

DRAFT

Teresa May
Home Secretary

Dear Mrs May

I write to question the extent to which your actions are in contravention of the Equality Act 2010 section 149?

As Minister you are of course first named in Schedule 19 of the Act as a responsible person to whom the Public Sector Duty applies and we were therefore surprised that so little regard seems to have been exercised in the consultation document issued on the 15th May 2012 following the Red Tape Challenge. The Duty to Advance equality is one that seeks to strengthen the previous provision and build upon the previous duties for public authorities to promote equality.

You will recall that the Public Sector Duty was introduced to ensure that the equality was to play an integral part in the thinking and actions of all public authorities following the apparent disregard shown by the then Metropolitan Police when they investigated the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act was passed in 1999 following the McPherson Inquiry and Report to ensure that never again would a public authority fail to have 'due regard' to equality even when it thought that equality was only marginal to its work.

It is in this context that we are dismayed to see attempts to water down gains made to ensure an equal opportunity to all people with protected characteristics. We were particularly disappointed to note that you appear to be responding to the Red Tape Challenge whilst not at the same time publishing how many of the responders supported or opposed the Equality Act 2010. Before the closing of the consultation on the Cabinet Office Website the responses appeared to be largely in favour of the Act and yet the Consultation documents issued 15 May contain the views of business alone.

Many of our members run their own business and are not hostile to the needs of SME's, but have been surprised that the many lessons learned over the last 37 years since the SDA 1975 and the RRA 1976 seem to have been ignored.

We are seeking legal advice about whether your actions to a contravention of your statutory duties but in the meantime wish you to be aware that we take very seriously any attempt to damage the good practice on equality which have been the envy of Europe over recent years.

Yours sincerely

Linda Bellos OBE