskforce mentoring scheme.

We aim to build on our already positive relationships with analysts in various Government Departments and stakeholder organisations, including DWP and the Office for Disability Issues (ODI), the Devolved Administrations and the EHRC, by sharing research programmes and identifying possible joined-up projects. This will help to minimise duplication of resources.

During 2009/10, we will:

- establish a research strategy and develop a research programme for 2010/11 structured around the specific GEO aims defined in this Business Plan;
- develop our understanding of the impact of current economic conditions on women and other equality groups;
- assess and begin to build on the findings of the National Equality Panel;
- establish a comprehensive framework for measurement of inequality in the UK; and
- complete a series of equality seminars, bringing together expert analysis, academics and policy-makers on specific equality issues.

Communication

It is important that policy is developed on the basis of sound evidence. We must also ensure that this evidence is made widely available so that stakeholders can challenge us on our policy decisions accordingly. We will:

- publish GEO research within a three-month window of completion. Copies will be made available in hard copy and on the web, and in different formats such as easy read and Braille;
- ensure that the findings of the National Equality Panel are made widely available;
- publish a research strategy in autumn 2009; and
- launch the Equality Measurement Framework with the EHRC in summer 2009.

Resources

- **Our people**

Nine per cent of GEO's staff costs is devoted to improving our evidence base.

- **Other Government Departments**

DWP, ONS and DCSF are providing access to datasets and analysis for the National Equality Panel, and a wide range of Departments are feeding research findings into the National Equality Panel. DWP and BERR provide access to databases that are important in our work on equality in the economic downturn and the new economy.

- **Our Commissions**

We worked with the EHRC on the Equality Measurement Framework, which is of major potential value in measuring equality, and on a number of research and/or survey projects that will potentially help us to build our evidence base on equality in the economic downturn and new economy.

Work programmes and projects

- Women and other groups in the recession and the new economy.
- The National Equality Panel.
- Improved evidence base on GEO-led equality strands, particularly sexual orientation.
- Development and use of an Equality Measurement Framework.

8. Working internationally

There is a significant international dimension to our work on equality, and especially gender issues, with GEO leading on important international conventions, as well as significant proposals for legislation in the EU. We are also keen to work closely with other countries and international institutions to help women and families through the recession, and into the new economy.

As a small, cross-cutting and strategic Department, we will prioritise our interventions to achieve the most effective impact and to align with the themes set out earlier.

As the international strategy develops, we will set out our ambition in relation to the work with the wide range of our international partners. This will include what we will do to meet our obligations, how we will influence developments and how we will utilise existing mechanisms to ensure that we can share our experience and progress with others.

We want to ensure that European legislation achieves the right balance between costs and benefits, that the equality machinery is fit for purpose and that we can adapt to differing environments – such as the economic challenges that we are currently facing.

GEO's international gender work aims to ensure strategic representation and promotion of UK policies on gender equality and the protection of domestic interests within international and regional obligations and commitments emanating from the EU, the United Nations (UN), the Council of Europe and the Commonwealth, in order that UK gender policy is advanced, constructive partnerships are forged, UK best practices are disseminated and UK foreign policy goals are furthered. Specific areas where we wish to see progress include the EU equal pay review and issues that cannot be tackled alone in a global world, for example trafficking.

By the end of 2009/10, we will:

- negotiate actively on the draft Anti-discrimination Directive (as set out in Chapter 2);
- monitor and feed into EU analysis of the Community Legal Framework concerning the gender pay gap and development of any new proposals that arise from it (as set out in Chapter 2);
- contribute actively to influence EU strategy on the new EU Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men, and on work to help understand the impact of the recession leading an advisory group which will report in May 2009;
- strengthen cross-governmental co-ordination mechanisms to implement CEDAW and other international commitments by establishing a four-nations gender directors' network, establishing a cross-governmental working group to monitor and report on progress and disseminating relevant information across Government;
- represent the UK at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the UN in February/March 2010 and ensure that the UK's policies on gender are promoted;
- promote the UK's international commitments on gender equality policy in partnership with the WNC through a series of events in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland during January and February 2010;
- monitor and report on UK progress on implementing key international obligations, including preparing national appraisals/reports on:
 - the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to inform the global assessment in preparation for the 15th anniversary in 2010;
 - the Commonwealth gender plan of action in preparation for the tri-annual ministerial conference in summer 2010; and
 - CEDAW in a one-year follow-up report to the UK's examination by the CEDAW Committee;
- build on the UK's leading role in the provision of protection for LGBT people by supporting the development of similar protections across Europe and internationally; and

- support the post-recession economy and build a fairer, stronger (and family-friendly) future by:
 - holding an international conference on women in the new economy in autumn 2009 to assess the global impact of the downturn on women and responses to it one year on and to plan for the post-recession future;
 - working through the EC Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities Between Women and Men to co-chair the drafting of an advisory Opinion on Women and the Financial Crisis (to be finalised in May 2009);
 - contributing to EU discussions to ensure that gender is mainstreamed through the post-Lisbon agenda on jobs and growth; and
 - participating in EU discussions to shape and identify priorities for the future EU Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men (post-2010), and sitting on the related working group to draft an EC Advisory Opinion on the Future of the EU Roadmap (due in November 2009).

Communication

Our work in Europe and elsewhere is an important part of our efforts to create a fairer society for everyone. We will:

- use key hooks like International Women's Day in March 2010 to highlight the international work we are involved in as well as our domestic efforts; and
- work with colleagues in other Government Departments, particularly the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to ensure that messages about equality are part of their narrative when engaging with other countries.

Resources

- **Our people**
Six per cent of GEO's staff costs is devoted to working internationally.
- **Other Government Departments**
GEO is the lead on EU and international gender obligations such as CEDAW, CSW, etc. BERR and DWP lead on areas such as the Lisbon strategy.
- **Our Commissions**
The EHRC is an accredited UN Human Rights Body. It participates at EU level. The WNC leads on the CSW. As such, both produce shadow reports for a range of international events and reviews and attend panels etc. The WNC promotes awareness of CEDAW and CSW by engaging with women's organisations.

9. Engaging widely and working with others

Communicating and engaging widely

Communication can be a tool for change. Many of the areas of policy covered by GEO involve cultural and/or attitudinal change, for example overcoming barriers to participation in public life and tackling violence against women.

Intelligent use of communication can help us to achieve our aims, whether they are a better understanding of the impact of the recession on women facilitated through a web discussion forum, or changing perceptions of domestic violence by standardising all marketing activity and messages across Government. GEO will use a variety of communication techniques to effect change, from the traditional mix of PR and events, to an increasing focus on digital and social media to reflect changing trends in public engagement.

It is vital, too, that GEO improves relationships with its stakeholders both inside and outside Government. We are a small Department working in the heart of Whitehall and we rely on good relationships with other Departments leading on policy areas in which we have an interest. We also rely on the many external stakeholders that help to make our aspirations a reality for people, including businesses, trade unions and the third sector. Good relationships are based on clear and open communication with stakeholders – something we have taken steps to improve in recent months and will build on in the coming year. We have a number of mechanisms for doing this, including the Senior Stakeholder Group, regular informal meetings, and Ministerial and official-level speeches and event attendance, plus updates via mass-communication routes such as the website and our publication series.

All communication activity will be guided by the following principles. It will:

- relate clearly to one or more of the strategic aims outlined in this Business Plan;
- be appropriately targeted to the issue involved, the audience we are trying to reach and the outcome required; and
- be evaluated where appropriate at the end of the Business Plan year for effectiveness in contributing to the delivery of the outcomes in this document.

By the end of 2009/10, we will:

- ensure that the work of GEO is widely understood by our stakeholders, and benchmark this in the 2009/10 reporting year by conducting a perception audit;
- put a stakeholder engagement strategy in place which results in better stakeholder relationships and greater understanding of the engagement that is already going on, and ensures that our stakeholders are well placed to support us whenever possible;
- use opportunities like the forthcoming consultations on age discrimination and the public sector Equality Duty to improve our presence in the regions, for example by hosting regional events;
- explore other opportunities to link up with the Devolved Administrations, for example by including appropriate information in sources of guidance like *Real Help Now for Women* and distributing it widely;
- underpin all policy activity with targeted, appropriate communication to help us to deliver our aims, for example by running a PR campaign to raise awareness of public appointments to help increase diversity;
- ensure that the work of GEO is accessible to all, including through our website, publications in multiple formats, and other channels such as regular events attendance;
- publish a web accessibility plan in summer 2009 to improve access to the information on the website and make the most of the opportunities that digital communication can provide;
- ensure that GEO hosts a conference in spring 2010 to keep our key stakeholders up to date with the work we are involved in; and
- improve our relationship with Government colleagues through an active programme of attendance at equality events/open days etc organised by other Government Departments. This will help to position GEO at the heart of the debate on equality.

Resources

- **Our people**

Nine per cent of GEO's staff costs is devoted to communicating and engaging widely.

- **Other Government Departments**

Key players are the Home Office, BERR, the Better Regulation Executive, DIUS, DWP, CLG, MoJ and DH.

Working with and through others

Key to GEO's role is delivery with key independent partners as well as other central Government Departments, the Devolved Administrations, regions and local Government, the EU and international institutions.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

The EHRC was established by the Equality Act 2006. The Act set out a general duty on the EHRC to encourage and support the development of a society in which:

- people's ability to achieve their potential is not limited by prejudice and discrimination;
- there is respect for and protection of each individual's human rights;
- there is respect for the dignity and worth of each individual;
- each individual has an equal opportunity to participate in society; and
- there is mutual respect between groups based on understanding and valuing of diversity and on shared respect for equality and human rights.

The EHRC's vision is 'A society built on fairness and respect. People confident in all aspects of their diversity'. The EHRC is publishing a three-year Strategic Plan to deliver this general duty and realise this vision. The Strategic Plan sets out the following strategic aims:

- Secure and implement an effective legislative and regulatory framework for equality and human rights.
- Create a fairer Britain: with equal life chances and access to services for all.
- Build a society without prejudice – promoting good relations and fostering a vibrant equality and human rights culture.
- Promote understanding and awareness of rights and duties – deliver timely and accurate advice and guidance to individuals and employers.
- Build an authoritative and responsive organisation.

GEO Ministers account for the EHRC's business in Parliament and approve the amount of grant-in-aid and other funds to be paid to the EHRC. GEO provides the grant-in-aid from its budget (just over £60 million in 2008/09, with a similar amount forecast for 2009/10) and Jonathan Rees, GEO's Director General, is the Principal Accounting Officer for the EHRC's expenditure. A small sponsorship team in GEO provides day-to-day advice and guidance to the EHRC on, for example, its pay remit and the appointment of Commissioners and sets the level of financial delegations for the EHRC.

GEO's policy teams work closely with EHRC staff in the pursuit of shared equality and diversity objectives. For example, the Equality Bill will require the EHRC to draw up effective guidance on the Bill's provisions and provide effective enforcement once the Bill is enacted. GEO and the EHRC's aims and objectives converge in many areas and both parties are committed to an open and transparent relationship that is based on sharing information and a mutual understanding of relevant issues.

The EHRC brings together three former commissions: the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission. The EHRC responsibilities cover England, Scotland and Wales. In Scotland and Wales there are statutory committees responsible for the work of the EHRC.

More information on the EHRC is available at: www.equalityhumanrights.com.

During 2009/10, we will:

- strengthen the EHRC Board through the recruitment of new Commissioners;
- work closely with the EHRC to help in implementing its new three-year Strategic Plan, for instance working in partnership on effective, timely and targeted guidance to support the Equality Bill;
- review our sponsorship arrangements and agree a new Framework Agreement; and
- assess the results of the EHRC's inquiries into the financial services and construction industries, and lead the Government response to them.

Resources

- **Our people**
Four per cent of GEO's staff costs is devoted to managing sponsorship arrangements with the EHRC.
- **Other Government Departments**
Other Departments with a strong interest in EHRC activity are CLG, BERR and DWP and within that the ODI and MoJ.

Women's National Commission (WNC)

GEO also sponsors the WNC, a lower-tier, advisory NDPB, which was originally established in 1969. The WNC is the official independent advisory body that gives the views of women to the Government. The main work of the WNC lies in responding to Government initiatives and consultation exercises, co-ordinating the response from women's non-governmental organisations and supporting the strategic objectives of the Chair and Commissioners.

The current WNC Board consists of the Chair, Baroness Joyce Gould, and 15 Commissioners, ten of whom were appointed by Ministers in September 2008. GEO is now looking to appoint Commissioners to replace those whose terms expire in 2009.

Following the recommendations from the WNC light-touch review in 2007, a Memorandum of Understanding between GEO and the WNC will be available by summer 2009 on GEO's website at: www.equalities.gov.uk. This document will take account of the requirements placed on the WNC by the Ministers for Women and Equality and GEO.

The WNC will produce its own Business Plan for 2009/10. Current information about its work is available at: www.thewnc.org.uk.

During 2009/10, we will:

- support the WNC to be an effective two-way communication channel between Government and women's organisations, organising regular meetings and events with senior officials and Ministers to exchange dialogue and feed into the development of gender policy;
- complete an Operating Framework and review the recommendations of the 2007 light-touch review to ensure that delivery has been implemented; and
- conduct a public appointment exercise to recruit Commissioners to ensure that the Board has its full complement of Commissioners.

Resources

- **Our people**
Some 0.6 per cent of GEO's staff costs is devoted to managing sponsorship arrangements with the WNC.

GEO works closely with Regional Development Agencies, other Government Departments and others to deliver its priorities.

We work with a wide range of partners to tackle deep-rooted problems of inequality with a long history through continued management of PSA 15 – which seeks to address the disadvantage that individuals experience because of their gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation or belief.

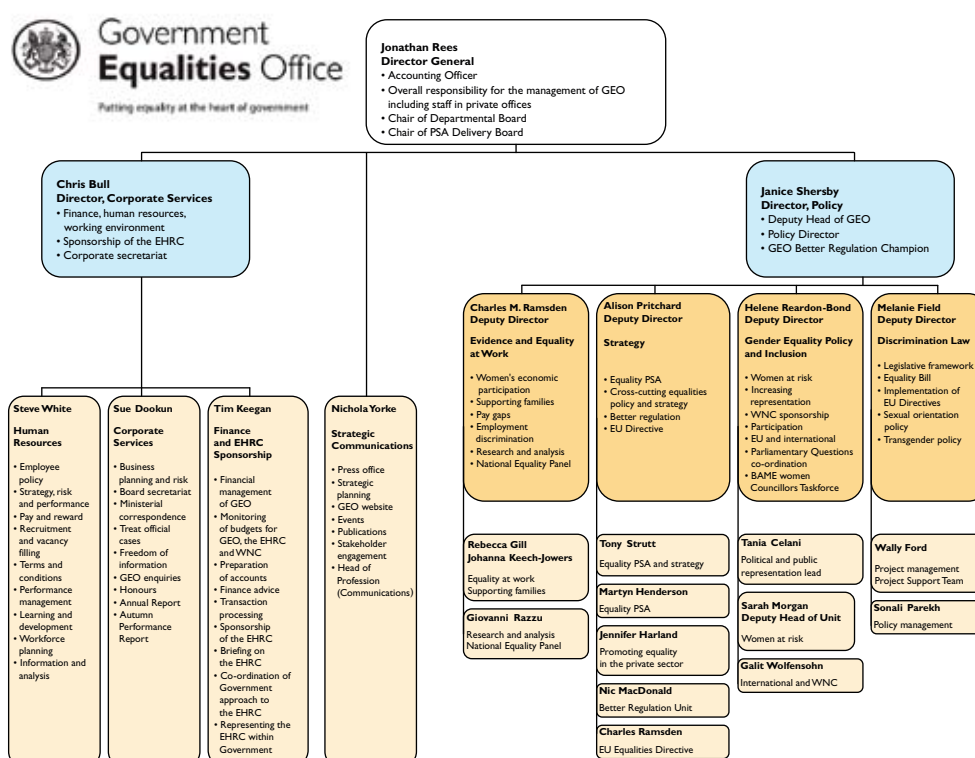
In addition, we work through the Government Office Network, Regional Development Agencies and others to strengthen local delivery of PSA 15 priorities. We will support the establishment and development of the new English Regions Equality Network and gather early evidence on the impact of Local Area Agreements and the new Comprehensive Area Assessment in relation to delivering on the equalities agenda.

We will complete a piece of work on what makes for an effective local performance indicator from an equalities perspective to feed into the wider CLG-led review of the current national indicator set.

We have a wide range of groups feeding into our Senior Stakeholder Group, which meets every six weeks, and we engage with a range of other groups.

10. Improving as a Department

GEO was established as a separate Department in October 2007. It currently has just over 100 staff, working in four main policy directorates and in two other directorates dealing with corporate services and strategic communications respectively.



The work of the policy directorates is described in Chapters 2 to 8 and Chapter 9 covers engaging and working with others. The Corporate Directorate manages the sponsorship arrangements for the EHRC and GEO's central requirements, mainly financial management, human resources services, governance and some customer contact issues.

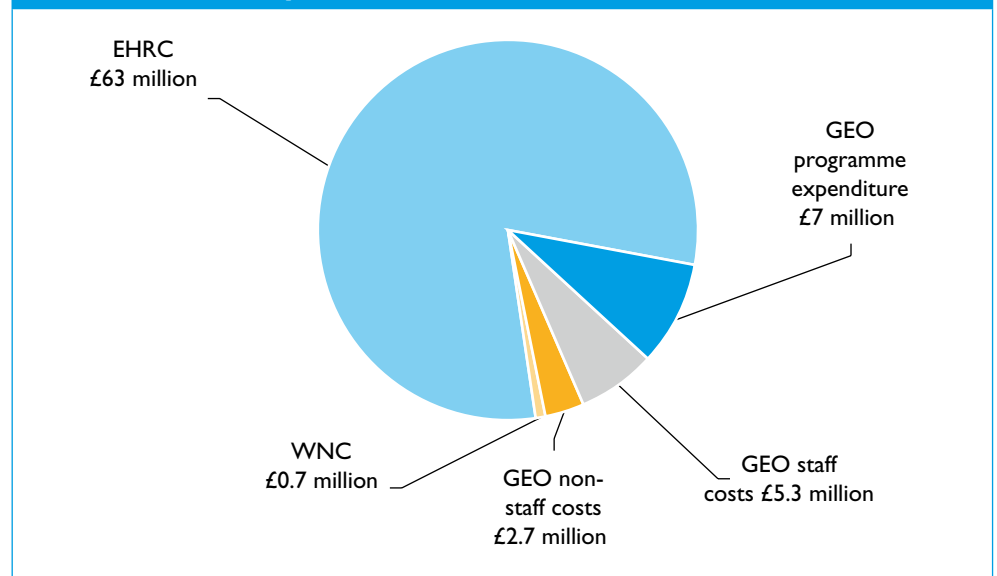
In addition, GEO works closely with its legal team, based in the Treasury Solicitor's Department. Twelve lawyers, headed by James Maskell, deal with GEO's business, primarily supporting our work on strengthening and streamlining the legislative framework.

Managing our resources

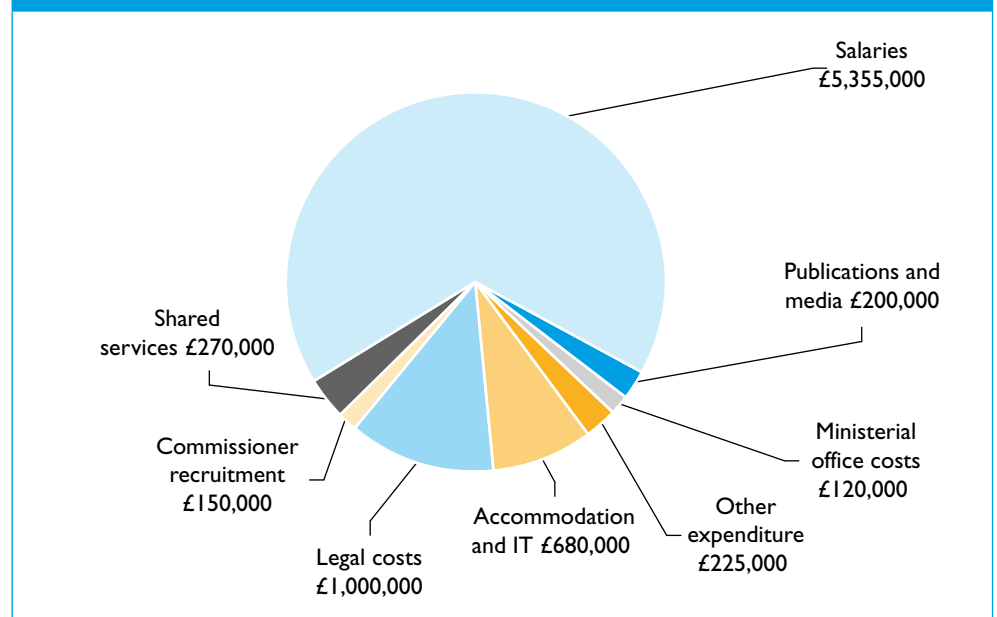
GEO had a budget of £84 million for 2008/09 and, while the budget for 2009/10 has not yet been confirmed with HM Treasury, it is likely to be of the same order. Some 80 per cent of GEO's budget (£70 million, including £7 million capital) is earmarked as grant-in-aid for the EHRC. Of the

remainder, some £8 million is allocated to administration (salaries and non-pay costs such as accommodation, IT and audit services) and £7 million will be for GEO programme expenditure in support of GEO’s policy goals, for example research for evidence-based policy making and support for Rape Crisis Centres.

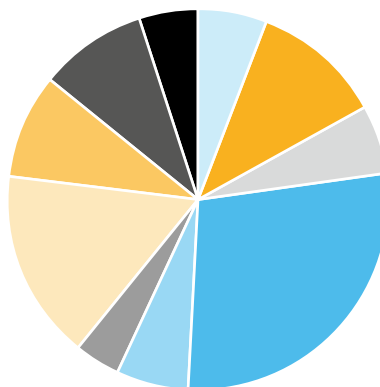
GEO resource expenditure



GEO administration breakdown



Expenditure by aim and work programme



- Promoting physical safety and freedom from violence – 6%
- Improving equality at work and economic participation for all – 11%
- Working internationally – 6%
- Modernising, strengthening and streamlining the legislative framework – 28%
- Opening up opportunities in public and political life – 6%
- Improving life chances and public services – 4%
- Corporate services – 16%
- Improving our evidence base – 9%
- Communications – 9%
- EHRC and WNC sponsorship – 5%

During 2009/10, we will:

- improve our procurement arrangements and guidance for staff to deliver improved value for money and ensure that our procurement work fully supports our equality aims;
- agree our pay remit with HM Treasury;
- promote the value for money of GEO and EHRC operations; and
- develop a set of equality-related priorities to feed into Spending Review discussions.

Resources

- **Our people**

Some 4.6 per cent of GEO's staff costs is devoted to managing our resources.

- **Other Government Departments**

GEO agrees budget and other financial matters with HM Treasury, the National Audit Office (NAO) is GEO's external auditor and CLG provides internal audit services.

- **Our Commissions**

GEO's budget includes funding for our two NDPBs, the EHRC and the WNC, and we negotiate annual budgets and monthly grant-in-aid payments with them.

Improving our capability

In GEO's early stages, human resources work concentrated on recruitment and agreeing a single set of terms and conditions for GEO staff, who joined the new Department from a number of other Government Departments. Now that terms and conditions are agreed, human resources work is concentrating on improving our capability, learning and skills development, drawing on shared services arrangements agreed with CLG and DWP, and on monitoring the skills and diversity of our workforce. We are also working to understand staff issues through workshops and surveys.

During 2009/10, we will:

- complete impact assessments on key human resources policies;
- complete an equal pay review;
- complete actions set out in our Diversity Delivery Plan and regularly review progress;
- implement our learning and development strategy;
- ensure that staff are aware of and undertake learning and development appropriate to their needs;
- engage with our staff through a detailed staff survey and undertake necessary improvement action; and
- set up new Whitley arrangements for formal consultation with trade unions.

Resources

- **Our people**
Some 2.8 per cent of GEO's staff costs is devoted to improving our capability.
- **Other Government Departments**
GEO has negotiated 'common citizenship' agreements with CLG and DWP for access to learning and development opportunities, staff support arrangements and access to job vacancies.
- **Our Commissions**
GEO works closely with the EHRC and the WNC – all three parties have a mutual interest in capability.

Improving our governance

The Departmental Board leads the work of GEO by setting the overall strategic direction and providing direction on major operational and management issues. The Board consists of GEO's Senior Civil Servants and three non-executive directors:

- Peter Bungard, Chief Executive of Gloucestershire County Council;
- Judy McKnight, formerly General Secretary of Napo, the trade union and professional association for probation officers and family court staff; and
- Janet Soo-Chung, Consultant at NHS North West Leadership Academy.

The Board meets every two months, reviewing finance and performance and discussing a key policy issue. The minutes of the Board are circulated to all GEO staff.

Two subcommittees oversee key corporate governance functions:

- The Audit and Risk Committee provides the Board with financial and risk management assurance. The Committee is chaired by Peter Bungard, and membership includes the other non-executive directors. The Director General, Corporate Services Director and the Head of Finance attend from GEO, and representatives from the National Audit Office (GEO's external auditors) and CLG Internal Audit Services (which provides an internal audit of GEO governance and finances and of GEO's sponsorship arrangements) also attend.

- The Research Programme Board provides the Board with assurance that GEO's research programme is agreed, and its total budget approved, by GEO senior management.

GEO is subject to scrutiny by the NAO (GEO's first set of audited accounts were published in June 2008) and by the CLG Select Committee on parliamentary issues. The Committee has reviewed GEO's first Annual Report and Accounts and GEO's Autumn Performance Report. The Committee's commentary on these publications and GEO's response are at: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmcomloc/memo/geo/ucm0202.htm

During 2009/10, we will:

- develop and implement more refined risk management procedures;
- restructure the way we work to deliver efficiencies by increasing cross-team working and greater use of project-based work;
- improve our performance through better business planning and performance reporting; and
- improve our systems and guidance, including data management, electronic filing, security and equality impact assessment guidance.

Resources

- **Our people**
Two per cent of GEO's staff costs is devoted to improving our governance.

Improving our handling of customer contact

The nature of GEO's work naturally inspires a large number of enquiries, requests for information and letters to Ministers. GEO is a small Department with finite resources which have been stretched in the last year handling the high volume of customer correspondence and Parliamentary Questions. We anticipate that the volume of enquiries will increase in the coming year with the introduction of the Equality Bill. We have recently improved our internal processes and will focus on meeting our target to answer all enquiries, in whatever form they are received, within 20 working days.

GEO's website, www.equalities.gov.uk, is the main information and communications channel for GEO and is covered in Chapter 9. The website is being upgraded to ensure that it meets the requirements set out by the Information Commissioner – in particular, to produce a freedom of information publication scheme.

GEO has recently introduced its complaints procedure so that people in any way dissatisfied with GEO's work or handling of their enquiry can make a formal complaint. That procedure is set out on the website.

During 2009/10, we will:

- improve our handling of customer enquiries to ensure that we answer 80 per cent of all enquiries within 20 working days; and
- improve the information routinely provided on our website to comply with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act.

Resources

- **Our people**

Three per cent of GEO's staff costs is devoted to improving our handling of customer contact.

- **Our Commissions**

Parliamentary Questions often cover the work of our Commissions and we are reliant on prompt information from the EHRC and WNC.

Annex A

Our Departmental Strategic Objective and Public Service Agreement

PSA 15 – Equality

The Government's priorities for 2008–11 were announced by Alastair Darling as part of his 2007 Pre-Budget Report. These priorities are referred to as Public Service Agreements (PSAs) and have the same status as White Paper commitments.

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 tackling inequalities. For example, PSA 8 seeks to narrow employment gaps for disadvantaged groups, while other PSAs seek to address inequalities in health, criminal justice and other areas.

GEO is the lead Department for PSA 15 – the Equality PSA – which is an important part of the overall suite. Over the three years to March 2011, this PSA aims to:

- narrow the gender pay gap;
- increase disabled people's choice and control;
- address inequalities in civic participation;
- tackle discrimination in employment; and
- improve understanding and address unfair treatment.

For each of the above commitments, there is a related statistical indicator. Details of these and the methodology for measuring progress were set out in the Delivery Agreement published by HM Treasury at the time of the Pre-Budget Report (https://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/pbr_csr07_psa15.pdf). A recent report by the NAO confirmed that the data systems in place to measure performance are suitably robust and will give a reasonable picture of progress.

As lead Department, GEO is responsible for the overall programme management of the PSA, including chairing a Management Board which meets quarterly to oversee and drive progress on the PSA priorities, monitoring progress on the statistical indicators, managing risks and co-ordinating action across Government. The Prime Minister's Delivery Unit reports twice-yearly to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet on the delivery of PSA commitments.

However, responsibility for achieving the PSA is not down to GEO alone. The ODI at DWP leads on increasing disabled people's choice and control. CLG leads on civic participation. GEO leads on the remaining three priorities, but with the involvement of Departments across Whitehall. A summary of the delivery plans for the PSA was published in September 2008 (http://www.equalities.gov.uk/what_we_do/equality_psa.aspx).

Departmental Strategic Objective

Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSOs) are linked to PSA delivery and help ensure that the Government's key commitments are embedded in the work of all Departments. Our DSO, published in March 2008, reflects the wording of the Equality PSA and is supported by some of the same indicators. Additional indicators have been included to capture the totality of our work.

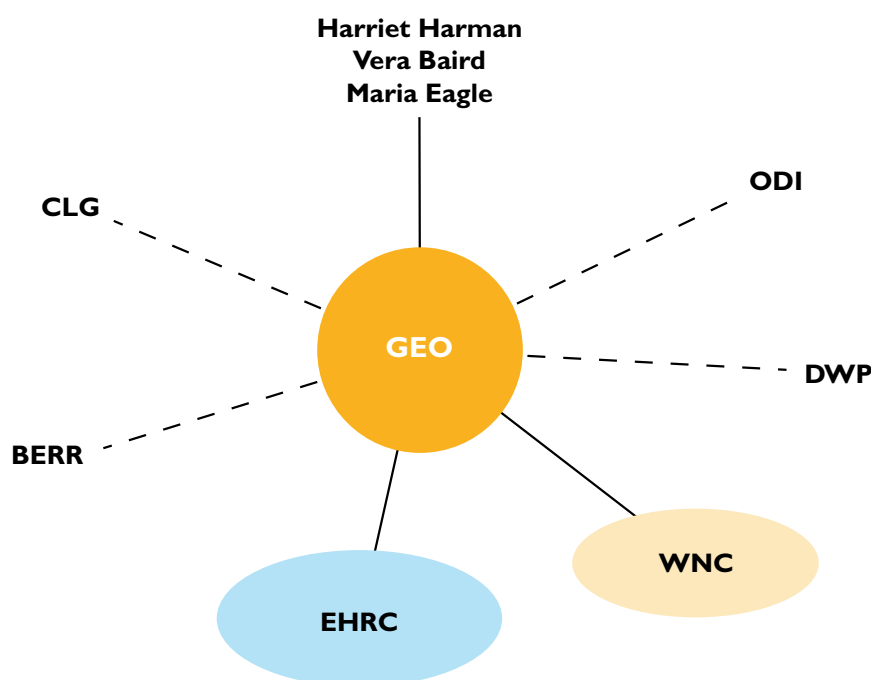
GEO's Departmental Strategic Objective

To address the disadvantage that individuals experience because of their gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief by:

1. Ensuring progress against the Minister for Women's priorities.
2. Developing and supporting delivery of the Government's equality strategy.
3. Reducing the gender pay gap.
4. Increasing disabled people's choice and control.
5. Addressing inequalities in civic participation.
6. Reducing discrimination in employment.
7. Addressing unfair treatment.

Annex B

Government equalities – who does what



Other Government Departments and the Devolved Administrations

CLG continues to lead on race and faith policy (other than in respect of certain equality matters) including PSA 10 on race equality and community cohesion.

DWP leads on disability policy and legislation (ODI) and on age policy (older people) including PSA 17.

BERR, which leads on employment rights, has responsibility for some specific aspects of discrimination law in the workplace¹ – age, religion or belief and sexual orientation – but not policy more generally.

DCSF, (DIUS for further and higher education) and the Scottish and Welsh Governments are responsible for equality law and policy in the field of education, and for children and youth policy.

Moj leads on human rights law and policy and on the Gender Recognition Act 2004.


The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) leads on equalities legislation and policy within Northern Ireland, as a devolved matter.

¹ The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
www.berr.gov.uk/employment/discrimination/index.html

Annex C

Glossary of acronyms and abbreviations

- BAME** Black, Asian and minority ethnic
- BERR** Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform
- CEDAW** Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
- CLG** Department for Communities and Local Government
- CSW** Commission on the Status of Women
- DCSF** Department for Children, Schools and Families
- DfT** Department for Transport
- DH** Department of Health
- DIUS** Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
- DSO** Departmental Strategic Objective
- DWP** Department for Work and Pensions
- EHRC** Equality and Human Rights Commission
- EU** European Union
- GEO** Government Equalities Office
- LGBT** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
- LSE** London School of Economics
- MoJ** Ministry of Justice
- MP** Member of Parliament
- NAO** National Audit Office
- NDPB** non-departmental public body
- ODI** Office for Disability Issues (part of DWP)
- OGC** Office of Government Commerce
- ONS** Office for National Statistics
- PSA** Public Service Agreement
- QC** Queen's Counsel
- WNC** Women's National Commission
- WWC** Women and Work Commission



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