

Progress Towards Equality

Summary Conference Report, 2008



Edinburgh

Belfast

Cardiff

Manchester

London



What is Progress Towards Equality?

Progress Towards Equality was a project funded by the European Commission, through the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – Progress (2007 – 2013).

The project was the work of a broad consortium of advice sector organisations: Advice Services Alliance (Advicenow), AdviceUK, AdviceNI, Citizens Advice, Citizens Advice Scotland, Citizens Advice Cymru, Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, Law Centres Federation and the British Institute of Human Rights.

The project ran from November 2007 to December 2008. It aimed to develop anti-discrimination and human rights expertise, capacity and awareness among advisers and the general public through:

- Bringing advice organisations together to exchange experience and identify local needs
- Free national and regional conferences to help advisers recognise and deal with discrimination problems
- A user-friendly website for the public 'Is that discrimination' on www.isthatdiscrimination.org.uk
- A range of public information materials including a flyer and magazines to inform people about their rights
- Building an evidence base to inform national Equality Commissions, national governments, and national funders of legal advice.

This programme is supported by the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – Progress (2007 – 2013).

The Commission is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained in this report and this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

For more information see:
http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html

Introduction and background

The EC Framework Directive 2007/8 and other EC equality directives have been transposed into UK domestic legislation through a variety of equality acts and regulations. In addition the UK has introduced additional measures to promote equality through the provision of additional positive equality public duties and the Human Rights Act.

Despite this long history of equality and anti-discrimination rights, and ten years on from the domestic Human Rights Act in the United Kingdom, research available at the start of this project demonstrated that public awareness of anti-discrimination and human rights and problem resolution is low and for a variety of reasons, capacity is inhibited among advice organisations to support individuals to resolve discrimination, equality and human rights problems.

The five conferences – in Belfast, Edinburgh, Cardiff, London and Manchester – aimed to identify and articulate these issues, as well as promote awareness and resources, and 11 key recommendations for policy makers, funders and advice givers have been identified.

We hope policy makers, funders and advice givers will respond positively to the recommendations and will take action to respond. In doing so we believe, that these recommendations would better help support the realisation of the provisions on access to justice such as those found in Article 9 of Framework Directive 2000/78.

Only by responding to the recommendations in this report will the Framework Directive's words be fully translated from anti-discrimination measures to improved life chances, equality and human rights in practice.

A full conference report can be found at www.isthatdiscrimination.org.uk, and on partners' individual websites.

Key recommendations

Recommendations for policymakers and funders

- 1** The EU, national governments, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) must tackle the inadequate and unequal access to specialist discrimination advice through capacity building, promoting effective partnerships, and providing higher levels of sustained funding. This should include, but not be limited to, strategies for access to justice and legal aid for people with all types of discrimination problems.
- 2** The EHRC, the ECNI and advice sector should work together to develop a training strategy which ensures that information providers, generalist advisers and specialist advisers have the skills and knowledge they need to provide effective discrimination and human rights advice.
- 3** The EU, EHRC, ECNI, and other funders of discrimination advice, should support integrated packages of advice and public legal education which enhance people's awareness and their ability to deal with discrimination problems they encounter by enabling them to take action and seek appropriate advice.
- 4** National governments and the EHRC and the ECNI should work in partnership with the advice sector to reduce the particular risks clients face in pursuing non-employment discrimination cases through the courts.
- 5** The EHRC and the ECNI should recognise the difference that local advice and enforcement makes to people's lives, and to the effective promotion of equality.
- 6** The UK government should ensure the Equality Bill is passed and provides a simpler, stronger framework for equality. The NI Executive should also ensure that a single Equality Act is passed in NI.



Recommendations for advice agencies

- 7** Advice providers locally and nationally should highlight the lack of access to justice for people with discrimination and human rights problems.
- 8** Advice agencies should build effective networks on discrimination advice, deepening their work with each other and their relationships with equality organisations and communities: through engagement and through public legal education.
- 9** Advice providers should aim to provide accessible and practical information to help their clients understand and use human rights to challenge their situations. Advice organisations need to develop their understanding of and training on how to use human rights law to maximum effect in advice provision.
- 10** Advice agencies need to demonstrate – through social policy and effective use of evidence – how discrimination advice and casework contribute to social change and realisation of human rights.
- 11** Advice organisations should promote diversity and equality within their own organisations, and campaign for judicial diversity.



Is that discrimination? Public information materials

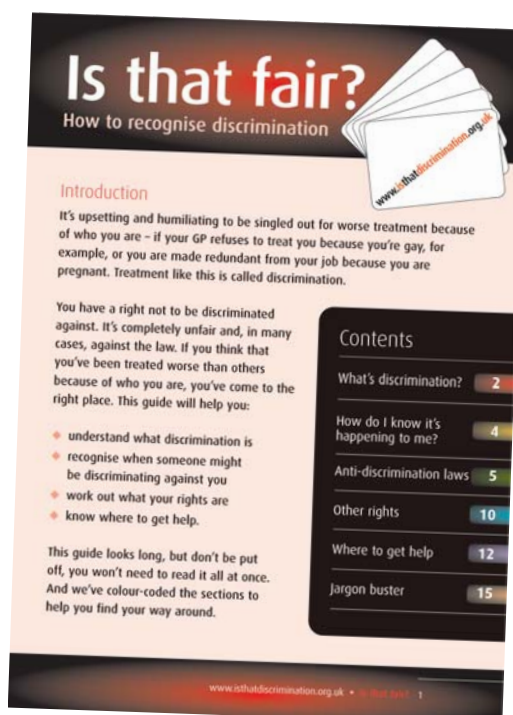
The www.isthatdiscrimination.org.uk website is the public face of the Progress Towards Equality project. It is intended to raise awareness of discrimination and human rights issues and give people the confidence, knowledge and skills to take action.

The website includes the following resources:

- **'Sort it!' magazine** – an awareness raising magazine designed to attract the attention of those who might not realise they are being discriminated against or think they just have to put up with it
- **'Is that fair? How to recognise discrimination' guide**
- **'You don't have to put up with it. How to deal with discrimination' guide**
- **Got a problem?** – interactive problem page where users can get advice on their situation from our agony uncle discrimination lawyer
- **Sound files** where users can listen to others with a discrimination problem

Advice agencies, and other public facing agencies, can access these materials at www.isthatdiscrimination.org.uk

Hard copies are available from partner organisations.



The European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – Progress

This programme is supported by the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – Progress (2007 – 2013).

The Decision no 1672/2006 establishing a Community programme for employment and social solidarity – PROGRESS was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council on 24 October 2006 and published in the OJ on 15 November 2006. Its overall aim is to support financially the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area as set out in the social Agenda and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these fields.

Progress' mission is to strengthen the EU contribution in support of Member States' commitments and efforts to create more and better jobs and to build a more cohesive society.

To that effect, PROGRESS:

- provides analysis and policy advice on PROGRESS policy areas;
- monitors and reports on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in PROGRESS policy areas;
- promotes policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities;
- relays the views of the stakeholders and society at large

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27m, EFTA-EEA, Croatia, Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia and EU candidate countries and Serbia.

For more information see: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html

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