

Human rights provide a clear and practical framework to help our leaders determine what are reasonable restrictions and what are not, ensuring they can navigate the delicate balance between protecting our health and safeguarding our vital freedoms and individual needs.

Protections that complement or enhance our hard-won rights will maximise consent and compliance, and ultimately best safeguard public health. Changes of such magnitude should be proportionate and measured, and rooted in science and the law. They must have clear review and end points, be flexible to specific needs, and remain open to challenge.

Elements of the legislation with particular equality and human rights dimensions include the following:

- When detaining people who are suspected of carrying coronavirus, and relaxing crucial safeguards on detention set out in the Mental Health Act, it is critical that Government ensures that exemptions only extend as far as is absolutely required, both in time and scope, and are regularly monitored and adjusted.
- A recent Commission inquiry into the criminal justice system has shown that people who have a learning disability or are experiencing mental ill health can find it difficult to participate fully in proceedings using the courtroom video and audio links now being expanded. Appropriate adjustments must be put in place to maintain their ability to access a fair trial.
- We know that during periods of confinement domestic abuse (a crime mostly impacting women and girls) tends to increase, and that the healthcare and educational settings that offer a way of identifying this issue will be under unprecedented pressure.
- Redeployment of other care professionals to respond to coronavirus will help save lives. But it also risks leaving already vulnerable older people and those living with mental health conditions exposed.
- The reduced number of children still able to attend school will only constitute a small proportion of all children with special educational needs, and the dispensation for councils to reduce support to these pupils will have a profound impact on families. Such