



Mick Pearson, chairman of the Federation's equality subcommittee

Inequality in equality

In my three years on the Federation's equality subcommittee I have always tried to argue the case for equality across all strands of the spectrum, that is gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, race and faith. This is a given as far as I am concerned, after all what we are talking about is discrimination, in whatever form that might take and it is never right that someone should be discriminated against because of who they are. Yet there does still appear to be inequality within the arena of equality.

Early in December I attended the official launch, by the National Policing Improvement Agency, of the Equality Standard for Policing. The standard has been developed over 18-months, with a three month trial period in some forces, and will be coming to all forces early in 2010. It sets out a framework which aims to improve equality through a variety of means including looking at recruitment and progression and I fully support the end product. But at the launch a number of senior figures simply focused on race, religion and creed with little reference to disability, gender and age. I heard just one mention of "young communities" by speaker, Rob Garnham, the new chairman of the Association of Police Authorities.

While I believe that the police service should be committed to the diversity strands mentioned, I felt disappointed and frustrated that there was no mention of gender issues; no mention of disability; nor was sexual orientation given a platform; age was only mentioned in passing. This inequality must have been galling to some of those present; I know it was because I asked some of them after the event. I even asked a representative from one of the diversity staff support associations who were represented in the speeches and he agreed with my feelings on the matter. We cannot continue in this vein, the police service needs to be fully inclusive and show that it is fully inclusive. After all, we all have the ability to be discriminated against because of our gender, our age, our sexual orientation and we could have a disability or

become disabled at any stage during our service.

The Employment Tribunal is often the last, sometimes the only, resort of those discriminated against. Age discrimination claims increased three-fold when comparing the years 2006 to 2007 with 2007 to 2008, and are set to rise further. Disability discrimination claims account for more requests for funding received at the Federation headquarters in Leatherhead than any other type of claim. There have been some high profile disability cases in police forces around the country. I want to encourage those who are responsible for equality and diversity in the upper echelons of the police service and government to publicly widen their viewpoint, perceptions are important in such sensitive areas of business. Do not fall into the trap of reinforcing what seems to be an inequality of equality.