

Human Rights Easy Read Guide: Cameras in Health and Social Care

Updated March 2026



What is in this guide?



Sometimes cameras are used in health and social care.



This guide helps you to know about your human rights if cameras are being used in the places where you are getting support.

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Difficult Word Buster



Absolute right

An absolute right is a type of right which can never be limited by staff in public services.



CCTV

CCTV is a type of video camera which only some people can watch. CCTV is short for 'Closed-Circuit Television'.



Complaint

Making a complaint is when you tell an organisation that they have done something wrong.



Judge

A judge is a person who makes important decisions about the law in a court room.



Limit

Limiting your rights means putting rules on what you are allowed to do.



Non-absolute right

A non-absolute right is a type of right which can sometimes be limited by staff in public services.



Privacy

Privacy is when you or your information cannot be seen or heard by other people.



Public services

Public services are organisations that serve people and they are usually paid for by the government. NHS services, local councils and the police are public services.



Regulator

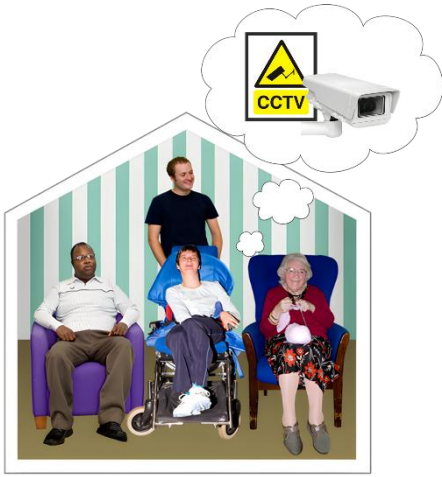
A regulator is an organisation which checks that public services are working well and takes action if they are not working well.



Wellbeing

Wellbeing is your physical and mental health and happiness.

Why is this guide important?



Sometimes people think it is a good idea to put cameras in places where we get support from health and social care services.



For example, there could be cameras at the GP, in hospitals, in care homes, or even in your own home.



If staff working in **public services** want to use cameras in the place where you live or get support, they must think about your human rights.

The Human Rights Act



The Human Rights Act is the law which protects our human rights in the UK.



Human rights are rules that protect people.



Everyone has human rights under the Human Rights Act.



The Human Rights Act says that it is the law for staff in **public services** to respect and protect your human rights.



[Click here to read BIHR's Easy Read guide to the Human Rights Act.](#)



The Human Rights Act says we have 16 rights.



In this guide we talk about 3 important rights to know about when cameras are being used in places where we get support.

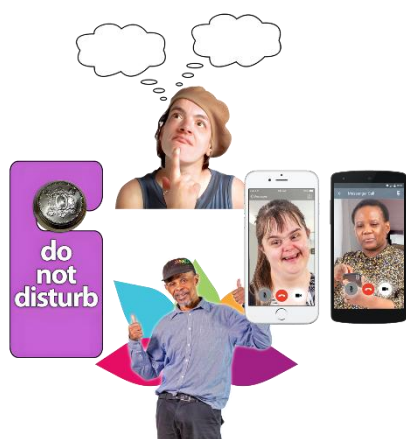


[Click here for Easy Read guides to your 16 rights in the Human Rights Act.](#)

Your right to private and family life, home and contact



Your right to private and family life, home and contact is protected by Article 8 of the Human Rights Act.



This right protects your **privacy**, your **wellbeing**, making decisions about you, and keeping in touch with people who are important to you.



[Click here to find out more about the right to private and family life, home and contact.](#)

When could this right be at risk?



If cameras are being used in places where you get support and this makes you feel like you have no **privacy**.



If cameras are being used in places where you get support and this is affecting your **wellbeing**.



If cameras are being used in places where you get support and staff keep this secret from you.

Can your right to private and family life, home and contact be limited?



Yes. This is a **non-absolute** right. Staff in **public services** can use cameras in a way that **limits** your right to private and family life, home and contact, but only if they have passed a 3-part test:



1. Lawful

There must be a law saying staff can use cameras in places where you get support.



2. For a good reason

Some good reasons to use cameras might be to keep you safe from harm, or to keep other people safe from harm.



Staff in **public services** might say that cameras are there for other reasons, like to teach staff how to do their job properly, or to stop someone's family from worrying about them. These are not good reasons.

Step 3



3. Thought about properly

Staff must think about all the ways they can keep you or other people safe from harm and they should choose the option that **limits** your rights the least. They should involve you in these talks.



For example, to give you more **privacy**, staff might decide to only use cameras in some rooms, or only at some times of the day.



Staff in **public services** might have to ask a **judge** to check that using cameras is the right decision for you.



Staff should keep checking whether cameras are still needed. If they are not needed anymore, they should stop using them.

Oliver's Story



Oliver is an autistic man with a learning disability.



He lives in a house with 3 other people and all of them get help every day from their support workers.



When Oliver gets upset, he harms himself badly.



The support workers think it would be a good idea to put **CCTV** in Oliver's bedroom, so they can see if he is harming himself and help him quickly.



They think this is lawful and for a good reason.



They think about all the ways they could help Oliver when he is harming himself, including someone sitting with him all day.



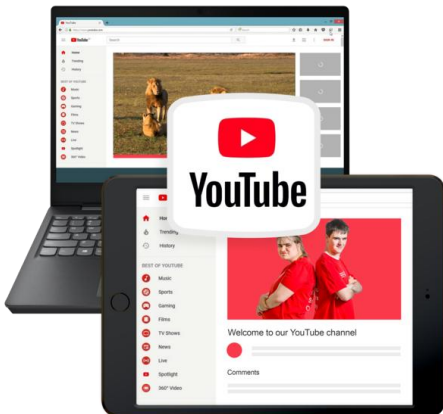
They decide that using cameras is the option which **limits** Oliver's rights the least.



Then, the staff decide to put **CCTV** in everyone's bedrooms, even though the people who live with Oliver are not likely to harm themselves.



Putting **CCTV** in everyone else's bedrooms is wrong, because it is not lawful, not for a good reason, and it **limits** the other people's rights too much.



[Click here to watch another story about CCTV and your right to private life.](#)

Your right to be safe from serious harm



Your right to be safe from serious harm is protected by Article 3 of the Human Rights Act. This is an **absolute right**.



Staff in **public services** must not treat you in a way that makes you feel very scared, bad about yourself, embarrassed, or causes you a lot of pain.



Staff in **public services** must protect you from serious harm.



Sometimes having cameras in the places where we get support could keep us safe from serious harm.



For example, staff could help you more quickly if someone is harming you or you are harming yourself and they see this on **CCTV**, but it would take longer if they were only checking on you every 30 minutes.



Other times, having cameras in places where you get support could make you feel embarrassed or very bad about yourself, and your right to be safe from serious harm could be at risk.



Using cameras in places where you get support might sometimes help find out if staff are hurting people.



But, by the time this has been seen on **CCTV**, people have already been hurt and they have not been protected from serious harm.



There are lots of other ways to stop staff hurting people in the places they get support, instead of using cameras.



[Click here to find out more about the right to be safe from serious harm.](#)

Alexis' Story



Alexis is autistic. She is being made to stay in a mental health hospital under the Mental Health Act.



One day, the staff tell Alexis that she has to go to a different hospital which is a 4-hour drive away.



Staff say Alexis must go to the new hospital in an ambulance. 2 staff members sit and watch her and there is a **CCTV** camera recording them.



Alexis finds the journey too loud, too bright, and too uncomfortable. The ambulance does not stop so she cannot use the toilet and soils herself. Alexis feels very embarrassed, scared and upset.



Using **CCTV** in Alexis' ambulance journey is not needed because there are 2 staff members watching her. This is causing her serious harm.

Your right not to be treated unfairly



Your right not to be treated unfairly is protected by Article 14 of the Human Rights Act. It is also called the right not to be discriminated against.

When could this right be at risk?



If staff in **public services** think you need to be watched all the time, just because you have a learning disability or mental health problems.



If staff in **public services** decide that cameras should be used in every room all the time and they do not think about how this might affect each person.



[Click here to find out more about the right not to be treated unfairly.](#)

Making decisions about cameras in the places where you get support



The Mental Capacity Act is a law that tells staff in **public services** what to do if someone needs help to make decisions, or if someone does not have the ability to make a decision.



If staff in **public services** think putting cameras in places where you get support is a good idea, they should talk to you about this.



Staff in **public services** should help you to make your own decision about whether it is okay for cameras to be used where you get support.



If you cannot make a decision about cameras being used, someone will decide for you, thinking about what is best for you as an individual person.



The person deciding for you should still ask you what you think about cameras being used. They should talk to other people in your life and think about the good and bad things about using cameras.



They should choose the option which **limits** your rights the least.



If there are cameras in places where you get support and this is kept secret from you, there must be a very good reason for this to make sure this does not take away your rights.

What can I do if I think my rights are at risk?



There are things you can do if you are worried that staff in **public services** are using cameras in a way which does not look after your rights.



You can talk to staff in **public services** about what they decided or did. You can ask them to tell you how they are looking after your human rights.



If you think of changes which could protect your rights better, you can tell staff in **public services** because they might not have thought properly about different ways of supporting you.



You can make a **complaint** to a **public service**.

You can write to a [regulator](#) of health and social care services.

- In England, there is the [Care Quality Commission](#).
- In Northern Ireland, there is the [Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority](#).
- In Scotland, there is the [Care Inspectorate](#) and [Healthcare Improvement Scotland](#).
- In Wales, there is [Care Inspectorate Wales](#) and [Healthcare Inspectorate Wales](#).



Where can I find more information?

- [BIHR Easy Read Guide to the Human Rights Act](#)
- [BIHR Easy Read guides to your 16 rights](#)
- [Restraint Reduction Network One-Page Poster on Surveillance](#)





BIHR is a charity that needs help to make guides like this one. [Click here to find out how you can support BIHR.](#)

If you are reading a printed version of this guide, you can type these websites into your browser for more information:

bihr.org.uk

restraintreductionnetwork.org

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