

Minority Ethnic Matters Overview+

MEMO+ is an occasional series of briefing papers on topics of interest to minority ethnic communities in Scotland.

It is produced by the [Scottish Council of Jewish Communities](#) in partnership with the [Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland](#), and is supported by the [Scottish Government](#).

Having Your Say: Scottish Human Rights Commission Consultation: Building a Strategic Plan

What is the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC)?

The Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) was set up to promote Human Rights in Scotland. It is responsible for the promotion of Human Rights in relation to devolved matters, and reports to the Scottish Parliament. It will co-operate with the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) with which it shares premises, and which has responsibility for Human Rights issues reserved to the UK Parliament.

The SHRC intends to:

- promote all Human Rights – civil, political, economic, social, and cultural
- identify and advocate best practice within public authorities
- monitor law and policy in Scotland and, where necessary, recommend changes, though its recommendations are not legally binding

The SHRC has powers to:

- carry out legal inquiries
- intervene in legal proceedings

The Chair of the Commission is Professor Alan Miller who has worked in the field of Human Rights for 25 years, including some time with the United Nations. The other commissioners are:

- Kay Hampton, who is also an EHRC commissioner, was formerly the chair of the Commission for Racial Equality
- Shelagh McCall has worked as international prosecution appeals counsel at the UN
- John McNeill was Acting Director of the Scottish Prison Service, responsible for regimes and healthcare

SHRC consultation: Building a strategic plan

Proposed goals

The SHRC has proposed four "strategic goals":

1. Creating a Human Rights Culture in Scotland

The SHRC will promote awareness, understanding, and respect for Human Rights, with particular regard to those whose rights are not always respected. It plans to achieve this by:

- delivering training and education to public authorities
- raising awareness of human rights within the population of Scotland, making human rights accessible
- fostering an understanding of human rights in everyday life
- encouraging greater respect for human rights in Scotland

2. Integrating Human Rights into the governance of Scotland

The SHRC will develop best-practice guidance and tools to enable organisations to integrate Human rights into their day-to-day activities. It will also monitor law, policies, and practices, and will recommend appropriate changes, and may intervene in civil legal proceedings, and conduct legal inquiries. It plans to achieve this by:

- identifying both gaps and good practice
- developing an evidence base for a Human Rights National Action Plan for Scotland
- reporting to the Scottish Parliament, Government and civic society
- responding to relevant Scottish Government consultations

3. Implementing effective internal governance

The SHRC is an independent organisation and is not controlled by either the Scottish Parliament or Government. It will lead by example, carrying out its work according to a "rights-based" approach, and decisions will be transparent and accessible. It plans to achieve this by:

- developing appropriate structures and policies to ensure transparency and accountability.
- entering into Memoranda of Understanding with appropriate organisations
- setting up any specialist advisory panels that may be required
- ensuring that information about the SHRC's work is readily available both through the publication scheme and by responding openly to Freedom of Information requests
- adopting an Ethical Procurement standard and system for equality and rights impact assessments.

4. Meeting international responsibilities

The SHRC will seek formal recognition as a national Human Rights institution, and will co-operate with other relevant institutions and international bodies. It plans to achieve this by:

- devising a strategy for international engagement
- applying for formal recognition by the International Co-ordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC)
- monitoring Scottish compliance with the UN Convention for the Prevention of Torture, Inhuman and Degrading Punishment and Treatment, and the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Consultation Questions

Note that you do not have to answer every question in the consultation paper. If there are particular issues on which you would like to comment, you can choose to respond only to the questions that relate to those.

Creating a human rights culture in Scotland

1. How should we use training and education to create a Human Rights culture in Scotland?
 - Who should we deliver training and education to?
 - What training and education tools should we use?
 - Please highlight any examples of good practice that you have used in the past.
2. How should we go about raising awareness and understanding of Human Rights in everyday life in Scotland?
3. How should we encourage greater respect for Human Rights in Scotland?
4. How can the performance of the SHRC be assessed in this area?
5. What other things should we be doing to create a Human Rights culture in Scotland?

Integrating Human Rights into the governance of Scotland

6. Which groups in society and which Human Rights concerns are at present inadequately addressed?
7. What criteria should we use to prioritise the issues we identify?
8. How can we maximise the participation of the people of Scotland in our mapping exercise?
9. What is the best way to measure the extent to which people are able to exercise their rights?
10. How can we ensure that the mapping exercise fulfils its objectives?
11. How should we prioritise our response to the issues raised by Parliament and other bodies?
12. How should our performance be assessed in this area?
13. What other things should we do to integrate Human Rights into the governance of Scotland?

Implementing effective internal governance

14. What more can we do to ensure that we are accessible, accountable and transparent in everything that we do?
15. How should our performance be assessed in this area?
16. What other things should we do to implement effective internal governance?

Meeting international responsibilities

17. How else should we engage on Human Rights internationally?
18. In what other ways should we actively participate and co-operate with international, regional and other UK institutions?
19. How should our performance be assessed in this area?
20. What other things should we do to ensure that we meet our international responsibilities?

Send your views to the SHRC by 31 March 2009:

by e-mail to: yourview@scottishhumanrights.com

by post to: Scottish Human Rights Commission
Optima House
58 Robertson Street
Glasgow
G2 8DU

*We would be interested in hearing your views too
please send us a copy of your response at MEMO@bemis.org.uk*

Useful Documents and Websites

Scottish Human Rights Commission
<http://scottishhumanrights.com/about.html>

SHRC Strategic Plan
http://scottishhumanrights.com/documents/SHRC_StrategicPlan.pdf

Consultation Response Form
http://scottishhumanrights.com/documents/SHRC_Questionnaire.doc

Equality and Human Rights Commission
<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/Pages/default.aspx>



The **Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC)** is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland. It advances public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture and community, and also works in partnership with other organisations to promote good relations and understanding among community groups and to promote equality. (Scottish Charity SC029438)
<http://www.scojec.org/>



BEMIS (the Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland) is the umbrella body for ethnic minority organisations in Scotland. It aims to strengthen the capacity of the ethnic minority voluntary sector; raise the profile and coordinate the voice of this sector; and take a lead on policy issues to ensure that issues of concern are raised with government and other relevant bodies.
<http://www.bemis.org.uk/index.html>



The **Scottish Government** is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and social justice for all those who live in Scotland. **One Scotland** is the Scottish Government campaign designed to tackle racism. It aims to raise awareness of racist attitudes, highlight its negative impact and recognise the valuable contributions that other cultures have made to our society – and make Scotland no place for racism.
<http://www.scotlandagainstracism.com/>