

Strategic Planning for 2016-19



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

Our Mission Statement: The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (the Commission) champions the human rights of those who live in Northern Ireland. The Commission is Northern Ireland's human rights guardian and centre of excellence. It holds to account and works in partnership with Government, elected representatives, statutory organisations and civil society. The Commission, established on the basis of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, plays a central role in shaping a society that, as it emerges from conflict, respects the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by upholding human rights and responsibilities.

What We Do: The Commission's role is to promote awareness of the importance of human rights, to review law and practice and to advise government on what steps need to be taken to fully protect human rights in Northern Ireland. We base our work on international human rights standards, including those of the United Nations (UN) and the Council of Europe. The Commission, in line with the 'Paris Principles' guidance of 1993, has 'A' status recognition at the UN as a national human rights institution. This gives us special access to the Human Rights Council, treaty bodies and other organisations. The primary role of the Commission is to protect and promote the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland.



Message from the Chief Commissioner

The Human Rights Commission is keen to get your views on what work we should be concentrating on over the next three years.

Within the Commission's life span we have investigated many issues including Nursing Homes, Emergency Healthcare, Prisons and Immigration services. We have provided advice on what should be in a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

We want to hear from you on where our priorities should lie. Tell us what you think we should focus on above and beyond our daily work to promote and protect the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland. Our priorities are currently good governance, austerity and dealing with the past. Do these priorities still hold good or should we concentrate on other issues?

What exactly can we do? We can investigate human rights protections in the Criminal Justice System, Healthcare, Education, within any area of public service including the Government. We can go anywhere in Northern Ireland to look at any area where human rights are engaged.

Tell us what is concerning you in your community or what issues are affecting you and your family most. Even if you think that they may not be a rights issue, you should still let us know as human rights are often right at the heart of our daily lives.

You can let us know your views by filling in this short survey.

Thank you for giving your views we really appreciate it.

Les Allamby

NIHRC Chief Commissioner

Our current Strategic Priorities:

Pillar One: Human Rights and Good Governance: Human rights need to be embedded at the heart of the executive and legislature, reflected in our basic legal framework and honoured in the operation of all offices of State. The challenges in these regards include the complexity of our constitutional system, the nature of our devolved jurisdiction and the relative newness of many of the governance structures.

Actions: The Commission supported the development of a strong indigenous framework for human rights-compliance on the part of the State. It continued to advise Government in support of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. It monitored, advised and supported public servants - including local government and the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) - to carry out their functions in a human rights-compliant manner. In particular it helped develop capacity for rights-based commissioning and delivery of services in the health and social care sector.

Outcomes: The Commission supported the embedding of capacities for human rights across Northern Ireland's governance structures, at all levels and including the framework of service delivery, especially in the health and social care sector. It published its annual statement on human rights in Northern Ireland. It advanced the process for a separate Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. It ensured that UK-wide human rights initiatives took account of the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland and that these did not diminish existing protections or in any other way impede the distinct Northern Ireland Bill of Rights process.

Our Work under this Pillar over the Past 3 years has included:

- Establishing a Business & Human Rights Forum with membership from businesses small and large, trade unions and NGO's.
- Working in partnership with the Northern Ireland Civil Service to develop practical human rights training tools for civil servants
- Establishing a Human Rights Inquiry into Emergency Healthcare and working with individual Trusts to implement our findings.
- Producing annual statements on Northern Ireland's human rights record.
- Working with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety towards the implementation of recommendations contained in our investigation report into the human rights of older people in nursing homes.
- Publication of new research on public procurement and human rights to outline why government departments and other public authorities should integrate human rights standards into all public procurement processes.

Pillar Two: Human Rights and the Conflict: The legacy of conflict runs deep in Northern Ireland. There remain serious gaps in accountability, justice and inter-community reconciliation. Division and sectarianism result in violence and other forms of hate crime. Lives continue to be blighted and lost.

Actions: The Commission fostered a human rights-based understanding of the key issues of dealing with the past in Northern Ireland and developed a suite of materials on the topic. In so doing, it paid particular attention to the situation of victims and survivors and of former prisoners convicted of conflict related offences. The Commission challenged racism, including sectarianism and all its manifestations and contributed to the promotion of good community relations. The Commission undertook pioneering work on the human right to culture (including in terms of the right to acknowledge and celebrate diverse linguistic and other senses of individual and community identity). In recognition of the relationship of peace, equality and non-discrimination, the Commission continued to play its role in combating discrimination including on such grounds as race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity and age.

Outcomes: The Commission played its part in stimulating a new phase of consideration of how Northern Ireland undertakes a wide-ranging programme of dealing with the past, taking account of international good practice. In so doing, it ensured that significant advances are made in addressing the particular situation of victims and survivors and of former prisoners convicted of conflict related offences. It demonstrated how human rights need to be at the heart of good community relations. The Commission's work on the protection of the human right to culture in post-conflict societies was of international significance. The Commission contributed substantially to ensuring that a post-conflict Northern Ireland is a more equal and non-discriminatory society.

Our Work under this Pillar over the Past 3 years has included:

- Providing extensive human rights advice to Government including on:
- The Stormont House Agreement
- Flags and Emblems
- Dealing with the Past
- Parades & Protests
- Hosting a United Nations supported International Symposium on the Human Right to Culture.
- Continuing to work with the United Nations, local political parties, the Irish Government and the UK Government to ensure that any new legislative proposals, for example around the repeal of the Human Rights Act, do not undermine commitments contained within the Belfast, St Andrews and Stormont House Agreement.
- Continuing to advise Government in support of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

Pillar three: Protecting Human Rights in a Time of

Austerity: Economic recession and austerity measures have led to unemployment and budget cuts that impact deeply on the enjoyment of human rights, including the right to an adequate standard of living. While those who are already at a disadvantage suffer the most, it has to be recognised that recession impacts the human rights of all the people of Northern Ireland.

Actions: The Commission closely monitored the State's compliance with its socio-economic duties, including that of ensuring an adequate standard of living. It focused attention on the needs of those who are most powerless including persons with disabilities; children in the care of or detained by the state; prisoners; ethnic minorities (including Travellers) and persons in need of health and social care. It advised government and its agencies on the achievement of these rights during a time of public spending constraint. The Commission provided human rights capacity-building support to the State and other actors.

Outcomes: The Commission ensured that legislators and policy decision-makers addressed economic challenges with the understanding that human rights protection is a priority matter. It brought to the forefront of their attention the impact of austerity measures on the most powerless in society addressing the needs of vulnerable individuals and those who are marginalised. The Commission supported their voices to be heard and those community and voluntary organisations working on their behalf. It transferred skills to relevant State actors for rights-based socio-economic decision making.

Our Work under this Pillar over the Past 3 years has included:

- Taking Strategic Litigation to ensure the rights of the most vulnerable are protected, including: A judicial review of Northern Ireland's Termination of Pregnancy Law, to bring the law in line with international human rights standards. We have asked for the law to be changed to allow women and girls to have the choice of accessing a termination of pregnancy in circumstances of serious malformation of the foetus, rape or incest.
- Our successful judicial review of Northern Ireland Adoption Laws which as a result enables couples regardless of their marital status or sexuality to be eligible to apply to adopt.
- Highlighting through new Research the improvements that need to be implemented to improve services for children and young people within the care system.
- Working with local communities across Northern Ireland and reflecting their voices in our Annual Statements to Government to ensure that human rights policies are improved for everyone.
- Setting out the human rights of carers and recommending ways to improve support to carers.
- Investigating racist hate crime in Northern Ireland and collaborating with criminal justice agencies to ensure that hate crime is dealt with effectively – in a way which ensures that practice is human rights compliant and victim-centred.

Who we Are



[Les Allamby](#)

Chief Commissioner

Les Allamby has been appointed Chief Commissioner for a period of five years. He took up post on 1 September 2014.

Les is a solicitor and formerly the Director of the Law Centre (Northern Ireland). He was appointed honorary Professor of Law at the University of Ulster last year and is a trustee of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland. He was a former Chair of an Advisory group to Human Rights Commission on proposals for economic and social rights within a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

He was also formerly the Chair of the Social Security Standards Committee for Northern Ireland, a member of the Legal Services Commission (Northern Ireland) and a member of the Legal Services Review Group. He has undertaken election monitoring for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and International Organisation for Migration in Bosnia, Pakistan and Georgia. Les was also a former Chair of the immigration sub group (OFMDFM) and a former member of the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership (Home Office).



John Corey- **Commissioner**

John Corey was General Secretary of the trade union NIPSA from 2003 – 2010 and previously held other senior trade union positions with NIPSA. Within the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), he was a member of the ICTU Executive Council and from 2008- 2010 was the Chairperson of the ICTU Northern Ireland Committee.

John is a Member of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and is on the Labour Relations Agency's Panel of Arbitrators/ Independent Appeal Chairpersons. He represents trade unions on the Northern Ireland Business and Industry Forum, is Chairperson of the Coalition against Water Charges campaign and is a member of the Management Committee of Trademark. He is currently Vice-Chairperson of the Trustee Board of North Down Citizens Advice Bureau.

John's past public appointments included the Belfast Harbour Commissioners, the Boards of the Training and Employment Agency, the Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards, the Northern Ireland Economic Council and the Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland (ERINI).



Milton Kerr QPM- **Commissioner**

Milton is a former police officer (now retired) who had responsibility for community safety in 'G' District (Foyle, Limavady, Strabane and Magherafelt). He was awarded the Queen's Police Medal (QPM) in the 2008 New Years Honours list for distinguished service particularly in the areas of hate crime and domestic violence. He holds a BA (Hons) in Graphic Design and a Masters in Business Administration from the Open University. He is currently a Commissioner with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and a Non-Executive Director with the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service.



Paul Yam MBE- **Commissioner**

Paul has helped Wah Hep to establish a number of facilities such as a youth group, an after school club, a Chinese school, an adult English programme, the Wah Hep information drop-in centre and a multi-agency interpreting service. He served as an Equality Commissioner from 2004-2009, was chair of Craigavon and Banbridge Community Forum from 2006-2009 and has been a member of the Racial Equality Panel. He has also played a leading role in establishing the BME Belong Programme. Chair of Belong Programme from 2008-2012. In 2010 he was awarded an MBE for services to community relations work in Northern Ireland.



Christine Collins- **Commissioner**

After university and short term jobs in archaeology and Industrial Science, Christine joined the Civil Service Fast Stream in 1978. Her career included posts as Registrar of Companies (1986-8), Secretary to the Board, Department of Economic Development (1988-9), Deputy Head, British Side, Anglo Irish Secretariat (1993-4), Head of Police Division, Northern Ireland Office (1994-8), Head of Prisons Policy, Northern Ireland Prison Service (1998-2000) and Secretary, Northern Ireland Civil Service Commissioners (2000- 2002).

Christine retired from the Civil Service in 2005 and now runs her own consultancy company, specialising in change initiation/management; governance; and tackling corruption. Christine is Deputy Chair of the Huntington's Disease Association Northern Ireland, and Chair of the Northern Ireland Rare Disease Partnership. Her interests include people, equestrianism, arts, politics, food, and gardening.



Marion Reynolds MBE- **Commissioner**

Marion has 38 years social work experience working within Family and Child Care Services. She worked for 14 years at the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and in the Eastern Health and Social Services Board rose to the position of Deputy Director of Social Services. Currently Marion is a member of:

- the Exceptional Circumstances Body of the Department of Education;
- the Board of Alpha Housing Association;
- the Domestic Violence Research and Special Interest Group at Queens University;
- and
- the Northern Ireland Advisory Group of Homestart.

Currently she works part-time as an Independent Social Worker.



[Grainia Long](#)- **Commissioner**

Grainia Long is Chief Executive of the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC), and is a Non Executive Director at Thames Valley Housing in London. Grainia held leadership positions in the UK charity, the Chartered Institute of Housing for seven years and was Chief Executive of the CIH from 2011 to 2015. She had previously spent four years as Director of CIH in Northern Ireland. Her recent experience includes roles as Principal Adviser to the Commission on the Future for Housing in Northern Ireland from 2008-2010, and Director of Policy at the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. Prior to this, she worked in Scotland for the housing and homelessness charity Shelter. In January 2014 she was appointed a member of the Lyons Commission on Housing Supply.



Alan McBride- **Commissioner**

Alan McBride is the Centre Co-ordinator of the WAVE Trauma Centre in Belfast and has been a tireless worker for peace, his wife Sharon was among nine people killed by the IRA in the Shankill bomb atrocity in 1993. In 1999 he achieved a Degree in Community Youth Work at the University of Ulster with first class honours and in 2006 an Mphil in Reconciliation Studies through the Irish School of Ecumenics (Belfast), Trinity College Dublin

Alan's work with WAVE includes the day to day management of the centre, but beyond this he also facilitates groups, edits the organisational magazine, and collates stories from members for inclusion in a number of publications. Alan also sits on the board of Healing Through Remembering (HTR), a group set up to find ways of allowing Northern Ireland to address its troubled past – he has primary responsibility for the HTR subgroup on a 'Living Memorial Museum'.

He is currently the lead Commissioner concerning transitional justice.

Find Out More

You can find out more about our past work through our annual reports and accounts on our website www.nihrc.org

For Further Information

Contact us

If you would like to know more about the work of the Commission, or any of the services we provide, please contact us.

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

Temple Court
39 North Street
Belfast
Northern Ireland
BT1 1NA

Telephone: +44 (0) 28 9024 3987

Textphone: +44 (0) 28 9024 9066

SMS Text: +44 (0) 7786 202075

Fax: +44 (0) 28 9024 7844

Email: info@nihrc.org

www.nihrc.org

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