

24 October 2023

Health secretary calls for halt on recruitment into equality roles

Steve Barclay, UK health and social care secretary, has written to NHS chairs telling them to cease recruitment for specialist roles.

In a letter of 19 October, health secretary Steve Barclay wrote to chairs of integrated care boards in England. In it he calls for them to scrap recruitment into specialist equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) roles, which Barclay claims are not “value for money”.

He said: "these issues are everyone's responsibility and should be addressed through normal management processes rather than using external providers or dedicated roles within organisations."

PCS, which campaigns against all forms of discrimination, has joined other organisations including nursing leaders in criticism of the letter. General secretary Mark Serwotka said:

“Steve Barclay is playing petty politics. The NHS and their providers, under the Public Sector Equality Duty, have a legal requirement to address issues around EDI. These specialist roles are vital to tackle inequalities and discrimination in our health care system and wider society. Barclay will be aware that his own government-commissioned review determined that EDI roles are essential in all levels of the health service.

"There is no division between so called front line and back officer workers, the majority of whom are trade union members, committed to improving equality for patients and staff."

Get involved in PCS's [equality networks](#).

If you are being treated unfairly, contact your rep - find their details on PCS Digital.

Not yet a member? [Join PCS](#) now.