Making a difference
Wales review 2009/10
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Who we are

The Equality and Human Rights Commission was established under the Equality Act 2006. Our job is to promote equality and human rights, and to create a fairer Britain.

We do this by providing advice and guidance, working to implement an effective legislative framework and raising awareness of everyone’s rights.

www.equalityhumanrights.com/wales
Foreword

Setting a new agenda has been the theme of our work during the past year. We engaged with the widest range of people we could in seeking to keep equality and human rights at the top of everyone’s priorities.

We saw some progress on long standing problems as well as some new initiatives. Really positive developments include:

- The gender pay gap reducing from 13% to 9% - the narrowest gap ever in Wales
- The Welsh Assembly Government consulting to ensure every viewpoint on future specific public sector duties was captured
- Faith groups working together to build networks across the country
- Major employers introducing new workplace policies on domestic abuse and mental health

Heartfelt thanks from us and the Wales Committee go to Neil Wooding, our Commissioner from 2006 - 2009. We are greatly appreciative of Neil’s energy in driving forward the equality and human rights agenda in Wales.

His leadership established the positive values and behaviours that underpin the Commission’s work.

In the year ahead we will work to ensure the Equality Act is a powerful catalyst for change in Wales. Other ambitious goals include:

- Action to help disabled people live in safety and security in our communities through our Disability Harassment Inquiry
- Assisting public services to translate human rights principles into everyday actions
- Working with those providing services, and with employers, to avoid the cuts falling disproportionately on the groups in our remit.

We look forward to working closely with as many of you as possible in making a difference.

Ann and Kate

Kate Bennett
National Director for Wales

Ann Beynon
Wales Commissioner
Our Wales Committee was established by the Equality Act 2006 to ensure the overall work of the Commission reflects the needs and priorities of Wales. We set the strategic direction of the Commission’s work in Wales.

Strong working relationships built on trust are a top priority for us and we recognise that only by working collaboratively can we achieve our goals.

We travel around Wales meeting hundreds of people committed to promoting equality and human rights. We thank everyone we’ve met for their generosity, time and effort in sharing their views and experiences.

We’ve met individuals and organisations whose everyday work is promoting equality as well as people with leadership roles in public services, business and the community.

Your contributions are invaluable in a number of ways. They enable us to speak with authority, not assumption, about key issues and help us in sharpening our focus on what needs to change.

Meeting people helps us establish shared agendas, broker difficult debates and give a voice to those who are seldom heard.

This ongoing dialogue has laid the foundations for alliances and partnerships which are powerful and sustainable.

This has enabled us to seize opportunities, extend the reach and give a higher visibility and impact to our - and others - work and achievements.

We will maintain this high level of engagement in the year ahead to ensure our objectives take account of your views, that they are relevant and have a big impact in driving change in Wales.

Ann Beynon and Neil Wooding
Meet the Wales Committee

**Ann Beynon OBE** is Commissioner for Wales. Ann chairs our Wales Committee, supported by the National Director for Wales. Ann is Director for BT in Wales.

**Barry Clarke:** Barry was a committee member until January 2010 when he became an Employment Tribunal Judge.

**Anne Crowley:** Anne is a policy and research consultant, with particular expertise in the field of children.

**Rhian Davies:** Rhian is Chief Executive of Disability Wales.

**Karen Dusgate:** Karen is Chief Executive of Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association.

**Reverend Aled Edwards:** Aled is Chief Executive of CYTUN (Churches Together in Wales).

**Siân Gale:** Siân is a partner in Pawb, providing public support services for broadcasters.

**Clifton Robinson:** Clifton is Chief Executive of the Housing Diversity Network.

**Dr Olwen Williams:** Olwen is Chief of Staff for Primary Community and Specialist Medicine at Betsi Cadwaladr UHB.

**Liz Withers:** Liz is Principal Policy Advocate for Consumer Focus Wales.

**Dr Neil Wooding:** was Commissioner for Wales until December 2009. He is Director of Public Service Management Wales.
The Equality Act simplifies and strengthens the law and our job is to make sure the Act translates into real improvements in people’s lives.

Making this happen was the aim of our three employer events, four roundtables and presentations to the Wales TUC, CIPD, Eversheds, Tai Pawb and Citizens Advice Bureaux among many others.

Our nine voluntary sector events across Wales gave race, gender, older people, religion or belief, transgender, sexual orientation and disability stakeholders the opportunity to identify gaps in current services which we published in our Plugging the Gaps report.

Examples of priorities are:

- making sure accessible public toilets are provided in every area
- having a flexible, integrated, accessible and concessionary transport system
- provision of health care catering taking account of cultural and religious diversity

Our consultations shaped the Welsh Assembly Government’s thinking about how we could implement the Equality Act public sector duty to deliver the best outcomes for Wales.

This includes building on current activity such as data gathering and assessing the impact of policies. North Wales and South Wales police services used data gathered about employment to develop initiatives to recruit more women, ethnic minority and LGBT staff.

Cardiff Council discovered, after carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment, Muslim women and children were not swimming because of a lack of privacy. A curtain dividing the cafe area from the pool and training women lifeguards dramatically increased take-up of free swimming sessions.

We are working closely with the Welsh Assembly Government so everyone in Wales is clear about their rights and their responsibilities and our range of guidance will help people tackle the greatest inequalities.
Wales has been described as an advice desert where a lack of advice undermines individuals’ ability to challenge discrimination.

The Commission is addressing this by increasing access to information and guidance, building the skills of equality advocates and funding casework.

Our Wales Helpline and Advice line staff have been busy assisting individuals, employers, service providers and legal representatives.

We helped the parents of a disabled child succeed in securing over £250,000 in improvements to make a local school more accessible.

Their daughter is now attending the school and being educated in the local community instead of much further away from home.

Over 30 people completed our discrimination law university courses at Cardiff and Bangor this year, giving advocates the skills to support cases.

Our student network helps them to continue to share their expertise and skills. As a result of the course, one CAB adviser secured over £200,000 compensation for clients and is now embarking on a legal career.

We delivered sessions for Citizen Advice Bureaux advisers on human rights issues and there is now a demand for this across Wales.

We used our legal grants to work with Newport, Flintshire and Denbighshire Citizens Advice Bureaux and Race Equality First so they can provide legal advice to individuals who feel they have been discriminated against.

Ynys Mon Citizens Advice Bureau used their grant and saw a significant increase in ethnic minority volunteers joining the service on the island.
Promoting Human Rights

Our research shows that 93% of people support laws to protect human rights and they also support the principles of dignity and respect.

However 83% surveyed felt human rights laws are still misunderstood in Wales.

The Commission’s task is to find ways to explain what human rights means in everyday life - and how human rights principles can be used to improve public services.

Over 50 individuals and organisations across Wales gave evidence to our Human Rights Inquiry. Wales fared well - we then launched the report at the Senedd and the Eisteddfod.

At the Inquiry, Hannah Spokes, a young carer aged 16, gave evidence about the emotional and practical support she receives from the Young Carers Network.

The Network is based on a human rights approach. As the family carer, the young person has the right to be told about what’s happening to their parents and their right to be included in the decision making processes of social services, GPs and health boards.

The Inquiry highlighted good practice and good ideas that can be shared and this was the basis for our second human rights summit held in Swansea in July.

Over 150 public sector organisations explored the benefits of taking a human rights approach in public services.

Delegates told us that our presentation, Dignity Drive, based around an imaginary street, was a powerful introduction to the issues. So we have developed it as a desktop and DVD resource that everyone can use at their workplace.

It’s proving to be very popular and we’ve had lots of interest, particularly among NHS Wales’ organisations such as Abertawe Bro Morgannwg UHB.

We are encouraging everyone to take a look at this educational tool, which is available on our website and in DVD format.

Neil Wooding, Dr Brian Gibbons, Ben Summerskill, Dame Nuala O’Loan and Kate Bennett
Over 100 people attended our second Conversation Evening in St Asaph to talk about human rights. People who had never worked with us, or focused on human rights before, described the event as a ‘light-bulb moment’.

Attitudes towards human rights were transformed and participants have told us they are planning similar events.

Feedback was enthusiastic and participants told us:

‘I am going to do at least one thing a day to make the world a better place.’

In December 2009, over 75 people came to our Evening Talk with Colm O’Gorman, Director of Amnesty International in Ireland, to mark Human Rights Day.

His personal story of campaigning against the abuse of power proved inspirational. He succeeded in persuading those in authority to take responsibility for the child abuse carried out by some clergy.

Colm described how he had used a combination of legal, campaign and media levers for change.

Those present spoke about how he had motivated them as individuals to take personal responsibility for ensuring human rights are upheld in everyday life.
Securing the rights of disabled people

In December 2009, we held the first major public events in the UK about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

Over 150 delegates and 85 organisations and public bodies met over two meetings to explore the Convention and prioritise action areas.

Our conference report, Rights of Way, outlined the hopes of disabled people in Wales for far-reaching social change starting at grass roots level. There was strong consensus on priorities including:

- a campaign for pride in being a disabled person and to combat stigma
- government taking action to turn rights into a reality
- a vision of disabled people integrated into mainstream education
- information that is inclusive, accessible and available in a range of formats

We are working with various organisations to ensure the energy sparked by these conferences unleashes the potential power of the UNCRPD convention.

Disability Wales launched a Streets Ahead campaign to increase access to high street shops and post offices.

The evidence from this will inform our activity to deliver improvements in the planning of new buildings.

We consulted with disabled people and organisations to shape our Inquiry into Disability Harassment.

There was overwhelming support in Wales for including harassment of family, friends and carers of disabled people in the scope of the Inquiry.

Public transport was described as a hot spot for harassment.

We are now gathering evidence to increase the chance of disabled people living in safety and security.
Sharing ideas with business

This year we increased our engagement with the private sector to share ideas and learn.

At the top of the agenda was the impact of the economic recession and how to prevent equality and human rights from slipping down the priority list.

Our series of publications on Working Better and Managing the Downturn aimed at small and medium sized business was well-received.

Businesses told us advice and guidance about employment law in these difficult times was particularly welcome. They added that innovation, diversity and flexibility together are the key to survival.

The John Lewis Partnership explained staff well-being is their top priority.

The Commission’s Finance Sector Inquiry found a 55% pay gap between women and men, a long working hours culture and much slower career development for women.

The Inquiry enabled us to build strong links with organisations such as Admiral, GoCompare, Principality and Call Centre Forum for Wales to understand the sector better and tackle gender inequality.

The Commission’s Meat-Packing Inquiry highlighted the widespread exploitation of migrant and agency workers in the meat processing sector.

The Commission has responded by setting up a taskforce to prepare guidance for the meat-packing industry. The Welsh Assembly Government has joined the taskforce.

The Inquiry found the Gangmasters’ Licensing Authority (GLA) does not inspect in Wales at the level it does elsewhere.

We are working with the Welsh Assembly Government to increase awareness of migrant workers’ rights and employers’ responsibilities.
Making the duties deliver

The public sector duties on race, gender and disability give public authorities the opportunity to put equality at the heart of services so that they meet real needs more effectively.

We asked public authorities to tell us their most positive outcomes from the equality duties.

Every Local Authority and Police Service responded positively and gave examples.

Our Rising to the Challenge report shows that the duties have resulted in practical, on the ground change.

Public bodies have discovered new ways of involving service users in decisions over the way services are delivered.

Dyfed Powys Police involved community members in training police staff in how to respond to hate crime incidents.

As a result, monitoring and support for victims and satisfaction rates of those reporting the incidents, has improved.

Gwynedd Council introduced a health strategy for the Chinese community and Flintshire introduced free entry to leisure centres for carers.

Swansea Council carried out assessments about the impact of policies on different groups and published them to increase transparency.

We published 60 examples of different initiatives. Many of these began in relation to one aspect of equality and developed to incorporate many others.

Some, seemingly small changes made a big difference to people using services.
We worked with inspectorate and regulatory bodies in Wales, including Estyn, Wales Audit Office, and Health Inspectorate Wales to explore the link between equality and improvement in public services.

Building on our ‘Equality Issues in Wales’ publication, we held a series of three seminars in partnership with the Bevan Foundation.

We worked with front line public sector staff to gather their evidence and experience.

We learned about inconsistent treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people in GP surgeries. And heard that some ethnic minority people had experienced discrimination as mental health service users.

Discussion moved on to identify effective practice and practical solutions for driving change forward in Wales.

We used this to instigate a constructive dialogue about using the duties to tackle the greatest inequalities in Wales.

**Triennial Review**

Our Triennial Review will measure progress on equality and human rights every three years. Working with stakeholders we have created a baseline of measures across all areas of everyday life.

First Minister Carwyn Jones, Mark Bainbridge of Thompsons Solicitors and our Commissioner Ann Beynon
Better working

Our Equality Exchange employer network continues to grow. In June, we held our 2\textsuperscript{nd} Wales Equality Exchange Annual Conference in Llandrindod Wells.

This year’s theme was \textit{confidently promoting equality}.

Almost 100 delegates heard key speakers share ideas on how confidence can help in making the moral, business and legal case for \textit{keeping equality high on the agenda} during the economic downturn.

Every delegate identified an aspect of their own work that could benefit from a more \textit{confident approach} and what their next actions would be post-event.

Equal Pay Duty

We commissioned a \textit{report from Swansea University} on the gender pay gap in Wales.

This showed that women continue to be stuck in low skilled, low paid jobs and are four times more likely to work part-time.

The report and our \textit{discussions on equal pay} with trade unions, employers and legal advisers informed our view on the most effective equal pay duty for the public sector.

We are seeking a \textit{duty that will bring benefits for women, their families and communities}.

This means taking a close look at women’s pay, the sort of jobs they do, their work patterns and contracts plus taking action to tackle discrimination.
Employer Policies

The **Equality Exchange network** and voluntary sectors partners helped us develop guidance to promote **effective employment practices in the areas of domestic abuse and mental health**.

Our aim is to ensure staff are supported better and employers increase their efficiency as a result.

The **benefits of effective practice**, such as reduced sickness absence, have clearly impressed employers and take-up of the guidance has begun.

**DVLA** has issued new guidance about domestic abuse to support staff, the **Fire Brigades Union** and **Assembly Commission** have introduced new policies and the **WLGA** are developing a new protocol for local government.
Bringing people together

This year, as part of our work to promote good relations, we commissioned research that looks at the lives of those experiencing the most serious prejudice and discrimination in Wales.

This includes people with mental health conditions, transgender people, asylum seekers and Gypsy Travellers.

When we publish our findings we will bring together voluntary and public sector organisations to agree actions for the year ahead.

One in four women students will experience violence on campus. So we launched our Asking for it? Campaign at a joint conference with NUS.

As a result students at Swansea Metropolitan University ran a campus awareness campaign. Other delegates built volunteering links with Women’s Aid.

We awarded over half a million pounds to equality organisations in Wales that promote equality and good relations. Among other things these projects have:

- created an advice and information service for disabled and ethnic minority people
- developed guidance to enable public authorities to understand honour-based violence and forced marriage
- carried out research on the experience of lesbian, gay and bisexual people with mental health conditions
- tested a multi agency approach to tackling hate crime

We had a strong presence at the Eisteddfod, where we launched our Human Rights Inquiry, generating a debate on human rights in a Wales context.

We also held a young people’s day to challenge the attitudes that lead to bullying in schools.
Equality and devolution

We attended the party conferences with our campaign to encourage political parties to increase the number of women and people from under-represented groups standing for election.

The campaign has created a sense of urgency and several parties have plans in place for the Assembly elections in 2011.

Our Electing for Equality commitment was signed by all four party leaders in Wales.

This ensured that good relations were promoted during the recent election, rather than campaigners stirring up prejudice against groups such as Gypsy Travellers and migrant workers.

This year we published Equal Opportunities and Human Rights: The First Decade of Devolution by Dr Paul Chaney of Cardiff University.

Our report shows that under devolution, strides have been taken towards equality, and equality has given strength to devolution.

An equalities agenda has taken shape that is distinct from Westminster and more suited to the everyday needs of Wales, such as adoption of United Nations Human Rights Principles into policy making.

Our regular meetings with Ministers resulted in a shared small grant fund with the Welsh Assembly Government.

We gave evidence to several sessions of the Assembly’s Equality of Opportunity Committee covering the Equality Act; Equal Pay and discrimination against those who have HIV.

We welcomed the establishment of the Cross-Party Working Group on Human Rights and contributed to their sessions.
Wales Projects 2010/11

Equality Act

We will increase understanding of the Equality Act and its potential to drive change so that everyone gets maximum benefit from the Act’s implementation. To assist individuals and the private, public and voluntary sectors get the most from the Act, we will issue a range of guidance. We will work closely with the Welsh Assembly Government to secure public sector specific duties that help address the greatest inequalities in Wales.

Promoting Human Rights

We will use our new web-based tool Dignity Drive and the findings of our Human Rights Inquiry to promote awareness, understanding and respect for human rights among decision-makers, public sector organisations, and the voluntary sector. We will gather and share effective practice between specific sectors, such as social housing, to translate human rights principles into everyday actions.

Securing the rights of disabled people

Our conferences about ensuring the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities delivers for people in Wales led to our Rights of Way report. We will use this report to involve disabled people and organisations in setting priorities. We will work with the Welsh Assembly Government to build the treaty principles into its policies.

Making the duties deliver

We will work with public service providers to demonstrate the value of implementing the equality duties. We will monitor progress in putting the duties into practice and will emphasise the need for equality impact assessment of public spending cuts to avoid unfair impact on certain groups.

Through our work with inspectorate bodies we will explore the importance of equality and human rights in improving services, and with the voluntary sector, to raise awareness of its role in driving change.
**Better working**

We will work with partners and our [Equality Exchange network](#) to promote effective employment policies on mental health, domestic abuse and equal pay. These will **support staff** and increase employer efficiency. Our aim is to achieve the widest possible take-up among employers and trade unions.

**Sharing ideas with business**

We will **connect business** with other leaders to share ideas to **build the business case** for equality. We will build on our Finance Sector Inquiry and Meatpacking Inquiry to implement the recommendations for **addressing inequality** in those sectors.

**Tackling discrimination**

We will **provide training** for [Citizens Advice Bureaux](#) and **trade unions** to increase their knowledge of how the [Equality Act](#) will **impact** on the advice they provide. We will make our **employment and discrimination law course** more accessible to increase take-up across Wales and develop a **discrimination advisers’ network**.

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**Bringing people together**

We will **gather evidence** from individuals, disabled people's organisations and public bodies in Wales to inform our **Inquiry into disability harassment**.

We will use every opportunity to **identify solutions** and effective practice. We will bring together disabled people and public service providers as the Inquiry’s **recommendations** take shape.

We will publish the second phase of our **Who do you see? research**, which looks at the experiences of the most discriminated groups in Wales. We will work with service providers, employers, policy makers and other interested groups to **increase the impact** of our **research findings**.

We will work with partners to increase the number of people from **under-represented groups** in public life. This will include publishing a **Who Runs Wales? 2011 report** looking at the **diversity of people in key decision-making positions** in Welsh life.
Contact us

The Equality and Human Rights Commission aims to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people, and promote and protect human rights.

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

www.equalityhumanrights.com

or by contacting our helpline:
Telephone: 0845 604 8810
Textphone: 0845 604 8820
Fax: 0845 604 8830

This report and more information can be found at:

www.equalityhumanrights.com/wales

Copies of this report are available by emailing

wales@equalityhumanrights.com

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