

## Overarching principles – Framework Document

Our society and our economy are strongest when everyone is treated with dignity and respect, and we all have the opportunity to succeed. In the current economic climate it is more important than ever that we draw on the talents of all, whilst safeguarding those in the most vulnerable situations.

The Government is committed to the EHRC being a strong, effective and independent equalities and human rights body. And the Government is committed to retaining the EHRC's status as an 'A'-rated National Human Rights Institution.

The Government and the EHRC have worked together to agree special adaptations to the public expenditure framework to ensure the EHRC's continuing independence. This framework, known as the 'Framework Document', sets out the broad framework within which DCMS and the EHRC will operate, and the relationship the EHRC will have with DCMS as the sponsor department. It does not confer any legal powers or responsibilities.

The safeguards in the Equality Act 2006<sup>i</sup> and this Framework Document together ensure that the EHRC is able to exercise its important functions independently of Government. Complementing this, the EHRC is committed to ensuring that it is suitably rigorous in pursuit of efficiency, effectiveness, and good governance in pursuit of its statutory functions, and in its use of public funds.

The EHRC retains overall accountability to Parliament through Ministers, as is standard in Parliamentary systems where Ministers are accountable to Parliament. The EHRC also retains accountability to Parliament for expenditure of public funds via the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons.

In addition Ministers are committed to facilitating and supporting work to further strengthen the EHRC's relationship with Parliament, to raise the profile and transparency of the EHRC's work with Parliament. For example, the Chair of Joint Committee on Human Rights has signalled the Committee's intention to work with the EHRC to develop a protocol of collaborative working and strategies to improve accountability, and Ministers have made clear their support for the Committee's plans. Officials are also discussing arrangements whereby the EHRC will answer certain Parliamentary Questions directly in correspondence rather than through the Minister.

These strategies will support the EHRC in its continuing commitment to being an exemplar National Human Rights Institution.

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<sup>i</sup> Which states that "*The Secretary of State shall have regard to the desirability of ensuring that the Commission is under as few constraints as reasonably possible in determining — (a) its activities, (b) its timetables, and (c) its priorities.*"