

BRITISH INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

STRATEGIC PLAN 2005-2008

SUMMARY

This document is a summary of BIHR's strategic plan. Please contact BIHR if you would like to discuss any parts of the plan in more detail.

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BIHR'S MISSION

The British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR) is an independent charity that raises awareness and understanding about the importance of human rights. We work with some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable communities in the UK, seeking to ensure that the principles of equality, dignity and respect are incorporated into practice and policy at all levels of public service. Our mission is to play a significant role in developing, across the UK, a culture in which all individuals are treated with equality, respect and dignity, and in which those principles are securely embedded in policy and practice at all levels of public service – in other words, a culture based on respect for human rights.

BIHR'S VISION FOR 2005 – 2008

BIHR's work to achieve a culture based on human rights will follow an established three-pronged approach, namely:

1. making targeted efforts to ensure that the most vulnerable people in our society, and those who assist them (whether they be community groups, social services, or carers and advocates) are aware of their human rights and know how to ensure they are respected
2. influencing public policy decision-making at central government level and influencing best practice development at local authority level by ensuring that policy-makers are well informed of human rights dimensions to the issues they are considering
3. encouraging informed debate and a more rounded understanding of how human rights have, or could have, an impact on society generally

The key features of the 2005-2008 plan are consolidation, cross-fertilisation, and focused development. The plan is designed to enable BIHR to achieve maximum leverage from its core activities, maximum visibility for its work and, as a result, maximum impact on policy and service provision, with particular reference to the most marginalised and vulnerable sections of society.

- BIHR's promotion and training work will be the fulcrum for the development of all programmes
- training and promotion in the statutory sector, aimed at service providers and those responsible for detailed service provision policy, will become a core part of BIHR's work
- BIHR's experience on the ground from both its voluntary and public sector training will be formally harnessed for research, policy and best practice development
- BIHR's promotion and training work will be promoted and discussed in fora outside the English context only, with a particular focus on Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland
- policy work will focus on areas and issues where our grass roots experience of human rights issues contributes most value
- some speakers and debates within the Public Education Programme will feed into our policy and research interests
- there will be a particular focus on the education of young people within the context of BIHR's Public Education Programme

BIHR'S WORK

BIHR has three programmes of work, broadly aligned to the three-pronged approach to achieving our vision:

1. Promotion and Training Programme
2. Policy and Research Programme
3. Public Education Programme

Although the programmes are generally discrete in their planning, funding and staffing, an integrated approach is crucial to BIHR's strategy.

BIHR's charitable objectives include education and awareness-raising but preclude lobbying. This is key to BIHR's neutral, objective and authoritative position.

HUMAN RIGHTS PROMOTION AND TRAINING PROGRAMME

The purpose of the programme

BIHR's Human Rights Promotion and Training Programme delivers human rights training to voluntary and community groups working with vulnerable people, and to public sector bodies. The aim of the programme is to promote the use of human rights standards as a tool to help tackle problems of social and economic exclusion and disadvantage, and to negotiate standards of public service provision that are based on the principles of equality, dignity, and respect.

We work with a wide scope of organisations ranging from small user or carer led grass roots groups to large umbrella organisations and local authorities.

Background and context

BIHR's Community Outreach Programme, delivering training to voluntary and community groups, became operational in early 2003. Since then it has been consistently subject to high levels of demand and, two years on, it is still providing a unique service.

For a number of years now, BIHR has received requests for human rights training from public sector bodies, and we have steadily been increasing the amount of paid-for training we have been carrying out, especially for local authorities. There are many points of overlap between this training and the work in the voluntary sector of the Community Outreach Programme, and the training programme for the plan period seeks to rationalise this situation and build on the benefits of bringing the two areas of work together.

Summary of aims 2005 – 2008

The Human Rights Promotion and Training Programme will develop in two significant ways: firstly, to increase paid-for training in the statutory and voluntary sectors; and secondly, to include information tools providing long-term support for the programme's clients. It will also develop an internal information exchange/flow model to enable all aspects of BIHR's work to capitalise on its grass roots experience.

The key aims for the plan period are:

- to put in place an organisational structure that will improve training efficiency and facilitate future growth and development in training
- to develop the provision of paid-for training to statutory authorities and other public sector bodies whose work is relevant to service provision and the treatment of disadvantaged communities and to larger voluntary sector bodies
- to continue current levels of training sessions for voluntary and community organisations
- to generate some of the programme's running costs through earned income
- to develop the provision of ongoing support and information tools to organisations and authorities that have received training
- to develop a model for capturing, analysing, and communicating the experience garnered by the programme in such a way that it can be a cornerstone for BIHR's policy work
- to extend the reach of the training and promotion to all nine England regions
- to encourage joint training across public and voluntary sectors
- to disseminate the outcomes of the programme more broadly, particularly in relation to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

POLICY AND RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The purpose of the programme

BIHR's Policy and Research Programme focuses on providing policy-makers with information on the human rights aspects and implications of the legislation, policies and decisions for which they are responsible, in order that the principles of human rights are increasingly embedded in policy and practice at all levels, from government policy to local service provision.

Background and context

The framework of the Human Rights Act has the potential to help those in authority who make decisions at all levels to consider how best to put the individual at the heart of their policy-making and meet the needs of vulnerable people in our society. At present however this potential is largely unfulfilled.

BIHR has a unique voice in the human rights field. We bring a broader conception of human rights to the table than most organisations, and we bring an unequalled evidence base through our Human Rights Promotion and Training Programme.

During the previous plan period, BIHR commissioned one piece of groundbreaking research, *Something for Everyone: the impact of the HRA and the need for a Human Rights Commission*, which continues to be extensively quoted and has had a significant impact on policy-makers and government officials, in addition to the various policy submissions BIHR made. We will benefit from the increased leverage this will give to our research projects, whether related to the HRA or to other human rights instruments, during the current plan period.

The HRA and the ECHR are only a part of international human rights. There are many other internationally recognised instruments that should arguably also be underpinning UK domestic issues, most importantly in relation to economic, social and cultural rights, if we are to achieve a culture of human rights in the UK.

Summary of aims 2005 – 2008

We will expand our public policy work and research in terms of both output and impact, and strengthen our focus on areas where BIHR's grass roots experience can make a uniquely valuable contribution in influencing policymakers at all levels. At the same time we will maintain and strengthen our emphasis on the need for international human rights instruments – including those dealing with social and economic rights – to underpin domestic policy.

We are aiming for our public policy and research work to position us increasingly as advocates not just for human rights but also for vulnerable and excluded people. We are also aiming for increased visibility for BIHR as a whole through this programme, with the specific benefits of providing further leverage for our training work, enhancing our value to certain stakeholders, and profile-raising with potential funders.

We will aim to work in partnership in order to combat lack of capacity, and to work through alliances in order to ensure BIHR is not, and not seen to be, campaigning but is still able to contribute to debates around legislation.

The key aims for the plan period are:

- to develop a clearly defined strategy for policy work, and from it a carefully timetabled work plan, to maximise the impact we can have on policy-making at all levels
- to carry out a minimum of one major research project each year of the plan and to make this a particular priority in the first year of the plan
- to make policy submissions as necessary
- to develop a research programme that draws on the grass roots experience gained through our training activities and links in with the policy work plan
- to heighten our visibility as an organisation contributing to the policy and research agenda
- significant involvement in key debates by government and Whitehall Depts concerning the establishment of the CEHR

PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The purpose of the programme

BIHR's Public Education Programme seeks to give those who are not policy makers or human rights professionals an awareness of what human rights are, an understanding of the implications of moving towards a culture based on respect for human rights, and an informed view of the ways in which human rights are or are not engaged in issues affecting society today.

Background and context

When the Human Rights Act came into force in October 2000, no organisation was given responsibility for promoting and explaining the values and standards it contained. It is now widely accepted that one of the main purposes in introducing the legislation, to develop a human rights culture across the UK, has never got off the ground. The public, fed information by an ill informed media, is ignorant of, and often hostile towards, human rights. BIHR is one of the few organisations trying to fill this gap and through our Public Education Programme, we aim to stimulate informed debate about the impact of human rights on society.

BIHR's Public Education Programme reaches a variety of audiences – students and the general public, predominantly through the Lunchtime Lecture series and panel discussions; school students through the website and pilot schools projects; supporters of human rights through our newsletter; the legal professions through the annual Sieghart Lecture; and those with a professional interest in particular sectors, through Lunchtime Lectures and occasional conferences. The Public Education Programme has not hitherto linked into other BIHR programmes in significant ways.

Summary of aims 2005 – 2008

The key aims for the plan period are:

- to continue our Lunchtime Lectures and other work aimed at awareness-raising in the general population, developing incrementally the numbers reached and the publicity achieved
- to develop the public education aspects of our website
- to continue to explore and conduct pilot studies into ways of reaching the younger generation
- to reach out to the interested and informed, through
 - our newsletter
 - conferences and lectures
 - development of our Friends scheme
 - occasional publications, newspaper and journal contributions