

# Our strategic plan

Executive summary  
2009–2012



**Equality and  
Human Rights**  
Commission

## Contents

- 01 Introduction
- 02 Foreword
- 06 Who we are
- 08 What we do
- 12 What we believe
- 14 A new story
- 16 We will...
- 18 Our strategic approach
- 20 Our priorities
- 26 Measuring our progress
- 32 Contacts

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Our **job** is to break down **inequality**, build **opportunity** and support a **civic society** where **fairness** and the **right** of the individual to a life of **dignity** and **respect** is not merely an **ideal** but a **fact**.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is charged by law with a vital **mandate**: to **protect** individuals against **discrimination**, to enforce the laws on equality and to **promote fairness** and human rights for **everyone**.

## Foreword

**For the first time, a statutory body has the responsibility to protect, enforce and promote equality across the seven ‘protected’ grounds – age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.**

The plan summarises our priorities and sets out a series of programmes and projects that we believe will help to make Britain a fairer, more equal place, with fewer of us likely to face discrimination and more of us able to realise our potential to the full.

In particular, this plan addresses the question of how the Commission will support the implementation of the Equality Bill.

But the heart of our mission, our integrated mandate, means that we will act across all the areas for which we are responsible, promoting fairness through structural change that benefits the 60 million people in Britain. We will always be ready to tackle the specific issues of discrimination, inequality and human rights failings that matter to each of the protected groups we are concerned with.

There can be no fair society if age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and gender reassignment remain as markers of disadvantage; and there can be no lasting or deep-rooted progress for disadvantaged groups unless we make a robust case for fairness which involves everyone.

In delivering this plan we will not be working alone. We already have many dozens of partner organisations who share our dedication to equality, good relations and human rights, and we consider it vital to work in close collaboration with them.

I would like to thank all of the people who took part in our consultation and offered us their insights, evidence, experience and ideas. We received over 400 contributions to the online consultation and welcomed more than 780 participants to events across England, Wales and Scotland. Without those contributions we simply would not have been able to develop a plan which was directed at the right targets or which could possibly work in the real world.

The people who were involved in this process came from a variety of backgrounds – business, public service, the voluntary and community sector, trade unions, academia – and they represented the interests and concerns of the full diversity of British society. Most are engaged in the day-to-day work of advancing equality and human rights. I cannot overstate the debt the Commission owes to those working on the frontline – both for that daily work and for bringing their expertise to bear on the development of our strategy.

In the coming three years we intend to capitalise on the relationships we have been building with people and organisations who have an interest in the Commission’s work and we will find more ways to secure the expert advice of many in our projects and our decision-making. The hard work of delivering this strategy can only succeed with the involvement of the widest possible coalition. I hope and believe that our plans match that ambition.



**Trevor Phillips**  
Chair,  
Equality and Human  
Rights Commission

## Who we are

**The Equality and Human Rights Commission** is the independent advocate for equality, human rights and good relations in Britain. We are an independent statutory body established under the Equality Act 2006 and our sponsor government department is the Government Equalities Office.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission strategic plan 2009–2012 sets out clearly how we are going to work towards our vision of a better Britain built on the principles of fairness and respect.



### **Gloria Buckley**

We make sure that public authorities are fulfilling their legal duties to promote equality and good relations. We have investigated local authorities' provision of authorised Gypsy and Traveller sites, like the three managed by Gloria Buckley, pictured.

## What we do

**Our mandate** derives from an approach to equality and opportunity which builds on a history of progress by our legacy commissions and many others. We are a modern regulator charged with upholding fair treatment and addressing inequality.

We are here for the 60 million people of Britain, to ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect. We believe no one should have to deal with the pernicious effects of discrimination and that prejudice has no place in a modern, open society.

Parliament has set us the tasks of promoting equality, enforcing the law, protecting the human rights of all and ensuring good relations in society. They are ambitious aims that can only be achieved in partnership with

our stakeholders and with the support of the public. We are living through rapidly changing times, both economically and socially. We believe that there is a ‘diversity dividend’, that the more inclusive we are the more benefits we will reap. By ensuring that we draw upon the skills of everyone we will be better as a country.

To help us fulfil our objectives we have unique powers. We can take legal cases on behalf of individuals to test and extend the right to equality and human rights; set up inquiries to investigate the behaviour of institutions; enforce the public sector equality duties; use our influence and our authority to lead new debates, building our arguments from the evidence we collect and publish. We are an independent publicly funded body.



### Working better

Our Working Better report, published in March 2009, drew on examples of flexible working like the bakery at Sainsbury’s in Camden Town, pictured. The report set out detailed plans for reforming parental leave and promoting greater flexibility in the workplace.

‘I think we’ve gone as far as we can with the **single identity** group. We need to bring others along with us. If we create a **bigger voice**, the Government is going to **respond** to it.’

**Baroness Jane Campbell**  
Commissioner,  
Equality and Human  
Rights Commission



**Sharon and  
Oliver Coleman**

The Commission took the case of Sharon Coleman, pictured with her disabled son Oliver, to the European Court of Justice. The case established new rights for the millions of carers across the UK, protecting them against discrimination by employers.

## What we believe

**We are a public body** charged with helping create a society where people can live their lives to the full, whatever their background or identity. Our evidence shows that there are often common roots of inequality and that with a joined-up approach across our mandate we can achieve real, systemic change. By working together with a wide range of groups our voice and the voices of those we speak for will be amplified.

We believe in empowering the individual. By putting power in the hands of those who need it we can move away from centralised control. We believe in communities: communities of place and communities of interests.

People want services that are tailored to them and want barriers taken out of their way. They want organisations in the public and

private sector to be transparent about how they behave. They want businesses to understand that reputation matters as much as the bottom line. They want public bodies that are efficient and spend the public's money wisely.

Nobody wants assumptions made about them because of their background or make-up, be they a white man looking to retrain, a black woman who needs support for her business, a gay undergraduate, a young child from a run-down estate, a mother who wants to work or a disabled person looking for the right support. There are seven specific pillars to our mandate, the seven strands where we will tackle discrimination and use the law to create greater equality – they are: gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age and gender reassignment.



### **Farmida Bi, Sabina Iqbal and Salma Yaqoob**

The Commission's Muslim Women Power List celebrated the achievements of professional Muslim women such as Bi, from the law firm Norton Rose, Iqbal, from Deaf Parenting UK, and Yaqoob, a Birmingham Councillor, pictured.

## A new story

**The pursuit of equality** has, historically, been one of fighting discrimination against individuals. It has been geared towards redress for offences that have already been committed. Essential as that approach is, we cannot only rely on people taking their cases through the legal system. We must also focus on working for systemic change and culture change, as our predecessors did, as well as individual justice. This is where fairness and equality intersect and support one another – fairness is about a culture of equality, an instinctive reaction against discrimination and prejudice, a celebration of difference where all talents can flourish. Equality is about the set of principles we hold dear and ensuring, with the law if necessary, that they are upheld.

It is not enough for us to identify problems: we must find solutions. We want to enable people and organisations to act fairly, rather than simply punish them if they step out of line. We will work with those who do well, help those who want to improve, and act against those who do not.

Our work must engage people's emotions. We tell people's stories – and we learn from them. We listen and we deal with the world as it is, rather than as we would like it to be. We act as a broker, bringing judgement and legal authority to difficult, fractured debates. We will often need legislation to do our work but we will also need the power of voice, argument and authoritative evidence to make our case.



### **Jack Thomas**

Our legal work allowed Jack Thomas, 14, pictured, from Swansea to compete in the UK Schools Games. Learning disabled athletes had been excluded from the Games and the Paralympics as a result of cheating at the Paralympics in 2002.

## We will...

Work to bring about a **landmark Equality Act** that eradicates unjustified discrimination and releases talent through a simpler legislative framework.

Ensure that the law **works for individuals**, breaking through injustice, making strategic interventions and supporting individual cases. We will also work with others to increase the availability of legal representation.

Deliver a **grants programme** that helps to widen the reach of the voluntary and community sector, fulfilling our mandate to strengthen good relations and bring people together.

Work with the **public and private** sector to provide high-quality advice and guidance on the law and ensure that the law is enforced.

Prepare public authorities for the next generation of the public duty, delivering practical guidance and promoting best practice focused on achieving results, namely better outcomes for disadvantaged groups.

Inspire the next generation to **embrace the values of equality and human rights**.

**Protect and promote the human rights of all**, implementing the recommendations of our Human Rights Inquiry to ensure a culture of dignity and respect in public services, and safeguarding our civil liberties.

Build the capabilities of our organisation to act as a **modern regulatory body** ensuring that breaches of the law are dealt with swiftly, proportionately and efficiently.

**Communicate directly with the public**, developing new platforms and tools through the Commission's digital strategy, and **give people information** so they are empowered to seek redress.

**Publish an agenda-setting triennial review** to assess the state of equality and human rights across Britain, and make concrete recommendations for reform.

Create **meaningful partnerships** with our stakeholders to advance equality and human rights across Britain.

# Our strategic approach

**Our strategy** is driven by our vision of a better Britain built on principles of fairness and respect, our statutory duty to eradicate discrimination, and the needs of the society in which we operate.

The strategic plan 2009–2012 sets out the Commission’s strategic direction: our priorities and work programmes over the next three years. It has been developed through involvement and consultation with stakeholders and partners who have an interest in or affected by our work.

It shows how we intend to fulfil our statutory obligations as the independent advocate for equality and human rights in Britain efficiently and effectively. We will use our unique powers to create change, and to empower and enable others to work with us.

**Our role** is to create a strong vision, lead debate, and to transform changing culture and influencing thought; providing the definitive interpretation of how the human rights and equality laws are used; and acting on breaches of legislation with the range of our enforcement and regulatory powers.

**We will empower others** by guaranteeing a trusted way through the system for those in need; by providing authoritative advice and support for those faced with discrimination and inequality; and by working alongside other regulators, inspectorates and authorities to create effective tools for action. We will lead by ensuring that our stakeholders’ voices are heard; or, where it is right speaking out independently; we will be partners and advocates for those who will benefit from the backing of our reputation and authority.

# Our priorities

We have identified five strategic priorities that we will work towards as an organisation over the next three years. All of the work we do will relate to one or more of these priorities.

## **Strategic priority 1: secure and implement an effective legislative and regulatory framework for equality and human rights**

The present legislative framework is widely regarded as inconsistent, incomprehensible and fragmented across different grounds of equality. At the same time, drivers of inequality are worsening and a more effective legal framework is required. The need for simplified but robust legislation that takes into account constitutional change – proposals for a Bill of Rights and devolution – is more compelling than ever.

- The Commission will ensure that the new legislation is successfully implemented, and will help public and private sector organisations to plan and prepare for the Equality Bill. We will ensure that the proposed Bill of Rights protects and promotes the principles set out in the Human Rights Act. This legislation will assist the Commission in meeting its statutory duties.

## **Strategic priority 2: create a fairer Britain, with equal life chances and access to services for all**

Our analysis of the changing face of disadvantage and discrimination in Britain, the changing labour market, the delivery of public services, and the immediate impact of the economic downturn, all point towards the need for concerted action by the Commission in tackling structural inequalities that impact on the groups in our mandate.

- We will address the structural causes of discrimination – for example the impact of occupational segregation on the gender pay gap – as well as the broader role of socio-economic disadvantage and income poverty in exacerbating discrimination and inequality.

- The Commission's work in England will contribute towards the delivery of Public Service Agreement (PSA) 15 on Equality in collaboration with Central Government, other Non-Departmental Public Bodies and partners in local government and the Voluntary and Community Sector. In Scotland we will work within the framework of National Performance Outcomes, and in Wales our priorities will take account of those of the Welsh Assembly.
- We will use the legislation and powers currently at our disposal – such as the public duties and the Human Rights Act – in order to create social change. The Commission will examine the culture of respect for human rights within Britain's public services.

- That will also require the Commission to assess the impact of particular forms of disadvantage using the Equality Measurement Framework, accepting that particular challenges may be invisible and therefore poorly understood within the official equality statistics.

**Strategic priority 3: build a society without prejudice, promote good relations and foster a vibrant equality and human rights culture**

Evidence suggests that structural discrimination and disadvantage are exacerbated by subtle processes that involve negative stereotyping, hostility and hatred towards particular groups, and deep-set prejudicial attitudes which themselves trigger harmful behaviours.

Our ambition over the long-term is to change the attitudes of a generation. We will work towards this through research, an

alliance with government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and a range of activities undertaken beyond the Commission. We will also build our links with cultural institutions to promote equality and human rights.

- There is evidence of heightened segregation and a lack of shared understanding, tolerance and respect of diverse cultures, beliefs and lifestyles, as well as a sense of powerlessness and marginalisation in some communities.
- The Commission will seek to reduce the general levels of prejudice in society, building on progress in some areas. For example, racism appears to be less prevalent among younger generations in Britain, though it is far from absent. There are also pressing challenges such as tackling hatred and violence directed at disabled people, lesbian, gay and bisexual communities, and transgender people.

- There is sound evidence that discrimination is fuelled by prejudice, segregation and lack of awareness. Unless we address the root causes of unlawful discrimination, the Commission will find the demand for retrospective interventions ‘to right past wrongs’ is unsustainable. Our strategic approach is about tackling the systemic causes and effects of discrimination.
- The Commission has a statutory duty to ensure that public bodies adequately address their good relations duties, yet there is currently considerable confusion and uncertainty around the legislative framework on community cohesion.
- The Commission will often work through intermediary institutions such as the strategic public bodies that set policies for schools and universities. These bodies may have greater insight into grassroots barriers and opportunities. We will also

develop direct channels through which we can communicate with the public.

**Strategic priority 4: promote understanding and awareness of rights and duties – deliver timely and accurate advice and guidance to individuals and employers**

The Commission has to ensure that every organisation does what is required of it in law, and that their duties are fulfilled in relation to equality legislation and the Human Rights Act. The Commission is the custodian of Britain’s equality and human rights enactments – along with the Scottish Human Rights Commission in Scotland – and our role is to provide timely, accessible and authoritative guidance on the law, while encouraging the exchange and development of best practice.

At the same time, we need to work with organisations and communities, not set ourselves against them. We recognise that the culture of public and private sector organisations is ever-changing. As organisations become more flexible and adaptive, we will need a different approach to equality and diversity.

- We will reward excellence among equality ‘leaders’, incentivise the ‘willing but nervous’ to improve, and take appropriate and proportionate action against ‘laggards’ who breach their statutory duties. The Commission will provide regular, accessible updates on legislative developments, case law and enforcement action through a variety of channels so that it can be readily put into practice, particularly among Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises. This will include a significant body of statutory and non statutory guidance in relation to the new Equality Act.

- We will work with others including key partners such as ACAS, the trade unions, and business organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry, and the various trade associations covering the professions, manufacturing and service industries. All public and private sector organisations must carry out their duties under the law.
- The individual’s right to redress remains paramount. However, the Commission believes that advice and guidance are often best provided through intermediaries such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and community law centres, and that our role is to provide effective oversight to ensure an adequate infrastructure of advice and access to justice across Britain.

### **Strategic priority 5: build an authoritative and responsive organisation**

Delivering on our first four strategic priorities will require the Commission to fulfil a complex remit, while coping with a range of economic and political challenges.

- We will continue to build our authoritative measurement framework and evidence base.
- We will continue to invest in people while developing effective approaches to project-based working. The Commission is continuing to build a lean and efficient corporate centre, while strengthening its financial management capability.
- An organisation that is strategically focused and professionally capable will also have the confidence to work with, and where necessary, lead those stakeholders that are committed to the human rights and equalities agenda in creating lasting social change.

- The Commission will maintain a reactive capability given the likelihood of unexpected events, crises and societal ‘shocks’.

### **Our work programmes**

The work programmes define both where we will focus our resources and how we will work with others. All of our programmes are linked to the Key Performance Indicators in the following section.

We have eight work programmes which set out in detail how we will work towards each one of our strategic priorities. These are set out in detail in the full version of our Strategic Plan, which is available on our website: [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

# Measuring our progress

The Commission has developed a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to help measure our progress over the next three years. The triennial review, due to be published in 2010, will set out further outcome measures against which the Commission's performance can be assessed.

## **Strategic priority 1: secure and implement an effective legislative and regulatory framework for equality and human rights**

- Evidence of the Commission's influence on key legislative and policy developments including the new Equality Bill, the proposed Bill of Rights and the EU Article 13 Directive that will help to strengthen domestic legal protection.

- Evidence of effective implementation of the various UN and Council of Europe Human Rights Treaties as measured by the Commission's work, including shadow reports on Britain's compliance in 2010, influencing the international bodies' assessments.

- Targeted use of our powers covering all the areas in our equality and human rights remit: at least 100 strategic legal actions and mediation cases each year and a 70 per cent success rate as defined by positive legal outcomes and effective settlement terms.
- At least seven Formal Inquiries and Investigations progressed over three years within set time-frames and budgets resulting in positive outcomes that effect change.
- A high and consistent level of awareness among public bodies targeted by the Commission of their obligations under the current public sector equality duties as measured by a baseline survey established in 2009/10, and a five per cent improvement year-on-year thereafter.
- A rise in the proportion of private sector employers receiving material from the Commission who believe they understand equality legislation as measured by a baseline survey established in 2009/10.

## **Strategic priority 2: create a fairer Britain, with equal life chances and access to services for all**

- An increase in the proportion of private sector employers conducting pay audits to 35 per cent from the current baseline of 23 per cent.
- At least five Memorandums of Understanding agreed with major public service regulators and inspectorates, and equality performance measures embedded in their inspection frameworks, within three years.
- Improved equality outcomes in relation to procurement and diversity, the criminal justice system, education and local government performance. We will publish these detailed outcome measures in the triennial review in 2010.

**Strategic priority 3:  
build a society without  
prejudice, promote good  
relations and foster a  
vibrant equality and  
human rights culture**

- An increase in awareness of the Commission and its work among the public by five per cent from the October 2007 baseline.
- An attitudinal shift on general measures of prejudice among target audiences, for example participants in youth programmes supported by the Commission.
- Three major national campaigns completed, evaluated and providing evidence of impact and cost effectiveness. The Commission will establish objectives for each campaign around awareness-raising, and attitudinal and behavioural change.

- In addition to campaign specific evaluation, we will also establish standardised metrics to build a picture of our impact. This will include a specific exercise to measure our brand equity among target audiences. The Commission will also measure media coverage by volume and message penetration, including digital platforms. This baseline will be established by the third quarter 2009/10.
- Three nationwide involvement exercises completed: average rates of 50 per cent attendance and a 20 per cent rate of first time attendees at all involvement and consultation events.

**Strategic priority 4:  
promote understanding and  
awareness of rights and duties  
– deliver timely and accurate  
advice and guidance to  
individuals and employers**

- Codes of Practice and guidance published that meet best practice guidelines and improve employer, policy-maker and service delivery awareness of statutory responsibilities as measured by an annual survey with baseline established in 2009/10.
- A 50 per cent increase in the number of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises that seek information and advice from the Commission and its partners, establishing a baseline in 2009/10.

- Attain a 20 per cent increase in overall user satisfaction with the Commission's services through a baseline survey carried out in the first year of the plan: evidence that over 90 per cent of requests for information and advice in accessible formats are responded to promptly and effectively.
- A Commission website and helpline service that meets the highest standards of public accessibility. Our user satisfaction survey will establish a baseline from which to assess whether the Commission's website and helpline are viewed as authoritative, and we will regularly monitor speed of response and target call volumes.

- An advice sector that is supported and mobilised to provide direct help and support to individuals: at least three grants per region will build the capacity of the advice and advocacy sector across England, with further resources for Scotland and Wales.
- A stakeholder survey to measure perceptions of the quality and reach of advice and advocacy services across Britain, aiming to increase stakeholder confidence in the overall provision of services by 20 per cent over the life of the plan.

**Strategic priority 5:  
build an authoritative  
and responsive  
organisation**

- An enhanced pool of engaged EHRC stakeholders, demonstrated by an increased range of organisations represented at Commission conferences and events: we will increase by 30 per cent the number of stakeholder organisations which contribute to the next Strategic Plan consultation over the 2008/9 baseline.
- Ensuring effective utilisation of our resources with expenditure kept within +/- 5 per cent of agreed budget, and developing and delivering on our value for money plan.

- Increased levels of assurance from internal and external audit including unqualified National Audit Office (NAO) approved annual report and accounts.
- New equality and human rights performance indicators consulted on and in place for the triennial review by June 2010.
- Employee index tracking levels of engagement among our staff will increase to 70 per cent by December 2009 – from a baseline of 55 per cent – with further improvements thereafter.
- The actions set out in our three-year equality scheme delivered by March 2012.

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Printed on 9lives Offset, manufactured from FSC certified 100% recycled TCF (Totally Chlorine Free) fibre. Vegetable-based inks were used throughout.

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Published June 2009

ISBN 978-1-84206-165-7

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