

Rt Hon David Cameron MP

Dear Prime Minister

The Equality Act 2010: equality analyses

You said to the Confederation of British Industry Conference 2012 that you intend to repeal the requirement to undertake equality impact assessments. I am advised that Danny Alexander made a similar comment at the Liberal Democrat Conference several weeks before.

If this is the case, I would remind you that your Government announced in January 2011 that it intended to change the terminology for equality impact assessment to “equality analysis”. The document published in 2011 by the Equality and Human Rights Commission states: **The change in terminology from ‘equality impact assessment’ to ‘analysis of the effects on equality’ is intended to focus more attention on the quality of the analysis and how it is used in decision-making, and less on the production of a document, which some may have taken to be an end in itself.**

We seek clarification of your intentions since it now appears to be Government policy to get rid of this type of assessment. Are we to understand that you no longer wish to know in advance about the impact of policies on different groups of people, or are you merely repeating what has already been announced regarding the renaming of equality impact assessments?

As an Institute, we share a concern that too much time is taken in conducting spurious and often inaccurate equality analyses. However, this is not because there is no need for them. Rather, it is that many people conducting the analyses do not understand what they are doing or why they are doing it.

We wonder how you can be sure that Government policies do not have the effect of treating some groups of people less favourably than others if there is no evidence of consideration to their likely impacts on the groups. Our review of recent Government policies suggests there is little evidence that the impact on real people has been considered when plans and proposals are circulated.

Surely you would not wish, as we do not, to see a return to the situation that prevailed between the late 1970s and 1990s when the duty under S71 of the Race Relations Act was applied only to local government and not other public services such as the police. You will recall that it was not until after the McPherson Report

into the murder of Stephen Lawrence that the Public Sector Equality Duty was extended to all public authorities and private organisations contracted to deliver public services on behalf of public authorities.

Asserting that equality had been considered is not the same as providing evidence of it.

We would, therefore, welcome your clarification that the spirit, if not the letter, of the Equality Act 2010 is to be maintained and safeguarded by your Government.

Yours sincerely

Linda Bellos OBE
Chair

cc: Jonathan Rees, Director General, Government Equalities Office
Baroness Onora O'Neil, Chair, Equality and Human Rights Commission