



The British Institute
of Human Rights 

Talking about human rights online:

A support guide

by members of the BIHR RITES Committee

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Introduction

by Hanna Gawron, Lived Experience Expert

Our human rights apply to all our interactions with the UK Government and public bodies, covering issues such as health, education, social welfare, housing and more. This means that even though a specific issue or area of concern may not be explicitly named as one of the 16 rights in our Human Rights Act, the Act itself may still be relevant.

Due to this, the significance of open communication surrounding the Human Rights Act must be emphasised. This pack has been created by members of the RITES Committee; a group of Experts by Experience who have used our Human Rights Act to achieve change – for themselves, the people they work with or their loved ones. From lived experience of caring for family members with complex needs to working in frontline public services, each of our experts brings a unique perspective of our Human Rights Act in practice.

We have designed this resource in order to support organisations and individuals to consider how they can talk about and create content about human rights online.

In this pack we have included some key tips on using Human Rights Language, a glossary defining key terms used when talking about Human Rights, key themes and questions to consider when creating content, as well as guidance on making social media content more accessible.

Thank you for picking up this guide!



Timeline of Key Events



1948

The United Nations created the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, followed by a range of international human rights laws.

1950

The Council of Europe created the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) and court; a strong regional system of human rights protection (not the EU).



1998



The Human Rights Act is introduced; our domestic law to 'bring human rights home', which covers the whole of the UK (GB and NI).

1998 - 2006

The rights in our human rights act are also covered by the devolution arrangements in the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Scotland Act 1998 the Government of Wales Act 2006.



2022



BIHR formed the RITES Committee, a group of experts by experience who have used human rights to achieve change. Each of our experts brings a unique perspective of human rights in practice.

Universality

Universality, the fact that rights belong to all of us, is what makes human rights so special and important. This is important context to have when you are beginning to consider human rights.

Universality refers to the concept that everyone has the same rights under human rights law and everyone is protected regardless of any characteristics or needs they have.

The RITES Committee wrote a full blog about this which you can read, but here are some quotes to introduce the importance of this concept to you.

“...it’s one of the **biggest strengths of the Human Rights Act** because we don’t see that same universality in so much legislation [that is] built on power structures and exceptions and not allowing it to be for everyone in that same way.” – Charli

“I think human rights are important to everyone because everybody should have the right to be heard and have a voice and **we’re all equal**, whether you have a disability or not or if you’re transgender, lesbian, anything.” – Lucy

“**if the Human Rights Act was to discriminate**, that would send the message out into the world that it’s fine to discriminate against certain individuals and certain groups... Not everyone has the same life opportunities, that’s a fact, but they have equal human rights.” – Hanna

“I think there’s a lot of doubt that the Human Rights Act is actually for everyone. Most of the time when we hear the words “human rights” people think about immigration or war crime, which is important, but a lot of the professionals in the women’s sector are not clear how the Human Rights Act is and could be applicable to women and girls. So, **there’s a lot of work to be done..**” – Fairuz

“...when I was growing up I always thought “everything is politics” and it’s not just that everything is politics, **everything is human rights** – in a way that I don’t think most people ever quite understand because they’re not given that opportunity to do so.” – Charli



Key messages to consider

Human Rights are universal and for everyone

Centring dignity, equality, justice, freedom, peace

Human Rights are vital for all of us

Ensuring basic needs are met and considered

Our human rights are based in law - we are entitled to them

Understanding equality and non-discrimination

Human rights are about holding the state to account

Key messages to consider

Our human rights are enshrined in the Human Rights Act (1998) and come from the European Convention on Human Rights

The Human Rights Act means public bodies have a legal duty to Respect, Protect and Fulfil when working and making decisions

Human Rights being enshrined in law means they are not just a nice to have - they are protected and for every person

Other laws must be applied and interpreted compatibly with human rights wherever possible eg Mental Health Act

You can write to an authority to remind them of their obligations and go to court if they do not rectify it

“all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” - Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Questions for discussion and reflection

There are a variety of topics and questions that you could consider throughout your content or discussions about human rights. We are providing a selection of examples for you to start with, but we also recommend that you consider topics or questions that are specific to your work.

You could use these questions as a conversation starter in your social media content, or you could reflect on them and share your answers.

Questions for discussion

- What are human rights?
- What does human rights law do?
- Who are human rights for?
- Why are human rights important?
- How can we find out more about human rights?



Questions for reflection

- Why our Human Rights Act Matters...
 - to everyone?
 - to the groups of people you work with?
- What age groups do Human Rights apply to?
- How might Human Rights help someone who has a disability?
- What can someone do if they think their basic needs are not being met?
- How can I use it to protect my family?
- Why are Human Rights important to...
 - family life?
 - health and social care?
 - groups of people who face inequality?

Example content

This week we are talking about human rights law and thinking about why it matters to us

Human rights are universal and belong to everyone, so we'd like to invite you to tell us how you think they are relevant to you and your families



ask questions to spark discussion

What are human rights?

Our rights are enshrined in the 1998 Human Rights Act and mean that public bodies have a legal obligation to uphold them.

As an organisation we believe it is important to talk about our rights and increase knowledge of human rights language



raise awareness in bitesize chunks

Human rights are universal and apply to everyone.

As an organisation working with disabled people, we think it is key to help people understand their rights - especially in health and social care.

This week we'll be posting about rights and how they apply to people we work with



commit to continual discussion and make it relevant to your work

Example content

@BIHRHumanRights

While the UN's #WorldStatisticsDay is only officially celebrated every five years, we thought it was a good time to share some of the statistics that are especially important to us a charity working in human rights in the UK...



link your work to relevant awareness days and months

@charliclement_

Firstly, taking possessions from inpatients has to not breach Article 1 Protocol 1 of the Human Rights Act (Right to Peaceful Enjoyment of Possessions). A blanket ban will almost always breach this because there is not individual risk assessment or consideration of need... 2/



bring a human rights perspective to topical discussions and media pieces

@centreWJ

Without the #HumanRightsAct, the survivors of serial rapist John Worboys would not have been able to challenge the police for their multiple investigative failures. Scrap the #RightsRemovalBill and #SaveYourRights



use social media to raise awareness of campaigns and to call on politicians and public figures to understand human rights

Recommended reading

British Institute of Human Rights: [Your Easy Read Guide to Human Rights](#)

British Institute of Human Rights: [What Rights do I have?](#)

British Institute of Human Rights: [Organisations' duties - What duties do organisations have?](#)

British Institute of Human Rights: [Get Informed: Resources](#)

British Institute of Human Rights: [Why Our Human Rights Act Matters Blogs](#)

British Institute of Human Rights: [Where do organisations' duties apply?](#)

Equality and Human Rights Commission: [What are Human Rights?](#)

Freedom from Torture: [What is the Human Rights Act? Everything you need to know](#)

Liberty: [The Human Rights Act](#)

[EachOther](#): independent journalism, storytelling and filmmaking to put the human into human rights.



Making accessible content

by Charli Clement, Lived Experience Expert

Making content accessible to disabled individuals is crucial in social media creation. Accessible content means disabled people can engage in an equal manner, and are able to access communities and spaces. Disabled people are disproportionately isolated, so online spaces are often crucial to our wellbeing, community, and relationships.



Alt text

Alternative text is build into websites and social media posts to be read out by screen readers. It means Blind or disabled users can get an equal experience of images (as well as supporting Search Engine Optimisation and being useful for if an image can't load).

It should be concise and contain a description of anything that someone needs to know to grasp the important parts of imagery and get an equal experience to a user who doesn't need alt text.

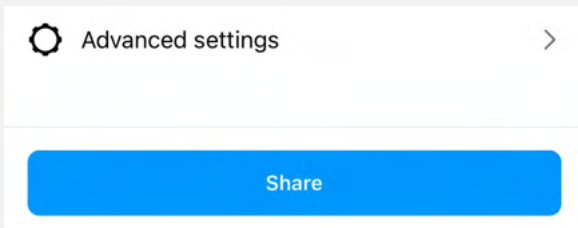
Different context is often needed in different forms of content. For example, in one picture, the background may not be relevant to the image, but in other images, it might tell you the location or context of an event, so it would be useful to describe.

If you are posting graphics, it can be useful to describe any icons or elements used if relevant, but if they are just for decoration it might not, or you could just describe them on only the first slide's description.

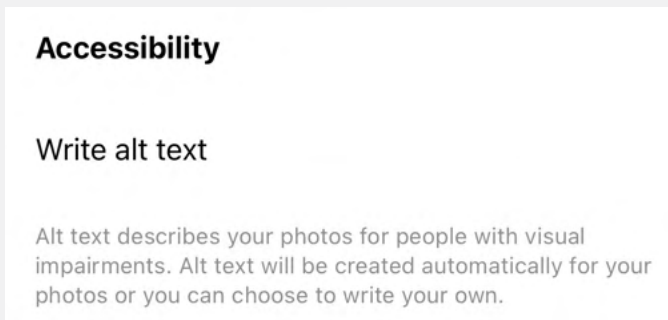
Sometimes you might have already described the image in the caption, and so alt text might not be necessary unless there are other details missing.

Making accessible content

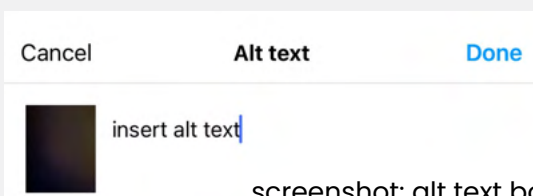
Alt text: How to Instagram



screenshot: advanced settings above "share" when creating an instagram post

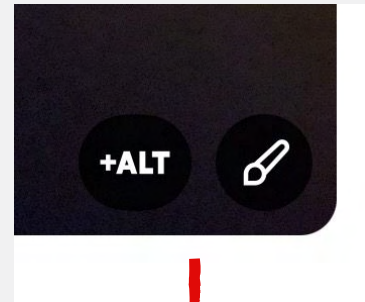


screenshot: accessibility -> alt text function

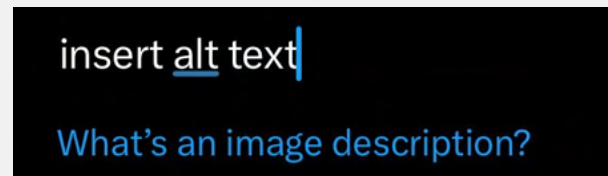


screenshot: alt text box to fill in reading "insert alt text"

Twitter/X



screenshot: add alt text on photo on twitter/X next to the edit button



screenshot: alt text function filled in reading "insert alt text"

Guides to alt texting

[Design102: What's the alternative? How to write good alt text](#)
[Accessible Social: Image Accessibility by Platform](#)

Making accessible content

Captioning

Video content should always have captions/subtitles. This makes video content accessible for those who are Deaf or hard of hearing, as well as people with auditory processing needs.

Did you know that 69% of people watch videos on their phones with sound off (Verizon Media)? Captioning means these viewers are also more likely to stay and watch your content, too.

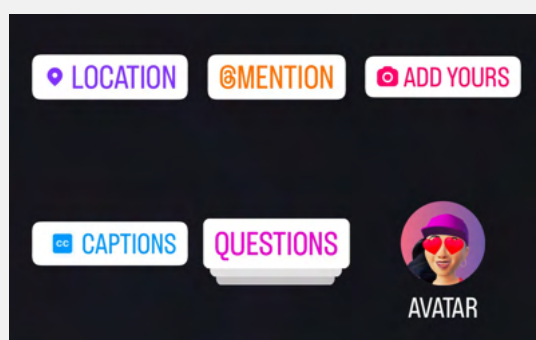
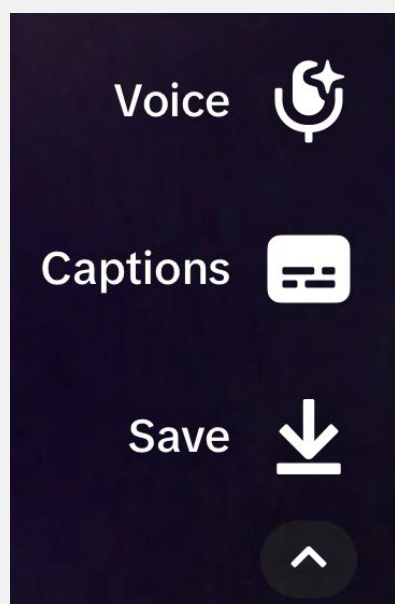
Captions should

- be accurate
- not shorten any phrases or sentences
- be in time with the video
- be in a font, colour and place that is easily visible.

If you are making content on TikTok, Instagram or Facebook, there are automatic captions available. If using these you should edit these for accuracy.

Guides for captioning on various platforms:

[Accessible Social](#)
[Royal National Institute for Deaf People](#)



screenshots of where to find caption feature on instagram stories and tiktok video editor next to other functions

Making accessible content

Hashtags

When using hashtags, you should write them in Camel Case - using a capital letter at the start of each new word, such as #HumanRightsDay instead of #humanrightsdays.

This is supportive for screen reader users, so the screen reader can identify all of the words individually, but can also support dyslexic and neurodivergent users who might struggle to understand the words when all together.

What not to do

Use too many emojis - Content containing lots of emojis is often inaccessible. Screen readers, which are used by blind or visually impaired individuals, as well as dyslexic people, read out every single character used - [you can hear an example of what this sounds like in this video.](#)

Rely on auto captioning - auto captioning is often wrong or confusing. Edit automatic captions before finalising content.

Use alt text to make inside jokes or as a meme, [such as in this example](#). The function is there for a specific purpose and leaves those who need alt text out of the loop.

Use external fonts - fonts cut and paste into social media captions or bios generally cannot be read by screen readers

Content calendar

Jan

27th - Holocaust Remembrance Day

Feb

All month - LGBTQ+ History Month (UK)

Second Tuesday - Safer Internet Day

12th - Red Hand Day (stop use of child soldiers)

March

8th - International Women's Day

12th - World Day Against Cyber Censorship

21st - International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

22nd - World Day for Water

April

All month - Autism Acceptance Month

Second Tuesday - European Equal Pay Day

7th - World Health Day

7th - International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda

8th - World Roma Day

23rd - World Book Day

24th - Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day

28th - World Day for Health and Safety at Work

May

1st - International Workers Day

Second Saturday - World Fair Trade Day

3rd - World Press Freedom Day

5th - Europe Day (Council of Europe)

15th - International Day of Families

17th - International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia

21st - World Anti-Terrorism Day

Content calendar

June

All month - Pride (LGBTQ+) Month

5th - World Environment Day

12th - World Day Against Child Labour

20th - World Refugee Day

26th - UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

July

All month - Disability Pride Month

11th - World Population Day

18th - Nelson Mandela International Day

August

2nd - Roma and Sinti Genocide Remembrance Day

9th - International Day of Indigenous People

12th - International Youth Day

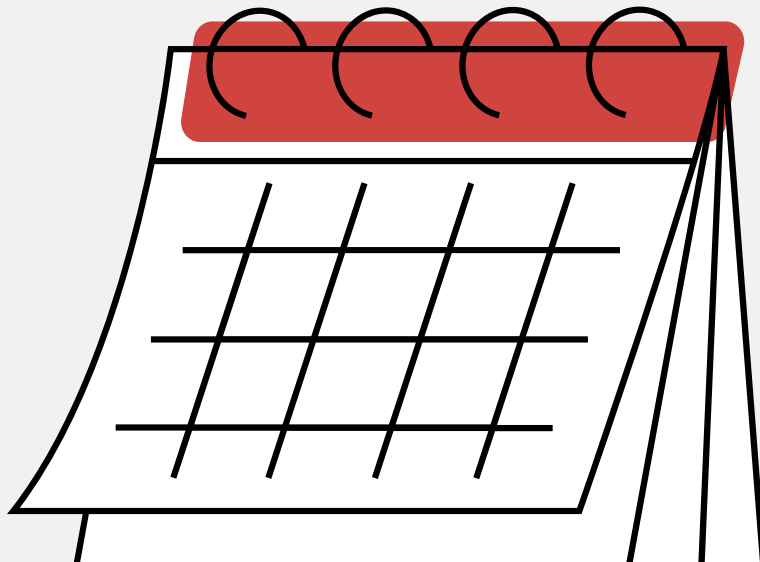
23rd - International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Abolition

September

10th - Suicide Prevention Day

15th - International Day of Democracy

21st - International Day of Peace



Content calendar

October

All month – Black History Month (UK)

1st – International Day of Older Persons

2nd – International Day of Non-Violence

10th – World Day Against the Death Penalty

10th – World Mental Health Day

16th – World Food Day

17th – International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

24th – United Nations Day

November

16th–16th Dec – UK Disability History Month

25th–10th Dec – 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

3rd – International Men's Day

4th – European Convention of Human Rights signed

9th – International Day Against Fascism and Antisemitism

18th – Anti-Trafficking Day

20th – Children's Day

25th – International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

29th – International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

December

1st – World Aids Day

2nd – International Day for the Abolition of Slavery

3rd – International Day of Disabled Persons

10th – Human Rights Day

18th – International Migrants Day

20th – International Human Solidarity Day

This is a **non-exhaustive list of awareness days and months** you might want to make content about or link your work to.

Afterword

by Ian Penfold, Lived Experience Expert

Human Rights are a vital part of the safety net that we all need to make sure that standards don't slip below what we think is acceptable as a Nation. Human Rights ensure that some people are not seen as worth-less because of who they are, we are all equal.

We can all help to raise the profile of human rights with those we support and work with whether this be through our peer groups, health and care partners, local support organisations or through social media.

By doing this we will make more people aware of their rights and better able to support themselves and challenge others when needed so that everyone has an equal opportunity to obtain and receive the care and support that they are entitled to and expect.



Glossary

Human Rights Act 1998

The Human Rights Act (HRA) covers our 16 Human Rights across the UK (Great Britain and Northern Island), and puts a duty on public authorities to respect, protect and fulfil Human Rights across their actions, decisions, policies and services. It means that Human Rights are enforceable here, through UK courts, and aims to create a culture of respect for Human Rights across the UK.

Universality

The official definition of Universality is “relating to or done by all people or things in the world or in a particular group” or “applicable to all cases”. In this context, it means Human Rights belong to all of us. It means the state cannot decide who does or doesn’t have them, and we don’t need to ‘earn’ them.

Absolute

Absolute Rights are Rights that cannot be interfered with or restricted by public officials under any circumstances. If an absolute right is at risk, public officials must act immediately to mitigate this.

Non-absolute

non-absolute rights are rights that can be restricted by a public official, however any restriction on one of these has to meet the 3-stage test, meaning it must be lawful, legitimate and proportionate.

Discrimination

Being treated less favourably than other people in the same situation based on a characteristic such as sex, race or religion. Discrimination may also be when a public official fails to treat you differently when you are in a very different situation to others or apply rules that have a worse impact on you.

Censorship

This is when you are prevented from saying something or accessing information because someone decides that the information or opinion would go against what the rest of society would agree with.

Public Authorities and their officials have these duties:

Respect

This means not restricting or trying to breach Human Rights.

Protect

Stepping in and taking positive action to protect people from harm, usually called safeguarding.

Fulfil

Investigating when things have gone wrong, and preventing these mistakes from re-occurring.

Public Body/Authority

Any governmental organisation that carries out tasks in the public interest, for example, the army, the police and the NHS. Hybrid public authorities are non-government organisations that perform similar 'public functions', for example, charities, private hospitals and non-profit organisations.

You can read more about this in [BIHR's explainer on public bodies and what public authority is.](#)

Public Official

Anyone employed by a public body and serving a public function (eg nurses, healthcare assistants, police).

The Human Rights Act



Article 2
The right to life



Article 3
The right to be free from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment



Article 4
The right to be free from slavery and forced labour



Article 5
The right to liberty



Article 6
The right to a fair trial



Article 7
The right not to be punished for something that wasn't against the law when you did it



Article 8
The right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence



Article 9
The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion



Article 10
The right to freedom of expression



Article 11
The right to freedom of assembly and association



Article 12
The right to marry and start a family



Article 14
The right to be free from discrimination



Article 1, Protocol 1
The right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions



Article 2, Protocol 1
The right to education



Article 3, Protocol 1
The right to free elections



Article 1, Protocol 13
Abolition of the death penalty

BIHR is a charity registered with the Charity Commission, which has a range of statutory guidance for charities relevant to social media, for more information visit:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission

This guide was made by the BIHR RITES Committee of lived experience experts, supported by BIHR staff.

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