

14 February 2015

Disability still tops discrimination complaints

Disability discrimination is persistently the most reported form of discrimination to the Equality Commission. It accounted for 39% of enquiries to the Commission last year.

We challenge discrimination through advice services and legal casework and through policy work. A key part of that work is our role as part of the Independent Monitoring Mechanism for Northern Ireland (IMNI). This promotes and monitors the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD). It seeks to protect the human rights, fundamental freedoms and dignity of all disabled people.



Equality Commissioner Murray Watt, who launched the research, with disability rights campaigner Kym Lennon

As part of IMNI, in December 2014, we identified a list of issues affecting Northern Ireland, based on new research, and fed these into the interim report of the UK Independent Mechanism on the progress made on implementing UNCRPD. The concerns are wide-ranging. They include substantive shortfalls in areas such as equality and non-discrimination, equal recognition before the law, living independently and being included in the community, education, health and an adequate standard of living and social protection.

Other issues include participation in public and political life, access to information and statistics and data collection and the impact on disabled people of policy and programme areas such as welfare reform and the inclusive education of children with special needs.

The Commission works with the public sector on Disability Action Plans which promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life. These will be key issues for the new councils coming into operation on April 1st.

The Northern Ireland Disability Strategy is silent on legislative reform. We are calling for changes to disability equality law here so as to, at minimum, keep pace with the positive legislative changes in Great Britain under the Equality Act. 82% of people who responded to the consultation on the Disability Strategy supported our call for law reform – but no action has been taken to date.