



Mike Smith

Mike has been CEO of Real, a user-led organisation of disabled people based in Tower Hamlets, since 2011. Real provides information, advice, advocacy and other products to support local disabled people to participate equally within society, overcome discrimination and achieve their human rights. Prior to this he worked for PricewaterhouseCoopers for 19 years; after qualifying as a chartered accountant he specialised in company tax advice, later becoming Director of Policy in Compliance.

Mike was a Commissioner at the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) between 2009 and 2012 where he chaired its statutory Disability Committee (of which he was a member 2006-2009). In 2009 Mike chaired the oral evidence panel for the EHRC's formal inquiry into sex discrimination and the gender pay gap in the financial services sector.

Mike led the EHRC's formal inquiry into disability-related harassment, which covered hate crime and hate incidents. The inquiry's ground-breaking report, "Hidden in Plain Sight", was published in September 2011, with the follow-up report "Out in the Open" published in October 2012. The inquiry found that harassment is a commonplace experience for disabled people, and a culture of disbelief and systemic institutional failures are preventing it from being tackled effectively. Following this he has spoken at conferences on disability hate crime around the UK and Europe, including the opening address to the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting at the Office for Democratic Institutes and Human Rights in Warsaw (2012), the Fundamental Rights Agency conference on Autonomy and Inclusion in Copenhagen (2012), and the Equality and Antidiscrimination Ombudsman conference in Oslo (2013).

For a number of years Real has delivered projects relating to disability hate crime, seeking to address the support needs of victims, and also worktop "change the system" around the wider criminal justice and public sector responses to hate crime. Mike was a member of the Government's Independent Hate Advisory Group from 2012 until 2021, the CPS Disability National Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel (2014-2015), and was appointed to the Metropolitan Police Service Strategic Hate Crime Board in 2021.

Mike has been involved in equality and diversity work for the last 25 years, starting off with his involvement in the disability movement in Tower Hamlets. He has been Vice-chair of Disability Rights UK, the Chair of National Centre for Independent Living (2005 to 2011) and a board member of Stonewall (2006 to 2010). He was a member of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Equality in Mental Health, and a member of the reference group for the Commission on Funding of Care and Support (the Dilnot review), and a member of the Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission.