

## **The New Public Sector Duty**

**Q.** What should public authorities do until the government regulations are available?

**A.** We advise public bodies to start to prepare for the Public Sector Equality Duty by gathering information and starting to consult and involve their stakeholders with regard to the new strands. This will help them to begin to identify their priorities for action.

**Q.** What protected characteristics will the Public Sector Equality Duty cover?

**A.** The duty will cover the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief and sexual orientation.

**Q.** The Public Sector Equality Duty is expected to come into force in England in April 2011. One of the draft specific duties is for public bodies to set their own equality objectives. Will public bodies be expected to have these in place by April 2011 or will they have a further period of time after this date to be able to develop them?

**A.** Under the Government's draft proposals, public bodies will need to have their equality objectives in place by the date that the Public Sector Equality Duty comes into force. The proposed date for this is April 2011.

**Q.** What approach should we take when developing our equality objectives?

**A.** Government proposals for the forthcoming Public Sector Equality Duty require public bodies to produce equality objectives. It is proposed that this will take effect from April 2011. The objective setting process should include: assessing which organisational functions are most relevant to the general Equality Duty, evidence gathering, consulting and involving, making reference to existing local and regional priorities, as well as national equality priorities set by Ministers using new powers under the Equality Act.

The guide, [Setting objectives and producing a gender equality scheme](#), provides a useful steer to public authorities as they prepare to set equality objectives. The Commission will be looking to see objectives of a similar standard to those set out in this guidance under the forthcoming Public Sector Equality Duty.