

A black and white close-up photograph of two young children smiling broadly. The child on the left is a white girl with curly hair, and the child on the right is a Black girl with curly hair. Both are wearing dark, textured sweaters. The background is out of focus.

**Equality and
Human Rights
Commission**

equalityhumanrights.com

**Who we are and
what we do**



Contents

- 2 About us
- 4 Why we are here
- 8 Our powers
- 10 Where we work



'Not a river of blood, but a tide of hope': our Chair, Trevor Phillips, speaks about modern multiculturalism on the 40th anniversary of Enoch Powell's infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech.



**Equality and
Human Rights
Commission**

**Equality and
Human Rights**

About us

At the Equality and Human Rights Commission we believe that everyone should be treated fairly and with dignity. Unfortunately this doesn't always happen. According to a survey carried out for us in 2007, discrimination and disadvantage are still common across Britain. We don't all have equal chances in life and some forms of discrimination are complex and deep-rooted. Sometimes people choose to ignore the rights of others even when this is against the law. This is why the Equality and Human Rights Commission is here.

We aim to help Britain develop in a way that values the ideals that most of us hold dear – **respect, freedom, equality,**

dignity and fairness. These are also the core principles that underpin 'human rights' – the basic rights and freedoms that belong to all of us as human beings.

Launched on 1 October 2007, our role is to:

- ensure people are aware of their rights and how to use them
- work with employers, service providers and organisations to help them develop best practice
- work with policymakers, lawyers and the Government to make sure that social policy and the law promote equality and
- use our powers to enforce the laws that are already in place.



Our specialist helpline advisers are here to give you information and guidance on your rights. We have separate helplines for England, Wales and Scotland.

Why we are here

As a single Commission we can act as one source of information and advice and tackle discrimination on multiple levels (many people face more than one type of discrimination). We bring together the work of the three previous equality commissions and we also have new responsibilities. This means we can provide previously under-represented groups, such as older people, with a powerful body to tackle discrimination.

We have laws in this country to protect us from discrimination, unequal treatment and to preserve our rights in relation to:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender, including gender reassignment
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sexual orientation

We also have human rights legislation that guarantees basic rights and freedoms for everyone.



Marcus Ramshaw, priest



Michael Etkind, Holocaust survivor



Gok Wan, television presenter



Alison Lapper, artist

2008 saw the launch of the Commission's YouTube channel. Our 'Equally Different' campaign features videos of individuals from all walks of life. Visit www.youtube.com/equalityhumanrights



The rights you have might apply in different settings:

- at work
- in education and training
- in the services you receive, like health and social care, transport or housing
- in the commercial services you buy, such as in shops and leisure centres or
- in the way you are treated by official institutions.

The law is slightly different depending on the kind of discrimination or unfair treatment you may have suffered and it can be quite complex. We can help you to work out your rights and give you advice on what you can do next.

“ This is truly a landmark case and it will have a real impact on the lives of millions of carers ”

John Wadham, our Legal Group Director,
on Sharon Coleman’s case

“ It has taken a lot of courage to fight this case, but no one should have to choose between caring for disabled relatives or their job. ”

Sharon Coleman took her employer to court after being harassed and refused flexible working to enable her to care for her disabled son, Oliver. We supported her case, which will lead to greater legal protection for carers.



Our powers

Enforcing the law

We have extensive powers to enforce equality law. We offer advice and information through our helplines, website and publications.

We can take legal cases on behalf of individuals as well as legal action to prevent breaches of the Human Rights Act. However, we can only take on a limited number of cases each year so we will concentrate on those cases which test the law. In addition we give funding to organisations that provide legal advice to members of the public.

Our role includes making sure that public authorities carry out their legal duties to tackle discrimination and promote

equality. We also have the power to launch official inquiries and formal investigations.

Shaping public policy

We work to influence the Government to develop equality and human rights legislation that is fit for the 21st century and that gives everyone the chance to reach their full potential.

We will use our influence and authority to ensure that social policy considers the importance of equality and human rights and that these issues remain at the top of the Government's agenda. By commissioning, assessing and publishing research we will become a respected source of evidence-based

knowledge about the state of equality and human rights in Britain.

We will also produce a report every three years, which will be presented to Parliament. This will assess equality in Britain and how much progress has been made.

Promoting good practice

We work with public, private and voluntary organisations and employers

to reduce discrimination, develop good practice and promote equality of opportunity for all. We use our communications and campaigns work to reach new audiences and to push for social change and justice.

We help other organisations through our grants programme, which enables us to give financial support to local and national projects that promote equality and human rights across Britain.

“ We all have the right to expect that we will be treated fairly, not exploited and that our dignity is respected ”

Trevor Phillips

Where we work

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

For details of how to contact us please see the back cover of this publication.

If you live in **Scotland** or **Wales** you can benefit from our separate offices with special remits to take account of the particular issues that affect you.

Scotland

The Equality and Human Rights Commission in Scotland is there to

ensure that the aims, vision and strategy of the Commission consider Scottish needs. The team is based in Glasgow and Edinburgh. We have a Scotland commissioner and committee to oversee our work and work closely with the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Commission for Human Rights and other organisations in Scotland.

Wales

The Equality and Human Rights Commission in Wales, based in Cardiff and Bangor, is there to ensure that the Commission takes account of Welsh needs. We have a Wales commissioner and committee to oversee our work and work closely with the Welsh Assembly and other Welsh organisations.

We gave £10 million to grassroots organisations working across all areas of equality in 2008. One of the recipients is APORENet, whose project aims to promote equality and human rights through art.

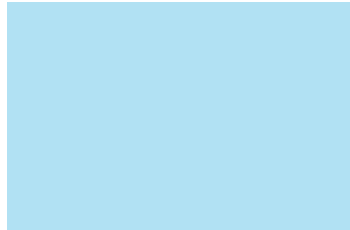


“ The aim of creating a diverse and equal society is the greatest challenge facing Britain today. Together we can make it a reality ”

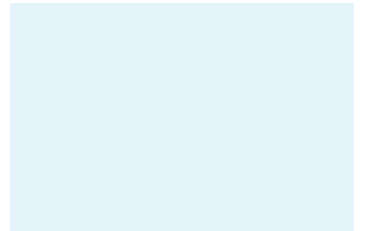
Nicola Brewer, Chief Executive,
Equality and Human Rights Commission



We are a non-departmental public body, independent of Government, established under the Equality Act 2006.
© Equality and Human Rights Commission July 2008



Photographs courtesy of Pauline Neild, Bob Hopley, APORENet and Airbus UK.
ISBN 978 1 84206 058 2



Contact us

You can find out more or get in touch with us via our website at:

www.equalityhumanrights.com

or by contacting one of our helplines.

This publication is also available in Welsh as a bilingual publication.

If you require this publication in an alternative format and/or language please contact the relevant helpline to discuss your needs. All publications are also available to download and order in a variety of formats from our website.

Equality and Human Rights Commission helpline – England

Telephone: 08456 046 610

Textphone: 08456 046 620

Fax: 08456 046 630

9am–5pm, Monday to Friday,
except Wednesday 9am–8pm

Equality and Human Rights Commission helpline – Scotland

Telephone: 08456 045 510

Textphone: 08456 045 520

Fax: 08456 045 530

9am–5pm, Monday to Friday,
except Wednesday 9am–8pm

Equality and Human Rights Commission helpline – Wales

Telephone: 08456 048 810

Textphone: 08456 048 820

Fax: 08456 048 830

9am–5pm, Monday to Friday,
except Wednesday 9am–8pm

