

# Human rights in the workplace

**Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world. They are based on important principles like dignity, fairness, respect and equality. Your human rights are protected by the law. If your employer is a public authority, they must follow these principles.**

## Human Rights

Human rights protect you in your everyday life regardless of who you are, where you live and how you choose to live.

If you work in the public sector, it's unlawful for your employer to violate your human rights.

If your employer isn't a public authority you can't make a claim against your employer for a breach of your human rights. However, human rights law has been incorporated into general employment law and applies to all employers, like the right not to be discriminated against because of your sexuality, for example.

Any decision by an Industrial Tribunal must follow the principles laid out in the Convention.

- [Find out your rights](#)
- [Employment-related tribunals](#)

## Protection in the workplace

Many of the principles of human rights are designed to protect you as a worker within the workplace.

You have the right to a private and family life. So an employer who discriminates against a gay worker, for example, may be violating that worker's right to a private life.

Your employer has the right to monitor communications within the workplace as long as you're aware of the monitoring before it takes place. Monitoring can cover:

- emails
- internet access
- telephone calls

- data
- images

You have the right to see any information held about you, like emails or CCTV footage.

Your right to a private life means you have the right to some privacy in the workplace. You can't be monitored everywhere. If your employer doesn't respect this, they'll be breaching human rights law.

- [Drug testing and employee monitoring](#)

## Breach of human rights

If you believe your human rights at work have been breached, you should talk to your employer first.

If you're still unhappy, you can follow the internal grievance procedure in your contract or written statement of employment.

- [How to resolve a problem at work](#)
- [Grievance procedures](#)
- [Employment contracts](#)

If that doesn't work, you may want to take legal action. Human rights law can be complex and so before doing this, you will need to take legal advice.

## Help and advice about your human rights

[Advice NI](#) can provide free and impartial advice.

Your local [trade union](#) may also be able to offer guidance and advice.

## More useful links

- [Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission website](#)(external link opens in a new window / tab)
- [Equality Commission for Northern Ireland](#)
- [Human Rights Act 1998](#)(external link opens in a new window / tab)