

Business Plan 2008/9

Equality and
Human Rights
Commission

equalityhumanrights.com

Bringing people
together

The Equality and Human Rights Commission reduce inequality, eliminate good relations between all protect human rights, ensure fair chance to participate in

Launched on 1 October 2007, the Commission is an independent statutory body established under the Equality Act 2006. Our sponsor minister is Harriet Harman MP, Minister for Women and Equality,

Government Equalities Office 2008. We took over the responsibilities of the three former equality commissions: the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal

Opportunities Commission. We also have responsibility for other key areas of equality – age, gender reassignment, religion or belief, and sexual orientation – as well as for human rights.

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New beginnings

The launch of the new Equality and Human Rights Commission marked a significant moment in the history of equality and human rights in Britain. This business plan sets out our aims and strategic priorities for our first full year of operation: what we see as our ‘take-off’ period. It describes what we want to do, how our work is relevant to Britain’s entire population and how we will use our resources to best effect.

The Commission is the first British organisation of its kind, heralding a major shift in the way we tackle inequality and promote human rights. We will prevent discrimination by addressing the causes that lie behind it, encouraging systemic change instead of relying solely on individual legal remedies after the event.

Our agenda is ambitious: we want to shape the society we all live in, changing the way both organisations and individuals approach equality, human rights and good relations between people, regardless of their backgrounds. We want to break down the barriers that hold people back, releasing talent and expanding opportunities for all.

Our broad remit covers equality and good relations in the areas of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation as well as the protection and promotion of human rights. We will build on the work and achievements of the three former equality commissions: the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission, and the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Equality isn’t a minority interest: a fairer society benefits everyone in terms of economic prosperity, quality of life and good relations within and among communities

Our overall objective for our 2008/9 business plan is bringing people together. We will focus on the need, for all who live in Britain, to have a deeper sense of commitment and mutual respect based on shared values with fairness at their core.

We see our role as helping people who might not otherwise meet to get to know and understand one another better. It underlines our commitment to working with others, bringing together different partners and agencies to address shared challenges. But it also recognises that without true equality of opportunity for all, society will remain divided.

Equality isn't a minority interest: a fairer society benefits everyone in terms of economic prosperity, quality of life and good relations within and among communities. The responsibility for building a successful society rests with all of us.

Alongside our emphasis on tackling discrimination through enforcement, we recognise the need to encourage culture change.

This means developing ways to address negative stereotypes and institutional discrimination, enabling us to fight prejudice by winning hearts and minds. It means influencing public policy locally and nationally, taking into account the different contexts of England, Scotland and Wales. And it means engaging with businesses in the private sector.

We have been working with many different people and organisations to develop our business plan. We need to continue to work with all those who share our commitment to improving society, encompassing the private, public, community and voluntary sectors. We will also work closely with central and local government to tackle discrimination and promote equality, including helping to support the delivery of public service agreements.

We have created a set of strategic priorities based on narrowing the gaps between people, reflecting the integrated nature of our remit and acknowledging how different equality and human rights issues intersect or overlap. By focusing on them we will help to improve opportunities for individuals and communities throughout Britain.



Nicola Brewer
Chief Executive

We have set challenging goals for 2008/9 which include:

- Lobbying for landmark legislation to promote equality and human rights, including a new Equality Act.
- Using our investigative powers to launch a major inquiry into how well the Human Rights Act is currently working.
- Commissioning research on the way social housing is allocated and on the associated community tensions that relate to social housing policy.
- Putting our digital strategy into practice, drawing on the experience of interactive and social networking sites such as YouTube to encourage new audiences to get involved with our work.
- Using our enforcement powers strategically, particularly for the public sector equality duties and in the 'new' areas of our remit – age, religion or belief, sexual orientation and human rights.
- Working with business and the private sector to promote fairness in the workplace, including providing high quality information, advice and guidance tailored to individual business needs.
- Providing clear and comprehensive information on equality and human rights and about the work we do for a range of audiences.
- Looking at how to most effectively use the existing public sector duties to promote equality (which apply to most public authorities) as well as our legal and enforcement powers.

In everything we do, we will make the Commission open, outward-facing and accessible to all.

The work programme set out in this document is ambitious but it is also realistic. It represents a significant step forward for us at the beginning of our journey to reduce the many inequalities that still exist in Britain today. We will tackle the root causes of discrimination and prejudice. We will strive to give everyone the chance to participate in our society. We will make the Commission a strong, independent voice for equality and justice. The aim of creating a diverse and equal society is the greatest challenge facing Britain today. Together we can make it a reality.

Nicola Brewer
Chief Executive

Management team and Board of Commissioners

The Board of Commissioners, led by our Chair, Trevor Phillips, is responsible for setting the strategic direction of the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Chief Executive and Commissioner Nicola Brewer, supported by the senior management team, is accountable to the Board of Commissioners for making sure that we achieve our business aims and for advising on emerging strategic priorities.

Board of Commissioners

Trevor Phillips OBE
Baroness Margaret Prosser OBE
Dr Nicola Brewer CMG
Morag Alexander OBE
Kay Allen
Baroness Jane Campbell DBE
Kay Carberry CBE
Jeannie Drake CBE
Rev Joel Edwards
Baroness Sally Greengross OBE
Professor Kay Hampton
Professor Francesca Klug OBE
Sir Bert Massie CBE
Professor Ziauddin Sardar
Maeve Sherlock OBE
Ben Summerskill
Dr Neil Wooding

For more information about our Commissioners go to www.equalityhumanrights.com

The context for social change

We believe the British public want to live in a country that values the ideals that most of us hold dear: respect, freedom, equality, dignity, fairness and a belief in community. These are also the core principles that underpin ‘human rights’ – the basic rights and freedoms that belong to all of us.

In order to tackle the challenges we face in today’s world, it is necessary to understand how our society is changing. Social and economic change since the Second World War has been substantial and far-reaching, particularly as traditional manufacturing industries have declined and new technologies have transformed the world of work. In the last 30 years, important demographic changes have meant that Britain’s population has become significantly more diverse.

Important examples of social change that we need to consider include the following:

- Overall, Britons are living longer and need more support as they age. Many are taking on significant caring responsibilities for parents, partners or spouses, relatives and friends.
- Britain’s population is growing ever more diverse as the proportion of ethnic minority Britons rises and global migration leads to greater movement in and out of Britain.
- Within a decade, less than one in four of the working population is likely to be white, male, British-born and non-disabled.
- Women are entering higher education and the labour market in ever greater numbers.

- For many Britons, the model of the traditional family unit is no longer relevant, with increases in the number of single parents, step-families and same-sex couples with children.
- Traditional class and group solidarities are declining. People are increasingly confident in expressing and asserting their own identities.

Along with many benefits, increased diversity brings new challenges for us all. While most people believe that everyone should be treated fairly and with dignity, the reality can be very different. According to our recent survey, ‘Living in Britain: Attitudes to Equality’, discrimination and disadvantage are still all too common across Britain.



‘ For many Britons, the model of the traditional family unit is no longer relevant ’

Our vision, mission and role

Vision

A society built on fairness and respect. People confident in all aspects of their diversity.

Mission

As the independent advocate for equality and human rights in Britain, the Commission aims to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people, and promote and protect human rights. We challenge prejudice and disadvantage and promote the importance of human rights.

We enforce equality legislation on age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation, and encourage compliance with the Human Rights Act.

We campaign for social change and justice and use our influence and authority to ensure that equality and human rights remain at the top of the agenda for Government and employers, media and society.

Acting directly and by fostering partnerships locally, regionally and nationally, we stimulate debate on equality and human rights. We give advice and guidance to businesses, the voluntary and public sectors, and individuals. Developing an evidence-based understanding of the causes and effects of inequality for people across Britain, we will be an authoritative voice for reform.

Role

To make sure that people are aware of their rights and how to use them through our casework and advice services.

To work with businesses, service providers and organisations to develop best practice in the field of equality and human rights and to make sure they comply with their legal responsibilities.

To work with non-governmental organisations, policy-makers, lawyers and Government to develop social policy and change the law, strengthening equality.

To use our powers to enforce the laws that are in place and to give individuals legal advice, assistance or representation.

Our three key functions

1 We enable

Helping people to achieve social change and ensuring organisations can meet their legal and moral responsibilities under equality legislation and the Human Rights Act.

2 We persuade

Convincing the public that equality and human rights benefit us all, creating a shared understanding of what is needed to make further progress.

3 We enforce

Making strong and targeted use of our powers, combining advice with conciliation and, where necessary, litigation.

Our work covers England, Scotland and Wales. We have offices in Bangor, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, London and Manchester as well as a regional presence in Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Guildford, Leeds, Newcastle and Nottingham.



Our four strategic priorities

1 Analyse, define and target key equality and human rights challenges

We will analyse and measure inequality at all stages of people's lives to build up a sound base of knowledge and evidence to inform our policy work and enforce the law.

2 Change policy and organisational practice to provide better public services alongside an efficient and dynamic economy

We will seek to transform the policies and practices of government departments, public institutions and private sector organisations through our role as an enabler, persuader and enforcer. We will show how promoting equality and diversity helps to create better public services, thriving businesses and an efficient and productive economy.

We will negotiate memorandums of understanding with all the major public service inspectorates, encouraging a strategic approach to promoting equality and diversity within public services.

3 Engage, involve and empower the public, especially people from disadvantaged communities and areas

True equality of opportunity is about making sure that everyone has the power to help shape the society they live in. We want to give individuals the chance to participate fully in our local and national democracy, as well as in local communities.

Following consultation and involvement with our stakeholders, we have developed four strategic priorities for the coming year.

4 Anticipate social change, develop new narratives and reach new audiences in ways that strengthen equality and human rights

We will commission research to help us fully understand the forces that create inequality in Britain. We will use our communications work to put forward a compelling case for the need to put human rights at the heart of British culture and to show how human rights reflect essential values of fairness, respect, equality, dignity and autonomy. We will work with the grain of social change to embed a commitment to fairness and diversity throughout Britain.



Our equality scheme Our powers and duties

We are subject to legal duties to promote equality in everything we do. Our commitments to action under the race, disability and gender equality duties are contained in our equality scheme for 2008/9, along with commitments on age, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. The document is available at www.equalityhumanrights.com/equalityscheme and is closely linked to this business plan.

The Equality Act 2006 gives us extensive powers and we have a dedicated department of lawyers and legal advisors who specialise in equality and human rights law. This means that we are well equipped to take legal action on behalf of individuals, particularly when cases offer the chance to clarify or improve the law. We also give funding to external organisations that provide legal help and advice.

We have significant powers to hold inquiries and formal investigations into discrimination – whether in a general area of life or in specific organisations. We also have special legal powers to make sure that public authorities comply with their duties to promote race, disability and gender equality.

We do not have the power to give legal assistance to people who want to take human rights cases, unless such cases are also about equality.

However, we do have the power to hold formal inquiries or to take judicial review proceedings to prevent breaches of the Human Rights Act. We can also join in with proceedings taken by others, intervening to promote human rights.

As a national organisation we will use these powers to strengthen the domestic protection of human rights and to promote greater public awareness of the Human Rights Act. We will also take a lead in promoting human rights through international organisations and networks. We plan to take on a special role in relation to the new UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, requiring the Commission to promote, protect and monitor the Convention in Britain. We also hope to gain National Human Rights Institution accreditation with the United Nations.

For details of the Commission's statutory duties and its main statutory powers please see the appendix on page 35.

Our three statutory committees

The Commission has three statutory committees which are responsible for ensuring that the overall work of the Commission reflects the needs and priorities of Scotland and Wales and the interests of disabled people, as well as developing their own specific work programmes and taking a lead role in working with our stakeholders.

Each committee is chaired by one of our commissioners and supported by a lead officer.

Jane Campbell chairs our disability committee, supported by the disability programme director.

Morag Alexander chairs our Scotland committee, supported by the national director for Scotland.

Neil Wooding chairs our Wales committee, supported by the national director for Wales.

We also have a standard working practice throughout the Commission called ‘asking the statutory question’. This is to help ensure that when developing new policies or programmes of work we consider from the beginning any specific requirements relating to disabled people or to the particular contexts of Scotland and Wales.

‘ We take legal action on behalf of individuals, particularly when cases offer the chance to clarify or improve the law ’



Our 2008/9 business plan is based on different ways of bringing people together.

We will work with others to narrow equality gaps, breaking down barriers between communities and tackling the root causes of prejudice and intolerance. We will promote interaction between individuals from different backgrounds, developing shared values to create a strong society. This commitment runs through all aspects of our plan and the work we will carry out over the next 12 months.

Our integrated remit – the first of its kind in Britain – gives us responsibility for promoting equality in the areas of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation, together with the promotion of human rights.

This unique mandate enables us to work in new ways, dealing with multiple and complex forms of discrimination and bringing together issues of equality and human rights.

We will combine a traditional emphasis on anti-discrimination and legal enforcement with a focus on changing culture. We see these as two sides of the same coin – we will use the law to tackle unfair treatment and send a clear signal to those who discriminate, while helping organisations to create workplaces and communities based on fairness and respect.



‘ We need to consider how individuals develop as generational changes may add to existing inequality and disadvantage ’

Core themes

Developing core themes for our work

In order to achieve our goals we have to consider the barriers and opportunities that people have throughout their lifetimes and how these affect them in areas such as health, education, employment and their degree of involvement in civic and political life (their 'life chances'). We also need to take into account how individuals develop – from childhood and adolescence into adulthood and old age – as these generational changes may add to existing inequality and disadvantage.

We can only eradicate discrimination and create real equality of opportunity for everyone by linking together and integrating the different areas of our remit. Rather than focusing on individual areas of equality we have devised a number of overarching themes to guide us as we develop our policy work. We selected these themes by drawing on recent evidence highlighting the most persistent and intractable forms of inequality in Britain, including material from the Equalities Review which was published in February 2007.

During the next 12 months we will evaluate the effect of our work on the areas of equality within our remit and on how we use our resources.

The themes cover aspects of our duties to promote equality, human rights and good relations. Through them we aim to achieve the following:

- Understand the long-term and underlying causes of inequality that need to be addressed through public policy.
- Make practical recommendations and influence policy priorities for Government and the public sector, employers, businesses, trade unions, civil society and the voluntary sector.
- Work closely with public authorities and inspectorates to help them meet their legislative requirements on equality, human rights and good relations.

- Produce guidance to show how equality, human rights and good relations principles can be used by practitioners and policy-makers to improve the way that services are delivered.

- Influence the 2009/10 public spending review as well as future central and local government policy-makers to promote our strategic approach to equality.
- Ensure that innovative policies on equality and human rights in Scotland and Wales are applied elsewhere in Britain where appropriate.

We are committed to working with others to achieve our aims. In developing our three-year strategy we will also create robust performance indicators to help us measure the impact of our work.

Themes and work programmes

1 Narrow the poverty gap: reduce social exclusion

We recognise that poverty and social exclusion disproportionately affect individuals and groups who already experience disadvantage because of their age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation.

We will promote measures to reduce disadvantage and improve economic wellbeing for all communities. Typically, those in lower income groups are more likely to suffer from ill-health, family breakdown, social exclusion, higher rates of crime and an unsafe physical environment. We will focus on the effects of poverty across whole communities, not only on how it affects individuals.

In 2008/9 our work will include:

- Working with the Department for Children, Families and Schools in England on the Government's children's plan. We want to make sure that our equality objectives are built into the way the plan is put into practice. This includes looking at ways of protecting children and young people from poverty where they already suffer disadvantage because of their age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation.
- Working with the Olympics Delivery Authority to agree a charter of achievement that helps to tackle social and economic exclusion not just in London but throughout Britain. We will use the charter to inform our work on the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games.

2 Narrow the caring gap: ensure care reform promotes equality and human rights for all

We recognise that providing high-quality health and social care is a vital part of any attempt to promote equality and human rights in an ageing society. We will develop and pursue an agenda for social care reform that collectively addresses the requirements of older and disabled people and their families, including parents, carers, support workers and children. This agenda will put human rights at the heart of public services, including the social care sector.

We will analyse the relationship between social care and wider measures of inequality such as the limited opportunities for independent living among older and disabled people, the restricted life chances of informal carers, the lack of employment opportunities for women, and the higher levels of poverty among children, single parents, families with disabled children, and older people. We will show how investment in and reform of social care can also bring cost benefits. We will target health inequalities to ensure that everyone who uses Britain's health service is treated with dignity and respect.

2 Continued

In 2008/9 our work will include:

- Putting in place a comprehensive policy development and influencing strategy to shape central Government's forthcoming Green Paper on social care reform. This strategy will include promoting best practice case studies developed through our human rights inquiry. It will also cover an assessment of the implications of recent cases such as that of Sharon Coleman, a single mother with a disabled child, who we supported in her legal action against her employer.
- Commissioning an independent cost-benefit analysis of investment in the social care sector to influence future government spending decisions. We have already begun parallel work in Scotland to embed the principles of independent living in social care services and to include them in the 2010 comprehensive spending review.

- Using the general equality duties to influence the development of the new health and social care inspectorate in England (which is due to be launched in April 2009) to make sure that inspection and performance management systems include equality and human rights. We will also draw on practical case studies from our human rights work for good examples of how to do this. In Scotland we will work with audit and inspection bodies on how best to promote equality in their work following the findings of the Crerar review on public service audit, regulation and inspection.

3 Narrow the opportunity gap: increase social mobility among disadvantaged groups

We will work with public institutions and the private sector to widen the availability of opportunities through education and employment, to give everyone the chance to realise their aspirations regardless of their background. Providing all children with the best start (which will often involve 'early years interventions' to help specific children where needed) is crucial if we are to narrow the gap between those doing well and those falling behind and also to reduce inter-generational disadvantage. Young people also need support as they make important transitions into work or higher education.

We will use our powers to push for fair access to goods, facilities and services for all, giving individuals advice and assistance where needed and working with industry regulators to promote equality, diversity and social inclusion.

4 Narrow the power, inclusion and integration gap: strengthen good relations by forging greater understanding between communities

In 2008/9 our work will include:

- Publishing a guide to promoting integration in the workplace and launching a best practice website for employers to help them promote equality and diversity by adopting practices such as flexible working.
- Commissioning and publishing research on what workers aged over 50 expect from work and life, the problems they face in the labour market and potential solutions including how we use our legal powers to give additional protection. We will assess the impact of recent legislation to prevent employment discrimination on the grounds of age and seek to raise awareness of this among employers.

We will promote the vision of an integrated society based on shared values and mutual obligations, where people from different beliefs and backgrounds live and work together. To achieve this we need to tackle discrimination, including taking action against violence, harassment and bullying. We also need to encourage others to use legal measures such as positive action to help people from under-represented groups in areas like employment and public life.

We will look at the factors – including economic inequalities – which often heighten local community tensions, as well as the role of local government in creating strong and inclusive communities for people of all backgrounds.

In 2008/9 our work will include:

- Taking action to promote good relations using, for example, the new duty on schools to promote community cohesion. Our regional teams will monitor tensions and particular incidents involving hate crime. We will also work on preventing and resolving conflict in areas covered by the newer parts of our remit such as homophobic hate crime, inter-generational tensions and inter-faith dialogue.
- Supporting the extension of Scottish criminal law to include offences aggravated by prejudice towards a person's presumed disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. This will bring provisions for homophobic, transphobic and disability-related hate crime into line with those for race and sectarian crime in Scotland.
- Investigating into how disabled people are made the targets of crime and violence (as in the cases of Brent Martin and Stephen Hoskin) and identifying potential means of intervening to prevent such incidents as well as providing support and equal access to redress for victims.

‘ We will work on preventing and resolving conflict in areas covered by the newer parts of our remit ’

We have set 12 key delivery targets to underpin our strategic priorities. Each target has been developed through consultation and involvement with our stakeholders.

Our key delivery targets

Strategic priority 1 is underpinned by the following targets

Our first key target is a general one that relates to all four strategic priorities.

- 1 We will create a three-year strategic plan that is relevant both for our stakeholders and the general public. The plan will determine our long-term priorities, such as how we use our enforcement powers, as well as shaping key debates.

It will explore how we can strengthen positive attitudes to diversity and human rights. The plan will be underpinned by an original measurement framework that defines what we mean by equality across ten key areas from employment and the criminal justice system to healthcare and education.

- 2 Influencing the creation of a landmark Equality Act to eradicate discrimination and release talent, tackle long-standing structural pay gaps, guarantee fair access for all to goods, facilities and services and help promote good relations between people from different backgrounds. We will develop a constitutional guarantee of equality to influence the drafting of the new legislation. We will help to devise a streamlined public sector duty that focuses on achieving practical results, narrowing the gaps between those doing well and those falling behind.

- 3 Creating a Britain-wide advertising, marketing and communications campaign to promote equality, develop good relations and support and protect human rights – including a ‘plain English’ guide to the Human Rights Act. Our first campaign will focus on how our work is relevant to everyone in Britain, challenging assumptions about who benefits from what we do.

Strategic priority 2 is underpinned by the following targets

- 4 A public inquiry looking at attitudes to human rights and how widely the Human Rights Act (HRA) is being used in public services. We will draw on the results of the inquiry to build up a solid base of evidence and good practice about the use of the HRA. Ultimately we want to see the culture of our public services shaped by equality and human rights principles, underpinned by the HRA and by the public sector equality duties. The inquiry will initially cover England and Wales only but will closely involve the Scottish Commission on Human Rights. We will publish the results of the inquiry in March 2009.

Towards the end of 2008 we will be holding a series of events to mark the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 10th anniversary of the Human Rights Act receiving royal assent.

Our key delivery targets

Strategic priority 2 targets continued

- 5** At least fifty actions involving the strategic use of our legal powers including individual cases in the newer areas of our remit (age, religion or belief, and sexual orientation) as well as human rights. We will use our enforcement powers pro-actively through formal investigations – such as our recent assessment of the treatment of staff in the social care sector – and judicial reviews. We will intervene in appeal cases and initiate specific inquiries to promote and protect human rights. And we will use our statutory powers to intervene before the courts as we did in the *Bainbridge* case on equal pay.
- 6** Working with private and public sector organisations to promote fairness at work. This includes encouraging effective approaches to regulation and transparency in the provision of services, to ensure that leaders take personal and direct responsibility for equality and diversity. Successful organisations are those that realise the full potential of the whole workforce and make the necessary investments to nurture their talent.
- We will ensure that public authorities comply with existing equality legislation, helping them to use the public sector duties to provide better public services by responding to individual needs. We will negotiate memorandums of understanding with the major public service inspectorates, encouraging a strategic approach to promoting equality and diversity within public authorities. We will tackle exploitation by campaigning with trade unions and business organisations for enforceable employment rights for all workers – addressing the unfair treatment and low wages of migrants in the British economy.
- 7** Influencing government strategies on the future of social care to promote independence and enable people to combine the demands of caring and work. We will build on recent legal cases and research we have commissioned to demonstrate the links between the availability of high-quality care, women's opportunities for employment and wider patterns of inequality, as well as existing gaps in social care services.

Strategic priority 3 is underpinned by the following targets

- 8** Grant-making and capacity development programmes that are open and transparent and that help to build our relationships with voluntary sector and community-based organisations. Through these programmes we will encourage closer and smarter working relationships between such organisations and local public authorities, particularly in tackling problems such as violence against women. We will use our grants programme to help people working in the newer areas of our remit – such as grassroots lesbian, gay and bisexual organisations – and provide an estimated £3.5 million of support to local law centres and advice bodies improving access to justice.
- 9** Developing a multi-media digital strategy to help us reach new audiences effectively and to inform and engage the public about equality, human rights and good relations. It will include launching a website for employers to give advice on how to promote equality and diversity by encouraging flexible working, drawing on existing models of best practice from different industries and sectors.

Strategic priority 4 is underpinned by the following targets

- 10** Promoting good relations between people of different backgrounds by bringing them together through activities such as camps, an arts competition, youth conferences and the Croeso programme in Wales.
- 11** Investigating the impact of social housing allocation on community cohesion and good relations between people from different racial groups. The intention is to examine how social housing is allocated, whether any particular group receives preferential access, how the current system is perceived by the general public and what wider implications this may have for fairness and public trust.
- 12** Implementing a programme to promote ‘new voices’, reflecting our role of empowering the unheard or marginalised. Planned activities include holding a major lecture and conference series focusing on Muslim women and business, examining the challenges facing marginalised communities and exploring the role of social class in modern Britain. We will search for new audiences and give them a platform to speak.

“ Our strategic plan will explore how to strengthen positive attitudes to diversity and human rights ”

Engaging and involving the public

Equality, human rights and good relations between people affect us all, regardless of background. We will build an organisation that is genuinely inclusive, outward-facing, open and accessible.

Through our intensive communication and campaign work we aim to be a recognisable, influential and inspiring voice for the public.

We will take particular issues and highlight them in imaginative ways that spark debate and encourage people to think about the kind of Britain they want to live in.



‘ We will work closely with all those who are interested in or affected by our work ’

Working with others

In order to develop sound, informed policies we will work closely with stakeholders and all who are interested in or affected by our work.

We have already started to build networks of stakeholders across Britain and over the next 12 months we will develop these as part of our strategy for involving others in our work. These networks include individuals and organisations that worked with our predecessor organisations as well as stakeholders from the newer areas of our remit.

We will encourage fluid and open links between our stakeholders and our policy teams. This will help us to benefit from external expertise in the fields we cover such as employment, welfare reform, health, education and criminal justice as well as the interests of different groups. It will enable external organisations to shape our work.

We will build strong relationships with central Government, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Assembly to ensure that equality and human rights are fully considered as new legislation is developed.

We will pay tribute to ‘equality champions’ in national and local government who have made a distinctive contribution to advancing our vision through an annual awards programme.

Digital strategy

Using online resources effectively will be vital if we are to achieve our aims. We have ambitious plans for promoting our work online in different ways and to different audiences. Our digital strategy includes setting up an interactive video channel as well as using social networking to raise our profile.

For many people, our website will be the way they first come across our organisation. As well as providing information and advice about legal rights and responsibilities, it is our main vehicle for informing people about us and our work. We will use the site to encourage people to influence what we do either through consultation and involvement or more general debate. We will be developing our site over the next 12 months to ensure it is accessible, informative, exciting and engaging.

‘ We offer a free and confidential disability conciliation service as a potential alternative to going to court ’

Our English regional network

In order to act as a trusted local source of information on equality and human rights, we will maintain a strong regional presence. To help us achieve this we have a network of nine offices across the English regions.

We will work closely with regional and local government offices as well as private, voluntary and community sector groups to develop relevant work plans for different areas. This allows us to link local concerns and contexts into our overall national strategy and work programme and helps us to build up a more accurate picture of the state of equality and human rights across Britain.

Grant-making

Under section 17 of the Equality Act 2006 we have the right to give financial assistance to organisations promoting equality and diversity, good relations and human rights.

We are running an interim grants programme for 2008/9. We have identified three priority areas for funding:

- Encouraging good relations.
- Promoting equality and human rights.
- Supporting the development of legal cases that help people get a fair deal.

We are also providing a capacity development programme to help organisations improve the services they provide. The programme will focus particularly on the newer equality areas in our remit (age, religion or belief, and sexual orientation) as well as human rights.

Information, advice and guidance

We run national helplines in England, Scotland and Wales to provide advice and information to people who want to know more about their rights.

Our helpline advisors are specially trained to deal with a variety of calls, from responding to requests for particular documents or information to providing specialist legal advice on individual cases.

Disability conciliation

We also offer a free and confidential disability conciliation service as an effective potential alternative to taking a case of disability discrimination to court under the Disability Discrimination Act.

We value the people who work for us

In everything we do, we will be:

Accessible

Accessibility is a fundamental part of who we are, what we say and what we do. It is only by being truly accessible that we can be inclusive. And it is only when we are accessible and inclusive that we can promote equality.

Authoritative

Through the quality of our work, our thinking, and by the examples we set, we are a leader in the field of equality and human rights. We are known and respected for our judgment and our guidance.

Ambitious

We want to make a difference. We want to be successful in bringing about change. To achieve this, we are bold and courageous in the decisions we make.

Accountable

We are responsible for the decisions we make and the actions we take. We acknowledge our responsibilities.

As an organisation we value the people who work for us and we are developing a comprehensive people strategy to ensure that each of our employees has the opportunity to develop their full potential free from prejudice or discrimination.

We see the working environment of the Commission as personifying the vision we want to achieve for British society: an environment where diversity is promoted and where all are treated with fairness and respect.

Since our launch on 1 October 2007, we have focused on integrating staff into the new Commission and on recruitment to make sure we have the expertise we need to function properly. We see the Commission as a learning organisation which means that we take our commitment to training and development seriously.

We recognise the need to draw on the unique and varied contributions of our workforce to develop a high performance culture that fully supports the strategy and future plans of the Commission.

During 2008/9 we will:

- Continue to recruit to give us the resources and the flexibility to carry out the work we will do.
- Build on our initial training programme to enhance the skills and knowledge of all employees.
- Involve and engage all employees in developing a high performance culture for the Commission.

1 Influencing policy, legislation and enforcement

- Helping to shape the Single Equality Bill and evidence of our influence on key legislation during 2008/9.
- Targeted use of our powers covering all equality areas in our remit.
- Evidence of our success rate in enforcement actions as measured through legal decisions and customer satisfaction.
- A high proportion of recommendations from formal investigations accepted and implemented.

2 Engaging and involving the public

- One major campaign completed and evaluated during 2008/9.
- Three nationwide consultations completed with average attendance rates of 70 per cent of all stakeholders invited.
- New equality and human rights performance indicators consulted on and in place for the three-year strategic plan by 31 March 2009.
- All organisations awarded grants under our 2008/9 grant programme to have achieved the outcomes specified.

3 Creating a high performance organisation

- Employee survey carried out by October 2008 to give us baseline data.
- The actions set out in our 2008/9 equality scheme will have been achieved and our three-year equality scheme will be in place by 31 March 2009.
- We will have the staff resources we need and a comprehensive training programme in place for all employees by December 2008.

We have developed a set of indicators to help us measure achieving our strategic priori

4 Delivering our services

- Requests for information, publications, guidance and advice (including accessible formats) responded to promptly and comprehensively.
- Development of Commission website so that it provides content relevant to the general public and other audiences as well as being easy to use and meeting high accessibility standards.
- Development of digital media to reach audiences effectively, including e-newsletters and social networking sites.
- Development of a monitoring system to measure the effectiveness of our helpline services and levels of customer satisfaction so that we can improve the quality of our services.

‘ We run national helplines in England, Scotland and Wales to give people information and advice about their rights ,

performance measurement
our progress towards
ties over the next 12 months.

Resources for 2008/9

Financial resources

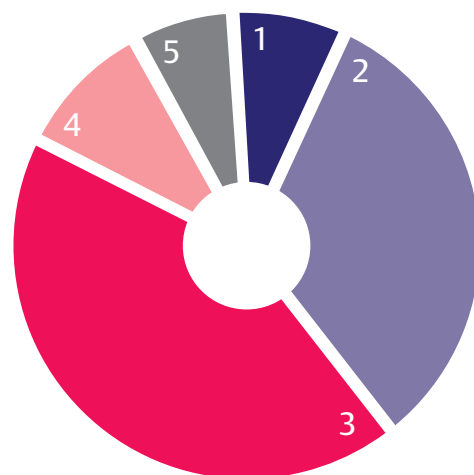
We have a provisional budget for 2008/9 of £70.3 million which includes depreciation of £1.5 million. Within this budget we have allocated £46.1 million for research, policy development, legal enforcement and investigations, and to fund our grants programme. It includes the financial resources allocated to the work programmes of our three statutory committees.

We have also identified the need for investment in our infrastructure such as knowledge management, IT and estates. A total of £4.8 million has been identified for project development work, enabling us to respond flexibly to changing priorities during the next 12 months.

Provisional budget by strategic priority of £70.3m

- 1 £6.2m strategic priority 1**
Analyse, define and target key equality and human rights challenges.
- 2 £21.9m strategic priority 2**
Change policy and organisational practice to deliver better public services.
- 3 £30.3m strategic priority 3**
Engage, involve and empower the public, especially people from disadvantaged areas.
- 4 £7.1m strategic priority 4**
Anticipate social change, develop new narratives and reach new audiences.
- 5 £4.8m project development**

The pie chart shows how we have allocated our overall budget across the strategic priorities.



Risk management

We have a robust management framework in place with a register that identifies the potential risks associated with our business plan and any actions we can take to minimise them. Every two months our risk appraisal group, chaired by our Chief Executive, reviews the risks we face and the audit and risk committee also looks at them each quarter. The senior management team and the Board consider and discuss individual risks in turn.

‘ We have allocated £4.8 million for project development work to enable us to respond flexibly to changing priorities ,

We have worked with many different stakeholders to gain their views and comments on our strategic priorities as part of developing our first business plan.

Over the next 12 months we will engage with and involve a range of organisations across all areas of our remit to create our first three-year strategic plan for 2009 – 12. By 'involve' we mean ways of engaging with people that go beyond traditional paper-based consultation. We will use innovative methods of reaching people to help us work with as many different groups and individuals as possible.

In addition we will publish an annual report. The first is due for publication in October 2008, setting out what we have achieved in our first full year of operation to bring people together and to become a strong, independent voice for equality and justice.

Our statutory powers and duties

The Commission's statutory duties

The Commission's statutory duties, set out in the Equality Act 2006, are to:

- Promote understanding of the importance of equality and diversity.
- Encourage good practice in relation to equality and diversity.
- Promote equality of opportunity.
- Promote awareness and understanding of rights under the equality enactments.
- Enforce the equality enactments.
- Work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination.
- Work towards the elimination of unlawful harassment.
- Encourage good practice in relation to human rights.
- Promote awareness, understanding and protection of human rights.
- Promote good relations among and between groups and others, where 'groups' include a group or class of persons who share a common attribute in respect of any of the protected grounds.
- Monitor the effectiveness of laws relating to equality and human rights and monitor and report progress towards identified desired outcomes.
- Encourage public authorities to comply with section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998 (compliance with Convention rights).

The Scottish Commission for Human Rights has now been established by the Scottish Parliament and work on human rights is shared by our two organisations. Human rights issues arising from matters reserved to the Westminster Parliament are for the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Issues arising from devolved matters are for the Scottish Commission unless the Scottish Commission gives its consent for us to handle them.

Appendix

Equality Act 2006

Our statutory powers and duties

Legal policy: law and policy monitoring, advice and guidance

Enforcement

The Commission's statutory powers under the Equality Act 2006 include the following powers relevant to its legal work.

- To advise Government about the effectiveness of any of the equality and human rights enactments and to recommend amendment, repeal, consolidation etc of any of the equality and human rights enactments.
- To advise central or devolved Government about the effect of an enactment and the likely effect of a proposed change of law.

- To issue or revise a code of practice in connection with a matter addressed in the equality enactments.
- To give advice or guidance (about the effect or operation of an enactment or otherwise).
- To publish or otherwise disseminate ideas or information.
- To undertake research.
- To cooperate with persons interested in human rights within the UK or elsewhere.
- To make, cooperate with or assist in arrangements for monitoring crime affecting certain groups.

Actions by the Commission in its own name:

- To conduct an inquiry into any matter related to equality and diversity, human rights or good relations between protected groups and report on its findings.
- To conduct an investigation where it suspects that the person has committed an act that is unlawful under one of the equality enactments, and to serve an unlawful act notice.
- To enter into an enforceable agreement to stop acts of discrimination or breach of public sector equality duty in lieu of an investigation, unlawful act notice or compliance notice.
- To conduct an assessment of compliance with public sector equality duties.

Litigation and casework

-
- To serve a compliance notice for breach of public sector equality duties (for breach of general duties only after an assessment).
 - For the purposes of an inquiry, investigation or assessment, to require any person to provide information, produce documents or give oral evidence.
 - To apply for an injunction to restrain/interdict to prohibit commission of an unlawful act.
 - To bring proceedings in relation to discriminatory advertisements, instructions or pressure to discriminate.
 - To bring own-name proceedings, including judicial review proceedings, and/or to intervene in proceedings relevant to its equality or human rights functions.
- Action to assist victims of discrimination:
- To assist an individual in proceedings that relate wholly or partly to alleged breach of one of the equality enactments, where the individual alleges that they have been the victim of the alleged breach, including providing legal advice, legal representation, facilities for settlement or any other form of assistance.
 - To assist an individual in proceedings concerning a landlord's refusal to consent to an improvement in a dwelling to facilitate the enjoyment of the premises by a disabled tenant or other lawful occupier.
- To make arrangements for the provision of conciliation services for disputes which could otherwise be litigated under one of the equality enactments.
 - To institute legal proceedings, including judicial review proceedings, relevant to a matter within the Commission's functions.

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**Helpline
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**Helpline
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Tuesday,
Thursday,
Friday
9am – 8pm Wednesday

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Our business plan is also available in Welsh. If you would like a copy in another language or format (such as braille, audio CD or cassette, Easy Read or large print) please visit our website or contact one of our helplines.

in touch with us via
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