

Scottish Recovery Consortium  
August 2023 – February 2024

# HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAMME

## Impact Report

**“An in-depth and very informative study into the rights of everyone, how they are upheld, and how we must fight to keep them.”**

- Participant, February 2024

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The British Institute  
of Human Rights 

# CONTENTS

**00**

## **Executive summary**

Page 1

**01**

## **Programme context & aim**

Page 2 - 3

**02**

## **What BIHR did**

Page 4 - 7

**03**

## **Outcomes**

Page 8 - 9

**04**

## **Programme goals**

Page 10 - 15

**05**

## **Next steps**

Page 16 - 18

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report covers the programme of human rights capacity-building commissioned by the Scottish Recovery Consortium (SRC), with funding from the Scottish Government National Development Project Fund. The programme was delivered by the British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR) from August 2023 to February 2024, building on a previous leadership programme which took place in 2022. The purpose of this programme was to equip people working in the recovery sector in Scotland with the knowledge and confidence to speak up for human rights, and to empower others to do so through their advocacy work, contributing to a longer-term aim of bringing about a shift in power and culture to improve the effectiveness of recovery services.

The programme of work involved:

- A joint review of the 2022 programme
- Co-development and co-delivery of an in-depth 10-part human rights leadership programme with up to 15 participants
- Creation of a comprehensive digital programme handbook

This report includes direct quotes from participants in the Rights in Recovery Leadership Programme, as well as measurable data gathered before, during, and after the programme to demonstrate how valuable and impactful this programme has been.



The Rights in Recovery Leadership Programme was successful in boosting participants' attitudes towards human rights law, as well as enhancing their knowledge and confidence to use the Human Rights Act to hold rights-based conversations with public bodies when supporting people whose lives are affected by substance use.

The report concludes with the individual and collective goals set by the group at the beginning and end of the programme. What we see across many of the goals is a recognition of how beneficial the course has been for participants, and a desire to share their learning and empower others to know and claim their rights as well. This suggests that the impact of this programme will touch many lives, beginning with the 10 wonderful participants who took part in the Rights in Recovery Leadership Programme.

# PROGRAMME CONTEXT & AIM

This programme came about after SRC was awarded funding from the Scottish Government National Development Fund to reduce problematic substance use. This followed on from the Scottish Government's 2018 Rights, Respect and Recovery strategy to improve health by preventing and reducing alcohol and drug use, harm and related deaths.

SRC's project was to provide training and support to peer advocates across Scotland, with a view to achieving the following aim:

**Respecting human dignity and rights needs to be the key focus in all drugs services. This would dramatically help to bring about the necessary shift in power and culture to help improve the effectiveness of all drugs services. It will help to increase the hope, engagement and confidence of people accessing services and will help to reduce stigma, increase compassion and empathy, and improve the quality of all services.**

SRC chose to partner with BIHR to co-develop and co-deliver this project, recognising human rights as a powerful tool that can secure positive change in the recovery sector. The programme meets BIHR's second strategic aim which is to strengthening the agency of community and voluntary groups to use human rights advocacy in their everyday actions.

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“I would describe the Rights in Recovery Leadership Programme as very informative and empowering. Previously not knowing anything about human rights I now feel I am in a position to challenge duty bearers around my rights and also to inform individuals and services in my region around human rights. I think the knowledge I have gained in this course will allow individuals to become empowered to the point where they can challenge services to get the care they need and deserve.” - Programme Participant

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This programme builds on the previous leadership course BIHR ran with SRC in 2022, this time delivered with a group of new participants working in recovery across Scotland, from urban areas to rural communities in the north.



### **Snapshot: What are the main issues you work on?**

- Addiction
- Isolation
- Mental health
- Access to treatment
- Criminal justice



### **Snapshot: What challenges do you face in your work?**

- Risk aversion
- Time constraints
- Funding
- Lack of knowledge on rights in recovery
- Medical approaches
- Disempowerment
- Stigma

The overall aim of the programme for both BIHR and SRC was to build participants' capacity to use human rights for positive change in their work. This work is particularly relevant considering the wider landscape of human rights in Scotland. In 2023, the Scottish Government consulted on a new Human Rights Bills for Scotland which will incorporate four international human rights treaties into Scots law. Additionally, the National Collaborative is working to integrate human rights into drug and alcohol policy leading to better outcomes for people affected by substance use.

Therefore, the Rights in Recovery Leadership Programme could not be more timely, offering people with lived and living experience the opportunity to develop a solid understanding of the Human Rights Act, the foundation upon which any additional legal rights protections will be built, and how they can use it to speak up for people's rights every day.

# WHAT BIHR DID

BIHR's activities on this programme involved an extensive review and incorporation of learning from the previous leadership programme run in 2022, the development of existing and new content to help build the capacity of participants around human rights, and the creation of a detailed digital resource to support ongoing learning and advocacy.

A vital element of this programme is that it is co-developed and co-delivered by both BIHR and SRC, recognising each organisations' complementary strengths coming together to support participants' learning.

## Research and Evaluation

It was important to recognise the achievements and learnings from the 2022 programme to tailor the repeat programme to a new group of recovery advocates. In order to develop and deliver a bespoke leadership programme over 5 months, transparent communication between BIHR and SRC in the early stages was key in determining what might be improved upon in the current programme.

BIHR's work to evaluate and develop this programme involved:

- Reviewing the evaluation data from the 2022 programme from participants
- A consultation call with the SRC programme lead at the start and midway through the programme
- Fortnightly check-in calls throughout the programme to reflect on participants' progress and co-develop workshop content
- Before, midway and after surveys to map the journey travelled in participants' knowledge and confidence to use human rights in their life and work
- In-workshop questions to participants about their areas of interest at the beginning of the programme.

## Workshop Development and Delivery

This programme was delivered using a hybrid delivery model, with the first and last workshops taking place face-to-face, and the remaining 6 workshops taking place virtually. This model was effective for giving a thorough and person-centred introduction to the trainers and the course, then providing the same level of detailed support to conclude the course. This was also a more affordable option to a programme delivered entirely in person. Three members of the BIHR staff team were able to attend the face-to-face workshops, and thoroughly enjoyed visiting SRC's office in Glasgow and getting to know the participants away from a screen.

The information gathered at the research and evaluation stage proved invaluable to the development and delivery of this programme. A key learning was to allow sufficient time for participants to digest and engage with information about human rights law. This meant that less content was covered than in the 2022 programme, but this provided participants with more space for interaction, discussion, and opportunities to connect their learning to their life and work every day.

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“I would highly recommend this programme. It excited me to learn more about human rights and gave me the motivation to join in active group discussions. The empowerment I now feel in having the correct language and information to support and advocate not only for myself but my peers too. Thank you.” - Programme Participant

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The co-produced element of this programme added significant value to the work, and participants commented on their enjoyment of the course trainers from both BIHR and SRC. Where BIHR contributed our expertise on human rights law and many years of experience of delivering effective leadership programmes to community groups, SRC brought lived experience of recovery, providing real life examples that participants found relatable as well as experience in capacity building within the sector.

Additionally, SRC's relationships across the recovery sector led to the inclusion of four guest speakers from across the recovery and human rights sector in Scotland, benefitting participants with a range of expertise and letting them know that their participation in the course is valued.

Guest speakers included:

- Michaela Jones – formerly SRC. Michaela spoke about intersectionality and her experience of being a woman in recovery.
- Professor Alan Miller – National Collaborative. Professor Miller shared his work to embed human rights in drug and alcohol policy in Scotland.
- Lucy Miller – Scottish Human Rights Consortium. Lucy spoke about the new Human Rights Bill for Scotland.
- Darren McGarvey – author and social commentator. Darren attended the final workshop and spoke about his experience of recovery and advocacy.

Participants on the Rights in Recovery Leadership Programme had the opportunity to go into detail on a variety of topics. At several points, they were able to directly influence material covered, ensuring a tailored and focused programme of training.







## Snapshot: Topics covered included:

- The Right to Respect for Private and Family Life, Home and Correspondence. This was explored in relation to restrictive decision-making, child welfare, and participation in employment, with a focus on the balance between autonomy and wellbeing where someone’s actions put themselves or others at risk of harm.
- The Right to be Free from Inhuman and Degrading Treatment. The focus was on treatment decisions severely impacting on people’s dignity, as well as a human rights case where inadequate living conditions in a prison were successfully challenged.
- The Right to be Free from Discrimination. Participants learned how the Human Rights Act and Equality Act work together to prohibit discrimination, and how to raise concerns about discrimination despite pervasive stigma in society around addiction.

100%

said they would recommend a BIHR human rights session to others

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“Due to our work and the lack of a rights-based approach to the participants we walk alongside, this course would give you the tools to deliver it and the confidence.”

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“I have learned a lot, very informative. It has boosted my confidence in claiming my own human rights and I plan to help other people gain the confidence to claim theirs.”

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“Interesting, well-presented, confidence boost, empowering.”

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“I know a lot more now than I did before and that is all thanks to this programme.”

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“If you get the opportunity get your name down. Very informative, delivered by expert presenters.”

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# OUTCOMES

## Before the programme:

Feelings towards human rights law, as well as the knowledge and confidence to claim rights in practice, were mixed across participants at the beginning of the programme.



How do you feel about the Human Rights Act?: 3.8/5



Understanding of the Human Rights Act: 2.6/5



Confidence discussing the Human Rights Act with public bodies: 3.4/5

## During the programme:

As participants progressed to the midway point of the programme, they were already reporting an increase in their understanding and confidence using human rights law.

75%

said they were more likely to take action to uphold people's rights by supporting them to be involved in decisions about their lives.



How do you feel about the Human Rights Act?: 4.8/5



Understanding of the Human Rights Act: 3/5



Confidence discussing the Human Rights Act with public bodies: 3.8/5

### After the programme:

Knowledge of the Human Rights Act and confidence to use it had increased even further by the end of the programme, with participants rating both the workshops and the trainers as 'excellent'.



BIHR's programme rated excellent: 5/5



BIHR's trainers rated excellent: 5/5



How do you feel about the Human Rights Act?: 5/5



Understanding of the Human Rights Act: 3.7/5



Confidence discussing the Human Rights Act with public bodies: 4/5

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“It was such a pleasure to be part of it so much useful information with guest speakers and delivered in such a great manner. We all felt involved and appreciated and was a privilege to be nominated for doing the programme.”

- Programme Participant

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# PROGRAMME GOALS

## Participant goals – then and now

In the second workshop, participants shared their goals for what they would like to achieve by the end of the programme. This had two purposes: one was to support with planning the workshop content with participants' goals in mind, and another was to gather real and immediate data that measured the direct impact of the course on participants and the people they work alongside. Participants were encouraged to keep their goals SMART: S- specific, M- measurable, A- achievable, R- Relevant, T- timebound.

The following samples from the cohort show that they have either met their original goal or they are on their way to meeting it as their confidence grows, and how they plan to take their new knowledge forward after the programme:



**Alan Before:** To gain as much knowledge and information whereby I can confidently challenge where a person's human rights have been violated.



**Alan After:** Alan will meet with colleagues to discuss how they will share their knowledge with their community and support people to understand their rights. The first step will be to meet up with other recovery leads and make a leaflet on human rights.



**Dave Before:** I'd just like to further my knowledge (particularly in the justice setting) and be able to give informed advice and guidance.



**Dave After:** Dave wants to break down the information he has learned on this programme and make it relevant to the people he supports in criminal justice settings. He plans to run two separate workshops over the next 6 months.



**Ashley Before:** To learn as much as I possibly can about human rights, to help empower myself and others to live a positive and fulfilling life, to not feel like a second-class citizen and have the same rights as everyone else.



**Ashley After:** Ashley wants to continue learning about human rights so she can advocate better for people. She plans to ask the community what they already know about human rights and what they want to know more about, and will start by sharing the PANEL principles with a plan to share more information about human rights within a year.



**Brian Before:** Easier to understand so I can share information to empower. If a handout can be developed to speak from, for people who we support, we can use this as a practice sheet and have correct information.



**Brian After:** Brian wants to choose six topics that are relevant to the people he supports, such as homelessness and treatment, and will use the course handbook to create a resource showing how human rights are important in these situations. He wants to co-produce this with a group and make it within a year.



**Darren Before:** My goal would be to integrate the information learned into practice and hold conversations with our participants in learning their rights.



**Darren After:** Within the next 6 months, Darren plans to set up a group where people can learn about their rights. It will be an ongoing process and will be measured by people having more confidence and using what they've learned. He will use BIHR materials and ask Tom to come to the introductory group, then take it forward from there.



**Dermot Before:** A comprehensive knowledge of human rights to a level that I can confidently relate this to people I work with and train within the MIST experiential programme.



**Dermot After:** Through his work with SRC, Dermot plans to do a travelling roadshow around Scotland to talk about the MAT standards and human rights. The first step will be to plan this and meet with SRC's new CEO. He'll know this is helping if we see the MAT standards being met.



**Jillian Before:** Better understanding and knowledge of what people's rights are and to gain more confidence.



**Jillian After:** Jillian wants her peers and community members to know that they've got rights, and plans to make people aware that they can have a say over decisions about their treatment. She will speak to people to find out how much they know by holding a workshop, and then bring people back together in the summer.



**Lee Before:** I'm hoping to have enough knowledge around the Human Rights Act to challenge when individuals' rights aren't being met. Also to be able to articulate my point from a place of understanding rather than anger or aggression.



**Lee After:** Lee supports a panel and will ask Tom to attend every 4 weeks to talk about human rights. He wants to share his knowledge with the community so that people know they have human rights, and hopes this will influence public officials working in services.



**Robert Before:** I would like the knowledge to take into groups and let others know about their rights and for me to present this also in my work capacity. Let people achieve what they should know.



**Robert After:** Robert wants to drip-feed information about human rights to the men's group he supports to help others to know about their rights. He will decide how to do this by the summer, with support from Tom.



**Victoria Before:** To gain knowledge and understanding around human rights. To learn the correct language to use in a professional way. End goal is to co-deliver workshops to inform and empower others with confidence and knowledge of rights in recovery.



**Victoria After:** Victoria plans to develop a rights in recovery workshop for the service where she works, which she will plan, trial and evaluate before rolling it out more widely.

## Collective goals

The final activity on the last workshop of the Rights in Recovery Leadership Programme involved a whole group conversation about how they might come together to tackle issues affecting their communities. This activity was facilitated to recognise the collective power of the group, harnessing their new knowledge and confidence to create positive change using human rights.

The group committed to two collective actions:

**1) Attend the National Recovery Advocacy Network every month. This was created to bring together the rights-based approach, advocacy, and the skills and knowledge of people with lived experience. It is attended by participants of SRC's previous training programmes focusing on rights in recovery.**

**2) Keep in touch and share how they are embedding their human rights learning into practice. This cohort of participants works across a large geographical area and in a variety of roles and contexts. Maintaining contact and holding each other accountable for their individual goals (see above) will keep up the momentum to advocate for positive change using human rights.**

### Stories of change



One participant hoped to gain more knowledge and confidence from the Rights in Recovery Leadership Programme. Whilst the programme was underway, a housing decision was made which affected a man she was supporting in the recovery community. The man had spent time in prison, and a decision had been made for him to move to different accommodation due to concerns about him posing a risk to others. The participant considered the man's right to autonomy and felt the risk to others in his current accommodation was low, and moving him would not be a proportionate interference with his rights. Attending the course enabled the participant to identify where the man's human rights were relevant, and confidently advocate on his behalf.



Another participant who often works in justice settings such as prisons and police stations shared an example of putting his new-found human rights knowledge into practice. He visited a man in a police station, who had been arrested outside a pharmacy on a Friday morning. The man was prescribed methadone, but when the participant visited him on Sunday morning he still hadn't seen a doctor and hadn't been given his methadone. The participant felt this was wrong, so he revisited his notes from the Rights in Recovery Leadership Programme, then contacted the police and challenged the lack of medical care. As a result, a doctor visited the man the next day.





Attending this programme also enabled one participant to push for accountability following the death of her brother. He was struggling with addiction and had been admitted to hospital due to health issues relating to his liver which were causing him to be confused. He was discharged from hospital when he needed more care, and sadly passed away. Whilst the programme was underway, the participant put her knowledge of the Human Rights Act to use by challenging the NHS trust's decision-making relating to her brother. She asked for a meeting and raised her brother's right to life, and her family has since been offered a formal apology by the hospital.

# NEXT STEPS

The measurable impact that the Rights in Recovery Leadership Programme has had on participants is significant. There have been marked improvements to participants' knowledge and confidence to know and claim their rights, which will support them in their own lives, and in their advocacy for people whose lives are affected by substance use. Participants told us they have left the programme feeling informed, inspired, and that their confidence has been boosted not only to speak up for human rights, but to share their learning and empower others to do the same.

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“I did a conversation cafe on Wednesday on the National Collaborative as I was so grateful for the training I had with you guys it was so helpful when presenting. I actually outdone myself with just how much information I had learned and stored in ma wee brain.” - Email from a programme participant two weeks after the final workshop

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Of course, whilst we must acknowledge the positive changes brought about by this programme, it is important to recognise that the journey towards establishing a culture of respect for human rights in recovery across Scotland must be ongoing.

When asked what further support participants needed to take action to support people's human rights in their life or work, they said:

- More capacity building sessions to improve confidence and skills
- A specific BIHR resource to help you embed your learning from today
- Attending the National Recovery Advocacy Network with SRC and link in with others who have knowledge and experience.

Participants will be provided with an extensive course handbook which will include key content from the programme and bespoke resources. A similar handbook was made available to participants on the 2022 programme which was found to be useful, and a written resource was specifically requested by participants on the current programme to support them to embed their learning beyond this 10-part leadership programme.

In sum, the Rights in Recovery Leadership Programme has enabled participants to understand human rights and why they matter in recovery, and to have the confidence to hold rights-based conversations with public bodies, ensuring that those rights are respected, protected, fulfilled. BIHR is delighted to have had the opportunity to work alongside SRC to deliver this programme, and we hope to continue our partnership with them over the coming years.

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“We were lucky enough to get onto this course [...] it's courses like this that have helped a lot of people, it's certainly helped me understand more about our human rights, and getting knowledge and understanding out to other people. If it's courses like this that keep getting dropped off due to the lack of funding, I'm afraid that empowerment will be going out the window [...] It's courses like this that we need to get more people involved in [...] If courses and services are getting closed down, we're not going to be able to empower other people. We need as much courses and training like this to help other people.” - Programme Participant

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“If only person knows their rights, it's one finger which can be trapped easily. If it's a community, it's a powerful fist.” - Programme Participant

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