

ROTA Winning the Race Coalition – Action Group

Minutes

11.00 – 13:30 am, 8th September 2009, ROTA, Waterloo

Present

Theo Gavrielides (TG)	ROTA
Pavan Dhaliwal (PD)	ROTA
Ewan Kennedy (EK)	ROTA
Karen Chouhan(KC)	Equanomics and 1990 Trust
Jennie McShannon (JM)	Federation of Irish Societies
Adelina Chalmers (AC)	Menter
Arjuman Kazmi (AK)	Voice4Change England
Rupert Daniel (RD)	Black Network for the South West (joined at 12:15)
Anthony Salla (AS)	MINET

Absent

Rob Berkeley	Runnymede Trust
Abdul Kahn	BECON

1. Introduction

TG Described the history and role of the Coalition formed in February 2009 to inform and influence the Single Equality Bill and other equality legislation.

The Action group was formed to take forward the work plan of the Coalition and to see how much the Coalition can coordinate, share the intelligence and expertise to change the Bill. Although the Bill is good there are concerns among members of the Coalition.

We have met with Michael Foster MP, the Parliamentary undersecretary for the GEO, the Solicitor General, and with the EHRC and will continue to do so.

PD believed it was important to get our key amendments ready before the Bill goes to the House of Lords as the other members of the senior stakeholders group had theirs ready.

2. Key concerns

TG summarised the key concerns of action group members as

- Stronger socio-economic duty
- Impact assessments, enforcement, and issues for the specific duties.
- Positive Action issue
- Definition of public authority and public functions
- Potential hierarchy of different equality strands and equality groups
- Procurement

- Concern over a regression on the Race Equality Act
- Awareness of the Bill and misinformation.

2.1. Stronger socio-economic duty.

TG stated there have been proposals to remove it completely weren't successful. There is timescales problem with the Bill and the Tories challenging. The Coalition must have a strategy for not only what we want to add but what we need to defend in the Bill and take advantage of the opportunity to open the door to strengthen the socio-economic duties through secondary legislation in the future.

2.2. Specific duties

Action point - ROTA We will draft a response to the specific duties consultation and forward that around the Action Group by the end of the week.

2.3. Enforcement

TG stated the present view is the EHRC will do this but capacity is questionable and the EHRC agree. Suggest inspectors, regulators and auditors should be mentioned specifically in the act alongside the EHRC to make sure this monitoring actually happens. **KC** identified that GEO were considering this.

Action Group agreed to consider an amendment into the Bill that the statutory inspectorates given a statutory responsibility to monitor implementation of these duties.

2.4. Positive Action

TG stated we need to increase awareness and understanding by maybe doing a briefing.

PD identified EHRC are putting out myth busting papers of which their guidance on positive action will be among them.

Action point - AK suggested a brief on affirmative action and positive discrimination because the EHRC will be on the Bill provisions and maybe the Coalition should do another briefing and a step further. The Action Group agreed.

2.5. Definitions

JM is concerned that certain groups such as Irish Travellers and Gypsy Roma will get left out and how do we ensure they are included.

KC raised the idea of the Coalition forming as a monitoring group to look at the Single Equality Bill Dissemination and monitoring by EHRC inspectorates.

AS identified that as well as Gypsy and Travellers there are also huge groups that are not identified in monitoring generally including Armenians or Latin Americans that need to be considered.

2.6. Procurement

TG stated that there needs to be a specific duty to address inconsistencies across public authorities.

AC – We have commissioned research on the socio economic benefits of equality and so when that finishes that will be interesting to look at and bring into this argument.

KC Asked what other inconsistencies are there across strands?

Action point - TG said he would circulate the list of amendments from the senior stakeholder group senior stakeholder group

2.7. Raising Awareness and Engagement

TG raised additional concerns around raising awareness and engagement and generating buy-in and the Coalition should do events to coordinate promotion.

TG stated Michael Foster MP (PS in GEO) is trying to engage and interested so the Coalition can use this route

2.8. Multiple Discrimination

PD stated EDF is doing lots of work on this so didn't think Coalition needed to lead but should inform and develop these areas. And because there is a lot of work in the Lords so Coalition should piggy back on other work.

Key concern remains the exclusion of indirect discrimination in the dual discrimination clause.

2.9. Public Functions Definition

TG was concerned that the public function definition is a very narrow one and is concerned about the organisations being subject to a ministerial decision which is at present limited. GEO believes that the proposed Ministerial powers should only remove those that authorities that change or no longer exist.

Action point - KC to circulate a list of the particular powers that the Ministers have in relation to this particular Act.

3. Coalition Work plan until March 2010

PD went through the draft work plan (circulated) that was being funded partly by the TRIF funding from the CLG.

TG proposed amendment to the work plan to aspire to be a monitoring group following **KC** suggestion earlier. Action Group agreed that it should be specific and narrow to monitoring the policy of inspectorates and EHRC.

Action point: PD

RD suggested an amendment to the TOR to outline the membership of the Coalition and who members represent **Action point: PD**

RD Questioned why the term BAME instead of BME was used. He expressed concerned of being too London-centric.

PD responded by saying that we will include the ROTA definition of BAME which should clarify things. **Action point: PD**

AK asked if the CLG TRIF funding was paying to achieve specific objectives by the Coalition and whether these should be clarified to members.

TG stated that the Coalition is independent and was set up with its objectives in February 2009 prior to the TRIF funding. Those objectives are included in the original letter to the Minister, they are published and have not changed. ROTA is an independent policy think tank and is valued and funded as such. ROTA has never been questioned about its independence and evidence based approach.

KC asked if the Coalition's focus is on equalities legislation only because **KC** is working on another coalition which is on a wider racial justice agenda and don't want to duplicate work.

PD stated that the Coalition work is focused on equalities legislation, such as the SEB and subsequent regulation statutory codes.

AK stated that one of Vandna's concerns was why V4CE is not mentioned in all literature as co-leading the coalition with ROTA.

TG responded that ROTA is leading the coalition and that V4CE, Runnymede and other key organisations helped to recruit the first members. Submissions, evidence, meetings, papers, briefings, research and work that are carried out by ROTA are acknowledged as contributions by all members without making distinctions.

KC suggested that in the objectives section we include "promoting race equality" and "avoiding roll back of the RRA. **Action point: PD**

RD requested more detail in the work plan outputs. **Action point: PD**

Meeting concluded at 13:30