

# The Human Rights Act

This factsheet explains what the Human Rights Act 1998 is and how it might help you if you are deaf or have hearing loss. It also provides information about the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

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**i** If you'd like this factsheet in Braille, large print or audio, please contact our Information Line - see last page for contact details.



## Disclaimer

This information is not legal advice and you should not rely on it as such. You should consider taking independent legal advice from a solicitor or other qualified legal adviser. Action on Hearing Loss does not accept any liability for any actions that you or anyone else may take, or fail to take, on the basis of the information contained in this factsheet.

## What is the Human Rights Act (HRA)?

The Human Rights Act (HRA) confirms the basic human rights in the European Convention of Human Rights ('the European Convention'), which was agreed by European countries after the atrocities of the Second World War.

The European Convention sets out fundamental rights to enable people to lead their lives with dignity, in freedom and in a safe environment, where people respect each other without fear of discrimination (unfair treatment).

These rights include:

- the right to life
- the right to be free from inhuman or degrading treatment
- the right to a fair trial
- the right to privacy and to family life
- the right to education.

The HRA allows people to claim the rights given by the European Convention in the UK courts.

Before the HRA came into force in 1998, people had to go to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. This could take a long time and was quite complicated.

The HRA means that the European Convention applies directly to all laws, including laws that came into force before 1998.

The government has announced its intention to replace the HRA with a British Bill of Rights, but it looks as if no decision will be taken until the UK has left the EU. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC - [see page 15](#)) has published a plan to retain the UK's equality and human rights laws after Brexit.

## What is the effect of the HRA?

The HRA protects your human rights. It does this by saying:

- Public bodies (organisations) must act in a way that respects European Convention rights (see 'Which organisations does the HRA apply to?', [page 3](#)).

- UK courts must interpret the law in line with your rights under the European Convention.
- The government must state if new legislation follows the principles of the European Convention.
- If a court decides that a particular piece of legislation is incompatible with the European Convention, it can make a 'declaration of incompatibility' to parliament.

## Which organisations does the HRA apply to?

The HRA applies to public bodies that provide public functions, such as:

- government departments
- local authorities (councils)
- courts
- schools
- hospitals and GP surgeries
- prisons
- public libraries
- transport bodies
- the police.

Public bodies include other organisations like the BBC and Ofcom, the telecommunications watchdog.

The HRA also applies to private organisations or charities if they provide public functions on behalf of the state. Examples include housing associations running social housing, private hospitals providing care on behalf of the NHS,

and private security companies running prisons or transporting prisoners. The HRA applies to these organisations only when they provide public functions.

## What does the HRA cover?

The HRA covers different types of human rights.

### Absolute rights

Some rights under the European Convention are absolute, which means that they cannot be restricted. For example, freedom from torture is an absolute right, which means that torture is never allowed.

### Limited rights

Other rights under the European Convention are limited rights. These can be restricted in some situations. The right to liberty is a limited right, which means the state can send people to prison, and schools can put pupils in detention, if necessary.

### Qualified rights

Some human rights are qualified rights. This means that the right of the individual has to be balanced against the rights of others or in the interests of the wider community. For example, freedom of speech should never be used to make hateful comments about people who are disabled if that harms their safety and security.

## Which rights are relevant if you are deaf or have hearing loss?

The Convention rights are set out in numbered paragraphs called 'articles'. Some rights are contained in 'protocols' (agreements) that supplement the Convention. These, too, are divided into articles. Some of these are particularly relevant if you are deaf or have hearing loss.

### Article 14: protection from discrimination

Article 14 states that the articles and protocols under the European Convention should cover everyone without discrimination. This includes discrimination on the grounds of disability such as deafness or hearing loss. So Article 14 ensures you can access your rights under the HRA in the same way as everyone else.

You cannot take action under Article 14 on its own. It has to be in connection with one of the other articles or protocols. For example, if you are refused fertility treatment because you are deaf, you could use Article 14 combined with Article 12 (the right to marry and to have a family – [see page 8](#)).

#### *Example*

You're deaf and not given communication support for your trial – for example, a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter.

This could be a breach of Article 6 ([see page 5](#)); it could also be discrimination under Article 14.

### Article 2: right to life

Under Article 2, a public body must do what it can to protect your life if it is responsible for you. Article 2 is relevant to the way that social services and healthcare services are provided to people who are deaf. Article 2 often works alongside Article 3 (freedom from inhuman or degrading treatment), particularly in relation to your right to access healthcare.

#### *Example*

If a local authority decided to close the residential care home you live in, putting your life at risk, this might be a breach of Article 2.

### Article 3: freedom from torture

Article 3 says that no one should be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment. This is an absolute right – it can't ever be restricted.

Degrading means humiliating or undignified. Not all abusive treatment is covered; it has to be very severe, including the physical or mental effects.

Public authorities have a positive duty to protect you from serious ill-treatment by others if they know you're at risk.

## Examples

Article 3 may apply if:

- you are bullied, because of your deafness, by someone who works for a public body, or in a place where you would expect the public authority to protect you from bullying
- you are resident in a care home, and a social services department doesn't stop you being seriously abused
- you are in prison and do not get any communication support, and you become isolated as a result (this might also be a breach of Article 14, [see page 4](#), and the Equality Act 2010 – see below).

Having medical treatment taken away or refused may breach Articles 2 or 3. Other possible breaches of Articles 2 and 3 include: funding restrictions or a total refusal to provide treatment or community care services. This could also be a breach of the Equality Act or community care law.

 For more about the Equality Act, see the other factsheets in our **Your rights** range ([see page 13](#)).

## Article 5: right to liberty and security

Article 5 states that everyone has the right to personal liberty or freedom. This means that no public body, such as the police, can restrict your liberty, except in very specific situations – for example, on suspicion of a crime or to section someone on mental health grounds. Strict procedures must be followed.

## Examples

Article 5 could be relevant if you are being kept in a residential care home against your wishes, or if you are placed in a care home rather than being allowed to live in the community.

Article 5 may also affect you if you have mental health issues and are kept in secure conditions for your own safety; or you are kept in a domestic setting when you're not capable of consenting to the arrangements, and you're under continuous supervision and aren't free to leave.

Article 5 is relevant to the way the police operate. It states that if you are arrested, you must be told why as soon as possible, in a language you understand. That also applies if you're detained. This is an important issue if you're a BSL user. If an interpreter isn't provided, that could be a breach of Article 5 and possibly Article 3.

## Article 6: your right to a fair trial

Article 6 is the right to a fair trial, which applies both to criminal and civil trials. Civil trials deal with disputes between individuals or organisations in which the claimant may get compensation.

Article 6 states that everyone has the right to a fair hearing. A hearing is when the court or tribunal makes a decision about the case. It must take place within a 'reasonable time' – in other words, without unnecessary delay.

The hearing must be in public, unless there is a good reason to restrict it, for instance to prevent intimate details of someone's private life being discussed; or to protect the interests of any children in the case. The court or tribunal must announce its judgment in public and it must give reasons for its decision.

Article 6 states that any tribunal must be independent and impartial.

Article 6 states that each person or party in a case should have the same rights as the other side: this is called 'equality of arms'. For example, anyone charged with a criminal offence has the right to legal advice, which must be free for those who cannot afford to pay.

You also have the right to ask questions of any witness and to have enough time to prepare for the case.

Under Article 6, you also have the right to have a free interpreter if you cannot understand the language used in court. In this situation, 'interpreter' includes other forms of communication support, such as a lipspeaker, speech-to-text reporter, electronic notetaker or BSL interpreter.

Article 6 could be used to strengthen a claim under the Equality Act, which requires courts and tribunals to make reasonable adjustments at no extra charge for people with a disability. If you are deaf or have hearing loss, this would include communication support, such as a BSL interpreter or lipspeaker.

Article 6 could also have an impact on courts that hold 'paper hearings', because it states that everyone has the right to an 'oral' (spoken) hearing.

A paper hearing is when the court decides what action to take based on written information, without anyone involved in the case being present. That could be important if, say, someone is claiming benefits and their credibility is a key issue.

### *Examples*

A person accused of a crime has the right to be told quickly what the charge is, and in a language they understand. If a deaf person's first or preferred language is BSL, they have the right to be told what the charge is in BSL.

Article 6 may also give someone who is deaf the right to a BSL interpreter, or other communication support, when they get legal advice from a solicitor in a police station or appear in court.

Article 6 could also mean that the government may have to give legal help in hearings on social security (benefits) and community care.

## Article 8: your right to respect for private and family life

Article 8 protects your right to respect for your private life, family life, your home and correspondence.

### *Example - private life*

Respect for your privacy includes a right for you to access information relating to your private life, such as social services and medical records; and information about health hazards and risks in a particular area that could affect you.

Article 8 also means that public authorities cannot give other people information about you without your permission.

Public authorities may sometimes be able to restrict your rights if it's necessary because of the wider interests of the community - for example, to defend national security.

### *Examples - family life*

The right to respect for family life could be used where a person in a residential care home is prevented from having contact with their family.

Another example would be where a social worker thinks parents can't look after their child because they are deaf. She decides to take children into care, instead of enabling them to attend a parenting course. The HRA could be used to challenge that decision. The court would look at the child's safety, the importance of family life, the ability to provide a parenting course and other factors.

### *Examples - home*

The following would be unlawful under the HRA:

- your neighbours are harassing you because you are deaf
- a local authority decides to close down a care home
- you're not housed in a suitable place
- the local council refuses to make or allow changes in your home.

Public authorities have duties towards people who are disabled, for instance, to provide community care services or healthcare. Article 8 could be used to challenge public authorities if their failure to act affects your home life.

## Article 10: freedom of expression

Article 10 states that everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This means that everyone has the right to hold their own opinions, to express them freely and to receive information from other people.

### *Examples*

The Equality Act requires public bodies to ensure that any information they provide is accessible to people who are deaf. This could include information held by libraries and museums; exhibitions, for example, should be accessible.

People who are deaf must be able to make their views known to a public body – for example, at public meetings or MPs’ surgeries.

Article 10 could be used to reinforce complaints brought under the Equality Act.

## Article 11: freedom of assembly and association

Article 11 protects your right to peaceful protest by taking part in meetings, marches and demonstrations in public places. However, you need to tell the police and your local council. The police can impose restrictions if, for instance, there is likely to be a serious disturbance, or to protect the rights and freedoms of other people.

Article 11 also gives you the right to join a trade union, a political party, or any other association or group; equally, you cannot be forced to join one.

### *Example*

Article 11 may protect people who are deaf from unfair treatment from the police while taking part in marches and demonstrations.

## Article 12: the right to marry and to have a family

Article 12 gives men and women the right to marry and to have a family. Same-sex couples can legally marry in the UK, although no one can be forced to conduct a religious ceremony. The right to marry includes a right for transsexuals to marry.

### *Examples – freedom to have a family*

Article 12 might be useful if your health authority treats you unfairly; for example, you’re refused fertility treatment because you are deaf.

Article 12 may also protect you if you’re not considered suitable as an adoptive parent because you are deaf.

Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life – [see page 7](#)) may be relevant to issues under Article 12.

## Protocol 1: Article 1: protection of property

Article 1 protects you from unfair interference with your property. It gives everyone the right to enjoy their possessions. It covers, for instance, your house, your business, things you own or have a right to use, and social security benefits.

But in some situations, public bodies can restrict your rights if it’s necessary in the wider public interest – there has to be a fair balance between the two. So the government can still enforce taxes and fines because that’s in the public interest. The local council may give you a licence to trade only if you pay a fee, because it needs to ease traffic congestion.

However, your belongings could include benefits and equipment that you get because of your deafness or hearing loss.

### **Example - protection of property**

Article 1 may be useful if the government removes a benefit you used to receive. For example, a young adult living with her parents is provided with equipment by the local social services department. When she leaves home, she may have to return it. If social services don't give the woman the same equipment in her new home, she may be able to use Article 1 to get them to provide it.

In some circumstances, the rights under Article 8 ([see page 7](#)) may be relevant to issues affecting property under Article 1 of Protocol 1.

### **Protocol 1: Article 2: right to education**

Article 2 gives people a right to an education. It is unlikely, however, that parents could use Article 2 to insist that their child is taught in a particular language - for example, in English or in BSL. Nor can it be used to choose a particular kind of school, such as a mainstream or special school.

Failure to provide special facilities for children with special needs may not be a failure to provide education. Cases at the European Court of Human Rights have shown that national governments have a lot of discretion in this area.

### **Example - how to use the right to education**

Article 2 combined with Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination - [see page 4](#)) may be used to protect a child who is bullied at school or not allowed to take part in school activities, such as trips or sports events, because of their deafness.

The Equality Act includes rights in relation to education. It may be possible to use Article 2 and Article 14 in support of a case under the Equality Act.

### **Protocol 1: Article 3: right to free elections**

Article 3 of this Protocol gives you the right to take part in UK parliamentary and devolved assembly elections, including the right to vote and stand in elections. It also gives you the right to vote in European Parliament elections. Elections must be free and fair and enable you to vote in secret. It doesn't cover local elections.

### **Example - right to free elections**

This may be useful if you are deaf and have difficulty accessing information about elections, perhaps because the information is not available in BSL.

In some circumstances, your rights under Article 10 (freedom of expression) or Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) may also be relevant to election issues - for example, to ensure the accessibility of information.

## How does the HRA relate to the Equality Act?

The Equality Act and the HRA are based on similar principles, such as dignity, fairness, equality and respect. The HRA reinforces the duty on public authorities to make reasonable adjustments and helps public authorities to deliver equality under the public sector Equality Duty.

### *Examples - human rights and the Equality Act's reasonable adjustment duty*

A doctor discusses different treatment options with a patient who is deaf. The doctor needs to communicate effectively so that the patient can make an informed decision. This is important, because the doctor not enabling the patient to make an informed decision might be degrading treatment. There would be no respect for the person's dignity or ability to make decisions independently, which puts the patient in an unequal position.

Under the Equality Act, the doctor makes a reasonable adjustment, which is the use of appropriate communication support. He follows NHS England's Accessible Information Standard in doing this.

The Accessible Information Standard came into force in England in August 2016. It's a very important standard for anyone who is deaf or has hearing loss. It requires every health and social care organisation to ensure you can understand the information about your care and treatment, and that you have the right communication support in place.

Without the HRA, it might be considered a reasonable adjustment for someone's son or daughter to act as interpreter to overcome the communication barrier. However, this scenario raises issues of privacy and family life under the HRA and is, therefore, unlikely to be an appropriate reasonable adjustment.

 To find out more about the Equality Act and the public sector Equality Duty, read the other factsheets in this range ([see page 13](#)).

 To find out more about the Accessible Information Standard, requirements across the UK, and our campaign to improve access to healthcare, visit [actiononhearingloss.org.uk/ontherecord](http://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/ontherecord)

## What should I do if I think my human rights have been breached?

Courts and tribunals are public authorities, so the HRA applies to them. They have to consider the relevance of the HRA and the European Convention rights in every case.

If you think a public body has breached your human rights (disregarded them), you'll need to decide what to do. Citizens Advice explains what you should think about, how to make a complaint, and what to do if you're thinking about taking legal action ([see page 13](#) for details).

## What is the UN Disability Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?

The UN Convention was formally approved by Parliament on 8 June 2009. It commits the UK government to respecting and promoting human rights for people who are disabled, including people who are deaf. It reinforces the HRA but it's much more wide ranging – it covers areas such as health, work, culture and accessibility.

The aim of the UN Disability Convention is to make your human rights real rights in practice. It sets out what disabled people should be able to do and what government needs to do to make that work.

For example, your right to accessibility means you must be able to take part in all areas of life on an equal footing with people who aren't disabled. Article 9 sets out the things government has to do to make that happen, such as developing access standards, ensuring more sign language interpreters and promoting access to communication technology. The Accessible Information Standard goes some way to meeting this ([see page 10](#)).

Unlike the HRA or the Equality Act, the UN Convention is not part of UK law, so you can't go to court if your rights are disregarded. But disabled people and organisations representing them can get

involved in monitoring implementation of the Convention, and use it to influence local services or national policy.

It can also be used to support cases under the HRA and the Equality Act. For example, it supported a case under the HRA against bedroom tax, although the HRA was enough on its own to win the case.

The UN Convention doesn't define disability but refers to 'persons with disabilities' in a broad way. It includes people with long-term impairments such as hearing loss who, because of the barriers they encounter, may not be able to participate fully in society, including professional life. This is 'the social model' – it's not the impairment that's the problem but the barriers.

European law on equal treatment and the Equality Act have to be interpreted in line with the UN Convention. For instance, the right to independent living under Article 19 is relevant to the Equality Duty.

 To find out more, see our factsheet *The public sector Equality Duty*.

## The Optional Protocol

The UK government has signed the Optional Protocol. This means two things:

1. Individuals or groups of individuals can bring petitions to the UN Committee that monitors implementation of the UN Disability Convention if they believe that their rights under the Convention have been breached.

2. The UN Committee can undertake inquiries if they believe that there may be grave or systematic violations of the Convention rights. For instance, the Committee upheld a complaint against Hungary by a number of blind and partially sighted people who claimed discrimination in not having ATMs (cash machines) accessible to visually impaired people – they didn't have Braille buttons and audio output.

In 2016, the Committee found grave and systematic violations by the UK government in the way that welfare reforms had been introduced. In their report, they also criticised the level of communication support available for deaf people.

## EHRC – monitoring human rights

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC, [see page 15](#) for contact details) has a special status as an independent National Human Rights Institution. Its role is to monitor human rights and how they are applied.

The EHRC monitors the UN Convention with the equivalent Commissions in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Together, they act to ensure the Convention is operating properly in the UK.

## UN Human Rights Council – reviewing UK progress

The UN Human Rights Council is reviewing the UK's progress on human rights in 2017. This is called the Universal Periodic Review because every country that belongs to the UN goes through the same process every five years. The EHRC is closely involved in this review, giving its views to the Council and the government.

The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is assessing the UK's progress in putting the UN Convention rights into practice. This takes place every four years and it's happening in 2017. UKIM has given its views to the Committee on the problems disabled people still face; and disabled people and their organisations have given their own report.

The EHRC website includes BSL videos on the Universal Periodic Review and UKIM's views to the Committee, as well as a guide to the Convention, *What does it mean for you?* ([see page 15](#) for details).

## Where can I get further information on my rights?

### Action on Hearing Loss

The other factsheets in our **Your rights** range are:

- *The Equality Act 2010 – an overview*
- *How does the Equality Act define ‘disability’?*
- *The public sector Equality Duty*
- *Your rights as an employee*
- *Your rights when using services.*

You can order these from our Information Line ([see last page](#) for contact details) or download them from our website at [actiononhearingloss.org.uk/factsheets](http://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/factsheets)

### Other organisations

It will not always be easy to understand the exact effect of the HRA or what to do about it in a particular situation. In many cases, you’ll need to get legal advice.

#### British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR)

The BIHR helps people to use human rights principles to improve their lives and as a tool for organisations to develop more effective public policy and practice.

The BIHR does not provide advice to individuals or take up their legal cases, but it has a range of useful information on its website, including ‘Your Human Rights’ guides and videos.

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Queen Mary University of London  
Mile End Road  
London E1 4NS

Email: [info@bihr.org.uk](mailto:info@bihr.org.uk)  
Website: [www.bihr.org.uk](http://www.bihr.org.uk)  
Guides and factsheets (website):  
[www.bihr.org.uk/Pages/Category/guides-and-fact-sheets](http://www.bihr.org.uk/Pages/Category/guides-and-fact-sheets)

#### Citizens Advice

The Citizens Advice service helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free information and advice. To find your nearest Citizens Advice Bureau, and for useful online information, visit the Citizens Advice website:

England and Wales: [citizensadvice.org.uk](http://citizensadvice.org.uk)  
Scotland: [citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland](http://citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland)  
Northern Ireland: [citizensadvice.org.uk/nireland](http://citizensadvice.org.uk/nireland)

Discrimination advice in BSL:  
[citizensadvice.org.uk/resources-and-tools/advice-in-bsl/discrimination-advice-in-bsl](http://citizensadvice.org.uk/resources-and-tools/advice-in-bsl/discrimination-advice-in-bsl)

Taking action about human rights:  
[citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/civil-rights/human-rights/taking-action-about-human-rights/](http://citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/civil-rights/human-rights/taking-action-about-human-rights/)

## Civil Legal Advice (CLA)

A free and confidential service in England and Wales for people who are eligible for legal aid. If you are not eligible for legal aid, CLA will direct you to other services. You can request online advice or speak to someone on the phone.

Telephone: **0345 345 4345**

Textphone: **0345 609 6677**

Text message: text 'legalaid' and your name to **80010** to ask CLA to call you back (costs the same as a normal text message)

Website: [gov.uk/civil-legal-advice](http://gov.uk/civil-legal-advice)

BSL (booking an online interpreter): [interpretingline.co.uk/home](http://interpretingline.co.uk/home)

## Contact Scotland BSL

Scotland's British Sign Language Interpreting Video Relay Service (VRS) - enabling contact with all of Scotland's public bodies and third sector organisations.

Online contact form:

[contactscotland-bsl.org/contact](http://contactscotland-bsl.org/contact)

Website: [contactscotland-bsl.org](http://contactscotland-bsl.org)

## Department of Justice

### Northern Ireland

Provides information on all aspects of the legal system in Northern Ireland, including compensation, courts, tribunals and legal aid.

Department of Justice  
Block B  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast  
Northern Ireland  
BT4 3SG

Telephone: **028 9076 3000**

Textphone: **028 9052 7668**

Website: [justice-ni.gov.uk](http://justice-ni.gov.uk)

## Disability Law Service (DLS)

A charity providing free legal advice and support to people who are disabled (including people who are deaf) in England and Wales (and details on where to go for advice in Scotland and Northern Ireland). It has a range of factsheets available online and by post.

The Foundry  
17 Oval Way  
London SE11 5RR

Telephone: **020 7791 9800**

Email: [advice@dls.org.uk](mailto:advice@dls.org.uk)

Website: [dls.org.uk](http://dls.org.uk)

You can request advice by email or post if you can't use the phone. If you say you have a hearing loss, DLS will try to respond more quickly.

## Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS)

The EASS helpline gives information, advice and support on discrimination and human rights issues to people in England, Scotland and Wales.

FREEPOST EASS HELPLINE FPN6521

Freephone: **0808 800 0082**

Textphone: **0808 800 0084**

Online contact form: [www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/app/ask](http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/app/ask)

Website: [equalityadvisoryservice.com](http://equalityadvisoryservice.com)

## Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

The EHRC protects human rights, promotes equality and challenges discrimination. It publishes statutory codes of practice and a wide variety of practical guidance and advice.

Website: [equalityhumanrights.com](http://equalityhumanrights.com)

Guide on the UN Disability Convention, *What does it mean for you?:*

[equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/united-nations-convention-rights-persons-disabilities-what-does-it-mean-you](http://equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/united-nations-convention-rights-persons-disabilities-what-does-it-mean-you)

## Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

An independent public body that promotes equality and challenges discrimination, through advice, support and enforcement.

Equality House  
7-9 Shaftesbury Square  
Belfast  
BT2 7DP

Telephone: **028 90 500 600**

Textphone: **028 90 500 589**

Fax: **028 90 248 687**

Email: [information@equalityni.org](mailto:information@equalityni.org)

Website: [equalityni.org/Individuals](http://equalityni.org/Individuals)

## Equally Ours

A partnership between eight national charities to raise public awareness of human rights in everyday life. The website includes lots of real-life case studies: [equally-ours.org.uk](http://equally-ours.org.uk)

## Gov.uk

A government website providing information about a wide range of topics, including the Equality Act 2010, disability rights and welfare benefits. It also gives links to online government services and organisations that can give you advice and support:

Website: [gov.uk/browse/disabilities](http://gov.uk/browse/disabilities)

Website: [gov.uk/check-legal-aid](http://gov.uk/check-legal-aid)

Website (Equality Act 2010 guidance): [gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance](http://gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance)

## HM Courts & Tribunals Service

Provides information on a range of subjects, including finding a court or tribunal, court and tribunal forms, and fees and help with fees.

Website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-courts-and-tribunals-service](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-courts-and-tribunals-service)

## Law Centres Network

Law Centres provide free advice and representation. You can find details of your local Law Centre from the Law Centres Network:

Email (online contact form):  
[lawcentres.org.uk/contact-us](http://lawcentres.org.uk/contact-us)  
Website: [lawcentres.org.uk/i-am-looking-for-advice](http://lawcentres.org.uk/i-am-looking-for-advice)

## LawWorks

A charity working in England and Wales to connect volunteer lawyers with people in need of legal advice, who are not eligible for legal aid and cannot afford to pay, and with the not-for-profit organisations that support them.

Website (find a clinic near you):  
[lawworks.org.uk/legal-advice-individuals/find-legal-advice-clinic-near-you](http://lawworks.org.uk/legal-advice-individuals/find-legal-advice-clinic-near-you)

## Liberty

A campaigning organisation that protects civil liberties and promotes human rights. It has a telephone advice line for free legal advice in England and Wales, or you can use the online query form.

Telephone: **020 7403 3888**  
Online contact form:  
[liberty-human-rights.org.uk/contact-us](http://liberty-human-rights.org.uk/contact-us)  
Website: [liberty-human-rights.org.uk](http://liberty-human-rights.org.uk)

## NI Direct

Comprehensive information about government services in Northern Ireland, including on a wide range of services for people with disabilities.

Website (Contacts A-Z):  
[nidirect.gov.uk/contacts](http://nidirect.gov.uk/contacts)  
Website: [nidirect.gov.uk](http://nidirect.gov.uk)  
Website (people with disabilities):  
[nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/people-disabilities](http://nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/people-disabilities)

## Office for Disability Issues

Works across government to ensure equality becomes a reality for people who are disabled. Its website has information about the UN Disability Convention.

Website: [gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-disability-issues](http://gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-disability-issues)

Website (easy-read guide to the UN Disability Convention): [gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/345124/uk-initial-report-easy-read.pdf](http://gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/345124/uk-initial-report-easy-read.pdf)

## Royal Association for Deaf people (RAD)

Provides a wide range of services that Deaf people want and need. All services are delivered in British Sign Language. Also works with mainstream services to help them to ensure their services are accessible to Deaf people.

Telephone: **0845 688 2525**  
Email: [info@royaldeaf.org.uk](mailto:info@royaldeaf.org.uk)  
Website: [royaldeaf.org.uk](http://royaldeaf.org.uk)

## Scottish Court Service

Information about the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service, the Judiciary of Scotland, the Supreme Courts, Sheriff Courts, Sheriff Appeal Courts, Justice of the Peace Courts, Tribunals and Office of the Public Guardian.

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service  
Saughton House  
Broomhouse Drive  
Edinburgh  
EH11 3XD

Telephone: **0131 444 3300**  
Fax: **0131 443 2610**  
Email: [enquiries@scotcourts.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@scotcourts.gov.uk)  
Website: [scotcourts.gov.uk](http://scotcourts.gov.uk)

## Scottish Government

St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

Telephone: **0300 244 4000**  
Text relay service: **18001+ 0300 244 4000**  
Email: [ceu@gov.scot](mailto:ceu@gov.scot)  
Website: [scotland.gov.uk](http://scotland.gov.uk)  
Website for BSL users:  
[contactSCOTLAND-bsl.org](http://contactSCOTLAND-bsl.org)  
Website (equality and rights  
policies): [beta.gov.scot/  
policies/?topics=Equality%20and%20  
rights](http://beta.gov.scot/policies/?topics=Equality%20and%20rights)

## Scottish Legal Aid Board

Provides information about legal aid and whether you may qualify, and where to find a legal aid solicitor.

Thistle House  
91 Haymarket Terrace  
Edinburgh  
EH12 5HE

Telephone (switchboard): **0131 226 7061**  
Telephone (legal aid information line):  
**0845 122 8686**  
Email: [general@slab.org.uk](mailto:general@slab.org.uk)  
Website: [slab.org.uk](http://slab.org.uk)

## Welsh Government

Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

Telephone (English): **0300 060 4400**  
Telephone (Welsh): **0300 060 4400**  
Email (English): [customerhelp@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:customerhelp@wales.gsi.gov.uk)  
Email (Welsh): [cymorth@cymru.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:cymorth@cymru.gsi.gov.uk)  
Website: [wales.gov.uk](http://wales.gov.uk)

### Information you can trust

The Information Standard certifies us as producers of high-quality, evidence-based information.

Thank you to **Jenny White, our legal expert**, for helping us review and update this factsheet, published August 2017, using the latest government legislation.

### Did you find this factsheet helpful?

We'd love to know what you think of this factsheet – please email us at [reviewpanel@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:reviewpanel@hearingloss.org.uk)

If you'd like to join our Readers' Panel, to help us create new publications and improve existing ones, please let us know.

## Further information from Action on Hearing Loss

Our expert information covers everything you need to know about:

- hearing loss and deafness
- tinnitus
- ear problems and treatments
- hearing aids and cochlear implants
- useful products and technology
- communication tactics and support
- benefits and grants
- your rights.

Visit our website [actiononhearingloss.org.uk](https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk) or call our Information Line ([see last page](#)) for information, support and publications. You can also find out about services in your area, our hearing research, and how you can get involved.

## Please help us support others

We provide our leaflets, factsheets and Information Line service free of charge to anyone affected by deafness, tinnitus or hearing loss in the UK. We rely on the generosity of our supporters to help us do this. We would be very grateful if you would consider making a donation - of as little or as much as you can afford.

Please send a cheque, payable to Action on Hearing Loss, to:

**Freepost RTLX-CZKX-BTTZ**  
**Action on Hearing Loss**  
**1-3 Highbury Station Road**  
**London N1 1SE**  
(No stamp needed)

Donate online at [actiononhearingloss.org.uk/icanhelp](https://actiononhearingloss.org.uk/icanhelp)  
Or make a donation over the phone by credit or debit card:

 **0203 227 6182**  
 **0203 227 6185**

Thank you.

Our purpose is to help people confronting deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss to live the life they choose. We enable them to take control of their lives and remove the barriers in their way.

To find out more about what we do and how you can support us, go to [actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://actiononhearingloss.org.uk)

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### Action on Hearing Loss Information Line

Telephone **0808 808 0123**  
Textphone **0808 808 9000**  
SMS **0780 000 0360**  
(standard text message rates apply)  
Email **information@hearingloss.org.uk**

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### Join us

 Action on Hearing Loss

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**Action on Hearing Loss is the trading name of The Royal National Institute for Deaf People.**  
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