

**April 2010**



## **MiNet Response to EHRC Single Equality Bill Guidance for Employers**

### **About MiNet**

MiNet (Minority Ethnic Network) is London's only Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) regional Third Sector network. Set up to promote and support the effective engagement, contribution and influence of the BAME Third Sector as partners in regional policy development and implementation for the benefit of the diverse communities across London. Since 2002, Race on the Agenda (ROTA) has hosted MiNet and also remains to be its accountable body.

### **Presentation, Accessibility and Usability**

This short response pays particular emphasis to the section 1.7 and 1.8 relating to harassment and victimisation. The focus on these sections is largely indicative of the service area of the organisations who responded and therefore most pertinent to the groups they represent. Nevertheless, many of the comments are likely to be relevant for other chapters within the guidance as they relate mainly to accessibility more than content.

Respondents felt that the present content of the guidance is well detailed, in a logical format and somewhat comprehensive. A number of suggestions were however made to ensure the guidance is more accessible. It was felt that this can be improved by including further examples and creating links to relevant information. These points are discussed further below.

There are some general areas which require minor corrections and amendments for consistency, which we expect will be altered at later stages of proof reading.

Examples of this would include the following:

The paragraph on page 51 which starts, “*An employee’s performance has recently got worse*” is an example and should be highlighted as such to be consistent with the rest of the document and also for ease of understanding.

The first example provided on page 46 discusses direct discrimination in the situation of a carer and how a person will be protected on these grounds. It may be useful to mention here that cases can also be made on multiple grounds, if possible, in the same scenario. And then a link provided to information within the relevant document on multiple discrimination.

Avoiding repeating information close together may also be unnecessary. On page 56, for instance, there is the following sentence: Nor does the unwanted behaviour have to be specifically aimed at the person *who finds it violates their dignity or creates for them an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment*. The information in italics is made redundant as this point is made further up the page. Therefore the sentence may be clearer and less repetitive if replaced with something similar to: “Nor does the unwanted behaviour have to be specifically aimed at the person who has made a case for harassment”.

It was felt that the guidance can be improved by developing the document in the anticipation that many people may only access the one section which they feel is most relevant. Therefore links to other key material within the document need to be made.

For example, the following links may improve reader satisfaction:

On page 56 & 59 links could be created to highlight which organisations are covered under the Equality Act for those who are searching through this section only.

On page 56 & 59 links could be created to the words protected characteristic so readers can find out quickly what these are.

On page 56 & 59 there could be linked information to differentiate harassment and victimisation as people can often confuse the two.

The following resources do this very well and have been recommended:

<http://www.acas.org.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=1076>

<http://www.publiclawproject.org.uk/downloads/HowPubLawHelpMe.pdf>

The following link highlights a document which has good usability with a case study and key points which the employees guidance may benefit from:

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/fairer-britain/good-relations/gypsies-and-travellers-simple-solutions-for-living-together/>

For example, the method of highlighting certain text could benefit the examples which are provided in section 1.7 on page 56, 57 and 58. In section 1.7 three categories are provided as to what constitutes unwanted behaviour against the Equality Act. As these categories are interspersed with a number of contained examples, without the categories being put into segments, it was felt that this makes it more complicated for the reader to follow. Particularly if they are not familiar with the subject. Therefore highlighting the three categories which constitute unwanted behaviours to be against the Equality Act may improve this.

To improve accessibility it was also felt that further examples could be provided for each of the protected characteristics where presently only one or two examples are offered. For instance, on page 56, an example is provided at the foot of the page about an employee with a disabled child. Respondents felt that where necessary a link should be provided with examples for each protected characteristic, using the same scenario to avoid additional work.

Some respondents felt that the example provided on page 57, may be slightly contentious and also move from one extreme to another which is unrealistic. Therefore a different example or two scenarios may be beneficial.

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