

UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS IN SMALL PLACES, CLOSE TO HOME

OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2020 – 2025



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THE BACKGROUND TO OUR FRAMEWORK

In 2019 BIHR commissioned a Strategic Review, with the support of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. This helped us explore the organisation's key achievements, our unique contribution to the human rights field and wider voluntary sector, and how to best secure and strengthen our visibility within the sector and wider policy and practice circles.

Working with an independent consultant, Liz Griffin of Hidden Depths Research, a range of key stakeholders were interviewed including those who benefit from our work, funders, and influencers. The review also included key people and organisations had not, at that point, worked with BIHR. Desk research was conducted and BIHR's internal and external work analysed.

Through this Review process the Board of Trustees, with the Director and staff team, have recalibrated BIHR's strategic direction:

- ✓ building on our **unique role** in providing **the support needed to secure local level social change through human rights**, and
- ✓ developing a **bold new approach to policy work** which **places people at the centre of national change to better respect and protect people's human rights**.

Our resulting Strategic Framework will guide BIHR for the next five years between 2020 – 2025. It will be operationalised through our annual work plan, with key measures to track progress, and supported by an aligned fundraising and income generation plan.



“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 map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. 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, holding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

SIR NICOLAS BRATZA, CHAIR OF BIHR'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES



It gives me great pleasure to launch a new five-year Strategic Framework for the British Institute of Human Rights, an organisation with which I have been proud to be associated for the past 40 years.

2020 marks an important milestone in the history of BIHR. It is 50 years since BIHR was founded with the mission of making the fundamental rights in the European Convention of Human Rights a real and effective part of the UK's law. Since the coming into effect of the Human Rights Act 1998, BIHR has played a pivotal role in promoting and defending the human rights protected by the Act. Both responding to attacks on both the Act and Convention system and increasing knowledge of the benefits the Act and Convention have brought to the people of this country, through education, training, advocacy, and publications. BIHR has, in particular, carved out for itself a key niche in areas such as health and social care, supporting both those using and those providing services so as to transform the relationship between people and power in their everyday lives.

The new Strategic Framework in no sense marks a departure from BIHR's earlier work. On the contrary, the Framework builds on the experience gained by BIHR over the years in working in partnership with community groups, public services, and decision makers across the UK to make practical use of the human rights guaranteed by the Act and thereby achieve positive and lasting social change. As the Framework makes clear, BIHR will do so principally by supporting people to use human rights law to bring about changes in their own lives; strengthening the voices of community and voluntary groups to use human rights law to address social justice issues; increasing the accountability of public bodies to respect and protect human rights in their policies and practices; and influencing national policy change to secure the protection of individual human rights.

At a time when universal human rights and their effective protection are increasingly at risk of being undermined or watered down, the need for a strong, independent, and vibrant voice to defend human rights and support others to use those rights for effective social change has never been greater. I am confident that, with an expanded and diversified funding base, BIHR can continue to provide that voice, not only for the next 5 years but for the next 50, and more.

OUR HISTORY

BIHR has a long history, having been initially established as The Human Rights Trust in 1970, later becoming the British Institute of Human Rights.

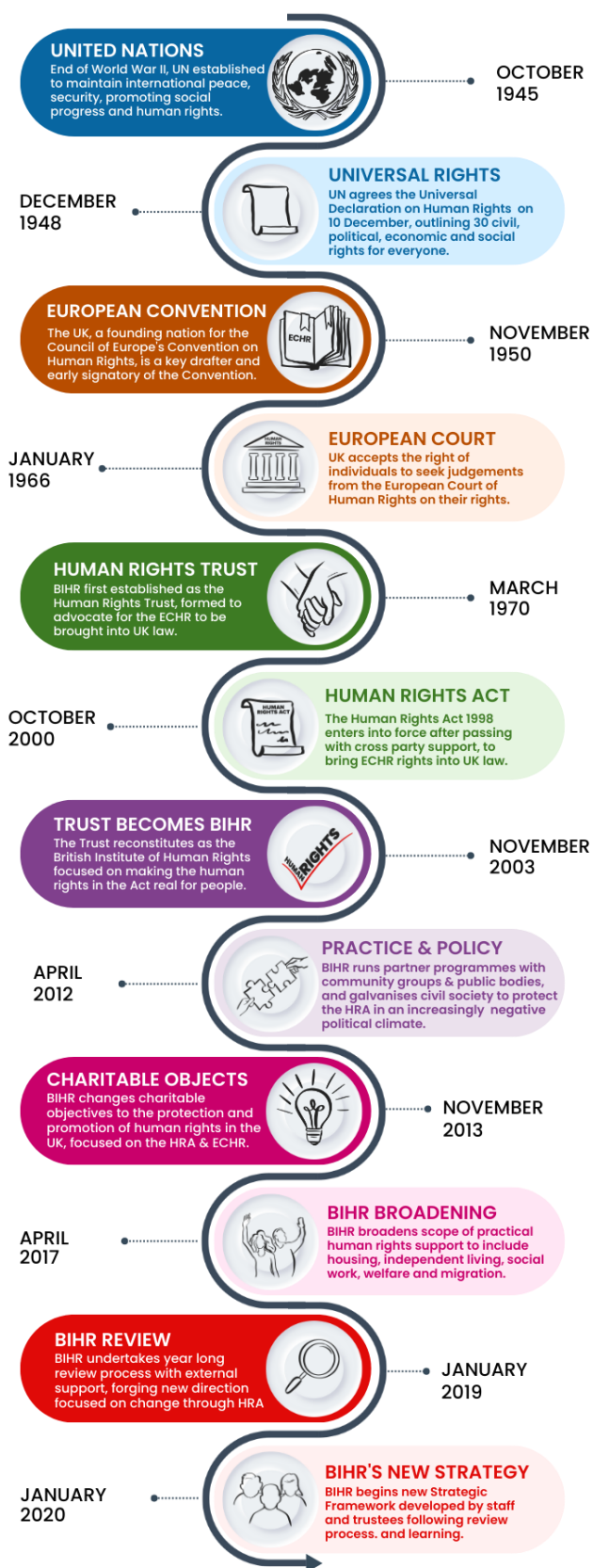
This Strategic Framework starts in 2020, as we embark on our 50th anniversary. In that time, we have achieved much, and transformed considerably.

Our founders focused on bringing the fundamental protections in the European Convention of Human Rights into UK law, so people could benefit from their rights at home, and not solely by taking cases to the European Court of Human Rights.

The passing of the Human Rights Act in 1998 brought these rights home, with two key aims, to:

1. enable people to bring human rights cases in the UK courts; and
2. help create a culture of respect for human rights.

A culture of respect is fundamental for every person, in their everyday life. The legal duties imposed by our Human Rights Act require that when people seek access to housing, healthcare, social care, education, etc. the officials involved uphold people's human rights. Essentially human rights should be the reference point for every person's dealings with those who hold public power.



For the last 20 years BIHR has developed a key niche in supporting both those with human rights and those with legal duties to uphold those rights, to realise the potential of the law to transform the relationship between people and power in their everyday lives.

Our new Strategic Framework is rooted in this history. Through it we seek to make the best use of BIHR's expertise, experience, evidence, relationships, and passion to work at the local and national level to achieve social justice through everyday use of human rights.



A human rights culture is:

“... one that fosters basic respect for human rights and creates a climate in which such respect becomes an **integral part of our way of life** and a **reference point for our dealing with public authorities** ... in which all our

institutional policies and practices are influenced by these ideas...The **building of a human rights culture ...[depends] not just on courts** awarding remedies for violations of individuals' rights, but on **decision-makers in all public services internalising the requirements of human rights law**, integrating those standards into their policy and decision-making processes, and ensuring that the **delivery of public services in all fields is fully informed by human rights considerations.**”

UK Parliament's Joint Committee of Human Rights (our emphasis)

OUR CHARITABLE STATUS

The British Institute of Human Rights is a registered charity (England and Wales), working across the UK. Our core charitable objectives are to promote and advance human rights throughout the UK, primarily the European Convention and the Human Rights Act within the UK. We do not work on international human rights laws (outside of the Convention, as it impacts the UK) or in other countries. We work in line with the Charity Commission guidance, and as such do not engage in party political campaigning.

The British Institute of Human Rights is a registered charity (1101575) and registered company (4978121).

BIHR 2010–2020: WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE UK



BIHR is proud to work in and with communities across the UK; whilst our offices were based in London during this time, the vast majority of our work to achieve social change through human rights takes place elsewhere.

We mostly work with small community-based groups, often led by people with lived experience of the issues they are focused on addressing. Where we work with larger groups this is most usually around advocacy and supporting a wider groups of people to benefit from their human rights by securing better decisions from public services and decisions-makers. During the previous decade, some examples of our community partners include:



Direct reach in **over 50 local communities** across the nations and Channel Islands to deliver education, outreach, practical mentoring, and change programmes rooted in enabling people to use the Human Rights Act for change.



Reached over **10,000 people in communities and public services**, supporting “lightbulb” moments to see the relevance and practicality of human rights to achieve positive change.



Reached over **13,000 people through co-produced practical information resources** (booklets, websites, films, etc) enabling people to integrate human rights through local advocacy and changing the way decisions are made.



Developed over **50 real life stories of how people's lives have changed** through our work to support people to benefit from human rights in their every life.



Influenced changes to national legislation and policy to ensure better respect for human rights, including by securing the human rights duties apply in health and care settings (Health & Social Care Act 2008, Care Act 2014); improving mental capacity law (Mental Capacity Amendment Act); producing training standards to reduce the use of restraint.



Galvanised the voluntary and community sector and individuals across the UK to speak up for the value of the Human Rights Act: **supporting 100 groups to join together in the annual Human Rights Day letter**; **over 400 responses to the Bill of Rights Commission**; and **75 groups supporting evidence to the UN's period review of the UK's human rights compliance**.

MOVING FORWARD

The Operating Environment (2020 and beyond)



Brexit remains the key issue on the UK's political agenda, bringing significant uncertainty. From welfare to citizenship, workers' rights to budgetary implications, the impact of Brexit for people's everyday lives remains a concern. We do know that the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights has been removed from the Withdrawal Act, thereby removing important international safeguards of people's human rights. This leaves our Human Rights Act as an important, but potentially vulnerable, backstop. The process of exiting the EU has also had the double-edged effect of creating a sense of extreme focus and urgency on the issue and a near paralysis of actions because the lack of clarity and certainty.



The potentially permissive environment for removal or regression of our protections is a political concern which cannot be ignored. Technically, exiting the EU does not legally affect the UK's Human Rights Act, which is based on the European Convention on Human Rights. However, the direction of travel away from universally agreed human rights is a worrying trend, which has been flagged by United Nations bodies and devolved governments within the UK.



Austerity measures have undoubtedly impacted the extent to which people's human rights are being respected and protected by public services, institutions, and decision-makers. Key areas highlighted by research include welfare, housing, health, and care support – all areas key to BIHR's work. This is in addition to real reductions in accessing legal advice and representation, leaving people with limited access to justice both before and within the court system.



The rise of the hostile environment is now well documented. Whilst this has a specific and important meaning within the immigration context, it is symptomatic of the wider move towards division amongst people and worrying interactions with power that place populism above evidence-based action.



The general impact for charities operating in this environment is well-known. At a UK level, there is a changed, less open, relationship with government, Whitehall, and Westminster in seeking to influence national policy. Funding opportunities have been tightened, with increased need for charities to both advocate with people to protect their rights, whilst experiencing further demand for charitable services and support.



There is an increasingly nuanced understanding of the way social change happens. Parliamentary work, traditional policy activities and litigation are all important. But the nature of politics, and particularly the access of civil society to spheres of influence is changing. In the current climate authentic stories of changes, rooted in people's real-life experiences are key to effective communication and changing hearts and minds, and through this action. BIHR has much to offer in connecting the work we do with people every day into the policy debates about the vital role of human rights at home.

What this means for BIHR's focus

Clearly, the political, policy, legal, economic, and social environment is increasingly uncertain. It continues to remain difficult, with often very stark choices for those we work with in communities, advocacy groups and public services and decision-makers. This makes our work at BIHR all the more important. The courtrooms are vitally important, but they are only one element of securing social change through human rights. When other frameworks and mechanisms are being removed and division is on the rise, this is the time when our human rights protections can really make a difference. Focusing on what unites us, and what is required not simply as an optional extra, but as a matter of law, is powerful.

People, power, and change are at the heart of our practical application of human rights. BIHR's key strength is the ability to support:

- ✓ groups of people accessing (or trying to access) public services AND
- ✓ those who deliver those services AND
- ✓ decision-makers

to better understand and apply the human rights in our HRA in real, meaningful ways. Through this we develop a unique evidence base for changing people's

everyday lives through human rights, achieving social change that supports community advocacy and transforms institutions, processes, and policies.

What this means for BIHR'S funding

Our 2019 Strategic Review demonstrated BIHR's unique – albeit often quiet – role in supporting the practical use of human rights at a local level. It flagged the need for us to rethink traditional methods of policy work in favour of giving voice to those we support. This will require a strong and vibrant BIHR. We must secure our financial base, fortify, and grow our expertise in human rights practice, and be bold in communicating about our work and its impact. This means working with funders to find new ways to provide our change through human rights support to the communities and public officials that need it and exploring income generating partnerships that further our impact.

Often, we will be seeking support to enable us to ensure what it is assumed should already be part of the way those with public power interact with people and organisations. We are a long way from the culture of respect envisioned by the drafters of the Human Rights Act, but with concerted and sustained action, our work shows this vision is attainable.

Building on what we have learnt from our Strategic Review process, we look forward to the coming five years to grow what works, to adapt what can be improved and develop new ways of working to deliver our bold new Strategic Framework.

OUR MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

Vision

BIHR's vision is of a strong and just society, in which all people can live well and flourish, safe in the knowledge that their human rights are being respected, protected, and fulfilled in their local communities and at the national level.

Mission

BIHR's mission is to support people and organisations to use human rights advocacy and approaches in their everyday life to achieve positive social change.

Values

We deploy our unique expertise on working with people to make practical use of human rights law, in everyday life beyond the courts for positive social change, in the most impactful way.

Collaborative partnership is at the heart of the way we work with people, their community groups, public services, and decision makers.

We work to empower people, who are often disempowered and disadvantaged by the actions of public services and decision-makers. We do this by working directly with community groups and those exercising public power. We work collaboratively, but we maintain our independence.

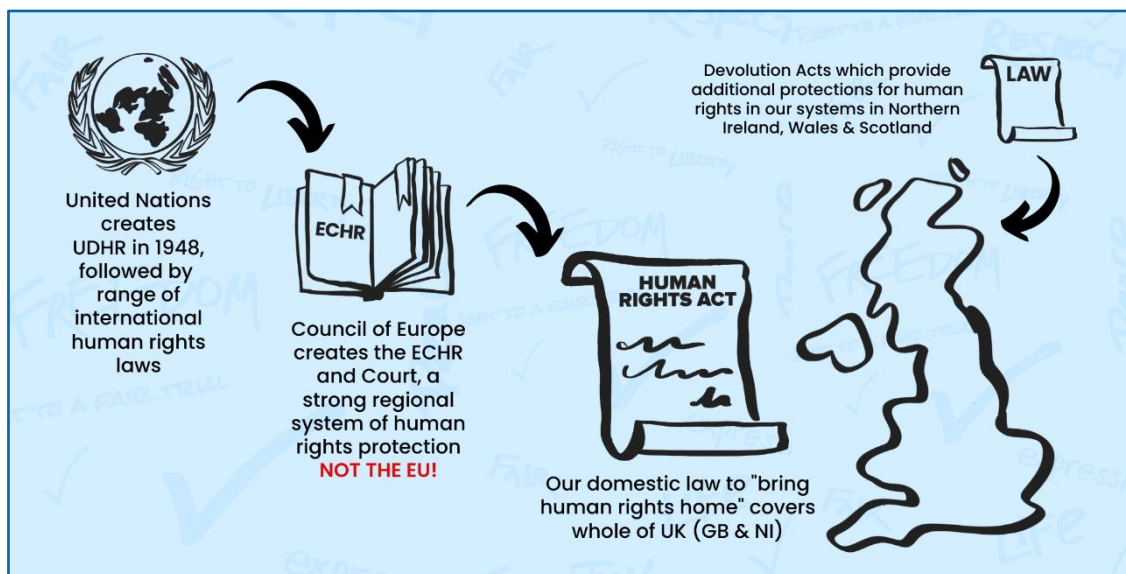
We support the use of the PANEL human rights approach, informing our values:

Participation – **A**ccountability – **N**on-discrimination – **E**mpowerment – **L**aw

HUMAN RIGHTS: WHAT WE MEAN

Ensuring people are treated with dignity and respect by those with public power underpins our commitment to putting universal human rights at the heart of people's everyday experiences across the UK. We use the power of our domestic legislation, the Human Rights Act, to make this happen.

The Human Rights Act brings protections from the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law, creating domestic legal duties to secure the implementation of people's rights. This runs alongside additional levels of protection interwoven into the devolution arrangements in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.



Traditionally these have been seen as civil and political human rights. However, as the European Court of Human Rights has itself noted

"The mere fact that an interpretation of the Convention may extend into the sphere of social and economic rights should not be a decisive factor against such an interpretation; there is no watertight division separating that sphere from the field covered by the Convention."

Everyday rights for everyone in everyday lives

Most of BIHR's practical human rights work focuses in areas traditionally seen as economic and social rights, such as health, housing, education, care provision and social support.

We believe the potential of the Human Rights Act to enable people to flourish across all aspects of their lives has not yet been realised.

We are committed to enabling people to make best use of their protections and the duties of public officials under the Human Rights Act, using this legal framework to bring about social change beyond the courtrooms.

Through our work we demonstrate the value of human rights for people in their everyday lives. This also develops a unique evidence base to show why the Human Rights Act – both rights and duties – are important for us all, and vital to a modern democracy.

BIHR is therefore committed to telling the positive story of the Human Rights Act's impact for everyone, every day, securing it in the UK's legal framework.



The right to life



The right to be free from inhuman or degrading treatment or torture



The right to be free from slavery or forced labour



The right to liberty



The right to a fair trial



The right not to be punished for something that wasn't against the law when you did it



The right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence



The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion



The right to freedom of expression



The right to freedom of assembly and association



The right to marry and found a family



The right to be free from discrimination



The right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions



The right to education



The right to free elections



Abolition of the death penalty

THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE: OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Everyday positive change through practical use of our Human Rights Act: Fran and Jim's story

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It is fantastic to be able to access practical support about my son's human rights. No matter how much I read, it isn't the same as direct support. On my own I can't be sure that I have got it right or have the skills to make it real, and this really matters when you are advocating for an adult child detained and abused in hospital. I now realise human rights are essential in ensuring good care is being delivered and that staff are accountable. This is much bigger than my son, it's about all the parents and children in the same situation across the country

– Fran, parent and carer

Jim is in his twenties and has learning disabilities. Jim has been moved from institution to institution, recently 200 miles from home following abuse. Everyone agreed he should be discharged and supported to live independently near his family. But the decision-makers disagree over who should find and fund this support. This meant Jim remained in a locked hospital ward.

Following a community learning session with BIHR, and using our practical co-developed resources, Jim's mum Fran wrote a complaints letter raising his human rights and the legal duties of the health services and local authorities involved in his care. For the first time Fran received an immediate response. A few months later, Jim is living independently, close to his family, with the housing and care he needs. Fran has gone on to support other parents and people with learning disabilities, Autistic people, and people with mental health issues to use human rights advocacy to help resolve similar situations in her community. She uses her experience to call for a human rights approach to care, restraint, seclusion, and the institutionalisation of people in national policy forums.

How we're making change at BIHR

Transforming the lives of people like Fran and Jim, scaling out and up this action, and creating policy shifts through human rights, is the change we help make happen at BIHR. Our theory of change is based on the principle that when people are supported to translate human rights law into a practical tool this can lead to significant change that addresses and prevents everyday social injustices. Through this we have a unique evidence base which can not only change local power structures but also influence the national law, policy and guidance that sets the parameters for local systems. This in turn has the potential to positively impact people's lives. Evidence of the important impact of human rights is a vital element in demonstrating the case for the Human Rights Act and securing our legal protections.



PEOPLE AND POWER

People are at the heart of the change we seek to support. Our theory of change relies on working in partnership with both “rights-holders” and “duty-bearers” to create positive change that respects, protects and fulfils human rights. We therefore work with those at risk of having their human rights breached by working with their groups and supporters, as well as with those who may present a risk to human rights.

Our human rights approach means people are not vulnerable; they are put in vulnerable situations by decision-makers, policies, laws, or practices. Framing social justice issues as human rights issues empowers people to move beyond asking for charity or goodwill, to calling on public bodies to comply with the law.

CAPACITY AND CONFIDENCE

Our tools and change programmes build people’s capacity to understand how legally protected human rights are relevant to the issues they face, either in accessing public services or exercising public power. We focus on how to use the power of the law in the Human Rights Act to make change in their lives without court action.

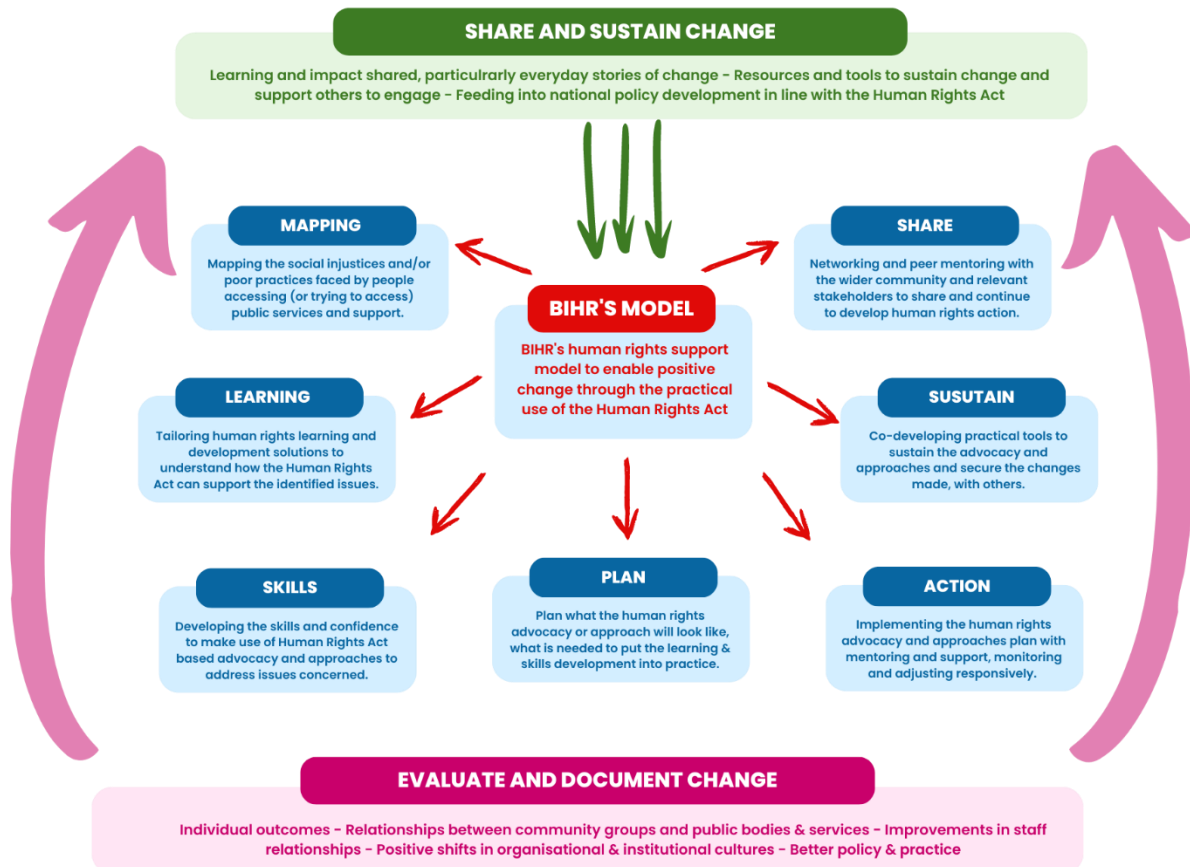
Our programmes, whilst they have a core elements, are flexible, depending on the needs of the communities and public bodies and services we support.

Learning from our programmes informs the practical legal information and tools we produce for those beyond our direct reach. This also underpins our new approach to policy work which places people and their experience of achieving change through human rights at the heart of national influencing activities to secure rights-respecting law and policy.

WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES AND PUBLIC BODIES

Our theory of change relies on BIHR working with both “rights-holders” and “duty-bearers” to create positive change that respects, protects and fulfils human rights.

We therefore prioritise working with local communities and communities of interest via collaborations with other groups, as well as working with those who have human rights duties such as public service providers, regulators, and policymakers. Working with both we use a flexible model, which includes:



WHAT WE DO NOT DO

It is important to be clear about what BIHR's model does not include; we do not:

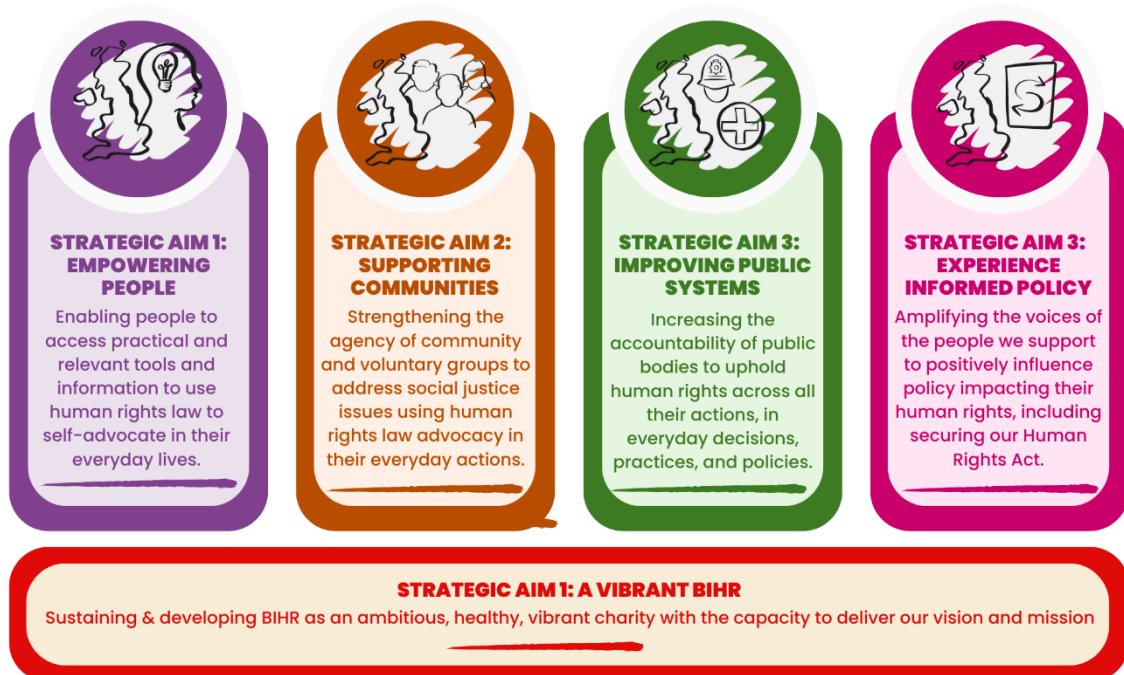
- Provide legal advice or representation either in casework or litigation.
- Work with individuals on a one-to-one or advocacy basis, rather we support people through their community groups or through our self-advocacy tools.
- Regulatory or other legal overview or quality-mark style endorsements of the human rights records of those we work; we provide the support others need to implement their Human Rights Act duties in their own work.

STRATEGIC AIMS & OBJECTIVES 2020–25

BIHR focuses on helping secure a culture of respect for human rights in everyday life, beyond the courts and in everyday life.

We produce the tools and support people need to use the law to resolve situations. This is about preventing poor public services and policy and challenging and changing decisions when things have gone wrong.

At the heart of each of our strategic aims is our commitment to bring about collaborative change through the use of human rights advocacy and approaches to change policy and practice. We seek to achieve change through human rights at 4 key levels, each underpinned by our organisational health.



People facing these issues, in public services and bodies, will inform our work:



AIM 1**EMPOWERING PEOPLE**

Enabling people to access practical and relevant tools and information to use human rights law to self-advocate in their everyday lives.

**BACKGROUND**

The human rights self-advocacy information and tools we provide have real value as tools for people for people in their everyday lives.

We are committed to ensuring people have access to information about how the protections in our Human Rights Act relate to the social injustices they face, and tools to enable them to use the legal framework to bring about change in their own lives or spheres of influence. This includes but goes beyond raising awareness or the provision of information.



One-day training session with Inclusion North, a user led community group for people with learning disabilities and/or autistic people, and families.

We are focused on providing the practical support people need to advocate for their human rights, the rights of those they care about, of people in their community, and of people who use their services.

As with all of BIHR's work, co-production partnerships are at the heart of our practical information and support provision. This means working directly with people affected by the issues to identify and produce the support they need to understand and practically use human rights.

We recognise that how we provide our practical information support to people must meet a variety of needs. Our approach therefore combines:

- ✓ face-to-face support through community outreach and training
- ✓ written hardcopy resources (also available online)
- ✓ interactive web-based tools, an exciting new area for BIHR
- ✓ an active and engaged social media presence, and
- ✓ providing information and tools through additional media such as film.

2020–2025 OBJECTIVES UNDER THIS STRATEGIC AIM

- ✓ Enhance our human rights advocacy website Know Your Human Rights, responding to need, keeping legal information updated, expanding beyond health and care, with a parallel path for those with human rights duties.
- ✓ Updating our suite of practical human rights support tools for people using public services and staff delivering them, filling gaps with new materials.
- ✓ Ensuring people who need our human rights support materials have them with resource reprints and a distribution plan, working with larger institutions and groups.
- ✓ Deliver a human rights advocacy and approaches training calendar for people using services (and their families/supporters); community and advocacy groups; duty holders, including seeking funding to provide an annual free human rights training programme for people using services, community, and advocacy groups across the UK.
- ✓ Develop BIHR's website as a hub for information to support human rights advocacy and to continue to capitalise and grow our social media presence to share impact.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

”

For the last 12 months I have been engaged in a very stressful defence of my elderly parents' entitlement to care with a council's social care department. At times when I felt utterly alone your guides and resources have given me fresh approaches to take and have reassured me that I am doing everything I can to ensure their best interest. They have been married for 60 years and they have only me to advocate for them. Thanks to BIHR for walking with me on this difficult road and allowing me to hold statutory services to account to protect their rights to be together.

– Heather

AIM 2**SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES**

Strengthening the agency of community and voluntary groups to address social justice issues using human rights law advocacy in their everyday actions.

**BACKGROUND**

This is an exciting time for BIHR to transform our work. Our recent Strategic Review process identified the need to democratise human rights by increasing the agency of communities to make local change using human rights.

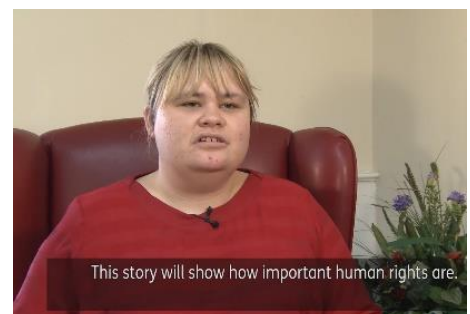
BIHR is uniquely placed to do this; we already work locally with a range of groups through various funded one-off projects. In 2018-19 we supported over 500 people and their groups in NW England (Liverpool, Preston, and Blackpool), NE England (Newcastle, Sunderland, and York), North and South Wales (Bangor and Cardiff), London, and South England. This is work we plan to grow.

We know there is significant demand for our human rights advocacy support from local community groups, and the wider voluntary sector. However, these organisations often face funding challenges themselves which prevents them from being able to fully utilise human rights advocacy for change. We will prioritise seeking grant-based funding which enables us to meet the needs of the local groups and communities of interest we support.

Our work in Strategic Aim 1 to seeking funding for an annual free UK-wide human rights training programme will focus specifically on supporting community groups to gain introductory insights into change through human rights. This creates a pool of beneficiaries who will inform the development of our planned change programmes in the voluntary and community sector, including both local geographic communities and communities of interest.



Winning a QMUL Community Engagement Award for our East London Human Rights and Mental Health Summer School, co-produced with people with lived experience of mental health services.



Clip from our partnership learning disability, Autism, and human rights community film partnership

We will also continue to develop the consultancy element of our work to support systems change with larger voluntary sector organisations. This includes those who are advocating and campaigning, and who deliver services to people.

2020–2025 OBJECTIVES UNDER THIS STRATEGIC AIM:

- ✓ **Develop change programmes with local communities and communities of interest to use human rights advocacy for change in their area or interest.** This includes exploring **funding avenues** for a new open access/application-based support approach to **develop and deliver our change model with up to 5 organisations through a regular 24-month programme.** Our planned open access annual training programme (Strategic Aim 1) will feed into this process, providing a preliminary stage, and a pool of beneficiaries for this more in-depth change programme.
- ✓ **Work with other voluntary sector groups to develop a human rights approach internally, to inform their policy and practice in seeking to achieve social justice.** This focuses on BIHR's Traffic Light Assessment system in which we work with other organisations to benchmark their progress against the human rights approach PANEL principles. This work, which has a strong focus on working with an organisation's staff, service users and other stakeholders, provides recommendations to either develop or improve human rights practices within the organisation.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

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Working with BIHR had allowed us to move towards a culture of human rights which is bought into by everyone working in the organisation regardless of job title. We opted for BIHR consultancy to ensure that we all work from a rights-based approach and not our own individual values.

– Freedom from Torture

”

Since I've done the human rights project, I've learnt a lot and I think I can help someone who needs help because they shouldn't be discriminated against and they should be able to be treated just like anyone else

- Adam, member at self-led group at Liverpool Mencap

The members [people with learning disabilities, autism or both] have been really passionate about the human rights project with BIHR, because in the past things have happened to them, and maybe their human rights haven't been met and they've been unsure about what to do. They've come to me now and they know what to do if their human rights aren't being met.

- Support worker, Liverpool Mencap

”

The support we've received from BIHR has greatly increased our knowledge and confidence in using human rights across all areas of our work.

- Latin American Women's Rights Services

AIM 3**IMPROVING SYSTEMS**

Increasing the accountability of public bodies to uphold human rights across all their actions, in everyday decisions, practices, and policies.

**BACKGROUND**

Whilst BIHR is a charity and is therefore not responsible for the enforcement of human rights, we have developed an important reputation as a trusted and challenging provider of the capacity-building services needed by the public sector to deliver rights-respecting services and policy.

During 2018-19 we worked with a range of statutory and voluntary service providers, NHS bodies, local authorities, businesses, and commissioning groups, to support them to better understand their human rights duties and positive change policy and practice. Through this we reached over 500 practitioners directly, from frontline nurses to Chairs of commissioning groups.

This work has far-reaching impact. Our human rights change model influences both the way staff make decisions about individual people and the way organisations are run, from policy and strategy right through to organisational culture. This is a vital part of the work to achieve a culture of respect for human rights in the UK.

We will seek to develop the consultancy element of our work to support this systems change, working with public services and officials. However, it is also important to seek innovation and continuation funding to work with public service providers and officials. This sustains good work on a longer-term basis. Importantly seeking independent funding to support our consultancy development also ensures a level of equality and robustness between ourselves and partners, rather than always operating on a client-provider model.



NHS staff identifying the impact using a human rights approach has had for people they support in community services



Supporting care home staff to identify and raise human rights concerns

2020–2025 OBJECTIVES UNDER THIS STRATEGIC AIM

- ✓ **Work with public authorities to develop a human rights approach, meeting their legal duties to respect, protect and fulfil people's human rights.** We will work with public bodies providing support that enables them to meet their legal duties to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. This will use our human rights change model. By public bodies we mean both traditional state authorities, and voluntary groups or companies delivering public services
- ✓ **Work with decision-makers to integrate human rights into high-level processes and policies, which have a significant impact on people's experiences of public services.** This includes working with commissioners and senior leaders to positively and proactively action their legal duties to uphold people's human rights. It may include using our Traffic Light Assessment system, benchmark their progress against the human rights approach PANEL principles, and providing recommendations for improvement and development.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

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We have progressed from a philosophical commitment to human rights to a greater actualisation of such intentions within our day to day practice ...

As well as having improved our assessment and support planning procedures so they are more solid in respecting human rights, we are now also exercising our positive duty to protect human rights more effectively. We are now seeing a range of human rights issues being flagged up that may otherwise have gone by and be unattended to, and we have used a human rights approach to respond more swiftly and in partnership with the police and safeguarding teams. We have consequently seen a marked reduction in violent incidents, down by 50% together with less evictions. Using a human rights approach has helped change the character of the service, and is a wonderful way to bring us back to focusing on people.

– St Martin of Tour Housing Association (mental health support)

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Incorporating human rights into our practice has given the whole staff team a boost. To be involved in something so innovative has given us a new perspective. It has started an evolutionary process for us and our service users are telling us they feel the benefit.

- NHS Frontline Manager

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This is the first ever human rights learning and development I've done despite being a local authority manager, often in front line roles, since 1993. I find that shocking. Really useful and valuable. I think all commissioning staff, plus all NHS and all local authority staff should be doing this work.

Commision Manager, Manchester Health & Care Commissioning

Simply brilliant session for the Board on exactly how MHCC can further embed human rights within its commissioning practices. If we use a human rights lens, everyone stands to gain.

Ruth, Chair of Manchester Health & Care Commissioning

AIM 4**EXPERIENCE INFORMED POLICY**

Amplifying the voices of the people we support to positively influence policy impacting their human rights, including securing our Human Rights Act.

**BACKGROUND**

This Strategic Framework sets a new direction for our influencing work, with a focus on amplifying the voices of those we support in communities and systems work to be part of the national policy debates that affect them. This means:

- ✓ supporting people, communities, and public services to speak up and share the value of the Human Rights Act for them in their everyday live.
- ✓ identifying those laws and policies that are risking people's human rights in their local implementation, and supporting people, communities, and public services to be heard and to influence national change.

Innovating in the current context: Policy informed by practice

We know from 20 years of work with people and public services, that changing a policy does not automatically change practice. It is vital we secure space at policy discussions and reviews to offer real evidence from people and practitioners alongside expert human rights legal analysis. More than this, once rights-respecting policy commitments are made, there must be implementation of that change to uphold human rights. Communities and practitioners frequently tell us implement is the most important element of change. As a parent, fighting to get her son returned home with supporting, rather than being locked in a mental health hospital recently told us:

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I have a briefcase full of policy documents, it gets fuller and fuller and nothing changes. We need organisations like BIHR working with people and practitioners to make the change real in practice

– Kirsten, Parent Carer and activist, North East England

This is an exciting time for BIHR, and for democratising the change the human rights can deliver not just at local levels, but also nationally. We will be seeking to develop a new communities of practice approach. This will enable us to move from one-off project-based interventions to sustaining our engagement with those we support to make change locally and sharing this nationally.

Through our communities of practice, we will link up the practical, local level change being delivered to inform policy work. We will seek to work with the people we support to ensure their voices are heard by those with power and influence, to ensure law and policy are rights-respecting. This will place people directly at the heart of holding officials to account for respecting, protecting, and fulfilling human rights.

Building on our convening of civil society action

We will also retain our unique convening role, bringing together the broader social justice, voluntary and community sector to speak up on human rights issues. We will be focusing this on marking human rights celebrations to create positive opportunities to speak up, and to galvanise groups to challenge risks to our human rights laws, such as repeal or regression.

2020–2025 OBJECTIVES UNDER THIS STRATEGIC AIM

- ✓ **Develop a communities of practice model to enable those we support to sustain their learning, practice, and change using the Human Rights Act,** providing a practical means of connecting local change makers to the national conversations that affect their rights, supported by practice-based legal research and consolidating human rights impact stories:
- ✓ **Bring the voices of those we support into debates about the importance of human rights law in the UK, showing the impact of the Human Rights Act for people.** In particular sharing impact stories about how using the Human Rights Act is delivering positive advocacy in communities and informing better decision-making by local and national bodies.
- ✓ **Bring the voices of those we support into debates about national law, policy, and practice to raise their concerns about how these affect their human rights, and to share evidence of rights-respecting solutions.** This means enabling the people we work with in our community and public services change programmes to directly inform our policy work. We want to develop a

model that enables us to do this policy work together to bring about real national and system change.

- ✓ **Seek to further develop our work to enable voluntary and community groups to make best use of UN mechanisms** to shine a spotlight on human rights concerns and to share positive human rights practice within the UK.
- ✓ **To develop BIHR's research and communications capacity to consolidate and share evidence of the positive impact of using the Human Rights Act to address social injustices.** This includes ensuring that key information from our policy influencing work with those we support is widely disseminated through a range of media and communication tools.
- ✓ **Increased investment in our organisational evaluation model to capture our impact evidence of using human rights to address social injustices.** This includes reviewing our current model for projects and across the organisation, with regular data review and appropriate sharing of evidence, particularly individual stories and changes to organisations, law, and policy.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

As a key member of the Mental Capacity Act National Forum, the third sector group lobbying the government during the Amendment of the Mental Capacity Act 2018–2019 we realised that our role on the group was unique. We were invited because we are experts in human rights law and can offer insight on how any changes to the current bill may infringe or protect human rights. But what we offered the group which was far more important was feedback directly from people we work with.

We were able to explain how the Mental Capacity Act currently works for people who use services, their families and carers, as well as the challenges practitioners face through real stories we've gathered during our direct work with people and practitioners. This meant that although those people were not always round the table (a systematic problem in policy development) their stories, written by them, were. No other organisation on that group were able to do this. Through this, we secured real change in the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Bill which passed in April 2019.

We've since progressed this work and now sit on several NHS England working groups amplifying the voices of those we work with when analysing current, and developing new, NHS policy and guidance.

By sharing the stories gathered through our work, alongside our legal expertise, we are now shaping policy change in children's mental health services, in the care and treatment review process for people with learning disabilities and/or autism and have developed national training standards on the use of restraint.

AIM 5**A VIBRANT BIHR**

Sustaining & developing BIHR as an ambitious, healthy, vibrant charity with the capacity to deliver our vision and mission.

**BACKGROUND**

We are proud of our organisation's ethos of working both within and beyond the "London bubble", with a staff team bringing together a range of experience and expertise on human rights law and practice.

One of our greatest strengths is our ability to deliver work that draws on the talents of our staff team, working collaboratively with a range of people with different roles in securing human rights, and doing so across the UK. BIHR's dedicated and high skilled expert team are a key asset to the organisation. We have a collegial and collaborative work culture, in which we aim to always live up to our organisational values. We have a core operating team of 6, with the ability to expand to up to 15, as needed.

BIHR is, however, a small charity, and this carries the same risks as any other similar sized group. It can be challenging to provide the range of staff opportunities and benefits available in larger institutions, and more could always be done to improve internal systems to better support our staff and activities.

Securing a sustainable funding base that enables growth and innovation that can meet the demand for our expertise, remains a challenge. Sadly, we turn down a number of requests for support, particularly from smaller community groups, because they have not adequately budgeted for our services. Within the public sector, there is often an expectation that initial scoping work or the sharing of top line expertise without a full support programme has no cost. Our lack of flexible core funding to enable us to engage with both types of opportunities is limiting the potential to start the journey of more rights-respecting policy and practice. Finding solutions to this is vital to secure sustainable change.

2020–2025 OBJECTIVES UNDER THIS STRATEGIC AIM

- ✓ Further expand and diversify our funding base, in particular to develop unrestricted / core funding to enable BIHR to respond flexibly to the need for

our support and secure funding specifically for our new model of policy work and to support the democratisation of human rights at community level.

- ✓ **Continue to develop our talented team of mixed specialists who bring a unique combination of experience to enable the practical application of human rights.** This includes developing and retaining our talented team and supporting wellbeing with effective line management, working patterns that recognise our UK-wide reach, and non-work related team building. As our work increases and develops, we will review staffing needs and appoint the most qualified and talented staff.
- ✓ **Further develop our internal systems to increase efficiency and effectiveness,** including continued improvement for IT systems and internal knowledge management to ensure these are meeting their full potential to best support BIHR.
- ✓ **Ensure the continued development of our Board of Trustees with a range of expertise relevant to our work.** This includes identifying skills gaps and opportunities to grow the Board's expertise and experience, effective succession planning, and ensuring Trustees are briefed and well-supported in carrying out their role.



BIHR have contributed to and improved the standards of advocacy through their work for over 15 years. They have worked alongside advocacy organisations and frontline advocates to help us make a real difference to the protection and promotion of people's human rights through our advocacy work

It is incredible to think that BIHR achieve what they do with a small team of dedicated members of staff. The amount of people they have helped to protect and promote their human rights when using public services through supporting advocacy and advocacy organisations is insurmountable.

– Karen, Advocacy Service Manager, Northwest England

IMPLEMENTING OUR FRAMEWORK

This Framework sets out our key Strategic Priorities over the next five years (2020 – 2025) with key objectives under each.

Each aim and the corresponding objectives will guide BIHR's annual operational work plan. This will be alongside this will be our monitoring and impact approach, which enables us to capture both qualitative and quantitative data on progress, and review and reflect. Progress will be monitored through staff operational mechanisms and through strategic oversight at Trustee meetings.

This Framework will be reviewed at relevant points to reflect on its effectiveness, and provide the opportunity for amendments, as needed.