# EHRc launches new guidance to combat entrenched discrimination in Britain’s uniformed services



Britain’s Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has issued new guidance aimed at tackling deeply rooted discrimination and sexual harassment within the armed forces, police, and other emergency services. The EHRC describes these issues as “entrenched” and sees their guidance as a crucial step in addressing workplace cultures that have long allowed such behaviours to persist.

The new guidance focuses on improving how these uniformed organisations collect and analyse workforce equality data. According to the EHRC, understanding this data is foundational to driving cultural change, creating safer working environments, and developing targeted policies to prevent harassment and discrimination. This approach can also help improve recruitment, retention, and the overall reputation of these vital public services. The watchdog stressed that many police and fire services currently lack a clear understanding of their staff’s diversity and equality profiles, citing a 2023 report from His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). This shortfall hampers efforts to take effective action to diversify and improve these workforces.

Martyn Jones, Acting Wales Commissioner at the EHRC, emphasised that while the nature of uniformed services entails unique workplace cultures, their workforces still deserve to be safe, fair, and equal. He highlighted that “collecting and analysing good equality data is essential” for organisations to comprehensively understand workforce needs and problems, enabling them to design better interventions to combat harassment and discrimination.

This initiative comes amid recent troubling developments in the Metropolitan Police, where nine officers at Charing Cross police station were suspended following allegations of excessive use of force and making discriminatory and misogynistic remarks. The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) opened the investigation after a mandatory conduct referral from the Met. Assistant Commissioner Matt Twist condemned the behaviour, calling it “disgraceful” and reaffirming the Met’s commitment to rooting out misconduct. The Charing Cross station had previously attracted criticism following a 2022 IOPC report revealing officers exchanging offensive messages about rape, domestic violence, racism, homophobia, and ableism.

The EHRC’s guidance forms part of a wider programme addressing sexual harassment and race and sex-based discrimination within uniformed services. This work aligns with the new legal obligations under the Worker Protection (Amendment of the Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, which requires employers to proactively prevent sexual harassment within their workforces. The EHRC is tasked with supporting organisations to comply with this duty, including providing practical guidance and, where necessary, taking enforcement action against those failing to implement reasonable preventive measures.

In support of these efforts, the EHRC recently hosted an Equality Exchange event for senior leaders and equality, diversity, and inclusion practitioners within Britain’s armed forces, police, and fire services. The event aimed to improve understanding of the new legal duties and how to apply the EHRC’s guidance effectively. This emphasis on leadership and practical implementation reflects the commission’s view that high-level commitment is essential in transforming entrenched workplace cultures.

Furthermore, the EHRC has advocated for the inclusion of equality and human rights considerations in policing inspection frameworks for 2025 to 2029. It has stressed the importance of evaluating forces’ compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998, particularly concerning measures to prevent sexual harassment, discrimination, and victimisation. These inspections are designed to hold uniformed services accountable and ensure continuous progress on equality issues.

Overall, the EHRC’s new guidance and associated initiatives underline the importance of data-driven, legally informed, and culturally conscious strategies to eradicate harassment and discrimination within some of Britain’s most respected but traditionally insular institutions. It is clear that while progress has been slow and challenging, meaningful change requires transparency, robust data, effective legal frameworks, and ongoing scrutiny.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/watchdog-launches-guidance-to-help-tackle-discrimination-in-uniformed-services-DEN4MIVM2NNTBMQJLZCOEKJ62E/), [[2]](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/media-centre/news/tackling-discrimination-work-ehrc-launches-first-equality-data-guide-uniformed), [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/ehrc-watchdog-iopc-equality-and-human-rights-commission-metropolitan-police-b1248460.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/watchdog-launches-guidance-to-help-tackle-discrimination-in-uniformed-services-DEN4MIVM2NNTBMQJLZCOEKJ62E/), [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/ehrc-watchdog-iopc-equality-and-human-rights-commission-metropolitan-police-b1248460.html), [[6]](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/response-hmicfrs-proposed-policing-inspection-framework-and-programme-2025-2029)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/watchdog-launches-guidance-to-help-tackle-discrimination-in-uniformed-services-DEN4MIVM2NNTBMQJLZCOEKJ62E/), [[2]](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/media-centre/news/tackling-discrimination-work-ehrc-launches-first-equality-data-guide-uniformed), [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/ehrc-watchdog-iopc-equality-and-human-rights-commission-metropolitan-police-b1248460.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/watchdog-launches-guidance-to-help-tackle-discrimination-in-uniformed-services-DEN4MIVM2NNTBMQJLZCOEKJ62E/), [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/ehrc-watchdog-iopc-equality-and-human-rights-commission-metropolitan-police-b1248460.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/watchdog-launches-guidance-to-help-tackle-discrimination-in-uniformed-services-DEN4MIVM2NNTBMQJLZCOEKJ62E/), [[4]](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/our-work/advising-parliament-and-governments/our-letter-fire-and-rescue-services), [[5]](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/media-centre/news/ehrc-hosts-equality-exchange-event-uniformed-services)
* Paragraph 6 – [[5]](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/media-centre/news/ehrc-hosts-equality-exchange-event-uniformed-services), [[6]](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/response-hmicfrs-proposed-policing-inspection-framework-and-programme-2025-2029)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/watchdog-launches-guidance-to-help-tackle-discrimination-in-uniformed-services-DEN4MIVM2NNTBMQJLZCOEKJ62E/), [[2]](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/media-centre/news/tackling-discrimination-work-ehrc-launches-first-equality-data-guide-uniformed), [[4]](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/our-work/advising-parliament-and-governments/our-letter-fire-and-rescue-services), [[6]](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/response-hmicfrs-proposed-policing-inspection-framework-and-programme-2025-2029)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/watchdog-launches-guidance-to-help-tackle-discrimination-in-uniformed-services-DEN4MIVM2NNTBMQJLZCOEKJ62E/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/media-centre/news/tackling-discrimination-work-ehrc-launches-first-equality-data-guide-uniformed> - The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has published its first guidance on workforce equality data for uniformed services, aiming to help armed forces, police, fire, and rescue services improve the collection and analysis of equality data. This initiative is a crucial step in addressing entrenched cultures of harassment and discrimination within these sectors. The guidance is intended to assist leaders and managers in creating safer work environments and developing targeted anti-harassment policies, thereby enhancing recruitment, retention, and the organisations' reputations. The EHRC's guidance is part of a broader programme to prevent sexual harassment, race and sex-based discrimination, harassment, and victimisation in the uniformed services. Martyn Jones, Acting Wales Commissioner at the EHRC, emphasised the importance of collecting and analysing good equality data to build an accurate picture of the workforce and address issues effectively. The launch of this guidance follows recent incidents, including the suspension of nine officers at Charing Cross police station amid allegations of excessive use of force and discriminatory comments. The EHRC's initiative underscores the need for cultural change within uniformed services to ensure safe, equal, and fair workplaces.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/ehrc-watchdog-iopc-equality-and-human-rights-commission-metropolitan-police-b1248460.html> - Britain's human rights watchdog, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), has released new guidance aimed at addressing 'entrenched' discrimination and sexual harassment within the armed forces, police, and other emergency services. The guidance focuses on improving the collection and analysis of workforce equality data, a critical step in tackling cultures of harassment and discrimination. By enhancing data collection, organisations can better understand their workforce composition, drive cultural change, and implement targeted anti-harassment policies. The EHRC highlighted a 2023 report from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, which found that many police and fire services lacked an understanding of their equality data and staff diversity, hindering efforts to improve workforce diversity. Martyn Jones, Acting Wales Commissioner at the EHRC, stated that while uniformed services have unique workplace cultures, their workforces should be equally safe, equal, and fair. He emphasised the importance of collecting and analysing good equality data to build an accurate picture of the workforce and address issues effectively. The launch of the EHRC guidance coincides with the suspension of nine officers at Charing Cross police station amid an investigation into allegations of excessive use of force and discriminatory comments. The EHRC's initiative is part of a broader effort to prevent sexual harassment, race and sex-based discrimination, harassment, and victimisation within uniformed services.
4. <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/our-work/advising-parliament-and-governments/our-letter-fire-and-rescue-services> - The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has outlined its focus on tackling sexual harassment, discrimination, and victimisation within uniformed services, including fire and rescue services (FRS), as part of its 2025 to 2028 strategic plan. The EHRC aims to support organisations in implementing the new preventative duty introduced by the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, which requires employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their workers. The EHRC provides guidance to assist employers in complying with this duty and has the authority to take enforcement action where organisations fail to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment. The EHRC's initiative underscores the importance of creating safe and inclusive environments within uniformed services and highlights the need for proactive measures to address harassment and discrimination.
5. <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/media-centre/news/ehrc-hosts-equality-exchange-event-uniformed-services> - The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) hosted an event for senior leaders and equality, diversity, and inclusion practitioners from Britain's armed forces, police, and fire services. The Equality Exchange Event focused on tackling workplace sexual harassment and the new preventative duty for all employers, which came into force on 26 October 2024. The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 introduced a legal obligation on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their staff. The EHRC's event aimed to improve delegates' understanding of their legal duties to protect their workforce and how they can implement the EHRC's guidance in practice. This initiative is part of the EHRC's broader programme to address sex and race discrimination in uniformed services across England, Scotland, and Wales.
6. <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/response-hmicfrs-proposed-policing-inspection-framework-and-programme-2025-2029> - The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has responded to the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) proposed policing inspection framework and programme for 2025 to 2029. The EHRC emphasised the importance of including equality and human rights considerations in all thematic inspections. The response highlights the need for assessments to ensure that police forces comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998. The EHRC advocates for the inclusion of topics such as tackling discrimination, harassment, and victimisation in the workforce, as well as assessing how well forces are taking reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment, a new employer duty required by the Worker Protection (Amendment of the Equality Act 2010) Act 2023. The EHRC's response underscores the necessity of scrutinising the impact of actions taken by police forces to address equality and human rights issues.
7. <https://www.drc-gb.org/private-and-public-sector-guidance/public-sector-providers/public-sector-equality-duty/guidance> - The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) provides comprehensive guidance for public authorities in England, Scotland, and Wales on the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The guidance offers an overview of the equality duty, including the general equality duty, specific duties, and their applicability. It outlines the steps public authorities should take to meet the duty, encompassing both legally required actions and recommended practices. The EHRC's resources aim to assist public authorities in integrating equality and good relations into their daily operations, ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010, and promoting inclusive and fair practices within public services.