



Project learning: Human Rights in the Media

About Human Rights Consortium Scotland

The Consortium is Scotland's civil society network to promote and protect human rights. Our membership is drawn from across civil society. We work towards two outcomes:

- Civil society has the information and understanding that it needs to protect and promote human rights.
- A strong collective civil society voice to protect and promote human rights in Scotland.

We work collaboratively and inclusively. The Consortium is currently 'incubated' by Amnesty International UK, with plans to be an independent organisation by summer 2020.

About this project

To better protect and realise human rights in Scotland, we know that more people need to understand the importance of human rights for them, their communities and Scotland. We know too that for this to happen, we need to harness a wide variety of mediums and that this includes the media.

This project (funding title: Building a Human Rights Approach in Scotland) took place between May 2018 and April 2019, and was funded by [Network for Social Change](#). The project activities included:

- **Communicating for Change training** – training delivered by [Equally Ours](#) for 15 participant organisations, looking at how to take a strategic approach to media work including framing of messaging to achieve change on social issues and human rights.
- **Introduction to Media Skills training** – training delivered by a [media consultant](#), to 11 participant organisations, providing practical tools and tips to enable organisations to engage with the media effectively.
- **Piloting a civil society Human Rights Communications Network:**
 - Initial consultation and scoping exercise with key organisations to identify needs and suggestions for collaboration.
 - In response to this scoping, we held our first successful peer workshop and networking session on 'Human Rights in the Media' with 17 participants and two expert speakers: Rachel Hamada, journalist and Director of The Ferret, and Pauline Kelly Media Officer with Amnesty International Scotland.
- **Provided web resources around communicating human rights** on the HRCS website and highlighted to Communications Network members, including links to best practice guides and a new briefing titled 'We need to talk about human rights' – see: <https://hrcscotland.org/resources/communicating-human-rights/resources/>

Learning from this project

- **Value of collaboration across different types of organisations**

One of the strengths and core characteristics of the Consortium is its broad membership and its ability to bring together very different organisations. Its membership includes organisations working on a wide range of issues, and organisations of very different types whether local or national, small or big,

campaigning organisations or service providers, and so on. This project showed that there is value in having a broad range of organisations in the room, learning and discussing together and sharing their particular expertise and concerns.

- **Value of drawing on expertise from across the UK**

Equally Ours, based in London, have particular expertise and experience around strategic communications on human rights, and this provided for excellent, expert training within this project. This experience is a helpful reminder that civil society in Scotland needs to continue to source the best expertise from across the UK, and indeed the wider world, to inform developments around human rights in Scotland.

- **Considerable interest and willingness, but less capacity**

Civil society are an incredible source of expertise and commitment to ensuring that human rights are secured for all in Scotland. Many of those who took part in this project spoke about wanting to use the media more to communicate effectively about human rights, with particular interest in increasingly doing so in a strategic way. However many, particularly those from smaller organisations, also spoke about the challenge of engaging strategically in media work due to lack of capacity to do so. If human rights are to be better understood in Scotland, we need the voices of the smaller and local organisations in the media too, and they need resourced to have the capacity to do so.

- **Benefit of focus on media work**

The participants in this project were engaged, or wanted to be engaged, in some way in media and communications work but for most, this role was only one aspect of a varied workload. Participants therefore valued the opportunity to focus on media work and get specific learning around this, though are also interested in training or resources related to other work around human rights.

Human Rights in the Media: Future plans

The Consortium will develop the activity and learning of this project in the following ways:

1. We will build on contacts built through this project. However, instead of continuing this pilot of a distinct communications network, we will incorporate specific events and resources around human rights in the media within our wider work to facilitate civil society to protect and promote human rights. This will include making invitations to media-focused events open to all of our membership.
2. We will hold further peer network and learning sessions around human rights in the media in 2019. One of these sessions will specifically bring together student journalists and human rights organisations.
3. Organisations spoke about the importance of getting the voice of those with lived experience of defending their rights into the media. However, they also spoke about the challenges of doing so and that even where there were individuals who were willing to speak publicly about their human rights and those of their communities, a lack of training, support and experience made them reluctant to do so. Therefore, the Consortium is exploring funding to enable a programme to help empower those with lived experience of defending their rights to speak publicly.
4. Develop a plan for the Consortium's strategic media engagement within our current resource and capacity.

For more information on this project or the Consortium's wider work, contact: Mhairi Snowden, Coordinator, hrcscotland@gmail.com, T: 0131 3578590, @HRCScotland