

2007 – European Year of Equal Opportunities for All

The UK Contribution



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Foreword

Europeans are living through a time of rapid and radical change – economic, social and demographic. The last twenty five years have seen huge transformations in the way we work; the structure of our families; the roles played by women in our societies and the composition of our populations. So revolutionary have these changes been that even our definition of the word European has altered.

Amidst all this change there is one certainty – there is much more on the way. And, as people live longer and technology permits even closer monitoring of our ever fluctuating global order, the pace of this change will increase. So, if we Europeans want to meet the challenges, and make the most of the opportunities of this future, we must ensure that our societies are built on foundations sound enough to withstand the shifting sands of time.

The decision to designate 2007 as the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All was a significant step in this direction. Its aim was to make each and every one of us aware of our right to be treated with fairness, dignity and respect and of our responsibility to accord the same treatment to others. It also highlighted the benefits that diversity brings to communities and individuals.

The Government of the United Kingdom, and the recently established Equality and Human Rights Commission, were enthusiastic supporters of the Year and devised a country wide programme of activities to mark it. These were attended by a wide range of organisations, authorities and individuals from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. They shared their vast knowledge and experience of working to make Britain a fairer society with us and each other.

This report allows us to share some these with you and, at the same time, to outline the United Kingdom's contribution to the Year. We hope that people across Europe will find it useful in their attempts to build a better and fairer future for us all.



Barbara Follett MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary



Trevor Phillips
Chair, Equality and Human Rights
Commission

Chapter One

UK COMMITMENT TO THE EUROPEAN YEAR

- 1.1 The European Union (EU) has a proud record of legislating for equal rights and anti-discrimination but law-making alone does not ensure that equal opportunities are enjoyed by all. Culture change and action to increase awareness are vital if the principles established in legislation are turned into reality.
- 1.2 Here in the UK we fully embraced the EU's initiative in establishing 2007 as the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (EYEOA). In its aims and direction, the European Year was firmly aligned with the UK's approach to equalities and human rights.
- 1.3 We shared the European Year's stated aims to:
 - make people more aware of their rights to enjoy equal treatment and a life free of discrimination – irrespective of race or ethnic origin, disability, gender, religion or belief, age or sexual orientation
 - promote equal opportunities for all
 - put the spotlight on the benefits of diversity for societies and individuals.
- 1.4 We also supported the approach in which all discrimination grounds should be treated in a balanced way and the different ways in which women and men experience discrimination (ie on the grounds of race or ethnic origin, disability, gender, religion or belief, age or sexual orientation) have to be tackled.
- 1.5 The UK Government and the devolved administrations (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) are committed to a comprehensive agenda of reform that goes beyond tackling individual instances of discrimination. The aim is to create a *new* framework to challenge persistent patterns of discrimination and inequality as well as promote and protect diversity and good relations between people.
- 1.6 Of particular significance during the year was the establishment of the new Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) with its mission to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination in all its aspects, strengthen good relations between people and protect human rights.

- 1.7 The new independent Commission inherited the powers of the previous Commissions (the Commission for Racial Equality, Equal Opportunities Commission and the Disability Rights Commission) and also acquired new powers. The EHRC will promote equality and tackle discrimination in relation to sexual orientation, age, and religion or belief – areas that were not covered by the previous Commissions. It will also, for the first time, be charged with the promotion and protection of human rights, providing institutional support for the Human Rights Act. It will encourage public and (where appropriate) private bodies to comply with the principles that underline the Act, levering up standards by encouraging good practice based on respect for the dignity of each individual. The Commission's responsibilities cover England, Scotland and Wales. In Scotland and Wales there are statutory committees responsible for the work of the EHRC.
- 1.8 The Year aptly coincided with not only the establishment of the EHRC but also with the Government Equalities Office (GEO). The latter is responsible for the Government's overall strategy and priorities on equality issues. Its work includes: leading the development of a more integrated approach on equality across Government to increase opportunities for all; taking forward the Minister for Women's priorities; taking forward work on an Equality Bill following the Discrimination Law Review; responding to the Equalities Review; and sponsoring the EHRC and the Women's National Commission. The Department also leads on policy on gender and sexual orientation and is responsible for integrating work on disability, age, race and religion or belief into the overall equality framework.
- 1.9 The creation of the EHRC and GEO shows how seriously the UK takes equality of opportunity for all. The UK's extensive programme of activities to mark the 'Year' was delivered in partnership with the EHRC.
- 1.10 Partnership is at the heart of the Government's approach to equality and diversity. As a result, the activities involved a wide range of partner organisations from across the UK that included the devolved administrations, local authorities and other public sector bodies such as the Government Offices in the regions of England as well as groups involved in the equality agenda: unions, business organisations, the voluntary and community sector and academic groups.

1.11 Activities during the Year were organised around the four overarching themes of:

- Rights
- Representation
- Recognition
- Respect

RIGHTS – raising awareness of the right to equality and non-discrimination and of the problem of multiple discrimination

- 1.12 To deliver the theme based around *Rights*, the UK Government focused on capacity building in order to ensure that organisations involved in the equality agenda can give and disseminate good quality anti-discrimination advice.
- 1.13 The key challenge being, to make sure that public, private and third sector organisations embed rights into their systems, working cultures and processes for the benefit of all. Many of the objectives set for the EHRC are concerned specifically with achieving these outcomes and additionally in the public sector we have introduced public sector equality duties covering race, disability and gender. These are powerful levers to promote equality and do not exist elsewhere in the EU.
- 1.14 It was fortuitous, that during the European Year the Government introduced the Gender Equality Duty. This means that from April 2007 public authorities (PAs) in carrying out their functions, are required to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful sex discrimination and harassment; and to promote equality of opportunity between women and men.
- 1.15 In essence, this means not thinking about equality, as merely an add on. It means focusing on two key questions “How are we going to make sure that our services better meet both the needs of men and women?” and “How are we making sure that our employment practices take account of the different needs of men and women?”
- 1.16 The UK government is strongly of the view that by addressing these two key questions positively, all citizens would benefit from better services as well as a more equal society.
- 1.17 The Year has provided a major opportunity to showcase and celebrate what we have achieved with the implementation of the duties and the practical steps organisations can take to embed equality measures into their cultures and processes (see Chapter Two). By building institutional

capacity, individuals' access to justice would be easier and the concept of Rights would become more meaningful.

REPRESENTATION – stimulating debate on ways to increase the participation of groups which are victims of discrimination and a balanced participation of men and women

- 1.18 All people in the EU are entitled to equal treatment, irrespective of their race or ethnic origin, disability, gender, religion or belief, age or sexual orientation – this is the key message that the Year put across not only to the general public, but also to individuals or groups that suffer from discrimination, or are potentially exposed to discrimination.
- 1.19 Across the UK a series of high profile seminars that included, workshops, conferences, theatre, exhibitions and media publicity, were used to promote discussion and debate about the themes of the Year. In addition, the UK leg of the European Truck Tour was a valuable showcase to raise awareness and understanding. (see Chapter Two)
- 1.20 The Government's Ministers for Women and Equality Harriet Harman and Barbara Follett announced a key priority of their work during the 'Year' – to tackle under-representation in public life and in particular, empower Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) women to build cohesion within their communities and as a bridge between communities. Currently approximately 168 ethnic minority women serve as councillors in the whole of England and the Government is firmly committed to achieving significant improvements to this under-representation. To be representative, the number would need to be closer to approximately 1000.
- 1.21 Actions taken to date to tackle this under-representation include:
 - The Ministers for Women and Equality hosted a major event for regional Black, Asian and minority ethnic women activists focused on increasing civic participation to celebrate Black History month. To coincide with this they also published interim findings on research into BAME women's routes into becoming councillors.
 - The "Women Take Part" campaign was launched in October 2007, to identify what currently exists to help women from under-represented groups become active in local decision making; what works and what needs to happen to make a lasting change.
 - Engaging Operation Black Vote (a body whose role is to increase greater participation from different ethnic communities and backgrounds in the electoral process) to explore how permitting

positive action by political parties could boost the representation of minority ethnic groups.

- Setting up the Councillors Commission – to examine the barriers and incentives to standing and help increase the diversity of councillors. This reported in December 2007 and Government will be responding to the recommendations.
- Commissioned research into BAME women’s routes into decision making positions.

1.22 The Year clearly helped to reinforce the importance of people taking part in matters that properly concerned them.

RECOGNITION – facilitating and celebrating diversity and equality

1.23 During the European Year two significant initiatives were taken to facilitate diversity and equality across all strands. In June the Government published proposals for an Equality Bill for Great Britain. The proposals were developed as a result of the Discrimination Law Review. The objective was to consider the opportunities for creating a clearer and more streamlined discrimination legislative framework and so produce better outcomes for those who currently experience disadvantage. This review was complemented by the work of the independent Equalities Review which was commissioned by Government to examine the root causes of persistent patterns of inequality and explore ways in which they can be tackled in today’s Britain.

1.24 The extensive consultation on proposals for an Equality Bill focused on exploring and identifying various possibilities for legislation including:

- the scope for harmonizing, simplifying and updating current law;
- areas where protection is currently inconsistent;
- positive action measures to address entrenched discrimination and disadvantage;
- how public sector procurement can be used to promote equality;
- appropriate measures to protect against harassment outside the workplace;
- how to promote compliance with discrimination law;
- reviewing dispute resolution procedures.

1.25 Following the consultation, which closed in September 2007, ministers are considering a number of measures, amongst them actions to increase transparency, make use of procurement to encourage equality, strengthen

enforcement and widen the scope of positive action. The resulting Equality Bill is intended to strengthen, simplify and modernise all Britain's discrimination legislation. In July, the Prime Minister Gordon Brown emphasised the Government's commitment to driving forward a strong agenda on equalities right across his administration by creating the GEO under the leadership of the Minister for Women and Equalities, Harriet Harman.

- 1.26 Celebration and recognition were significant elements of the UK's contribution to the European Year. The UK government published an informative booklet showcasing powerful examples of the work being done by the people and organisations who actively champion equal opportunities for all throughout the UK (see Chapter Three). Ministers and other leading figures such as Trevor Phillips the Chair of the EHRC, visited a host of projects that celebrated equality of opportunity for all; a film highlighting 'good practice' was shown at all events during the European Year.

RESPECT – promoting a more cohesive society

- 1.27 The UK Government has a clear strategy to build respect at a local level. Effective participation by local communities provides a benchmark of how things should be done. For example, the Government has strongly endorsed the approach set out by the Women and Work Commission in its report 'Shaping a Fairer Future'. This sets out a strong case for local solutions to the intractable problems of the gender pay gap and job segregation between men and women and made the case for the huge benefit to UK productivity of achieving the full participation of women in the workplace.
- 1.28 A key focus of the European Year was to raise awareness among the public about the importance of eradicating clichés, stereotypes and violence, and promoting good relations among all members of society, particularly young people. This approach was central to the events organised throughout the UK in 2007. As well as developing seminars, conferences and workshops on a regional basis, there were specific events aimed at young people too, using creative and dramatic techniques, such as 'theatre', to bring alive the issue of building a more cohesive society.
- 1.29 At each of the regional events considerable time was spent on engaging the audience in practical issues around human rights and the contribution they make to a stronger and more cohesive society in both social and economic terms. This interactive awareness session, based on using human rights to tackle everyday inequalities was delivered by partner organisation, the British Institute of Human Rights (see Chapter Two).

Chapter Two

UK PARTICIPATION

2.1 A strong programme of activity was organised in May 2007 and included the support and participation from the devolved administrations and reached all parts of the UK. As well as government-sponsored activity many Local Authorities and other organisations – such as the National Health Service – arranged complementary activities to spread as widely as possible the messages of the Year. The UK's commitment was further reflected in the strength of the delegation to the European 'Closing Event' held in Lisbon in November 2007. It was headed by Barbara Follett with representatives drawn from all sectors.

LAUNCH EVENT

2.2 To launch the 'Year' we hosted a conference in Manchester on 14 May 2007. As a curtain raiser, Meg Munn, the then Minister for Equalities, and the EHRC Chair Trevor Phillips, visited local projects showcasing work on equality and diversity in the city. Later they were joined by invited delegates from a wide range of organisations that included the public, private and voluntary and community sectors as well as a number of networks. The event was facilitated by Manchester media personality Tony Morris.

2.3 Meg Munn, Arlene McCarthy MEP and Trevor Phillips delivered keynote speeches and delegates had the opportunity to put questions in a 'Question Time' session to a diverse, Panel that included Trevor Phillips, Gail Porter (Government Office North West) Jane Touil, (a manager from Breakthrough, a UK organisation run by disabled people to remove barriers to inclusion and independence), Paul Martin (Chief Executive of the Lesbian & Gay Foundation) Riaz Ahmed (a leading figure on race relations in Oldham) and Tony Winter (former gangster turned Street Pastor in the city of Manchester). Below are some profound statements from the speakers.

- "Equal opportunity and human dignity are inextricably linked. However, laws will not necessarily make things better for people, so we have to work to inform people of their rights and showcase the benefits of diversity. Our work will only be at a close when we no longer need a Year of Equal Opportunities." **Arlene McCarthy.**

- “Equality issues should be issues for everyone because they matter fundamentally in society. In order to build trust in communities and combat extremism, we can be positive about diversity and nurturing a shared culture of respect between communities.” **Meg Munn.**
- “We face two major challenges today, with climate change and how we live with each other. How we live together raises many important issues, such as changing demographics, increased migration and new family structures. We have some of the most progressive equality laws in Europe, but the law on its own is not enough and much more must be done. The European Year of Equal Opportunities for All gives us all a chance to show the rest of Europe what we do well, and to talk about what we can all do better.” **Trevor Phillips.**
- “How will we persuade people that equality is liberating and should be embraced? “It is about promoting contact between disabled and able-bodied people. Disabled people often live parallel lives and disabled people are seen as a burden and a cost. Those barriers are not broken down if people are not educated with disabled people, eat with them, work with them, or socialise with them. It can be difficult for people to understand disabled people and their needs. Diversity is normal“. **Jane Touil, Breakthrough UK.**

REGIONAL ROAD SHOWS

- 2.4 The launch event was followed by a series of road shows that visited all areas of the country. At each event we asked the region what they were doing, or could be doing, to create a society at ease with its diversity. The road shows brought together local community and voluntary groups, advice and support experts, local councillors, businesses and employers, academics and researchers, as well as the general public. The road shows were facilitated by Juliet Alexander, Journalist and former TV Presenter.
- 2.5 Participants learned more about the European experience of creating greater equality and diversity. They had the opportunity to share ideas and good practice. They also participated in an interactive session that included case study scenarios, delivered by the British Institute of Human Rights. The session enabled delegates to share examples about how human rights principles can underpin inequality. Below we include some comments made during the road shows, to give a flavour of the discussion and debate across the regions.

- “European Structural Funds programmes are investing over £1.4 billion in this region to promote regeneration and growth. Connecting deprived communities and disadvantaged groups to opportunities and jobs is a cornerstone of our activity.” **Alison Biddulph, Director of European Secretary, Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber, speaking in Leeds on 21st June.**
- “There are stark differences in how public sector and private sector organisations embrace equality and diversity in their work practices. The new public duty legislation should apply to the private sector as well as the public sector.” **Leeds participant**
- “The equality review identified outdated attitudes and complacency as the key obstacles for an equal society. Positive action is needed to overcome some disadvantages, an equal society will not be created by treating everybody the same. Positive action should be made much easier and should be used across wider areas.”
Angela Mason, Head of the Women and Equality Unit, speaking in Gateshead June 28th.
- Anti-discrimination legislation should focus on changing wrong behaviour rather than solely on protecting people.
Participant in Gateshead.
- “Bristol is a very interesting city, enjoying high levels of affluence and yet also suffering from serious deprivation. The background to our society’s success is one of exploitation, discrimination, and unequal distribution of wealth. We have to face up to the consequent issues around equality, and the impetus for change has to come from within our community.” **Peter Hammond, Deputy Leader, Bristol City Council, speaking in Bristol on July 3rd.**
- “The region has a large population of migrant workers, and they can bring a number of benefits to the region. We are currently making a bid with the South West TUC to the RDA to set up a project creating a network for migrant workers, and in order to demonstrate the business case for having migrant workers in the South West.” **Paul Dunn, Chief Executive, Equality South West, speaking in Bristol.**
- “The EHRC should improve public understanding and perceptions of human rights and equality issues through targeted communication. The language and formats of communication should be easily understandable. Encourage private sector involvement, including SMEs, on the grounds of social accountability rather than a profit motive”. **Participants at Leicester event, July 17th**

- “The growth of new migrant communities and the introduction of government policies for the management of asylum seekers have raised difficult issues for local authorities and public services in sustaining new and emerging communities. Migration from EU accession countries is affecting a number of authorities across the north-west. Access to core services is emerging as a key issue”.
Jacquie O’Neill, Government Office for the North West, speaking in Blackburn on 12th July.
- “The public and private sectors need to work better together in terms of sharing best practice around diversity. For the private sector, there is a job to be done letting small and mediumsized enterprises (SMEs) know how they can benefit from diversity work and deliver some of the outcomes achieved by major employers”.
Tim Moore, North West TUC (Blackburn).
- “We currently have 9.4 million people over the age of 65, but by 2021 we will have 12.4 million people over 65. We need to keep people active for longer. Are our cities truly agefriendly? Do we have open spaces and adaptable housing allowing people to remain active in society? London has more people over 65 than Scotland and Wales, so has to organise itself accordingly.” **Baroness Sally Greengross, EHRC Commissioner, speaking in London July 19th.**
- “People distrust consultation because they feel they are not actually listened to; people need to see that implementation actually occurs.”
London participant.
- “Today we face new, unanticipated challenges, as a result of international terrorism and the associated suspicion and fear. Sadly, some people still feel that racial discrimination is a big feature of life in Britain and over half of the population feel that race relations have worsened over the last five years. It is a dangerous world but our job here is to make sure that, despite those dangers, we continue and expand what we have done”. **Barbara Follett, Minister for Equalities, speaking in Birmingham on 13th September.**
- “The needs of the most marginalised are not being addressed. Some voices are stronger than others and we are concerned about how to promote constructive consultation. Inclusion should be widened to the whole community.” **Birmingham participant.**

EU TRUCK TOUR

2.6 The regional road shows were complemented by our involvement in pan European activities for the year. We were delighted to support the truck tour that visited Liverpool and Glasgow in July and October respectively. To demonstrate their commitment to the EYEOA, Liverpool and Glasgow played host to the EU stop-discrimination truck which visited 21 countries and covered more than 18,000 kilometers with its message of “For Diversity – Against Discrimination”. The bright yellow 30-tonne vehicle with an in-built stage acted as an enormous mobile information and entertainment centre to inform citizens of their rights under EU and UK anti-discrimination legislation and promote the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. We were delighted to be able to contribute to the truck tour. We helped to facilitate media interviews and also provided the UK ‘Face of the Year’ – a minority ethnic Barrister, who had to overcome enormous hurdles in order to reach his goal.

SCOTLAND

- 2.7 To mark the Year, Scotland organised a series of events including an ‘opening’ reception, hosted by the then Minister for Communities, Rhona Brankin MSP. It was well attended with guests drawn from all sectors and sections of the community including colleagues from other countries.
- 2.8 In July the Highlands and Islands Equality Forum along with other partners hosted an event “Highlands R Us” as a celebration of Scotland’s Year of Highland Culture and the European Commission’s Year of Equal Opportunities for All. The event was designed to convey the message that Highland culture is diverse and that we should celebrate the richness of it. A large stage was erected in the centre of Inverness which allowed a rich and diverse range of performances to be delivered to a very enthusiastic audience.
- 2.9 In August, Seeing Red /I-C-Q Productions performed a series of free shows at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival entitled Diversity Dialogues. The production was sponsored by the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and others. The production was a collection of amusing anecdotes, celebratory stories and topical tales about diversity, equality and difference in our society.
- 2.10 A Conference hosted by Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Association for Mental Health in October, addressed issues such as stress and mental health, work based detection and prevention strategies, challenging discrimination and accommodating mental health in the workplace. The event was attended by a wide range of private and public sector organisations.

- 2.11 It was also a delight that Glasgow was one of the cities chosen to participate in the truck Tour during the month of October.
- 2.12 In November the Scottish Government hosted an event to discuss with stakeholders the Equalities Review undertaken on behalf of the UK Government and to consider the final report in the Scottish context. The event encouraged networking between stakeholders (including the Government and the Equality and Human Rights Commission), and reinforced relationships.
- 2.13 A stand-out contribution was the performance of an innovative theatre production, telling stories of individuals faced with discrimination during Edinburgh's Fringe Festival.

WALES

- 2.14 A launch event was hosted by Jane Hutt, the Welsh Assembly Government Minister with responsibility for equality. The event brought together public, private and voluntary sector organisations and community leaders and interest groups to encourage the widest possible participation. Other activities included a road show designed to raise awareness and highlight the services available to people which visited Pontypool Festival, Margam Balloon Festival, The Anglesey Show, Swansea Carnival, Cardiff Mardi Gras and Wrexham and Aberystwyth town centres. Informative and appealing merchandise was produced including mouse mats, t-shirts and bags to raise awareness of the European Year.
- 2.15 At a number of venues participants enjoyed street theatre performances using game show formats to highlight the impact of stereotyping and challenge prejudice.
- 2.16 The Welsh Assembly Government also joined with the Equality and Human Rights Commission to hold a schools poster competition as part of anti-bullying week in November 2007.
- 2.17 The closing event was hosted by the Welsh Assembly Government Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, Brian Gibbons to celebrate the achievements from the European Year. The event was facilitated by the highly regarded Paralympic athlete, Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson. Brian said: "The Year has been an important tool in raising the profile of the Welsh Assembly Government's work in promoting equality, diversity and human rights across Wales, the rest of the UK and Europe. The programme of events and activities were used to reach out to the general public to raise awareness of their rights, as well as help to develop stronger relationships with communities across Wales, in particular minority groups and individuals."

2.18 The European Year of Equal Opportunities for All has been a key instrument in promoting equality, diversity and human rights in Wales, both complementing and enhancing the strategic equality and human rights programme of the Welsh Assembly Government.

NORTHERN IRELAND

- 2.18 The Northern Ireland Equality Commission took advantage of the European Year to develop events that emphasised everyone's right to enjoy equal treatment and a life free from discrimination. The Commission's 7th Annual Conference was themed "Equality for All: A Focus on Rights and Representation" and attended by a broad spectrum of people from political leaders, including Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness, and senior policy makers to NGO's, trade union officials, employers and participants from the community and voluntary sectors. The event was also used to launch the Commission's statement on key inequalities in Northern Ireland.
- 2.19 The Commission established a series of partnerships with a number of external stakeholders to produce a wide range of activities, including an arts project with the education sector focusing on diversity and a schools-based photographic competition. Translated materials were produced and distributed for migrant workers and in addition informational stands at major events including the PRIDE festival.
- 2.20 The CBI Northern Ireland and Connect, publishers of Glosik – the first Polish magazine in Northern Ireland, joined forces to organise the Small Voice Business Awards Scheme, Members of the Polish Community in Northern Ireland nominated businesses and service providers who they believe have promoted good practice and encouraged integration.
- 2.21 The Commission dealt with the first employment case of Irish Travellers being discriminated in 2006. As a result of this the Commission developed a leaflet highlighting discrimination against Travellers and distributed this to employers setting out their obligations not to discriminate. 10,000 leaflets were printed and almost 4,500 were sent out to employers accompanied by a letter during Traveller Focus Week.
- 2.22 During Anti-Racist Workplace Week 2007 the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) launched a training DVD for officers and staff and community groups on the PSNI's Hate Crime Policy. This was backed up by a new range of posters highlighting the damage caused by all hate crime and reinforcing that all hate crime is illegal.

TAILORED EVENTS IN ENGLAND

2.23 We also hosted a further five ‘events aimed at specific groups and these were:

Focus on Youth

2.24 In October Equality South West organised an event entitled: ‘Focus on Youth’. Young people between the ages of 16 and 25 attended and discussed issues affecting their age group. Individuals working with young people and those with an interest in youth issues also attended. The event included four workshops around the key themes of: families and carers; independent living; mental health and improving life chances.

2.25 Following the workshops, equality issues were brought alive by a theatrical performance by the Garnett Foundation covering the different equality strands: race, disability, gender, religion or belief, age and sexual orientation. It was a stimulating and enjoyable production and afterwards, the audience had an opportunity to question the actors, who remained in character, about why they said or did certain things.

Local Government

2.26 In November the Local Government Association (LGA) hosted a conference in Birmingham aptly titled: ‘*The Challenge for Local Authorities*’. This provided Barbara Follett and Trevor Phillips with an excellent opportunity to engage council chiefs and local authority equality officers with the new Commission and its work. The event included a series of workshops for diversity practitioners within the LGA covering Community Cohesion, How Equality is linked to Human Rights, Equality and Procurement and How the Commission and Local Authorities can Work Together.

Voluntary and Community Sector

2.27 Birmingham was also the venue for a conference in November designed for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) around the theme of ‘Making Rights Real’. The event was arranged by the British Institute of Human Rights and was attended by Barbara Follett. It focused on increasing understanding in this important sector of key equality and human rights frameworks. Delegates were made aware of their rights and responsibilities and how key human rights principles underpin equality.

Women and Men Round Table

2.28 Barbara Follett led a thought provoking ‘Round Table’ discussion at the culmination of an event that concentrated on the issue of how women and men working together can achieve gender equality. The Men’s Health Forum played an integral part in this particular event. The discussions tackled a range of issues including health inequalities, family relationships in the 21st Century, violence and the reinforcement of gender inequalities through sport. The information drawn from this event will contribute to a research paper highlighting the gaps and challenges on engaging men and boys in gender equality issues. The research paper will also look at how the UK compares internationally.

Age

- 2.29 In December Help the Aged organised an event entitled ‘Age Equality – It’s Our Right’ to give a platform for older people. The seminar included a number of delegates unaffiliated to any particular organisation and they participated in the workshops with great enthusiasm. Jean Lambert MEP had spent a day shadowing pensioner Bernard Rickman in order to understand the challenges of Pensioners in their everyday lives. Both spoke passionately about their experiences. Fatima Janji from the Youth Parliament led an interactive session about stereotypes and illustrated what some older people thought about the Youth of today. These stereotypes were reflected back when the opinions of Youth on the elderly were revealed.
- 2.30 A highlight of the event was the entertainment provided by the dance troupe known as “Recycled Teenagers” comprising of men and women from all walks of life who had one thing in common, in that they were all Pensioners. They demonstrated that life goes on well beyond retirement age!
- 2.31 Delegates produced a **Wish List** for Government. This included a national plan for older people. They wanted a minister for older people; funding for intergenerational contact; a campaign to promote positive media portrayal of older people; the abolition of council tax for those over 65; and closure of the legal loophole to ensure that private and voluntary care home providers can come within the scope of the Human Rights Act.

2.32 As well as the above events, we are aware that there were also some *morally supported* activities too. These include for example a Diversity Conference hosted by the NHS that focused on Leadership and valuing diversity. One Local Authority embraced the Year, by hosting an evening conference to debate issues around mutual respect between people of different ages, ethnicities, faiths, gender, disabilities and sexuality. Another major event during the Year was the bicentenary of the 1807 Act that was introduced to abolish the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade. The Bicentenary coupled with the EYEOA provided a platform to mark these two important milestones simultaneously.

UK CLOSING EVENT, HOUSE OF COMMONS: 13TH DECEMBER 2007

2.33 The event was hosted by Barbara Follett and designed to ‘celebrate’ our contribution and achievements throughout the Year. The House of Commons provided the ideal setting for the celebration which was well attended by guests, invited to mark their respective contribution to the Year and/or to recognise the part they played in providing equality of opportunity through community and self-help projects. Invited guests included the UK ‘Face of the Year’, David Neita, and the two journalists who had won awards under the “For Diversity Against Discrimination” campaign: Mary O’Hara and William Briggs. Speakers included: Barbara Follett, Baroness Prosser (EHRC Deputy Chair) and Belinda Pyke, Director for Equality at the European Commission, as well as Janice Shersby, Director of the Government Equalities Office.

2.34 Delegates received a copy of our booklet “Valuing Diversity” containing a number of examples of best practice initiatives and a DVD showcasing equality projects involving a variety of organisations and individuals with commentary from Barbara Follett and Trevor Phillips.

2.35 To view the pictures from the House of Commons event, please visit:
<http://tinyurl.com/3bnh3k>

Chapter Three

CELEBRATING THE BEST AND THE LEGACY OF THE YEAR

- 3.1 The UK has some of the most progressive equality laws in Europe, but the law on its own is not enough, and much more needs to be done to embed equal opportunities for all throughout our society. We are proud of the excellent work being carried out by individuals and organisations – the real equality champions – to raise awareness around the issues of discrimination and to offer practical support to disadvantaged groups and to open up a range of opportunities to those previously excluded.
- 3.2 An important key element of the UK's contribution to the European Year has been to celebrate the achievements of these equality champions. We spread the word about good practice and innovative ideas through a variety of means. These include: a DVD shown at all events, highlighting equality projects by a variety of organisations and individuals with commentary from Barbara Follett and Trevor Phillips. In addition, a booklet entitled "Valuing Diversity" was published that included some powerful examples of the work being done to champion equality of opportunity for all in the UK. Both the DVD and the booklet have been distributed to a wide range of people and organisations throughout the UK. The booklet is also accessible from public sector websites including both local and central government.
- 3.3 A significant achievement of The European Year of Equal Opportunities for All has been to spread awareness of the rights of individual citizens. This objective will continue and will be backed by information, data and case studies developed to support the UK's activities to mark the Year. Two striking examples are the 'Valuing Diversity' booklet and the DVD mentioned above. Both were prepared because the UK National Implementing Body (NIB) wanted to hear from individuals that had faced discrimination at first hand; how they dealt with it successfully; and what lessons could be learnt from their respective experiences. As well as both items being useful tools for those working in the equality and diversity arena, developing them had provided an opportunity for individuals from within the community to have a voice and be heard at both national and local levels. The booklet provides a legacy for the work of the UK NIB and can be downloaded from the EHRC website:
www.equalityhumanrights.com

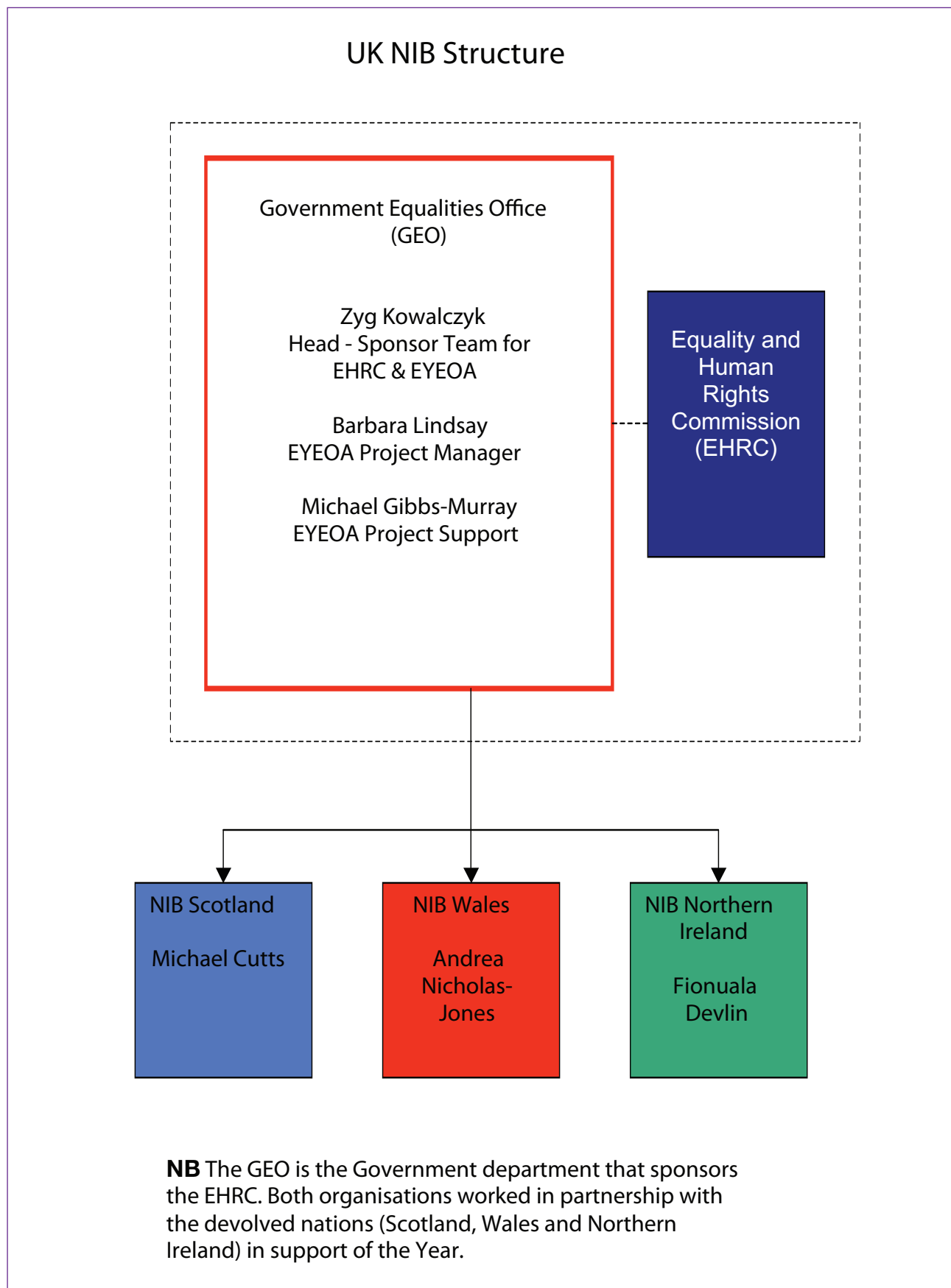
- 3.4 It is worth noting here, that in Northern Ireland, the Equality Commission used the Year to develop a number of publications for raising awareness. In one scheme the Commission worked with the Children’s Law Centre to develop a new leaflet in the well-known “Know Your Rights....about discrimination” series, focusing on young people. Around 30,000 copies were disseminated during the year. The Centre’s panel of young people participated in a consultation exercise and the publication has now been mailed to 2,700 schools, youth groups and advisory organisations across Northern Ireland.
- 3.5 A second project entitled ‘You me and everyone too’ was aimed at primary school children and based upon developing understanding through creative writing, workshops and the creative design of a puppet theatre. It involved the children writing a storyboard, making puppets and learning puppetry skills to develop a performance. The process has been documented and created into a DVD, which has been distributed to schools.
- 3.6 Similarly, Wales produced a DVD that captured scenarios/case studies from the various events which could then be used as a training tool for diversity practitioners. This was also useful in terms of policy development and for spreading good practice.

Chapter Four

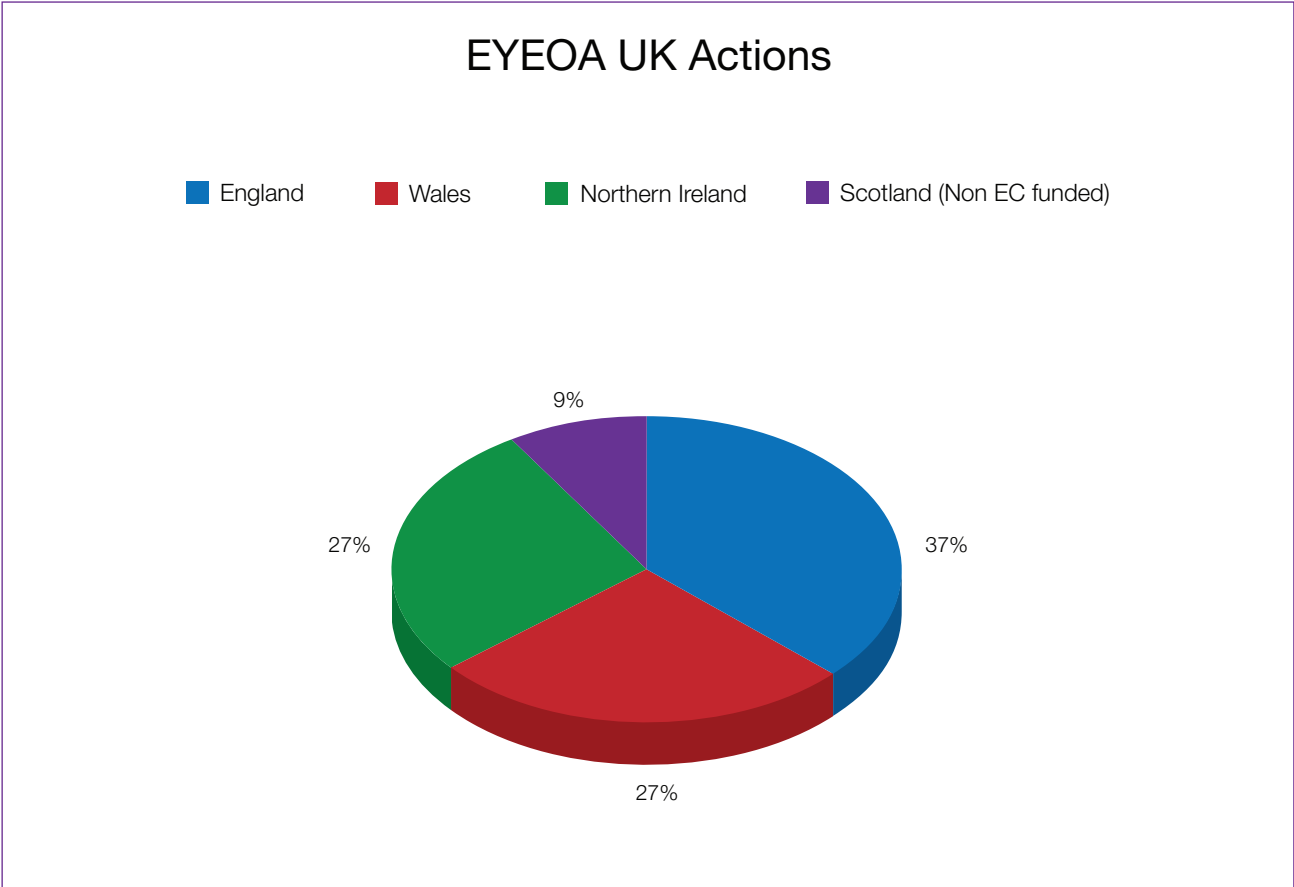
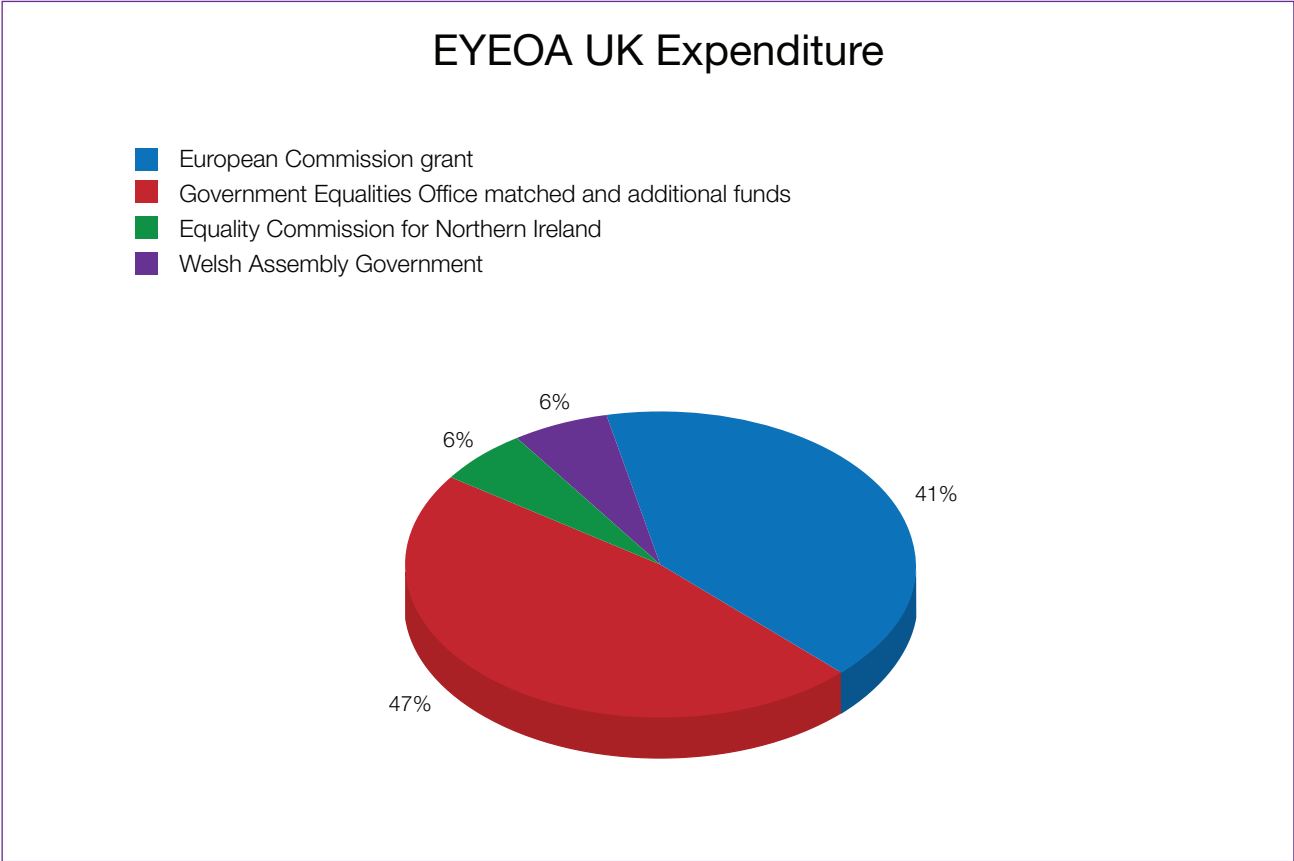
CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Events during the Year have proved effective for the long-term development of the EHRC. Important networks have been developed, awareness of its work and responsibilities raised among key stakeholders, community groups and individuals and a very useful bank of data, information and case studies generated to support its objective of promulgating best practice in the fields of equality and human rights.
- 4.2 Feedback from delegates at our efforts to mark the Year, reported an increased understanding of how the UK Human Rights Act is an intrinsic part of anti-discrimination; one that brings individuals together and how this changed their thinking about equality and diversity issues. In addition, we learned from delegates that key areas of knowledge were enhanced, in particular legislation and its applications as well as the role of the new Commission.
- 4.3 Commenting on the **four Rs**, Barbara Follett said that these should be supplemented by a fifth one ie ‘Responsibility’ as she firmly believes that we all have a responsibility as individuals to contribute to creating a society that’s at ease with its diversity.
- 4.4 We are pleased that the UK’s participation and lessons learned will contribute positively to the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (EYID). We are already in touch with colleagues in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, who along with EUCLID (an international information network for the arts and cultural sectors based in Liverpool) will be taking this work forward. The objective of the 2008 campaign has many synergies with the work we have achieved in 2007. Under the slogan “Together in Diversity” the campaign will highlight the contribution different cultures make to EU member states’ heritage and way of life, recognizing that intercultural dialogue is essential for learning to live together in harmony.
- 4.5 The aim is to achieve sustainability for current and future projects and achieve a long lasting legacy for the excellent contributions made by so many communities, groups and individuals in 2007.
- 4.6 In summary, much has been learned about how to develop engagement with communities and how to spread awareness of the benefits of valuing diversity through innovative and entertaining programmes. The Year has proved to be both useful and beneficial to the public, private and voluntary and community sectors as well as to a host of networks and other groups right across the UK.

Appendix A



Appendix B



We will consider any requests for alternative formats that may be required.
Please send your request to:

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Eland House
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Telephone: 020 7944 9400

If you have speech or hearing difficulties, you can contact us by textphone
on 020 7944 0600

The lines are open Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

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31 March 2008