

Our ref: JB/DI/TH  
Date: 20 April 2017

The Rt Hon. Damian Green MP,  
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions,  
Caxton House,  
Tothill St,  
London, SW1H 9NA.

Dear Secretary of State,

**Subject: Improving lives: helping workless families policy paper**

I am writing to offer the Equality and Human Rights Commission's advice and support on work towards implementing 'Improving lives: helping workless families', the policy paper recently published by your Department. The Commission has a wealth of evidence in many of the areas covered by the policy, and we consider that the Government's aim to create a fairer Britain can best be achieved through policies which reduce inequality and strengthen protection of human rights. We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with your officials to discuss developing the strategy set out in the paper.

We welcome the paper's analysis of causal factors which contribute to worklessness, the actions set out to address issues such as poor parental mental health and problem debt, and the new indicators to monitor progress. However, we consider that the strategy could be strengthened by;

- a full equality impact assessment of all the measures proposed, including consideration of likely outcomes for individuals who face multiple disadvantage;
- a comprehensive assessment of the measures in the policy on the human rights of children and disabled people, taking into account recent recommendations from relevant UN bodies;
- a commitment to commence the socio-economic duty in Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010;
- a commitment to reintroduce income-poverty related targets for the reduction of child poverty; and
- a commitment to collect data disaggregated by protected characteristics for all of the measures of worklessness and the measures for children and young people.

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Our evidence also strongly suggests that focussing solely on worklessness cannot address unequal enjoyment of the right to an adequate standard of living, and that further action is needed to tackle the immediate effects of poverty, and to guarantee the right to just and favourable conditions of work.

We would like to work with your Department to share our evidence and with a view to ensuring that these key human rights and equality issues are considered in the UK Government's policy in this area from the outset and throughout its design and implementation. I would appreciate if you could pass this letter to the relevant team and ask them to contact [Jeremy.Bloom@equalityhumanrights.com](mailto:Jeremy.Bloom@equalityhumanrights.com) / 0207 832 7866

Yours faithfully,



**David Isaac**

Chair

Letter to be placed on the Commission's website and copies to be sent to:-

Rt Hon. Harriet Harman QC MP, Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights  
Rt Hon. Frank Field MP, Chair of the Work and Pensions Committee

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