Have your say on our work: consultation on our draft strategic plan

Introduction

We would like to hear your views about how we should tackle important equality and human rights issues.

We have outlined some aims in our [strategic plan](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/draft-strategic-plan-2019-2022) (what we will work on from 2019 to 2022). Your views on how we prioritise and tackle these aims are very important to us.

Your input will help us shape our work.

Policymakers, business leaders, third sector organisations, and groups and individuals interested in our work in England, Scotland and Wales are welcome to participate in the survey.

The survey closes on Monday 7 January 2019 at 23:59.

How we handle your information

This survey will remain anonymous unless you choose to leave your contact details at the end of the survey (optional).

SmartSurvey privacy information

The SmartSurvey website may collect personal data. Please refer to [SmartSurvey’s privacy policy](https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/privacy-policy) for more information.

About you

1. Please tick the statement(s) that best describe(s) you.

* I am an individual
* I am a parliamentarian
* I am an employer
* I am a civil servant
* I am from the voluntary sector 
* I am from a public body
* I am form an inspectorate
* Other (please specify)

1. Which of these nine groups protected under the Equality Act (known as [protected characteristics](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics)) are most important to you? Tick all that apply.  
     
   For example, you may work in one of these areas, or relate personally to issues affecting certain protected characteristics.

* Age 
* Disability 
* Gender reassignment
* Marriage and civil partnership
* Pregnancy and maternity
* Race
* Religion or belief
* Sex
* Sexual orientation

1. If you work in any of the following sectors please tick all that apply.

* Education 
* Health 
* Justice and personal security (e.g. hate crime, homicides, sexual violence, domestic abuse, conditions of detention, access to justice)
* Living standards (such as poverty, social care or housing) 
* Political and civic participation, access to services, privacy and surveillance, or social and community cohesion 
* Work and employment 
* I do not work in any of these sectors

1. Please state where you are based, where your organisation operates, where you are a service user or where you represent service users.  
     
   Tick all countries that apply.

* England
* Scotland 
* Wales

Our proposed activities

1. Have you read our [draft strategic plan](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/draft-strategic-plan-2019-2022)? (You can still give your views and complete this consultation if you have not read it)

* Yes 
* In part
* No

Help us prioritise our work

1. We have set out three main goals in our [draft strategic plan](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/draft-strategic-plan-2019-2022).  
     
   Under each goal there are two or more Priority Aims.  
     
   Please rank the Priority Aims from most important to least important, with 1 being the most important and 9 being the least important (write/type a number next to each statement).

* helping people get justice when they are wronged and get fair trial in the criminal justice system **8**
* making sure prejudice is more understood and good relations are promoted, particularly through the education system **1**
* making sure new technologies and digital services promote equality and human rights **5**
* improving public transport and the built environment so that disabled and older people can take part in things more easily 2
* making sure particularly disadvantaged groups can access essential public services **3**
* making sure people in Britain have equal access to the labour market and are treated fairly at work **4**
* making sure the social security system is fair and works without discrimination **6**
* improving rules relating to detention and conditions in institutions **9**
* making sure public bodies that tackle violence against women and girls comply with equality and human rights requirements **7**

Please tell us why you answered this way (optional):

Royal Blind is Scotland’s largest vision impairment organisation. Our vision is to see a community in which blind and partially sighted people, including those who have other disabilities, are fully included and lead fulfilling lives. We operate only in Scotland and care for, educate and employ blind and partially sighted people from across the country, with occasional referrals from the wider UK.

We support people of all ages - babies and toddlers at our pre-school playgroup; children and young people at the Royal Blind School and Kidscene after school and holiday club; young adults through our supported accommodation and respite care and older people in our care homes. We also run the Scottish Braille Press, which provides large print, audio and Braille transcription for individuals and businesses across the UK. Our sister charity, Scottish War Blinded, gives free support to ex-service men and women, no matter if they lost their sight during or after service.

We have prioritised the Priority Aims based on our knowledge of the views and experiences of the people with vision impairment who access our services. Despite the progress which has been made in recent years in changing perceptions around disability, we believe there is a great deal more to do to challenge successfully the stigma which remains around vision impairment in every area of life. That is why we have rated tackling prejudice so highly. Prejudice, both conscious and subconscious, leaves too many people with vision impairment isolated and excluded, and too often without the same life chances as others. We agree that the education system has a particular role to play in raising awareness and challenging prejudice.

The isolation experienced by people living with sight loss is an issue we have explored in our report “Social Connections and Sight Loss.” Poor access to transport was identified by the people with vision impairment who took part in the research as a key contributing factor in isolation. It also creates barriers to accessing services, which is why we have placed it highly among the Priority Aims. Too often there are other obstacles for people with vision impairment preventing them accessing essential public services. These include cuts to services as a result of public sector budget pressures, which too often results in inadequate access to social services support. So we have rated this Priority Aim highly as well.

As a provider of supported employment, we are keenly aware that there is not a level playing field for people with vision impairment in the workplace. Young people with vision impairment are far less likely to secure employment after education compared to their fully sighted peers. We would welcome the Commission focussing on this issue in the years ahead.

We provide equipment and training to younger and older people with vision impairment to help them live independently with sight loss, so we are aware of the potential of technology to improve the lives of disabled people. However, we are concerned that there are still accessibility issues for many online services and a “digital by default” approach risks inequality of access to key public services.

Accessibility and fairness have also been important principles in discussions around the Scottish Government’s approach to its new responsibilities for social security. We are encouraged by the open approach Ministers have taken to engagement on how the new agency Social Security Scotland prioritises accessibility for disabled people, and we believe the Commission could play a useful role in helping monitor progress in this area.

1. Are there any issues we should work on that are not included? Please tell us what they are and why we should work on them (optional)

Royal Blind has launched the campaign “Our Vision for Equal Education” to highlight the need for increased support in Scotland’s schools for blind and partially sighted pupils. Up to 80% of our learning is through our vision, so pupils who are vision impaired start at an immediate disadvantage to their fully sighted peers. There is a growing number of children with vision impairment in Scotland’s schools, but the most recent figures show there has been a fall in the number of specialist teachers. We at concerned that this is contributing to an attainment gap for young people with vision impairment. It is also resulting in some pupils with vision impairment being excluded from learning opportunities, and too many experiencing loneliness and isolation within their school community.

These concerns over inequality in education are not restricted to pupils with vision impairment. We are conscious that pupils with a range of additional support needs have similar experiences, and not only in Scotland but across the UK. The right to education is essential for all young people, including disabled pupils. This is why we have welcomed the Scottish Government taking steps to incorporate the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child into Scots Law but have also urged Ministers to consider a similar approach in relation to the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Given that there are significant concerns that the current lack of provision in additional support for learning across the UK is impacting the human rights of children in our country to education, we believe this issue merits further consideration by the Commission for inclusion in the strategy as an issue for future activity.

1. **Which type of activities would help us to achieve each of our Priority Aims? Please tick all activities you feel would be useful to achieve the Priority Aims.**

Priority Aim: helping people get justice when they are wronged and get fair trial in the criminal justice system

* finding out more about the causes of the problem
* influencing changes to the law or public policy
* influencing organisations that set standards (such as regulators, inspectorates, or ombudsman
* helping decision-makers such as employers or public bodies to improve their practice
* challenging decision-makers (such as employers or public bodies) when they break the law
* helping individuals get justice (for example, people who have experienced discrimination)

**Priority Aim: making sure prejudice is more understood and good relations are promoted, particularly through the education system**

* finding out more about the causes of the problem **2**
* influencing changes to the law or public policy **1**
* influencing organisations that set standards (such as regulators, inspectorates, or ombudsman **3**
* helping decision-makers such as employers or public bodies to improve their practice **4**
* challenging decision-makers (such as employers or public bodies) when they break the law **6**
* helping individuals get justice (for example, people who have experienced discrimination) **5**

**Priority Aim: making sure new technologies and digital services promote equality and human rights**

* finding out more about the causes of the problem **1**
* influencing changes to the law or public policy **2**
* influencing organisations that set standards (such as regulators, inspectorates, or ombudsman **3**
* helping decision-makers such as employers or public bodies to improve their practice **4**
* challenging decision-makers (such as employers or public bodies) when they break the law **5**
* helping individuals get justice (for example, people who have experienced discrimination) **6**

**Priority Aim: improving public transport and the built environment so that disabled and older people can take part in things more easily**

* finding out more about the causes of the problem **2**
* influencing changes to the law or public policy **1**
* influencing organisations that set standards (such as regulators, inspectorates, or ombudsman **4**
* helping decision-makers such as employers or public bodies to improve their practice **3**
* challenging decision-makers (such as employers or public bodies) when they break the law **5**
* helping individuals get justice (for example, people who have experienced discrimination) **6**

**Priority Aim: making sure particularly disadvantaged groups can access essential public services**

* finding out more about the causes of the problem **1**
* influencing changes to the law or public policy **2**
* influencing organisations that set standards (such as regulators, inspectorates, or ombudsman **3**
* helping decision-makers such as employers or public bodies to improve their practice **4**
* challenging decision-makers (such as employers or public bodies) when they break the law **6**
* helping individuals get justice (for example, people who have experienced discrimination) **5**

**Priority Aim: making sure people in Britain have equal access to the labour market and are treated fairly at work**

* finding out more about the causes of the problem **2**
* influencing changes to the law or public policy **1**
* influencing organisations that set standards (such as regulators, inspectorates, or ombudsman **4**
* helping decision-makers such as employers or public bodies to improve their practice **3**
* challenging decision-makers (such as employers or public bodies) when they break the law **6**
* helping individuals get justice (for example, people who have experienced discrimination) **5**

**Priority Aim: making sure the social security system is fair and works without discrimination**

* finding out more about the causes of the problem **4**
* influencing changes to the law or public policy **1**
* influencing organisations that set standards (such as regulators, inspectorates, or ombudsman **2**
* helping decision-makers such as employers or public bodies to improve their practice **3**
* challenging decision-makers (such as employers or public bodies) when they break the law **6**
* helping individuals get justice (for example, people who have experienced discrimination) **5**

**Priority aim: improving rules relating to detention and conditions in institutions**

* finding out more about the causes of the problem
* influencing changes to the law or public policy
* influencing organisations that set standards (such as regulators, inspectorates, or ombudsman
* helping decision-makers such as employers or public bodies to improve their practice
* challenging decision-makers (such as employers or public bodies) when they break the law
* helping individuals get justice (for example, people who have experienced discrimination)

**Priority aim: making sure public bodies that tackle violence against women and girls comply with equality and human rights requirements**

* finding out more about the causes of the problem
* influencing changes to the law or public policy
* influencing organisations that set standards (such as regulators, inspectorates, or ombudsman
* helping decision-makers such as employers or public bodies to improve their practice
* challenging decision-makers (such as employers or public bodies) when they break the law
* helping individuals get justice (for example, people who have experienced discrimination)

**11. Do you have any ideas for specific activities we could do that would help us to achieve any of the Priority Aims listed above (optional)?**

It will be important to maximise the number of opportunities for individuals and organisations to supply the Commission with evidence and data relevant to its scrutiny and work in each of these areas. While invitations to contribute online or by correspondence are important, we would again highlight our concern that a “digital by default” approach can exclude some people, including some people with vision impairment. It will also be vital not only to consult with organisations who work on behalf of different groups, but also with those individuals who are directly affected by the issues within the Priority Aims, including disabled people. Like other organisations working with disabled people, we would hope to be able to contribute the views of people who are vision impaired through our own consultation processes. However it would be beneficial for the Commission to organise events to include people with lived experience alongside representative groups, elected members and government officials, relevant agencies and organisations. These events could discuss the evidence which should inform the work of the Commission on a Priority Aim, and also consider collaboratively how partnership working by those present could help achieve progress for equality with regard to the issues which have been identified. While such opportunities are sometimes provided by Government and the third sector, they remain infrequent and the Commission could play a valuable role in bringing together all those who have a role to play in addressing the issues relevant to the Priority Aims which have been identified by the Commission.

12. We propose to improve access to services for particularly disadvantaged groups.

Which of the following areas is most important to you? Please tick all that apply.

* access to education for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers
* access to health services for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers
* access to appropriate housing for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers
* access to appropriate education for disabled people 
* access to appropriate housing for disabled people 
* access to appropriate health services for asylum seekers and people who have migrated to Britain
* access to appropriate housing for asylum seekers and people who have migrated to Britain
* access to appropriate health services for transgender people
* understanding and addressing the reasons why a disproportionate number of ethnic minorities are detained in the mental health system in England and Wales

Any other feedback and contacting you

**13. Do you have any other comments on our draft plan (optional)?**

We welcome the Priority Aims identified in the draft Plan and the opportunity to submit our views on the draft. While we believe the Priority Aims do address many of the key issues which affect people with vision impairment across the UK, as a Scottish based charity we are very much aware that devolution means there will be different contexts and priorities in each nation. It will be important that the Commission in Scotland can engage distinctly with individuals and organisations here to ensure that it is evidence of the particular needs to promote equalities in Scotland which informs its own activities over the duration of this strategy.

14. Thank you for taking the time to fill out our survey.  
  
Would you like us to contact you (optional)? If so, please tick one or more of the statements below.   
  
Any information you choose to give will be recorded and stored in line with our [privacy policy](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/privacy-notice) (opens in new window). You can withdraw your consent to be contacted at any time by emailing [yourviews@equalityhumanrights.com](mailto:yourviews@equalityhumanrights.com). Please note that leaving your contact details means your survey is no longer anonymous.   
  
We will only be contacting selected participants until 5 March 2019.

* Yes, you can contact me about my responses (your details will only be used for the purposes of this consultation) 
* Yes, give me more info about your consultation (your details will only be used for the purposes of this consultation) 
* Yes, sign me up to your e-newsletter 

Please provide your preferred contact information if you wish to be contacted.

Name:

Email address: richard.baker@royalblind.org

Contact phone number: 0131 229 1456

Thank you

You have completed this survey!

Thank you for taking the time to answer this survey.