



Joint Committee on Human Rights

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From Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP, Chair

David Isaac
Chair, Equality and Human Rights Commission
Fleetbank House
2-6 Salisbury Square
London EC4Y 8JX

7 December 2016

Dear David,

Equality Advisory Support Service

I attach correspondence between the Joint Committee on Human Rights and the Government concerning the award of the contract for the Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS) to G4S; this includes a memorandum from the Government. I also enclose a letter dated 30 November which we have received from Liberty and the law firm Law Centres Network, dealing with the same issue.

The Committee has now had an opportunity to consider this matter. It notes that G4S assumed responsibility for the EASS helpline on 1 October, and that the Equality and Human Rights Commission has a representative on the helpline's management board, and is therefore involved in the management and supervision of the new service.

The Committee would be grateful to receive written evidence from the Commission containing an assessment of how the transition to the new contractor for EASS has gone and how effectively the helpline is now being run. It would be useful to know what information the Commission has been provided with on the performance of the service and what future steps it plans to take to monitor this.

We note the comment in the letter of 30 November from Liberty and LCN that they are concerned about:

[...] the quality of the advice provided by G4S employees, the quality of the training given to its staff, the extent of referral networks set up, whether there is an evidence of a loss of trust in the service, and the extent to which these factors have been affected by the 25% funding cut to the service.

We would be happy to receive the Commission's comments on any of these matters.

Finally, in the light of the representations the Committee has received from Liberty and others on the Government's conduct of the procurement exercise for the new service, it would be helpful also to receive the Commission's views on this matter also, along with any suggestions it may wish to make as to how future such exercises might be conducted.

We would be grateful to receive a response to this request, if possible, by Monday 23 January 2017.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a vertical line at the beginning.

Rt Hon Harriet Harman
Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights