

**Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP  
Minister for Women and Equalities/Secretary of State for International  
Trade**Sanctuary Buildings  
16-20 Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT  
United Kingdom26<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Dear Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP,

Equally Ours is the national network of organisations working to make equality and human rights a reality in people's lives. Our approach is one of constructive dialogue with the Government and across Parliament, identifying workable solutions and where necessary challenging and holding decision-makers to account.

We are writing to you because the appointment of David Goodhart to the Board of the EHRC (the Commission) raises serious concerns about the effectiveness of the appointments process used and, more crucially, has eroded public trust in the UK Government's commitment to race equality.

Against the well-documented backdrop of decreased public trust in government overall, the appointment rubs salt into the wounds of ethnic minority communities harmed by the disproportionate impact of Covid-19, the Windrush scandal and the hostile environment.

Our concerns are not, as some have suggested, about a clash of left and right. Nor about not recognising the need to have different perspectives on the Commission.

They are about the fact that Mr Goodhart has made public statements that directly contradict the values and legal duties of the Commission.<sup>1</sup> For example, the Commission is currently engaged in enforcement action to prevent a recurrence of the serious effects of the hostile environment policies on the Windrush generation and their descendants<sup>2</sup>, a connection that Mr Goodhart has already denied exists<sup>3</sup>. Mr Goodhart's comments often

---

<sup>1</sup> The Commission's General duty is set out in [s.3 of the Equality Act 2006](#), with further detailed duties set out in [sections 8-12](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/ymchwiliadau-ac-archwiliadau/assessment-hostile-environment-policies>

<sup>3</sup> <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/The-Border-Audit.pdf> in which he characterises the impact as "anomalies" caused by "over-zealous application" of the hostile environment and not the policy itself.

## Equality and human rights for us all

Equally Ours brings together people and organisations working across equality, human rights and social justice to make a reality of these in everyone's lives. Equally Ours is a registered charity (number 1135357) and registered as a company (number 06464749).

deny or underplay the very thing that parliament established the Commission to combat - structural inequality that requires strategic action.<sup>4</sup>

Mr Goodhart has recently also advocated that, 'The Home Office should move more decisively to remove people before they lodge a judicial review'<sup>5</sup> i.e., before they can exercise their lawful access to justice rights.

Such views inevitably cast doubt on any individual's ability to act independently and impartially when appointed to the Board of the body whose overarching duty is the development of a society in which there is respect for equality and human rights.<sup>6</sup>

While some action is now being taken, the UK Government has been slow to act on the disproportionate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on black and minority ethnic people. It has not yet risen to the challenge rightly set by the Black Lives Matter movement and many others including Equally Ours and our members to act on the structural inequalities that enabled that impact, and that Michael Gove recognised in his June 2020 speech<sup>7</sup>. It has not delivered the promises of action on its own race disparity audit, conducted more than two years ago.<sup>8</sup>

At a time when disproportionate numbers of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people have died while protecting others from Covid-19, and thousands of community groups and organisations across the country are working flat out to support the Covid-19 response, the appointment further undermines trust of communities in Government.

It goes against the recommendation in the government's first Quarterly report on progress to address COVID-19 health inequalities<sup>9</sup> that 'further work is needed to ... reduce fear and build confidence among ethnic minority people'.

Our concerns are also about the integrity of the public appointments process and the fact that the Government has so far failed to implement key recommendations of the ICC Sub-Committee on Accreditation to ensure the appointments process promotes transparent

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://policyexchange.org.uk/facts-vs-feelings-in-the-blm-debate/>, in which Mr Goodhart characterises disadvantage faced by black people as "inner city problems" of knife crime, "fatherless families" and an "anti-educational" culture with a "victim culture" that uses racism "as an excuse for any setback."

<sup>5</sup> <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/The-Border-Audit.pdf>, at p. 7

<sup>6</sup> The EHRC's general duty under s. 3 of the Equality Act 2006

<sup>7</sup> <https://reaction.life/michael-gove-speech-the-privilege-of-public-service/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.obv.org.uk/news-blogs/pm-urgently-needs-covid-19-race-equality-strategy>

<sup>9</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/928646/First\\_Covid\\_Disparities\\_report\\_to\\_PM\\_Health\\_Secretary\\_Final\\_22-10-20.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/928646/First_Covid_Disparities_report_to_PM_Health_Secretary_Final_22-10-20.pdf) Page 8, recommendation 13.



merit-based selection, putting at risk the forthcoming re-accreditation of the EHRC as an 'A' status national human rights institution.<sup>10</sup>

We note also the recent concerns raised by Rt Hon Peter Riddell CBE, the Commissioner for Public Appointments, about risks around the politicisation of appointments.<sup>11</sup> Such concerns make it all the more important that the UK Government shows its commitment to maintaining a strong, independent national equality body and national human rights institution.

We and many others have long been calling for the UK Government to adopt a comprehensive race equality strategy. We re-iterate this call and recommend that it includes actions to rebuild trust and demonstrate that the Government is taking seriously its commitments to race discrimination and equality.

We call on you to protect the independence of the Commission and its 'A' status, including by introducing a statutory appointment process and increased transparency as required by the ICC Sub-Committee on Accreditation.

We would welcome a meeting to discuss our concerns.

Yours sincerely,  
Ali  
Ali Harris  
Chief Executive Officer

Cc: Rebecca Hilsenrath, Chief Executive Officer, Equality and Human Rights Commission

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://nhri.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/GANHRIAccreditation/Documents/SCA%20FINAL%20REPORT%20-%20NOVEMBER%202015-English.pdf> (pp18-19)

<sup>11</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/932513/Peter\\_Riddell\\_to\\_Lord\\_Evans.docx.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/932513/Peter_Riddell_to_Lord_Evans.docx.pdf)



**Signed by:**

**Members**

brap  
British Institute of Human Rights  
Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE)  
Citizens Advice  
Disability Rights UK  
Discrimination Law Association  
End Violence Against Women Campaign  
Equality Trust  
Fair Play South West  
Fawcett Society  
Friends, Families and Travellers  
Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES)  
Humanists UK  
Law Centres Network  
Maternity Action  
Mind  
National AIDS Trust  
National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO)  
Race on the Agenda (ROTA)  
Royal National Institute of Blind People  
RNID  
Runnymede Trust  
Security Women  
Scope  
SignHealth  
Stonewall  
Trades Union Congress (TUC)  
Traveller Movement  
UKREN (UK Race in Europe Network)  
UNISON  
Women's Budget Group  
Women's Resource Centre

**Associates**

EqualiTeach  
FiLiA  
GIRES  
Just Fair  
Liberty