

Glasgow's Learning...

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Human rights

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We can think of Human Rights as the basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person. In 1998, the European Convention on Human Rights was incorporated into UK law through the Human Rights Act (1998). The UK originally signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights in 1953. The Convention sets out basic civil and political rights for every individual. Until 2000 - when the Human Rights Act (1998) came in to force - anyone who thought their rights had been breached had to take their case to the European Court of Human Rights. Now, however, they can take their case to a British Court.

The UK Human Rights Act (1998) provides a legal framework to protect people's freedoms. As well as dealing with life and death issues – like the right to live free of torture and killing – it deals with everyday issues. Working in Community Learning and Development there are five rights we should be especially aware of;

- The Right to respect for private and family life
- The Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- The Right to freedom of expression
- The Right to freedom of assembly and association
- Prohibition of discrimination

What does this mean for community learning and development?

It is important to understand that human rights are upheld and promoted not just by national and international governments, but within the local communities we live and work in.

The Act (alongside other legislation on Human Rights) is important for a range of organisations involved in Community Learning and Development - many would be described as a 'public authority' in the Act. This term includes organisations that carry out a role that government might otherwise undertake. As a 'public authority' it is against the law to violate the Convention on Human Rights.

However, on some occasions these rights can be overridden. For example, it might be to protect public safety, or the rights and freedoms of others. It is important to think about why these rights had to be breached, and reasonable grounds must be given.

Example

A local authority provided support workers to attend social activities with people with physical disabilities. This involved going to social events, pubs and clubs. One service user who was gay asked a support worker to go to a gay pub with him, but the service manager refused on the basis none of his staff was prepared to go to a gay venue. Later, however, an advocate challenged this because the service users right to respect for private life had been compromised.

(Example originally provided by the British Institute of Human Rights and published in DCA Guidance (2006) Human Rights, Human Lives.)

[Click here to download the section on the law and human rights which you can print and save.](#)



Pause for thought . . .

How aware am I of the human rights of people in the community I work in?

Are there aspects of my work which could – potentially – impinge on their rights?

The Find out more box offers further information sources that will guide you on this subject.



Find out more . . .

about human rights and how they affect our work

The UK Ministry of Justice offers a number of guides to help you understand your responsibilities. It includes a number of resources to help individual community members understand their rights as well. [Visit the guides now](#). In particular, Human Rights, Human Lives offers guidance to public authorities.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission website provides information on human rights and what they mean for you. It provides a [full list of all the rights protected under the Human Rights Act \(1998\)](#).



Did you know? . . .

Where after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works...unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere.

Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.

Eleanor Roosevelt, Chairman Human Rights Commission, 1948 (Quoted in Human Rights, Human Lives, DCA, 2006)

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