

# Human Rights Inquiry



Easy Read summary report



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Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

[equalityhumanrights.com](http://equalityhumanrights.com)

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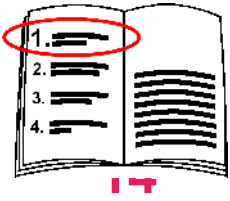


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# Introduction

The Equality and Human Rights Commission works to make sure that people are treated fairly and equally.

We work to make sure people:

- get their human rights
- get on better together
- have a fair chance to take part in society.



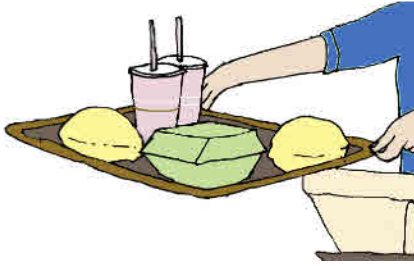
Human rights are basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world.

Human rights are there to protect everyone. The Human Rights Act is the law about human rights.



Public services like social services, healthcare, schools and the police have to help make sure people get their human rights.

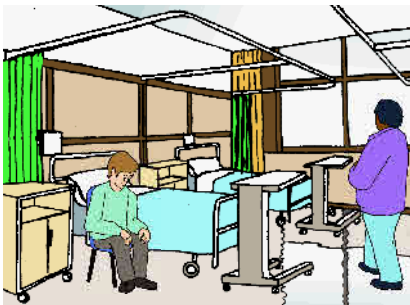
## Some examples of when human rights law might help



- Not being able to eat properly while in hospital or a care home.



- Abuse of people with learning disabilities.



- No privacy in hospital.



- Young black men being stopped and searched too much.



- Gay and lesbian partners not having the same rights as other couples.



- Not being properly protected from being stalked.



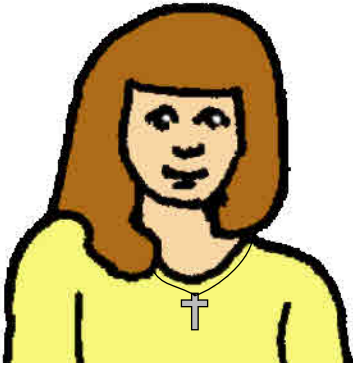
- Not being properly protected from being hurt at home.



- Not being given the adapted housing you need.



- Bullying in schools.



- Not being allowed to wear religious symbols like a cross at work.



- Not good enough schooling for children with special educational needs.



- Stopping people from going on a demonstration.



In 2008 we asked people how far respect for human rights had become a part of our way of life.

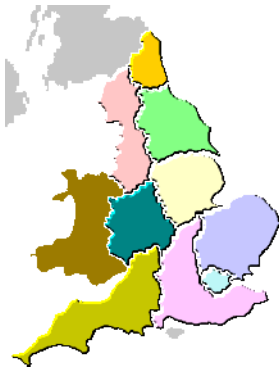


We also thought about what could be done, using human rights, to make life fairer and more equal for everyone.



This Easy Read report is about what we found out and what else we think should be done.

# What we wanted to find out



We wanted to find out about:

- human rights in public services in England and Wales



- the things that stopped people getting their human rights



- the good things that have happened in these public services



- how other services or organisations could learn from these good things

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- what the Equality and Human Rights Commission could learn for our work with public services in the future.

## How we did this work



We heard from nearly 3,000 people such as:

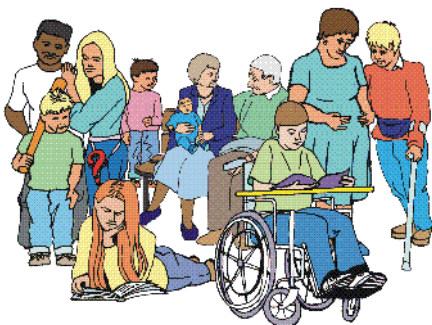
- people who use services



- people who provide services



- inspectors



- others.



We did this in lots of different ways – from research projects to hearing what people said to us.

# What do people think about human rights?



We found out that:

- most people think it is important to have a law on human rights



- but nearly half think the only people who get their rights are criminals and terrorists



- the newspapers sometimes got it wrong and said human rights were used when they were not and gave people a bad view of human rights



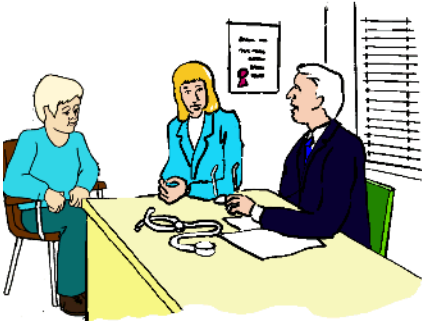
- this bad view in some newspapers could slow down people getting their human rights.

# The good things human rights law can do



We heard about services getting better when they think about human rights.

We heard how services got better in:



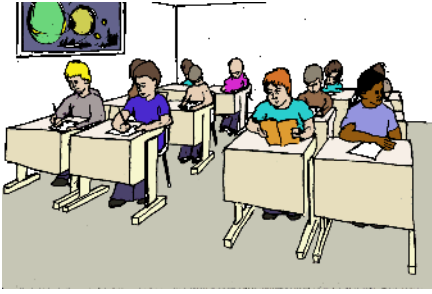
- **Healthcare**  
People got better treatment and knew what to do or when to complain.



- **Local authorities**  
The way they treated travellers and young people got better.



- **Police**  
The way they protected police officers and people who can't protect themselves got better.



- **Schools**  
Pupils and school staff were safer.



- **Inspections**  
Inspectors made services better.

## Some examples of when human rights law was used



- **A local community organisation supporting young people** helped young people understand that they should not be abused and about their rights about sex.



- **Counsel and Care** helped a man's wife with Alzheimer's stay in a local nursing home closer to her family.



- **The group Liberty changed police rules** about keeping **all young** people home late at night when they hadn't done anything wrong.



- **Liberty also protected people's rights to protest.** It was agreed the police were wrong to arrest 5 protesters and had to pay them damages.



- **Protecting a patient in hospital.** It was agreed that a man with cerebral palsy could still have some food fed to him by mouth because he wanted to, even though there was a risk he might choke.



- **The group Choices and Rights Disability Coalition** helped a severely disabled young man go back to college with proper support.



- **An advice centre** got an agreement for an asylum-seeker to pay a healthcare bill for her son in bits instead of all at once.

# What needs to be done to sort out the problems?



We heard that people were having problems getting their human right to be treated fairly and equally.



We thought a lot of these problems could be sorted out quite easily.

The problems included:



- services not knowing enough about human rights and how to treat people fairly and equally



- people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable people not knowing enough about human rights and how to get them

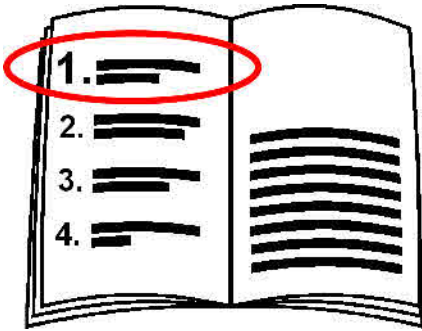


- services not talking about human rights in their organisations



- some newspapers saying that human rights were not used properly or not for everyone.

# What the Equality and Human Rights Commission must do

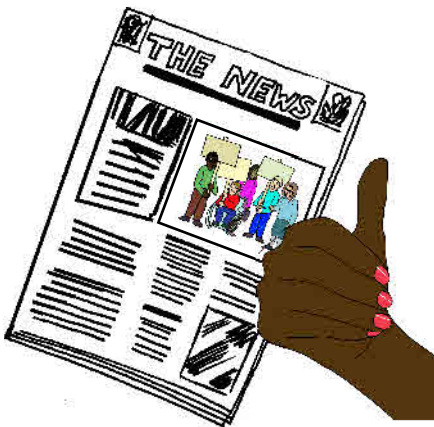


People said the Equality and Human rights Commission should:

- make human rights the most important thing they work on



- help other organisations and staff know what human rights mean in their work



- give newspapers the right information about human rights



- let people know that they have rights and how they can use them.

## What we heard



We heard that the Human Rights Act has made some public services better and if people understand it properly they can be even better still.



When this is done people's lives are changed and made much better.



But there is still a lot to do to make things fairer and more equal for everyone. We have some ideas about what needs to change to make this happen.

# What the Equality and Human Rights Commission will do

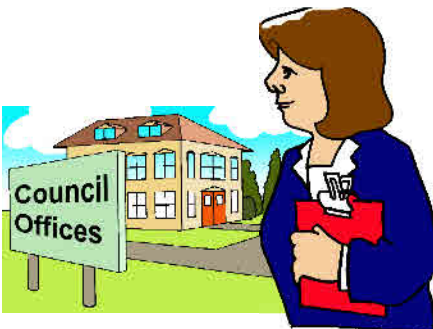
We will:



- work with others to help and support organisations to use a human rights way of working



- find out about good examples and tell others about these so they can do the same



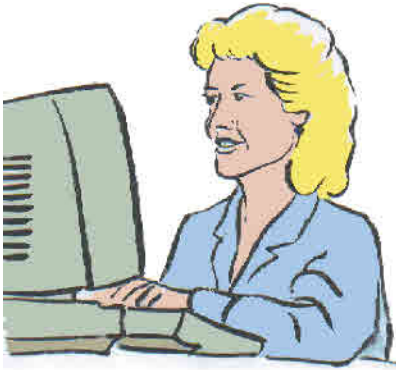
- check authorities are using human rights in their rules for services



- ask the Government and others to give good leadership on human rights and the law



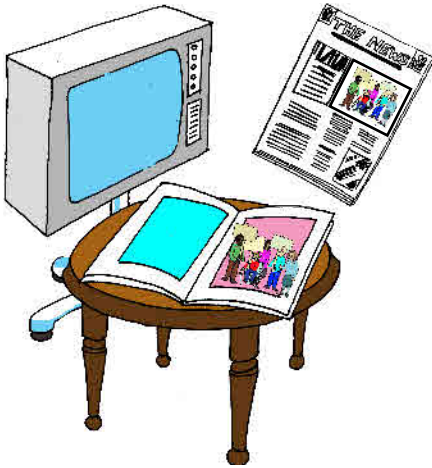
- be good leaders ourselves



- write new guides for people about human rights and get others to do the same



- help organisations use human rights in their work and all they do



- keep an eye on the news for stories about human rights and help newspapers understand about human rights law and what it does and does not do



- tell people every time we can the good things about human rights



- have more on our website about human rights



- help authorities do the things they should do under the human rights law



- help inspectors check that organisations are working in the right way so people get their human rights



- keep our help and information up to date



- help schools and young people to know more about human rights.

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We will also look at this work again in 3 years' time and see how well things have gone and how much has changed.

## And finally



We found that most people want human rights and think that they are important.

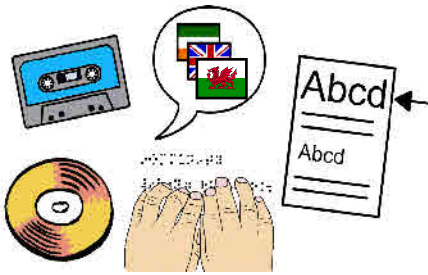


It is time for a new understanding of what human rights are really about and what we should all be doing to help.



All the things we have said the Equality and Human Rights Commission should do in this paper would help to make sure people get their human rights when using public services.

## Other formats



Please ask if you want this document in another format like:

- Braille
- audio
- large print
- another language.

## How to contact us



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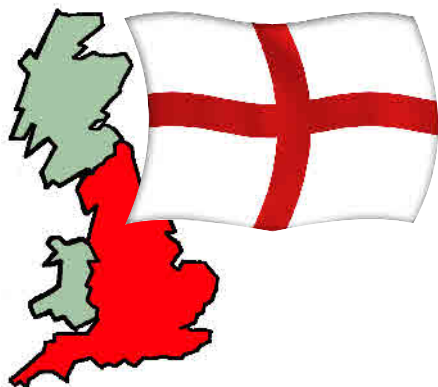
Website:

**[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)**

or

contact one of our helplines (Please go to the next page)





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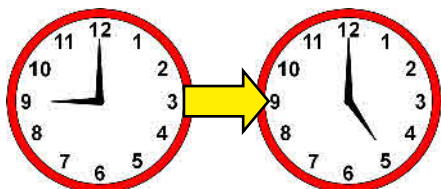
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Fax:

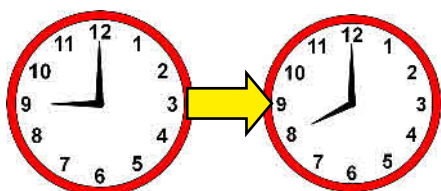


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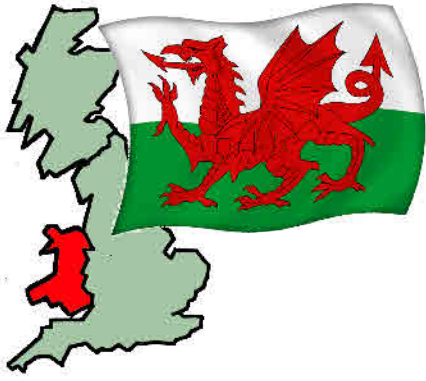
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9am–5pm



**Wednesday:**  
9am–8pm



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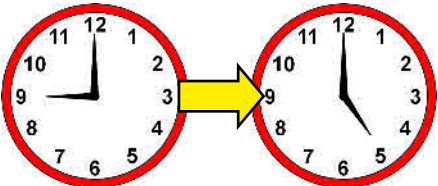
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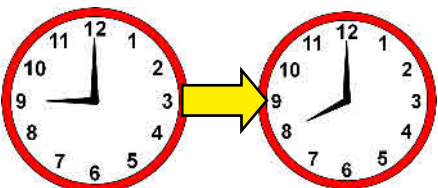
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