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UN Committee publishes report on follow-up to 2016 Inquiry

A The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has published a report on its follow-up to its 2016 UK inquiry.

The report examines what action the UK Government and NI Executive have taken, to ensure that people with a disability can enjoy the rights to independent living, employment and an adequate standard of living since the 2016 inquiry was carried out.

In its report the Committee has expressed concern that ‘there has been no significant progress for disabled people throughout the UK concerning their right to living independently and being included in the community’. It describes some reforms and policies that had been undertaken to provide financial support, accessible housing, and transport, as inadequate considering the cost-of-living crisis.

In relation to the Work Capability Assessment, the Committee has concluded that it is ‘the evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that this process is not trauma informed, not sufficiently linked to other services and support, and not suitable to assist people to be job ready’.

The Committee acknowledges that progress in Northern Ireland has been delayed due the suspension of the Executive and highlights the budgetary decisions made during the period of suspension of the devolved institutions which have negatively impacted disabled people have yet to be reversed or redressed.

The report refers to Northern Ireland being hit especially hard by the loss of EU funds. The European Social Fund was replaced by UK Shared Prosperity Fund which does not provide the same standard of support to disabled people accessing employment in Northern Ireland, it offers £20million less in funding and will end in March 2025.

In a joint response to the report, in their role as the Independent Mechanism for NI (IMNI), Geraldine McGahey, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and Alyson Kilpatrick, Chief Commissioner, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission said:

“We welcome the publication of the report, but unfortunately, we are not surprised by its content, which reports ‘no significant progress has been made by the State Party concerning the situation of persons with disabilities addressed in the inquiry proceedings’ and ‘signs of regression in the standards and principles of the Convention’. No doubt many will find this both shocking and concerning.

“We have continually raised our serious concerns about the lack of progress in addressing and implementing the UN Committee’s recommendations and the very real impact this has on disabled people’s lives in Northern Ireland. We need action and leadership to address the issues highlighted in this report.

“It is imperative that the Department for Communities and the NI Executive urgently take steps to finalise, in conjunction with the Disability Strategy Co-Design Group and other stakeholders, a Disability Strategy for Northern Ireland. This will ensure that disabled people and their representatives have their voices heard and we can move forward with policy and initiatives to fully realise their rights and equality entitlements as set out in the UNCRPD,” concluded the Commissioners.

The UK Government and NI Executive have obligations through the UNCRPD, as well as Windsor Framework Article 2 to uphold rights and equality protections for persons with disabilities.

Notes to Editors:

- The report is available on the [United Nations Human Rights website](#)
- 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.
- 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 Independent Mechanism for NI contributed to the [UKIM report \(pdf\)](#) on progress since the 2016 Inquiry into the impacts of welfare reforms on the rights of disabled people.
- You can read the 2016 Inquiry report: [‘Inquiry concerning the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland carried out by the Committee under article 6 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention : Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities : report of the Committee’](#)