

We need to talk about human rights

➤ Human rights are for everyone

Talking about human rights means saying out loud that we must be fair to everyone, no matter who they are, where they are from, what they have done or what they look like.

The fact that human rights do not exclude anyone is worth talking about. No matter who you are dealing with, human rights include them.

➤ Scotland supports human rights

Scottish law and policy increasingly use human rights as a foundation for decision making.

The Scottish Government's National Performance Framework includes an outcome to 'respect, protect and fulfil human rights'. More and more laws have human rights at their heart, including the new Social Security Act.

Across policy areas, using human rights as a baseline is more and more common. This means by talking about human rights you are ticking more boxes and are more likely to be listened to.

➤ Human rights are international

United Nations international monitoring systems make sure that the UK is always taking steps towards making human rights real for everyone, whatever your cause. Organisations can get involved in reporting to the United Nations, highlighting any progress needed on issues they care about.

Talking about human rights can increase pressure locally to meet these international standards, and bring international pressure to bear on local issues.

➤ Human rights are practical

Human rights can help to prioritise budgets and to shape strategic plans. They are not just about aspiration but also about how your organisation uses what you have to meet basic needs and protect basic freedoms.

Talking about human rights means shaping decision-making in very practical ways that make the greatest impact on people's lives.

➤ Human rights are personal

People do not fit into one neat box. Individuals have multiple identities from their gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, disability, religion, beliefs, background and more. A human rights-based approach explicitly recognises this. Human rights are intersectional, not one-dimensional.

By talking about your issue in human rights terms, you deliberately strengthen support for *all* human rights to be realised. You demonstrate that all aspects of human rights – and the international conventions that name them - apply to the people you are talking about.

➤ Human rights are legal rights

Human rights are not just good principles or best practice. They are also required by law. Decisions of public bodies must be compatible with the Human Rights Act.

Both individuals and the Equality & Human Rights Commission (our national human rights institution) can take individuals' cases to court to enforce the rights within this Act.

And there are plans in Scotland to adopt more human rights into Scots law. By talking about human rights, governments and public bodies cannot ignore you.

➤ Human rights are empowering

Human rights are about putting power into the hands of people who often feel powerless and ignored. They enable all of us to say, *this is my right*. They say I have a right to be heard. I cannot be ignored. I have power.

When organisations talk about human rights, they are empowering individuals and communities to claim those rights and use them too.

And what could be better to talk about than that.

For more information on human rights, have a look at:

- Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment guide: <http://eqhria.scottishhumanrights.com/>
- RightsInfo explainers: <https://rightsinfo.org/explainers/>
- Amnesty International's web info on what are human rights: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/what-are-human-rights>
- Human Rights Consortium Scotland – Scotland's civil society network on human rights. Become a member to protect and promote human rights, and to find out more about how to use human rights in your work: www.hrcscotland.org