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PRESS RELEASE

United Nations raises concerns for people with disabilities in NI

Concern over the levels of protection offered to people with disabilities in Northern Ireland has been expressed by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Committee released its report today examining the UK Government's and N.I Assembly's record in fulfilling its commitments under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Committee's Concluding Observations address key gaps in the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. The areas of concern in Northern Ireland were highlighted to the Committee by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Committee who together form the Independent Mechanism for Northern Ireland with a role to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the Convention by the Northern Ireland Government.

Commenting on the report, NIHRC Chief Commissioner, Les Allamby, said:

"The impact of social security reforms has led to a finding by the UN Committee of grave and systematic violations of the right to an adequate standard of living and social protection, the right to live independently and the right to employment across the UK. We welcome the call for a cumulative impact assessment of the effect of the reforms to date and future proposals."

"We share the communities' concerns at the lack of effective participation of people with disabilities in decision making processes. The Assembly and Executive could do more to involve people with disabilities when developing policy and law and have at times failed to keep to the principle of 'Nothing About Us Without Us'. The absence of a Northern Ireland disability strategy is a real concern. Today's report provides a set of strong recommendations which aim to improve the living conditions and address the legal and practical challenges faced by people with disabilities in Northern Ireland."

ECNI Chief Commissioner Dr Michael Wardlow said:

"The Committee has highlighted the fact that disabled people in Northern Ireland have less legal protection from discrimination than disabled people in Great Britain. It has recommended that Government takes the necessary measures to ensure that there is reform of disability rights law to reflect the recommendations made by the"

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in 2012. This is necessary to protect people with disabilities in Northern Ireland from direct and indirect disability-based discrimination and discrimination through association”.

“Our submission to the Committee also drew attention to the need to mitigate the adverse impacts of welfare reform on disabled people in Northern Ireland. So we welcome the U.N. Committee’s recommendation that the current time-limited package of mitigation measures addressing the adverse impacts of social security reform should be extended.”

"The failures identified by the U.N. Committee are reflective of serious concerns raised by the Equality Commission, with the Northern Ireland Executive and recently to the U.N. Committee."

Further information:

- Download the [U.N. Committee's Concluding Observations Report \(pdf\)](#)
- UNCRPD website section: www.equalityni.org/UNCRPD

Notes to editors:

1. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities report on the UK and devolved administrations which can be accessed here

The report made a number of recommendations for the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Assembly:

- **Collect information and adopt a strategic and measurable plan of action for improving the living conditions of all persons with disabilities, including in close cooperation with authorities in Northern Ireland.**
- **Take the necessary measures through the appropriate authorities to ensure that the Northern Ireland Executive reform on disability rights law reflects the recommendations made by Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in its 2012 Strengthening Protection for Disabled People report, to protect persons with disabilities in Northern Ireland from direct and indirect disability-based discrimination and discrimination through association.**
- **Address the high suicide rate among persons with disabilities, especially persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities.**
- **Ensure sufficient budget allocation for local authorities to accomplish their responsibilities regarding assistance for persons with disabilities, and extend support packages to mitigate negative impacts of the social security reform in Northern Ireland.**

2. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission are jointly designated as the Independent Mechanism for

Northern Ireland (IMNI) with a role to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the Convention by the Northern Ireland Government. [Watch a short video](#) on this joint work.

3. In August 2017 the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission made a number of recommendations to the UN Committee on what improvements needed to be made for disabled people in Northern Ireland. They presented their findings to the UN Committee examination in Geneva. They also contributed to the [Disability Rights in the UK report](#) (*pdf*) which was been produced by the United Kingdom Independent Mechanism (UKIM).

4. IMNI assisted the CRPD Committee in carrying out the Northern Ireland leg of an inquiry, under the optional protocol of the Convention, into the impact of employment, social security and welfare policies on disabled people in the UK during 2015. Download the [full report here](#) (*pdf*)