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The Equality Bill 2008/09 and banning age discrimination in goods and services

The Centre for Policy on Ageing warmly supports the government's aim to ban age discrimination in goods and services outlined in the Equality Bill, published on 27 April 2009. The new law will be implemented in phases,¹ with legislation in force in financial services and all other services, with the exception of health and social care, in 2012. There is no firm date for banning discrimination in health and social care services but the government has initiated a review of the practical action that is needed to tackle age discrimination in these areas, which will report in October 2009.²

Gillian Crosby, the Centre's Director said 'There is considerable evidence that older people face negative discrimination in health and social care that gravely impacts on their quality of life. The government is expecting older people to work longer and exhorts them to live healthier, 'independent' lives so it is critical that they should not be denied services that will enable them to do so. Chronological age must not be used as a barrier to a good life or as a mechanism to ration services. I hope the government will act swiftly after the review, in October, to ban unacceptable ageist practices.'

End

Contd with Notes/

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Notes

1. Age discrimination was banned in the workplace in 2006 and the Equality Bill will make it unlawful to discriminate against someone aged 18 or over because of age when providing services or carrying out public functions. It will not affect products or services for older people where age-based treatment is justified or beneficial. The law will only stop age discrimination where it has negative or harmful consequences. Legislation will be in force in financial services and all other services, with the exception of health and social care, in 2012. Access the Equality Bill, accompanying documents and impact assessments via the Government Equalities Office website http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_bill.aspx or the CPA Policies on Ageing website http://www.cpa.org.uk/cpa/policies_on_ageing
2. On 17 April 2009, Health Secretary Alan Johnson announced that Jan Ormondroyd, Chief Executive of Bristol City Council and Sir Ian Carruthers, Chief Executive of the South West Strategic Health Authority will lead an in-depth review of how the NHS and social care can effectively tackle discrimination against older people. Alan Johnson stated 'While the facts about ageing have changed "the fiction remains" ... meaning that in work and in healthcare, older people are treated differently because of their age.'
3. CPA produced a review (2008) from the literature on 'The likely costs and benefits of legislation to prohibit age discrimination in health, social care and mental health services and definitions of age discrimination that might be operationalised for measurement', commissioned by the Department of Health. Access the review via the CPA website <http://www.cpa.org.uk/information/reviews/reviews.html>