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Our ref: 476Buchanan

Date: 24/12/2018

Dear Mr Buchanan,

### **Appointment of Commissioners and Strategic Plan consultation**

Thank you for your letters of 8 and 23 November to our Chair, David Isaac. David has asked me to reply on his behalf.

#### **Appointment of Commissioners**

In your most recent letter you offered to give a presentation to our Commissioners. I am afraid the agenda for Board meetings is under significant pressure and there is no immediate time available on it. However, if you could let us know the specific topic you would like to discuss we can identify the most appropriate officer to attend a meeting with you.

As you noted in your letter of 8 November, the Board of the EHRC currently comprises thirteen Commissioners (including the Chair and the Chief Executive Officer, the latter a Commissioner *ex officio*), of whom nine are women.

Commissioners are appointed by the Secretary of State for Women and Equalities. The Government Equalities Office conducts the appointments process on her behalf. The Equality Act 2006 requires the Secretary of State to appoint an individual as a Commissioner only on the basis that the individual has experience or knowledge relating to discrimination and/or human rights, or

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is suitable for appointment for some other special reason. Commissioners are appointed in a personal capacity and not as representatives of any group or interest.

The appointments process for Commissioners is undertaken in accordance with detailed guidance from the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The Code of Practice issued by OCPA requires selection based on merit, open and transparent processes, and an element of independent scrutiny.

Opportunities to apply for appointment as an EHRC Commissioner are advertised on the public appointments website:

<https://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/>

No appointment process for EHRC Commissioners is currently open.

## **Strategic Plan**

Thank you for your response to the consultation on our Strategic Plan 2019-22. As I know you appreciate, this is based on evidence including from our triennial [\*Is Britain Fairer? report\*](#) setting out the state of equality and human rights in Britain, as well as extensive stakeholder and public consultation. You will also be aware that we need to make some difficult choices in focusing on a smaller number of strategic outcomes, following recommendations from Government and other stakeholders.

I have passed the information you have provided about key issues facing men and boys to the relevant team, and this will be reflected in our analysis of responses to the consultation.

In your letter of 23 November you expressed concern about the proportion of the EHRC's budget spent on staff costs. All of our spending (including staff costs) is in furtherance of our remit to protect and promote equality and human rights.

You also expressed concern that the Commission's work does not give sufficient focus to the issues facing men and boys. You may be interested to

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note some recent examples of our work in this area:

- We commissioned a [short film](#) for International Men's Day this year highlighting the benefits to individuals and employers of enabling fathers to take time off or work flexibly in order to spend time with their children.
- As part of our Working Forward project to promote good equality practice among employers, we have carried out a significant amount of work in relation to fathers' experience of the workplace. We also produced a guide for fathers (see our [Father's Guide](#)) to use with their employers when going on paternity leave or thinking about shared parental leave.
- You may also be interested to see our Pay Gaps strategy report (2017) which calls for improvements for fathers. (See our [Pay Gaps Strategy](#)).
- The EHRC is not currently working on the specific issue of male circumcision. In general terms, we work to strengthen the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including children's rights to be heard, and to have their best interests considered in all matters affecting them.

Parliament has given the EHRC responsibilities to assess and report on the UK's progress in realising the human rights in the international treaties it has ratified. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is the international human rights treaty that focuses specifically on equality between women and men in all areas of life. By ratifying the treaty, the UK committed to taking steps to end discrimination against women in all forms. Our extensive evidence-base shows that the rights of women and girls are under threat across a range of areas of life (see our latest [CEDAW report](#)), and equality for women and girls has not been achieved in practice. There is therefore clear evidence to show the continued need to focus on women's equality and human rights.

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Yours sincerely,



**Rebecca Hilsenrath**

Chief Executive

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