

Briefing for the Women and Equalities Committee:  
**The Equality and Human Rights Commission**

January 2017





## About this briefing

## Contact details



The content of the report has been shared with the Commission to ensure that the evidence presented is factually accurate.

The audit fieldwork for this briefing took place in August 2016. The briefing was shared with the Committee in November 2016.

The National Audit Office (NAO) scrutinises public spending for Parliament and is independent of government. The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), Sir Amyas Morse KCB, is an Officer of the House of Commons and leads the NAO, which employs some 785 people. The C&AG certifies the accounts of all government departments and many other public sector bodies. He has statutory authority to examine and report to Parliament on whether departments and the bodies they fund have used their resources efficiently, effectively, and with economy. Our studies evaluate the value for money of public spending, nationally and locally. Our recommendations and reports on good practice help government improve public services, and our work led to audited savings of £1.21 billion in 2015.


**This briefing looks at the Equality and Human Rights Commission (the Commission). It provides information on the Commission's governance framework, strategy, financial position, performance, and issues and challenges it faces. The briefing has been prepared in response to a request from the Women and Equalities Committee.**

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Interactive

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This briefing is in five parts:

Click on each section to find out more

Overview



Governance and strategy



Financial position



Performance



Issues and challenges



Appendix One: The wider landscape of responsibilities for equalities in Great Britain



Appendix Two: International comparisons





## Key facts



The Commission's mandate, set by Parliament, is "to challenge discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and to protect and promote human rights" (Commission's website).

The Commission was formed in 2007 as a non-departmental public body. It combined the work previously undertaken by the Equality Opportunities Commission, Commission for Racial Equality and Disability Rights Commission and took on responsibility for human rights as well as discrimination linked to religion or belief, sexual orientation and age. It is the first government sponsored body in Great Britain to undertake a role supporting human rights.



The Government Equalities Office, part of the Department for Education, is the government sponsor for the Commission. Funding is provided by the Secretary of State for the Department of Education.



The Commission is Great Britain's National Human Rights Institution, as provided for by the UN human rights system, and National Equality Body, as required by the EU race and gender directives.



The Commission is responsible for issues in relation to equality and human rights in England, Scotland and Wales. It shares responsibility for human rights in Scotland with the Scottish Human Rights Commission. It does not cover Northern Ireland, which has its own body.



The Commission enforces the Equality Act 2010, which protects against discrimination in the workplace and wider society. The Commission also has powers to bring cases under the Human Rights Act 1998. The nine 'protected characteristics' in the Equality Act 2010 are:

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



**£20.3 million**  
Expenditure in 2015-16



**203**  
The average number of full-time equivalent (FTE) employees (2015-16)

## Equality and Human Rights Commission at a glance: what it does



Provides **information and guidance** to help people understand their rights and responsibilities and improve compliance with the law.

**Example:** The Commission has written a series of guides explaining to employees their rights in relation to unlawful discrimination at work and the steps they can take to tackle this.

Uses its **enforcement powers** to protect people from serious and systematic abuse of their rights. The Commission is responsible for enforcing the [Equality Act 2010](#) and can bring cases under the Human Rights Act 1998. It can also assist individuals in bringing cases and intervenes in existing proceedings to provide legal and policy guidance to courts. It undertakes cases on a strategic basis. It has a range of enforcement powers set out in the [Equality Act 2006](#).

**Example:** The Commission intervened in the case of *Hurley, Jarrett and Palmer v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions*. The High Court ruled that the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions had discriminated against carers of disabled family members by failing to exempt them from the benefits cap.

Carries out **inquiries** to explore systemic issues, gather evidence and develop potential solutions.

**Example:** The Commission undertook an inquiry into the non-natural deaths of adults with mental health conditions detained in prisons, hospitals and police stations. Consequently, the Commission's human rights framework was incorporated into the Care Quality Commission inspection regime.

**Advising** government and Parliament on the effect laws, or proposed laws, have on equalities and human rights.

**Example:** The Commission advised Parliament on the implications of the Scotland Bill for the promotion of equality. This advice was used in a Lords Debate on the Bill.

**Monitors and advises the UN** on the UK's compliance with its international human rights obligations.

**Example:** On civil legal aid, the Commission recommended that the UK should monitor the impact of the legal aid reforms in England and Wales, and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reflected this in its recommendations to the UK.

Carries out **research, insight and analysis** to expose patterns of discrimination, inequality and human rights abuses and proposes solutions.

**Example:** The Commission published a review into race inequality in Great Britain.

Previous areas of work:

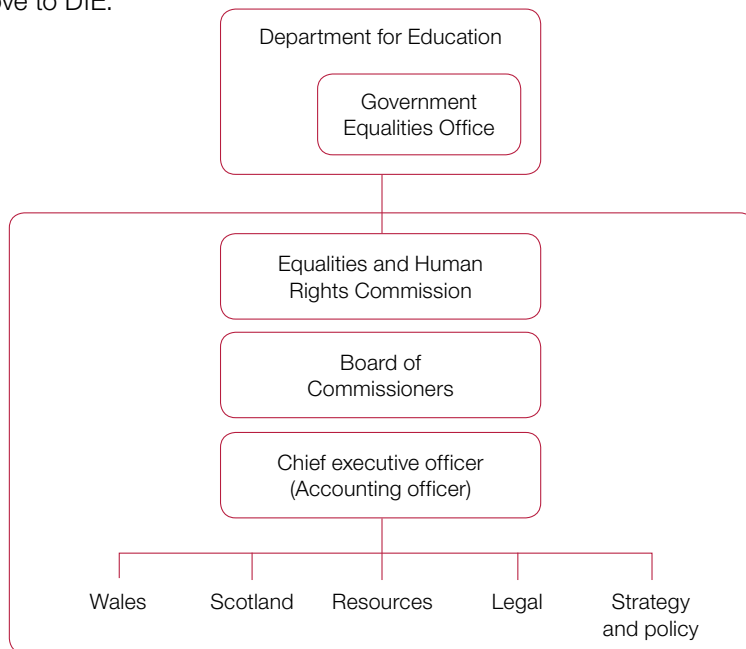
- A helpline to provide information, advice and support on discrimination and human rights was withdrawn from the Commission in 2012, and is now delivered by G4S (from 1 October 2016).
- Small grants were provided for other organisations to deliver specific projects, legal casework and build capacity in other grassroots organisations across the country. The Commission no longer provides grant funding.
- Arranging conciliation in employment.

# Governance

Link to current Framework Agreement: [EHRC-GEO Framework Agreement March 2015](#)



The Commission is Great Britain's National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), as provided for by the UN human rights system, and National Equality Body, as required by the EU race and gender directives. As such, it is subject to international standards such as the Paris Principles and its compliance with these is overseen by a UN committee. The Commission is an independent non-departmental public body (NDPB). Its functions, duties and powers are laid out in the Equality Act 2006. Its sponsor department is the Department for Education (DfE) (since 2015); it was previously the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) but moved because it follows the Minister for Women and Equalities. Accountability and governance for NDPBs are set out in framework agreement documents between them and their sponsor departments. The current framework document that is in place is between DCMS and the Commission, it is in the process of being revised following the move to DfE.



## The Framework Agreement document sets out the relationship between the Commission and its sponsor department:

The Permanent Secretary, as accounting officer for the **Department for Education** is accountable to Parliament for the issue of the amount of money given to the Commission by the Department and also responsible for ensuring arrangements are in place to provide oversight of their activities on a regular basis.

The **Government Equalities Office (GEO)** which currently sits within the Department for Education is the government sponsor for the Commission. The director of the GEO has formal lead responsibility for the relationship with the chief executive officer and accounting officer of the Commission.

**The Commission's Board** is made up of between 10 and 15 members called commissioners, who are responsible for establishing the strategic direction and oversight of the Commission. The commissioners are appointed by the Secretary of State. Three statutory committees (Scotland Committee, Wales Committee and Disability Committee) advise the Commission about the exercise of its functions in Scotland, Wales and in respect of disability. The statutory committees are chaired by commissioners.

The **chief executive officer (CEO)** is appointed by the Board, and will normally be the accounting officer. The Commission's CEO is responsible for accounting to Parliament, the Secretary of State, DfE, the Commission's Board and other stakeholders. The CEO is personally responsible for safeguarding public funds; ensuring propriety and regularity; reporting to the Board; day-to-day operations and management of the Commission; and achievement of its strategic aims.

The Commission is an **independent body**. Its independence is enshrined in the Equality Act 2006, which is designed to ensure the Commission is able to work independently of government.



## Strategic aims and objectives

The Commission identified new strategic aims in 2016, which are based on: the results of its [Is Britain Fairer?](#) review (a quinquennial review undertaken by the Commission to examine progress on equality and human rights); findings on UK compliance with international treaties; and a public consultation.

The strategic aims are supported by strategic objectives and a yearly work programme, which outlines what will be done to achieve these aims.

Aims	<b>Significant impact:</b> To secure advances in equality and human rights in priority areas	<b>Strong evidence base:</b> A strong evidence base to provide authoritative analysis and insight	<b>Sustainable infrastructure:</b> An effective and sustainable infrastructure to protect rights in practice	<b>Improved capability:</b> An expert, independent and authoritative national body
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Improving access to justice and treatment in the criminal justice system</li> <li>● Promoting civic and political participation and freedom of expression, and safeguarding privacy</li> <li>● Addressing the right to an education in relation to attainment gaps, bullying and exclusion in schools</li> <li>● Promoting equality in routes into work, fair treatment at work and fair opportunities for progression</li> <li>● Promoting the right to equality of access to appropriate health and social care services and dignity of care</li> <li>● Tackling prejudice and reducing identity-based violence</li> <li>● Liberty and freedom from harm</li> <li>● Standard of living and personal autonomy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strengthening its evidence base</li> <li>● Developing levers for change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Protecting and promoting human rights</li> <li>● Equality and human rights disputes</li> <li>● An effective legal framework</li> <li>● Promoting the effective implementation of and compliance with the public sector Equality Duty</li> <li>● Fulfilling its role as an NHRI and National Equality Body</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Investing in its people</li> <li>● Investing in its communications</li> </ul>

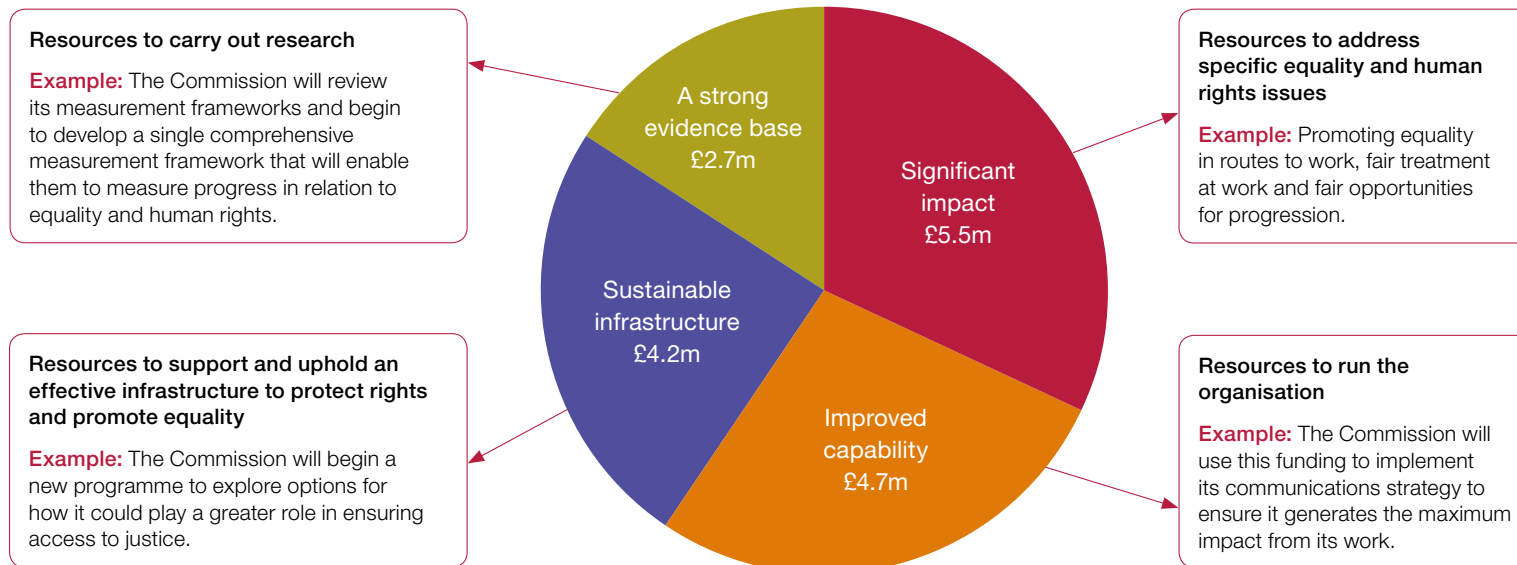




# The Commission's Business Plan 2016-17

Each year the Commission puts together a Business Plan, which sets out its work programme for the upcoming year. The work programme is designed to align with the strategic aims and objectives in the strategic plan. Resources are allocated based on the Business Plan. As part of the 2015 Spending Review the Commission's budget will reduce by a further 25% over the next four years.

## 2016-17 Resource allocation by strategic aim



### Note

1 The Commission's Business Plan only allocated £17.1 million to the aims as they only had an indicative budget at this point. Since then its budget has been finalised at £21 million.

Source: Equality and Human Rights Commission's Business Plan: [Business Plan 2016-17](#)





## How the Commission spent its money in 2015-16

In 2015-16, the Commission's expenditure was £20.3 million. The majority of its expenditure was on staff costs, £12.1 million. This is due to the nature of the Commission's work as delivery of its functions is dependent upon the skills and experience of its staff, for example legal experts and commissioners. Some £4.8 million was spent on delivery costs, of which the Commission spent £1.2 million on developing publications and information and £1.9 million undertaking research and policy development.

### Expenditure by type

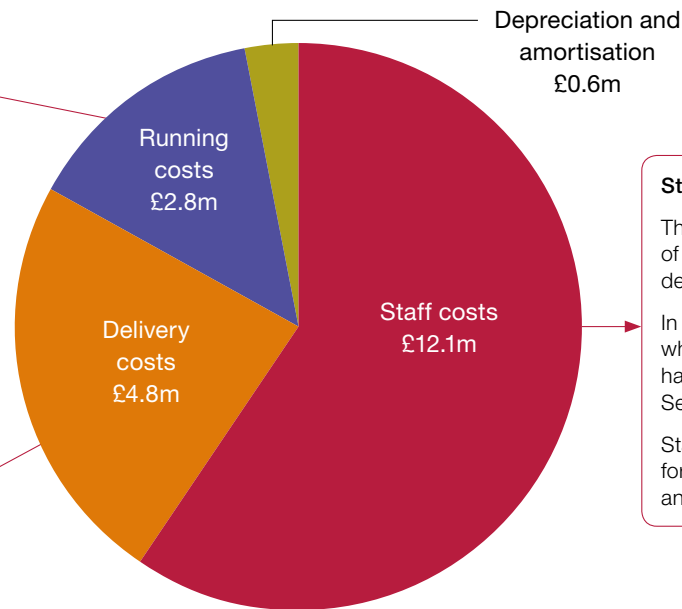
#### Running costs

Includes: staff support, recruitment and training; staff and commissioners' travel and subsistence; support and office services; IT and telecommunications cost; Access to Work; and auditor's remuneration.

#### Delivery costs

Includes: advisory services (£347,000); legal (£556,000); grants given (£772,000);<sup>1</sup> publication and information (£1.2 million); and research and policy development (£1.9 million).

*These delivery costs do not include the staff costs associated with delivering these functions.*



#### Staff costs

The Commission had an average of 203 staff (FTEs) in 2015-16, who deliver its functions.

In addition, it had 11 Commissioners, who are recruited, appointed and have their remuneration set by the Secretary of State.

Staff costs also includes employees for the Scotland office (18 people) and the Wales office (13 people).

#### Note

<sup>1</sup> The Commission no longer provides grant funding. The grants given of £772,000 relate to discrete, short-term programmes and were not a continuation of the much larger programme that existed historically.

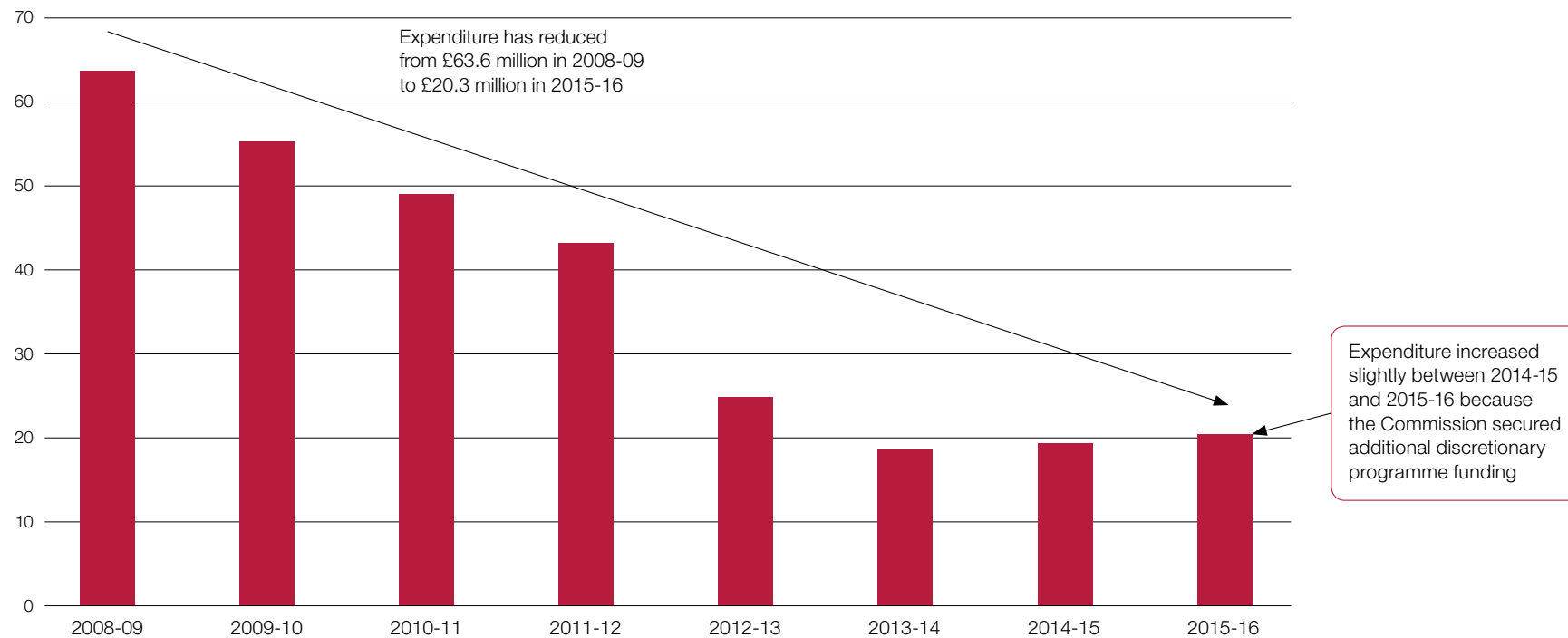


# The Commission's expenditure has reduced

The Commission's expenditure has reduced by 68% since its first full year in operation.

### Expenditure at the Commission between 2008-09 and 2015-16

Total expenditure (£m)



**Note**

1 Expenditure is shown in actual, rather than real, terms.

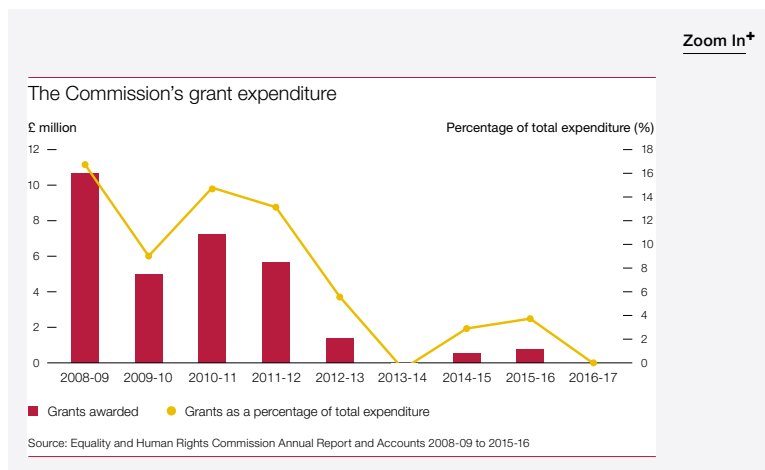
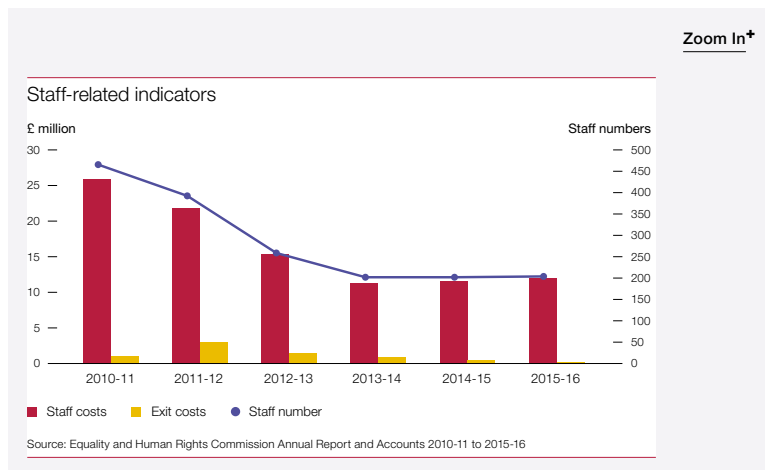
Source: Equality and Human Rights Commission Annual Report and Accounts 2008-09 to 2015-16





# The Commission's use of resources

Staff costs and grant expenditure are the areas of expenditure that have reduced most as a result of the Commission's funding reduction. Staff numbers have reduced by 56% since 2010 and the Commission no longer provides grants to other organisations.



## Reducing staff numbers and staff costs

- Staff costs have reduced by 54% and staff numbers by 56% (from 465 to 203).
- The reduction in staff numbers is mainly related to the removal of functions such as the helpline, grants and conciliation. Around 70 staff were employed on the helpline.
- Further reductions are planned during 2016-17.

## Decrease in grants awarded

- When the Commission was first set up there was a fully operational grant scheme. This money was designed to be used so other organisations could deliver specific projects, legal casework and build capacity to tackle discrimination and promote equality and human rights across the country.
- From 2006-08 to 2009-10 the Commission's accounts were qualified as there was insufficient evidence that grants issued were used for the outputs claimed. The accounts have received an unqualified opinion without modification since, that is, the financial statements give a true and fair view, in all material respects, in accordance with the identified financial reporting framework, and that there are no matters that need to be drawn to the reader's attention.
- In 2010 government undertook a review of the Commission and took away the grants budget from 31st March 2012. The grant expenditures in 2014-15 and 2015-16 relate to discrete, short-term programmes and were not a continuation of the much larger programme that existed historically.



## Performance highlights in 2015-16



1/2

### Information and guidance

The Commission with Ofcom produced a **guide**: 'Thinking outside the box' for those working in the television broadcasting sector and disseminated it via 10 industry roundtables.

Developed a **training programme** with the College of Policing on stop-and-search for police officers in England.

### Legal cases

The Commission took on new litigation:

**5** legal cases where it provided full assistance

**7** legal cases where it provided more limited support

**18** interventions

**1** judicial review

The Commission has also completed or continued 15 legal cases with full assistance, four with limited support and eight interventions.

### Use of formal enforcement powers

**7** new agreements

**1** investigation (ongoing)

### Pre-enforcement work (informal regulatory activity)

- Worked with **25** employers and service providers requiring them to improve policies and practices
- **35** complaints concluded on adverts
- **25** complaints concluded on pre-employment health questionnaires
- **45** other matters were approved for regulatory action including breach of the public sector Equality Duty. The Commission told us the vast majority were concluded via informal pre-enforcement work to encourage compliance with the law, without formal enforcement action

### Research, insight and analysis:

**10** publications

**Reports** looking at:

- *Is Britain Fairer?* review of progress on equality and human rights
- followed by *Is England Fairer?*, *Is Scotland Fairer?* and *Is Wales Fairer?*
- the scale and nature of pregnancy and maternity discrimination at work (with the former Department for Business, Innovation & Skills)
- equality, inclusion and participation in Scottish sport (with Sport Scotland)
- deaths in detention of adults with mental health (follow-up report)
- how changes to legal aid, tribunal fees and funding of the advice sector have affected the right to fair trial and access to civil justice in England and Wales

**1 inquiry** on better recruitment practices to improve diversity on boards

**1 review** of equality and human rights law relating to religion or belief

### Treaty monitoring

**4 published reports** on the UK's performance in complying with human rights treaties covering: economic, social and cultural rights; civil and political rights; children's rights; and on the elimination of discrimination against women – influencing up to 70% of the recommendations that the UN committees make to the government.

### Monitoring effectiveness of laws

**30 parliamentary briefings** to improve legislation



## How the Commission measures performance

The Commission measures progress in relation to equality and human rights in society through its Measurement Framework. Internally, it measures whether it has achieved its objectives through its Strategic Success Measures. Of the 25 key strategic success measures and targets for 2015-16, 23 were achieved or substantially achieved and two were not met and extended into 2016-17. In addition, it measures performance against key performance indicators (KPIs) in respect of operational measures, which it publishes in its annual report. The Commission has 13 KPIs, which it hopes to adapt in future so that they more clearly map onto its strategic aims and objectives. It achieved 10 out of 13 of its KPIs in 2015-16. The Commission is currently reviewing how it evaluates performance to allow it to better understand the impact individual projects have on societal changes.

### Key performance indicator

	2015-16 target	2015-16 outturn
Success rate of completed strategic legal actions	70%	65%
Number of unique visitors to the website	2.06m	1.7m
Website user satisfaction rating out of 5	4.0	4.3
Twitter engagement levels	12,000	19,535
Number of stage 1 complaints received	<30	23
Complaints acknowledged within five working days	90%	96%
Complaints responded to within 20 working days	90%	100%
Complaints upheld by the Information Commissioner's Office	<2%	0%
Requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 responded to within the statutory deadlines	100%	99%
Requests made under the Data Protection Act 1998 responded to within the statutory deadlines	100%	100%
Parliamentary questions answered within the deadline	100%	100%
Staff turnover	<10%	8.87%
Sickness absence (average number of staff days lost to illness per FTE)	<9	8.89

Source: *The Equality and Human Rights Commission Annual Report and Accounts, 2015-16*, p.26-27





## Key challenges

### Broad mandate

Every individual in Britain has human rights and is protected against discrimination. Therefore, the Commission's mandate covers a wide variety of issues affecting a wide range of stakeholders.

### Funding: Limited resources

Significant budget reductions have impacted the type and amount of work the Commission is able to do.

### Uncertainty over future funding allocation

There have been delays finalising the funding allocation for 2015-16 and beyond.

### Stakeholder engagement

The Commission needs good information from stakeholders to help it identify and prioritise issues. The helpline, which was previously run by the Commission, has now been outsourced.

### Responding to constitutional changes

Increasing devolution, the UK's decision to leave the EU and proposals for a Bill of Rights have implications for the legislation and infrastructure which protects human rights and prohibits discrimination.

### Increasing understanding of the Commission's role

The Commission wants to make sure it is, and is seen to be, independent of government. The UN accreditation body expressed concern over the Secretary of State's discretion over the appointment of Board members and the allocation of funds.

## Impact

The Commission cannot work on every human rights issue. It uses: the *Is Britain Fairer?* report; its reports to the UN on UK compliance with human rights; and public consultation to prioritise its work.

The Commission is not able to deliver what it has in the past and is changing the way it works ([See: The reduction in funding means the Commission operates more strategically](#)).

Uncertainty makes it difficult for the Commission to plan its work ([See: Delays in obtaining a clear funding settlement make long term planning difficult for the Commission](#)).

The Commission has concerns it no longer gets the data and referrals of cases for enforcement it needs from the helpline ([See: Case study: The Helpline](#)).

This is a developing area of work for the Commission. It is looking at the implications of these changes on legislation.

The Commission continues to maintain its status as an 'A' status UN institution.

## The reduction in funding means the Commission operates more strategically

The Commission has responded to its budget reductions in a number of ways. It is working in partnership with organisations to deliver change and has to be more selective in the legal cases it takes on, taking on cases with the potential for the most impact. The Commission is also implementing a new Target Operating Model.

### New operating model

Key changes:

- Closure of regional locations in Birmingham, Leeds, Newcastle, and Edinburgh
- Senior leadership team and decision-making bodies restructured
- Investment in the Inquiries and Investigation Unit
- A new Impact and Improvement Network
- More flexible resources
- Investment in developing highly skilled staff.

### Partnership working

The Commission has been increasingly working in partnership with other organisations due to reduced budgets and in order to achieve most impact.

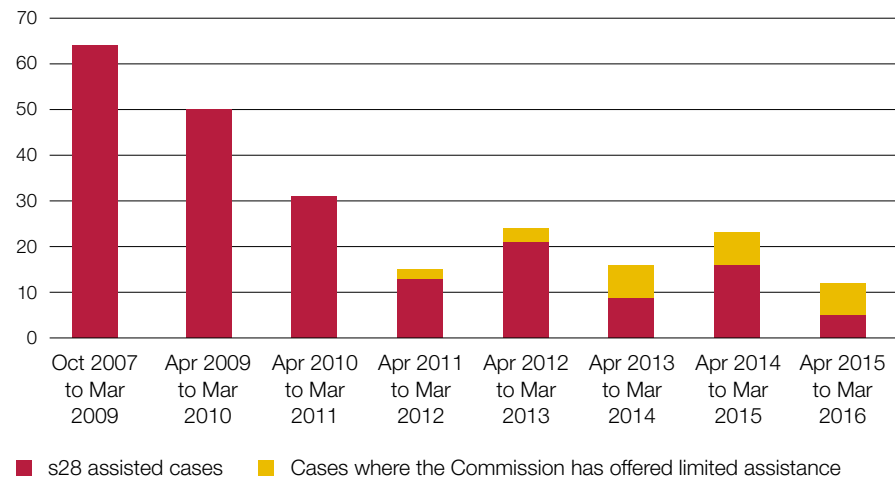
This work includes a wide range of organisations.

For example, it commissioned research with the former Department for Business, Innovation & Skills to investigate the prevalence and nature of pregnancy and maternity-related discrimination and disadvantage in the workplace.

### Revised approach to legal cases

**The Commission is more selective on taking on cases with the potential for the most impact, where often the law is unclear and outcomes uncertain.**

Number of legal cases



**Note**

1 s28 assisted cases: formal approval granted in accordance with the Commission's governance arrangements to provide full legal assistance to a specific individual for legal proceedings.

Source: Equality and Human Rights Commission internal data



# Delays in obtaining a clear funding settlement make long-term planning difficult for the Commission

## Changes in sponsor department

The sponsor department for the Commission has changed on a number of occasions in recent years as it follows the Minister for Women and Equalities.

Changes in sponsor departments have led to delays finalising the Commission’s funding settlement.

### Sponsor Department for the Equality and Human Rights Commission

GEO	HO	DCMS	DfE
2007–2011	2011–2013	2013–2015	2015–present

## Future funding settlement

Of the future funding settlement of £21.02 million, £4.52 million falls within the discretionary programme funding arrangements. While the controls have been relaxed, Secretary of State approval is still required in the case of expenditure in excess of £750,000, on capacity-building work and where there is overlap with DfE/GEO responsibilities or joint projects with other government departments.

The Commission understands it is to face a 25% reduction in its budget over the next four years. It does not yet have the exact details of its future budget, which it told us makes long-term planning and investment in permanent staff difficult. Work is under way with the DfE to finalise budget allocations for 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20.







## Case study: The helpline

The Equality and Advisory Support Service (EASS) advises and assists individuals on issues relating to equality and human rights across England, Scotland and Wales.

The service was initially run by the Commission. It cost approximately £3 million per annum and involved around 70 members of staff. It provided the Commission with useful intelligence on current equality and human rights issues and highlighted legal cases which the Commission could support. In 2012, the GEO review concluded the government should not fund the commission to deliver this service and the helpline was contracted-out. The contract was funded directly by government and contracted to Sitel (a private sector organisation between 2012 and 2016). A new three-year contract was awarded to G4S from October 2016.

The helpline provides general information, rather than legal advice.

### Data received from the helpline:

The Commission needs the data on enquiries to EASS in order to understand current equalities and human rights issues, and to inform its work and strategic priorities.

The Commission has expressed concerns the data it receives from the helpline is of poor quality.

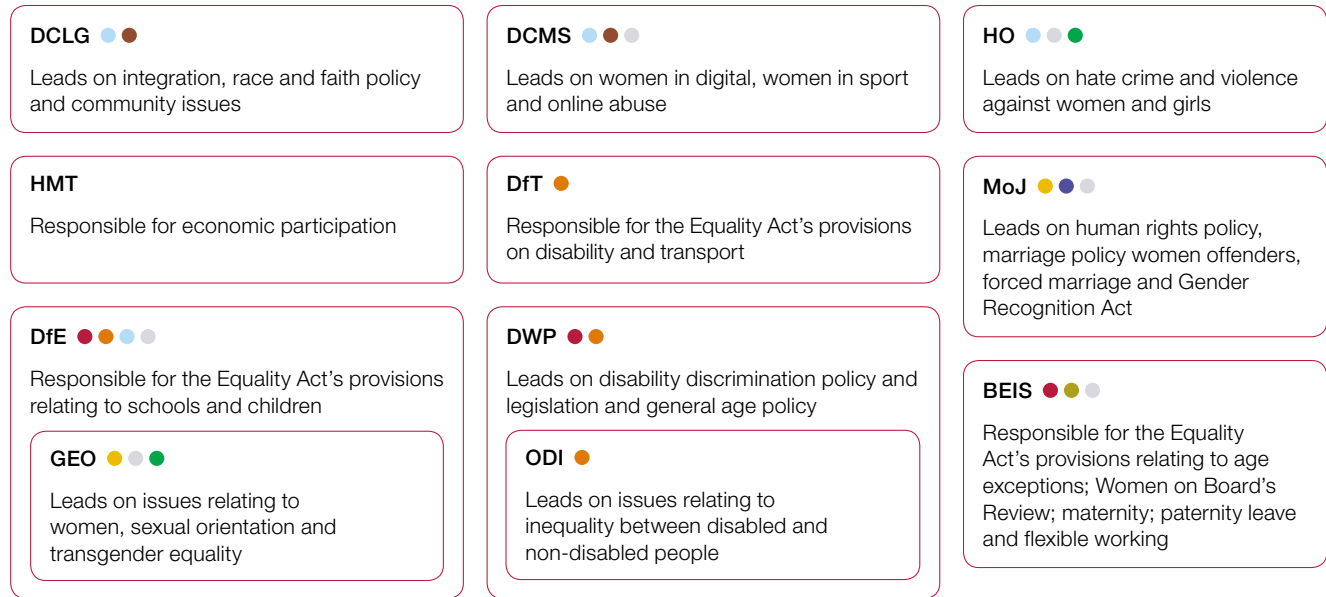
The number of strategic referrals to the Commission from the helpline increased from 112 in 2014 to 333 in 2015. However, only 52 of the total 445 referrals were considered by the Commission to be of strategic value, and none have been taken forward for strategic litigation.

**House of Lords Select Committee on the Equality Act 2010 and Disability** recommends that “the **EASS be returned to the EHRC**, either in-house or as the contract managers for a tendered-out service.” (*Report on the Equality Act 2010*). It received evidence that “the removal of the EHRC helpline and the establishment of the EASS has caused a disconnect between the EHRC and disabled people experiencing discrimination.” (*House of Lords Select Committee on the Equality Act 2010 and Disability, Oral and Written Evidence (2016), page 943.*)

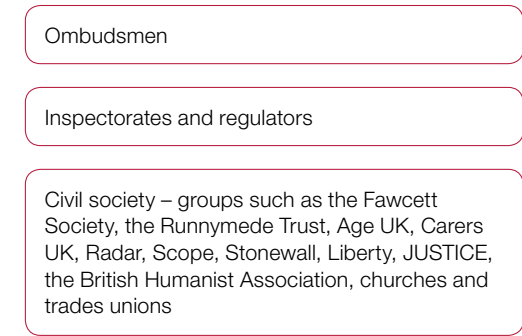
# Appendix One: The wider landscape of responsibilities for equalities and human rights in Great Britain



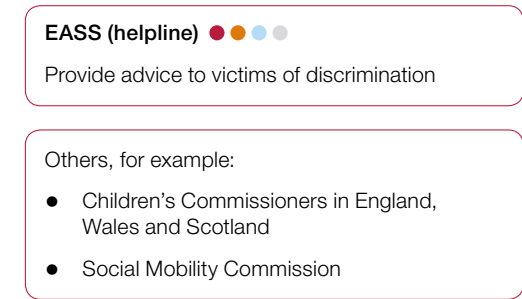
## Government departments



## Third parties



## Bodies funded by government



## Equality and Human Rights Commission

**Equalities: Nine protected characteristics:**

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

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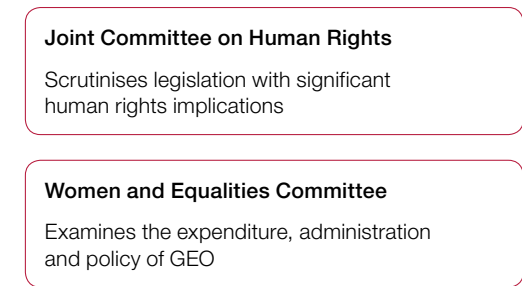
**Human rights**

The Commission is the only organisation in Great Britain that works across all nine of the protected characteristics

### Note

- This diagram does not include any devolved responsibilities although the Commission works with Welsh and Scottish institutions.
- DCLG = Department for Communities and Local Government, DCMS = Department for Culture, Media & Sport, HO = Home Office, HMT = HM Treasury, DfT = Department for Transport, MoJ = Ministry of Justice, DfE = Department for Education, GEO = Government Equalities Office, DWP = Department for Work & Pensions, ODI = Office for Disability Issues, BEIS = Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, EASS = Equality Advisory and Support Service

## Select Committees





## Appendix Two: International comparisons: European equality bodies

European anti-discrimination law requires that equality bodies are set up on the grounds of race and ethnic origin and gender for EU member states. The Equality and Human Rights Commission in the UK has a broad mandate and is one of the few countries that combines equalities and human rights in one institution. Different mandates and accountability structures make comparisons challenging.

### Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has its own NHRI which has an 'A' status accreditation, the **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC)**. Funded by the UK government, it was established as part of the Good Friday Agreement.

In 2015-16, it had 94 employees and spent £5.7 million.

### Ireland

One body:

**Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC)**  
An 'A' status NHRI that covers human rights and equality.

### Denmark

Two state-funded bodies:

**a) Danish Institute for Human Rights**  
An independent, 'A' status NHRI with a mandate to promote and protect human rights and equal treatment in Denmark and abroad.

**b) Board of Equal Treatment**  
Body tasked with issuing decisions in cases of individual complaints of discrimination.

**Also covers:** social origin, national origin, political opinion and skin colour.

### France

Two state-funded institutions:

**a) Commission nationale consultative des droits de l'homme (CNCDH).**  
An 'A' status NHRI.

**b) Defender of Rights**  
Promotional and legal support functions. Also covers: Way of life, genetic characteristics, health, family/marital status, surname, political opinion, pregnancy, union activity and physical appearance.

### Finland

Two bodies looking at equalities:

**a) Ombudsman for Equality**  
Performs inspections into businesses and provides trial assistance.

**b) Non-Discrimination Ombudsman**  
Mandated to advance equality and prevent and tackle discrimination.

Finland has a separate organisation for human rights.

### Netherlands

One body covering equality and human rights:

**Netherlands Institute for Human Rights (NIHR) is a 'A' status NHRI**  
It protects, monitors, explains and promotes human rights in the Netherlands through research, advice, awareness-raising and through individual assessment in the case of discrimination.

### Romania

One body focusing on equality:

**National Council for Combating Discrimination**  
**Also covers:** Nationality, language, social category, chronic non-infectious disease, HIV infection, as well as any other criterion.

Romania has a separate organisation for human rights.

### Mandate

European anti-discrimination law requires that equality bodies are set up on the grounds of race and ethnic origin and gender. Many EU countries have gone beyond these requirements and have equality bodies that deal with other grounds of discrimination (in particular, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief and disability). Some of these bodies also have a human rights mandate.

### Accountability

Different systems of accountability to reflect and ensure independence and effectiveness.

The bodies in Equinet, a European network of equality bodies, report to the following:

- 24 report to national parliament
- 2 report to head of state
- 16 national ministry
- 11 report to national audit institution

### Note

1 Thirty-two countries are members of Equinet, which has 46 equality bodies across its membership. Some of the bodies report to more than one organisation.