



3 December 2022

Call for action on International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Today, on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the Independent Mechanism for Northern Ireland Forum, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland have called for action to tackle barriers faced by many disabled people in Northern Ireland and to improve the lives of every disabled person living in Northern Ireland.

Michael Lorimer, Chairperson IMNI Forum, said:

“We need to see action by Government to tackle barriers that still prevent disabled people accessing and enjoying the range of human rights and equality protections that we are entitled to under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

“In its last report on the UK, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities raised concerns around the failure of the UK Government and NI Executive to address the need for inclusion and improving the living conditions of disabled people. It recommended that there should also be recognition and implementation of the right to live independently.

“Disabled people in Northern Ireland need our voices to be clearly heard. We are actively involved and committed to ensuring progress is made, but we need real action by Government. We need an effective, robust disability strategy which follows an equality and human rights-based approach and we need to strengthen our disability discrimination legislation so that the lives of all disabled people are improved across Northern Ireland”, concluded Mr Lorimer.

Alyson Kilpatrick, Chief Commissioner, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and Geraldine McGahey, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, also called for action:

“There is a real risk that realising the rights of disabled people in Northern Ireland, will not happen here, especially if they themselves are not involved in working on improving access to rights.

“The continued failure to adequately implement recommendations and address the wider concerns of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities must be recognised. This failure is particularly stark in the context of a cost-of-living crisis and the ongoing impact of Covid 19. We believe, as a result, disabled people’s right to equality has been further diminished. They have not been able to realise the rights set out in the Convention. In the absence of the NI Executive, we fear that access to rights will become increasingly difficult.

“It is incumbent on all of us to unite with the purpose of advancing the inclusion and participation of every disabled person in Northern Ireland to ensure they have access to the full range of rights contained in the Convention. Not only will this improve human rights for disabled people, it will improve society as a whole, as we benefit from the enhanced participation of all of our disabled friends and colleagues.”

Notes to editors:

- The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and Equality Commission for NI have a joint role as the [Independent Mechanism for NI](#), which involves promoting, protecting and monitoring the implementation of the UNCRPD in Northern Ireland.
- In 2021 The NI Human Rights Commission and Equality Commission for NI set up a [Disability Forum](#) to provide a dedicated space to ensure disabled people and their representative organisations. It has around 15 members from across the disability sector in Northern Ireland.
- The annual observance of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December was proclaimed in 1992 by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 47/3.
- The [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) is an international treaty highlighting that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- The UK adopted the UNCRPD in 2006 and ratified it in 2009, meaning it agreed to be bound by the rights and to protect and promote the human rights of disabled people.
- The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities last examined the UK in 2017. [Read its report and recommendations](#)
- Disability Action, on behalf the Equality Commission for NI, produced a research report: [‘Progress Towards the Implementation of the UNCRPD in Northern Ireland’](#) (*pdf*)

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