



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

**BUSINESS PLAN
2016-17**

April 2016

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Foreword

This is the Commission's strategic plan for 2016-2019. The plan was produced following feedback on awareness of the Commission in a Millward Brown omnibus survey in November 2015, consultation with stakeholders through meetings, a questionnaire placed on our website, and discussion with and between both staff and Commissioners.

The strategic plan builds on the platform of important previous work. This includes the human rights inquiry into health care in hospital emergency departments, work with the Northern Ireland Civil Service and other public authorities to develop training programmes on the use of human right standards and concepts in decision-making and policy development, plus our work in partnership with the Northern Ireland Ombudsman to explore how human rights can be effectively utilised when dealing with statutory complaints handling procedures. We will also see through our existing strategic litigation commitments.

The strategic plan also recognises the continuing difficult funding environment within which we operate. As a result, while our core work will continue to be delivered, some of our additional initiatives will be subject to raising the necessary resources – a challenge we are committed to successfully rising to.

The Commission was created by the Belfast Agreement and it will reach its 20th anniversary during the period of this strategic plan. The Commission remains committed to seeing a Bill of Rights introduced in Northern Ireland, an issue which may be thrown into sharper relief once the UK government's plans for the replacement of the Human Rights Act with a British Bill of Rights becomes clearer.

Further, the UN has adopted guiding principles based on human rights as a foundation for design and implementation of public policies related to poverty reduction or affecting persons living in poverty. Moreover, work has been undertaken internationally to examine how issues of taxation intersect with such policies. The Commission will explore that relationship in an environment where public expenditure on economic and social issues remains right.

The three pillars are designed to be forward looking and to demonstrate the practical value of human rights in building a better society for all our people.

The Commission's work has been recognised on the international stage as being innovative and this plan seeks to augment that reputation.

Our Mission:

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission champions and guards the rights of all those who live in Northern Ireland.

Who we Are and How we Work:

Established on the basis of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, we play a central role in supporting a society that, as it rebuilds following conflict, respects and upholds human rights standards and responsibilities.

Human rights values and standards need to be at the heart of our society if we are to achieve well-being, peace and justice. We are Northern Ireland's centre of excellence on human rights.

We hold government, elected representatives, statutory and other relevant organisations to account. To do this, we may work in partnership with these organisations and civil society.

We work to build strong relationships through local community engagement, to understand the issues affecting people. We shall continue with a programme of community visits and meetings throughout the life of this plan and continue to develop our communications through social media and other tools.

Our Core Activities

As the national human rights institution (NHRI) in Northern Ireland, the Commission has a range of duties and responsibilities including contributing to the monitoring of international human rights treaties in Northern Ireland. The core aspects of our daily operation are fundamental to fulfilling our mission. They are key to our compliance with the United Nations Paris Principles on the role of a national human rights institution and the Nolan principles of ethical standards in public life.

Our statutory functions include:

- ✓ Advising the Westminster government, the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly, and key agencies on legislation and compliance with human rights frameworks
- ✓ Our work to promote awareness of human rights through education, training and research
- ✓ Our international treaty monitoring work
- ✓ Our legal advice work including taking strategic legal cases
- ✓ Our engagement with other national human rights institutions in the UK
- ✓ Our work as part of the Joint Committee with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC)

Each year, the Commission reviews progress by government and public authorities with human rights laws and standards. Our Annual Statement published in December records progress on meeting human rights standards, and our Annual 'Human Rights Lecture' gives an opportunity to promote learning and discussion. The Annual Statement strongly informs our future work priorities. The Annual Statement will continue to be a key feature of our work throughout the life of the 2016-2019 Strategic Plan.

In 2015, the Commission was elected the chair of the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions. This reflects the esteem in which the Commission is held internationally and is an important opportunity to share our own experiences, facilitate dialogue and learn from others to achieve direct benefits for the people of Northern Ireland.

The Principles that Underpin Our Work:

We promote and abide by the following core principles:

Building a Culture of Human Rights: A goal of human rights is to establish a society that embeds such rights at its heart. A culture of human rights is one where human rights values demonstrably guide society. The Commission is committed to fostering this culture in Northern Ireland. In doing so, it recognises the challenges presented in a society moving forward that has experienced a protracted and tragic conflict and where community divisions can run deep.

Legality and Independence: The Commission operates on the basis of international human rights law, in compliance with a statutory mandate and independently of the State. The Commission works for the promotion and protection of those human rights to which the United Kingdom is legally committed at the national, regional and international levels, and does so, on the basis of the mandate conferred on it by law and in conformity with the UN Paris Principles.

Non-Discrimination and Equality: Human rights require that they can be enjoyed by everyone on the basis of non-discrimination and equality, a principle that is reinforced in Northern Ireland by the provisions of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement. The Commission honours this principle, above all, by protecting the most powerless in society addressing the needs of vulnerable individuals and those who are marginalised.

The Equal Status of Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Human rights, as recognised in the international treaties, have equal value and status and must be implemented in an integrated manner. The Commission respects this principle in its work and promotes full implementation in all engagements with the State and other partners.

Participation: Meaningful enjoyment of human rights must be based on the participation by those affected in any processes that may impact on

their well-being. The Commission is committed to involving rights-holders in all relevant areas of its activities and it strives to promote broader participation across society.

Accountability: Accountability is central to human rights enforcement so decision making must be transparent. The Commission honours this requirement in its own actions. It demands similar standards in public life and calls to account all those with responsibility for the promotion and protection of human rights. The Commission promotes human rights compliant independent oversight and accountability mechanisms.

Partnership: The promotion and protection of human rights needs the commitment of all who live in Northern Ireland, mindful that rights are balanced with responsibilities. It requires the engagement of government (central, regional and local) elected representatives, statutory bodies and civil society. As a Paris Principles 'A' Status NHRI, the Commission plays a pivotal role in building and sustaining the necessary partnerships. The Commission recognises the importance of its partnerships with the other UN-accredited human rights institutions in developing human rights values.

Delivering Our Mission in 2016-2019

Our strategic priorities will be centred around three key work-streams or 'pillars'. Each of these is in an area of substantive public interest, where we believe a real and lasting impact can be made to benefit the lives of people in Northern Ireland.

Pillar One: Delivering Human Rights through Excellent Services to the Public

This work stream builds on our previous programmes to embed human rights at the heart of government, and in how the state's policies and strategies are shaped and delivered. We want to develop this work further with stakeholders to ensure human rights are applied to the delivery of services to the public. In this work, the Commission is committed to a participatory approach including working with and supporting government and its agencies, and also civil society and the business community. Over the next three years we will:

Actions	Advise, support and build the capacity of government and public authorities to apply a human rights based approach to the design and delivery of services to the public, develop a programme to enable the application of a human rights based approach to health and social care services and statutory complaints processes; and keep under review policy and practice in prison and other places of detention.
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Enhance human rights standards in business and procurement through our Business and Human Rights Forum.

Advise government on the human rights implications of potential changes to domestic human rights laws and frameworks with reference to the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement commitments to a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and the possibility of 'A Charter of Rights for the island of Ireland'.

Outcomes The Commission can identify demonstrable improvement in the delivery of services to the public which have arisen from our work.

Pillar Two: Human Rights and Building the Future in Northern Ireland

Tolerance recognises the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. A tolerant society based on mutual respect and understanding requires the enforcement by the state of human rights laws and standards, as well as public education, awareness and support. In working to build a positive future, the Commission will focus our attention on those who are marginalised due to intolerance and hate crime and continue to advise government and those agencies dealing with Northern Ireland's past. Over the next three years we will:

Actions Develop a programme of work to build the capacity of government and public authorities to respond effectively to all forms of hate crime and promote tolerance and non-discrimination

Provide advice to government on implementation of relevant strategies to address the past; and where appropriate highlight and take action on rights engaged in relation to conflict related deaths, those who are injured, and legacy inquests

Outcomes The Commission can demonstrate examples of changes to policy and practice as a result of our work.

Pillar Three: Social and Economic Rights in a Time of Change

This work recognises the importance of social and economic rights and their equivalent status with other rights. Social and economic rights include the right to an adequate standard of living, to housing and protection against destitution. In the current economic environment, this

work seeks to ensure individual’s social and economic rights are protected and promoted.

A human rights based approach to tackling poverty and addressing social and economic rights may also raise issues of tax justice. This emerging concept is one which the Commission will explore in its work. Over the three years we will:

- Actions
 - Protect and promote economic and social rights through exploring a human rights based approach to tax and spending policies
 - Undertake a human rights inquiry to examine the rights of particular groups living in poverty or at risk of destitution incorporating a tax justice dimension
 - Promote access to justice by undertaking research on the needs of litigants in person and working to ensure the recommendations are met by the relevant authorities
- Outcomes
 - The Commission can identify demonstrable rights based approaches to social and economic issues by government in Northern Ireland arising from our work.

Implementing this Strategic Plan

The tools at the disposal of the Commission include advice to government legislators and policy makers, and to international human rights treaty implementation bodies, strategic litigation, legal support to individual members of the public, education and training, research and investigation and work arising from our Annual Statement. All of these tools are brought to bear as appropriate, in a systematic, integrated and complementary way.

The Commission is committed to implementing its strategic plan on the basis of the principles which underpin our work. The detailed work programmes to deliver the three pillars will be contained in the Commission’s Annual Business Plan.

Resources

For two successive strategic plans now the Commission has faced year on year reduction in budget. We are now functioning with less core budget and staff than fifteen years ago (when inflation is taken into account). During those years, as our expertise has grown we have found new, more effective and efficient ways of working. Inevitably, with staff reductions, at times it means a change in service. The Commission is entering the 2016-17 with 7 part time Commissioners, one Chief Commissioner and ten permanent staff. A list of Commissioners and the Commission's staff as at April 2016 are at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

For 2016-17 the Commission has a core budget of £1,149,000. This is funded by grant-in-aid from Parliament through our sponsor branch, the Northern Ireland Office.

The watchwords of the Commission have become 'applied human rights' making standards real by demonstrating their value in day to day decision making. Our programme of community engagement for the year ahead will allow the Commission to keep up to date with issues of real concern to people living in Northern Ireland and our development of a range of new partnerships will optimise capacity for raising awareness and protection of human rights particularly in a period of continued cut backs. Indeed our approach and methodologies have gained international support including the joint conference with the NI Ombudsman on a human rights based approach to complaints handling being partly funded by the International Ombudsman and European Ombudsman as well as Atlantic Philanthropies. Our new work into litigants in person is also a partnership and externally funded project with Ulster University School of Law and Nuffield Foundation. Partnerships will also be key to our planned examination of the elements of government's fiscal powers. All our work is aimed at the more effective application of human rights so as to ensure better decision making processes leading to improved experiences and outcomes. This work travels from the public sector into commerce through the setting up of the Business and Human Rights Forum and the Commission will be acting as Secretariat to that Forum in the year ahead.

Virginia McVea
Director
April 2016

BUSINESS PLAN 2016-17

This Business Plan describes the work proposed for the incoming year. The priority of this Commission is to focus attention on protecting the most powerless in society by addressing the needs of vulnerable individuals and those who are marginalised.

Pillar One: Delivering Human Rights through Excellent Services to the Public

This work stream builds on our previous programmes to embed human rights at the heart of government, and in how the state's policies and strategies are shaped and delivered. Over the next three years we want to develop this work further with stakeholders to ensure human rights are applied to *delivery* of services to the public. In this work, the Commission is committed to a participatory approach including working with and supporting government and its agencies, and also civil society and the business community.

Actions	<p>To advise, support and build the capacity of government and public authorities to apply a human rights based approach to the design and delivery of services to the public, develop a programme to embed a human rights based approach to statutory complaints processes and health and social care trust services and keep under review policy and practice in prison and other places of detention. In addition we will:</p> <p>Enhance human rights standards in business and procurement through our Business and Human Rights Forum.</p> <p>Advise government on its responsibilities for human rights in the context of existing and potential future changes to domestic human rights laws and frameworks alongside Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement commitments to a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and the possibility of 'A charter of Rights for the island of Ireland'.</p>
Outcomes	<p>The Commission can identify demonstrable improvement in the delivery of services to the public which have arisen from our work.</p>

In year targets:

- (a) Research and publish the 2016 Annual Statement on Human Rights in Northern Ireland (December 2016)

- (b) In partnership with the Centre for Applied Learning and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister secure the ongoing roll out and future delivery of the Commission programme of human rights training for the Northern Ireland Civil Service, (March 2017)
- (c) In partnership with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust deliver a project on developing an operational human rights-based approach to emergency health care to be piloted by the Trust (March 2017)
- (d) In partnership with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust deliver a project on developing a human rights based approach to participation to be piloted by the Trust (March 2017)
- (e) In Business and human rights work towards delivery of the recommendations contained within the Commission's report 'Public Procurement and Human Rights in Northern Ireland'. Specifically,
 - (i) work in partnership with the Department of Finance and Personnel, Central Procurement Directorate to pilot a project towards supporting the development of guidance on procurement practices human rights compliance (January 2017)
 - (ii) develop the newly established Northern Ireland business and human rights forum (ongoing).
- (f) To engage in International Treaty Body Monitoring and in particular:
 - (i) submit a parallel report to the United Nations Committee for the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (April 2016) and take part in United Kingdom examination process (June 2016);
 - (ii) submit a parallel report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (April 2016) and take part in United Kingdom examination process (May 2016);
 - (iii) submit a parallel report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (May 2016) and take part in the United Kingdom examination process (August 2016);
 - (iv) submit a report to the pre-sessional working group of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (March 2017);

- (v) submit parallel report to the United Nations Human Rights Council on the 3rd cycle Universal Periodic Review of the United Kingdom (September 2016) and follow up in advance of the commencement (March 2017);
 - (vi) engage with the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in advance of the United Kingdom examination (March 2017);
 - (vii) provide further information upon request to the Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention on the Rights of National Minorities following the United Kingdom examination (April 2016).
- (g) Work in partnership with Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman to
- (i) further develop tools for building human rights based approach to complaint handling;
 - (ii) host an international conference on human rights based approaches with the NIO, International Ombudsman and European Ombudsman (May 2016);
 - (iii) scope the potential for a broader educational programme (March 2017)
- (h) Develop a programme of work on human rights and constitutional protections, engaging and advising on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, any proposals in relation to the Human Rights Act and membership of the Council of Europe and membership of the European Union (March 2017)

Pillar Two: Human Rights and Building the Future in Northern Ireland

Tolerance recognises the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. A tolerant society based on mutual respect and understanding requires the enforcement by the state of human rights laws and standards, as well as public education and awareness. In building a positive future, the Commission will continue to advise government and its agencies as it deals with Northern Ireland's past, and we will also focus our attention more broadly on those who are marginalised due to intolerance and hate crime.

Actions Develop a programme of work build the capacity of government and public authorities to respond to all

Actions	<p>Through a focus on tax and spending decisions taken by government, to build the capacity of government to promote and protect social and economic rights</p> <p>Undertake a human rights inquiry to examine the rights of particular groups living in poverty or at risk of destitution incorporating a tax justice dimension</p> <p>As part of access to justice, undertake research and then work to implement recommendations on the needs of litigants in person.</p>
Outcomes	The Commission can identify demonstrable rights based approaches to tax and spending decisions by government in Northern Ireland arising from our work.

In year targets:

- (a) Scope a work programme on a human rights based approach to government spending and revenue raising (December 2016)
- (b) Develop and launch a film project which explores the rights of the most vulnerable and marginalised to include homelessness, disability and migrant workers. The project will be launched across social media platforms and film reel showcase event (June 2016)
- (c) Commence the joint research project with the Ulster University School of Law on the right to access to justice and litigants in person (ongoing to complete in 2018)
- (d) Scope a subject of significant public concern in the area of economic and social rights for a Human Rights Inquiry (March 2017)
- (e) Research and produce a paper on the impact of welfare reforms on families with children and young people (February 2017)

Corporate

In year Targets:

In fulfilment of and in compliance with its statutory obligations and the strategic objectives for 2013-2016 the Commission has identified key organisational and institutional development targets:

- (a) Operationalise a new Universal Periodic Review (UPR)/Annual Statement/Impact tracking programme (May 2016)

- (b) Move to paperless systems at the NIHRC (March 2017)
- (c) Develop the NIHRC digital resources to include increased production of videos and digital content (March 2017)
- (d) Develop a programme of work for digital resource development to include piloting an online Forum to discuss NIHRC accessibility to with a review of NIHRC social networks and website (January 2017) an NIHRC Instagram account and an annual communication plan for this platform (May 2016) increased production of videos and digital content (March 2017)
- (e) Develop and roll out a new community engagement scheme and programme to incorporate public participation on UPR (March 2017)
- (f) In fulfilment of our obligations as the International Monitoring Mechanism for Northern Ireland on the Convention for Persons with a Disability with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland the Commission will develop a programme of work within the Joint Monitoring Framework (June 2016 and ongoing)
- (g) Engage with other UK Commissions in relation to legal and policy matters on cross-jurisdictional issues as appropriate and taking account of our Strategic Plan (ongoing)
- (h) Engage with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission in relation to cross-jurisdictional issues as appropriate to include joint meetings and taking account of our Strategic Plan (ongoing)
- (i) Provide continuing support to the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) and the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) secretariat and specialist working groups with a particular focus on ageing, disability, legal work and counter-terrorism (March 2017)

Budget 2016-17

	2014-15	Revised 2015-16	2016-17
	Budget	Budget	Budget
EMPLOYMENT COSTS			
Staff	£655,000	£594,783	£623,204
Commissioners	£165,000	£160,325	£168,106
Total	£820,000	£755,108	£791,310
OPERATING COSTS			
Accountancy Fees	£1,000	£0	£0
Advertising, Publicity and Publications	£20,000	£40,976	£23,002
Auditor's (NAO) Remuneration	£12,000	£15,000	£15,000
Building maintenance and expenses	£20,000	£38,287	£28,452
Conferences, seminars and events	£8,000	£7,119	£5,200
Insurance	£10,000	£6,110	£9,012
Internal Audit	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000
IT	£20,000	£47,260	£24,000
Legal casework (non- recoverable)	£37,000	£34,383	£60,000
Light and heat	£15,000	£15,922	£11,640
Printing, postage and stationery	£12,000	£11,519	£6,000
Professional fees	£10,000	£51,417	£17,640
Rates	£50,000	£23,417	£17,232
Rentals under operating leases	£115,000	£57,607	£39,900
Research	£84,000	£0	£36,000
Staff training and recruitment	£12,000	£8,440	£6,200
Telephone	£10,000	£8,408	£12,612
Travel, subsistence and hospitality	£30,000	£23,357	£35,800
Total	£476,000	£399,222	£357,690
CAPITAL	£0	£19,670	£0
DEPRECIATION	£58,000	£40,764	£40,764
GRAND TOTAL	£1,354,000	£1,214,764	£1,189,764

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2016-17

In addition to staff personal development plans and the Commission's ongoing mentoring scheme, this plan sets out the main learning and development activities to be undertaken by Commissioners and staff during 2016-17 to achieve the objectives set out in this Business Plan.

Activity	Benefit	Staff
Enhanced mentoring through project participation in addition to the rolling mentoring programme which will continue.	Tailored mentoring and then an enhanced opportunity through application of skills in agreed projects with leading experts.	All staff and the project engagements for relevant staff
Human Rights and Fiscal powers	Cascaded training from a mentoring project	Relevant staff and Commissioners
Advocacy at the United Nations	Cascaded training from a mentoring project	Relevant staff and Commissioners
Developments in EU law	To ensure that the Commission is aware of developments at the EU which impact our work	Relevant Staff and Commissioners
Social Media as a tool	Social media training will allow the development of our public facing opportunities for raising awareness of human rights and increase accessibility as well as the quality of our work.	Staff and Commissioners

Appendix 1 - Commissioners

Chief Commissioner: Les Allamby

Commissioners: John Corey
Christine Collins
Milton Kerr
Grainia Long
Alan McBride
Marion Reynolds
Paul Yam

Appendix 2 - Staff

