

I am writing in response to your letter of 30 June to Peter Housden requesting sight of the Equality Impact Assessments undertaken so far to support proposals for 2010/11 budget reductions. Your request has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I can confirm that Communities and Local Government (CLG) does not hold full Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) for budget reductions in 2010-11. However, I am able to provide information on our consideration of equalities issues relating to the reductions announced on 24 May.

Since coming to office the Government has made clear that its most urgent priority is to tackle the UK's budget deficit in order to restore confidence in our economy and support the recovery. CLG is urgently reviewing its current programmes and seeking efficiencies in 2010-11 where possible, as well as contributing to the Spending Review which will set future Departmental budgets.

As you are aware, there is a legal requirement for all public bodies to have due regard to a number of matters relating to equality, and to consider the impact of their policies on grounds of gender, race and disability. CLG has given consideration to equality issues related to budget reductions and, in particular, has considered, alongside other Government departments, the situations where a full EqIA will be needed. An EqIA is a tool to assist public authorities with assessing the impact, or likely impact of their policies and practices on different groups, in particular, women, people from ethnic minorities and disabled people. It assists authorities with identifying adverse outcomes and steps that can be taken to mitigate adverse effects. EqIAs help public authorities meet the requirements of their general and specific equality duties and identify active steps they can take to promote equality. The Department's programme to mainstream equalities into its day-to-day work has included EqIA training workshops, rapid development workshops for senior civil servants and a web based toolkit and guidance for policymakers accessed through the department's intranet site.

On 24 May 2010 the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Chief Secretary to the Treasury announced the first step in tackling the deficit, setting out how the Government intends to save over £6 billion from spending in 2010-11. Included in that savings package were a number of CLG programmes, and there was an expectation that savings of over £1 billion would be delivered by local government.

In making these 2010-11 budget reductions, the Government has tried to ensure that as far as possible no authority is treated unfairly when compared to other similar authorities. CLG's overall conclusion is that the way in which the necessary budget reductions will be implemented will not cause significant unintended bias against any equality target group. As most CLG grant is not ringfenced, it will normally be for local authorities to make decisions on the impact of these reductions on their area based on their own assessment of local needs and circumstances. Local authorities, like government departments, are legally required to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful racial and gender discrimination and discrimination on grounds of disability, and promote equality of opportunity between different racial groups, between men and women and between disabled persons and other persons.

As it is for local authorities to make the reductions, we therefore consider that there are likely to be no significant equality issues which require the preparation of a full

EqIA by CLG on the 24 May budget reductions. Although CLG did not produce a full EqIA, it did give consideration to equalities issues and carried out an equality impact screening assessment which was shared with other Departments. Although not covered by your request, I attach this assessment for your information. CLG will reassess this as part of future funding decisions should any equality issues be brought to light. This document also refers (on p.4) to two others which officials took into account when they assessed equalities issues: an EqIA screening for the Working Neighbourhood Fund, and an impact assessment for Housing and Planning Delivery Grant. The former is attached and the latter is available at:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/523101.pdf>

Communities and Local Government is also preparing a contribution to the current Spending Review, which will set future budgets after March 2011. In doing this, we have followed guidance issued by the Government Equalities Office in identifying where more detailed assessments of equalities impacts may be needed for our proposals. We will complete EqIAs on these areas over the summer and publish them in due course.