



IMNI Joint Committee Meeting

Note of the Meeting – 25 November 2021 – via tele-conference

Present: June Best (CJB) (ECNI) – (ECNI Commissioner)
Stephen Mathews (SM) (ECNI Commissioner)
Stephen White (SW) (NIHRC Commissioner)
Helen Henderson (HH) (NIHRC Commissioner)

In attendance: Evelyn Collins (EC) (ECNI)
Darren McKinstry (DM) (ECNI)
Paul Noonan (PN) (ECNI)
Brian Drury (BD) (ECNI)
Julia Buchanan (JB) (NIHRC)

Apologies: David Russell (NIHRC), Rhyannon Blythe (NIHRC); Sarah Simms (NIHRC)

Stephen Mathews chaired the meeting.

1.0 Welcome/Introductions

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2.0 Minutes of the previous meeting

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

3.0 Matters Arising

3.1 Commissioner Best raised a point about paragraph 3.2 of the minutes relating to the Pet passport scheme and advised she was no longer optimistic that the issue will be resolved in the near future. She noted that the transition period had been extended indefinitely and that Northern Ireland residents can use the EU pet passport scheme for entry into the Republic of Ireland and beyond.

3.2 The Chair invited IMNI officers to advise on developments regarding matters arising:

MATTER ARISING: Colin Caughey presentation: NIHRC to seek to arrange presentation for autumn if possible / appropriate.

3.3 Colin Caughey had presented (earlier the same day) to members of the Joint Committee and the IMNI Disability Forum on his ongoing PhD research concerning the UNCRPD (relationship between National Human Rights Institutions and civil society, with a specific focus on engagement with Disabled Persons Organisations).

3.4 **ACTION:** The Committee recorded their appreciation to Colin and asked that a letter of thanks to be sent to him (NIHRC).

MATTER ARISING: PIP: NIHRC to continue to seek copy of information presented, and consider potential to follow-up with Minister directly.

- 3.5 NIHRC had received a copy of the Second Independent Review of the Personal Independence Payment Assessment Process from DfC. DfC had advised that there is a risk that the presentation previously delivered has been superseded by events. As members of the DfC Disability Strategy Co-design Group, IMNI officers plan to attend an upcoming meeting between the Group and representatives of Capita regarding its operation of the PIP assessment process.

MATTER ARISING: Independent Living Fund Working Group: ECNI to seek update from Co-Chair on timeline for recommendations.

Following correspondence from ECNI, the Department for Health had advised that consideration is being given to how best funding might be found for a potentially re-opened Fund, given the tight 2021/22 budget (remodelled figures were being prepared by officials as part of advice being finalised for the Minister of Health) and that an update would be forwarded in the near future.

MATTER ARISING: IMNI Joint Committee Agenda: ECNI to include an 'IMNI Forum update' as standing agenda item.

- 3.6 Minutes of the first two Forum meetings had been circulated with the Joint Committee meeting papers. Details about the third meeting held last week were included in the engagement paper.

3.0 Co-ordination and Implementation Paper

- 3.1 IMNI Officers provided a summary of key points from the paper.

UNCRPD List of Issues reporting

- 3.2 The UK Independent Mechanism met (25 October) to agree a structure and timeline for drafting a List of Issues submission (limit of 15,000 words).

- 3.3 Date of submission is June 2022 ahead of consideration of a List of Issues by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in August 2022.
- 3.4 With regards to drafting relative to the UNCRPD articles, IMNI officers had agreed that as a general rule NIHRC would draft the text for the civil and political rights while ECNI would draft those concerning social, economic and cultural rights.
- 3.5 IMNI staff will commence work later this month on drafting the Northern Ireland contribution to the UKIM report with a view to completion by the end of January.
- 3.6 IMNI are planning a number of engagement sessions with stakeholders in January/February as part of the process to develop UNCRPD list of issues submission. It is anticipated that the report should be submitted to Commissioners for sign off in late March 2022.

Disability Strategy

- 3.7 Over the reporting period, a number of meetings of the DfC's Disability Strategy Co-Design Group, facilitated by EY, were held to agree proposed high level outcomes for the strategy and identify actions against these.
- 3.8 Further meetings of the Co-Design Group were held with representatives of an inter-departmental working group of officials to discuss what they believed to be achievable within the timeframes and noting constraints and challenges with regard to achieving commitments.
- 3.9 The frustrations experienced by the DPO sector in relation to the ongoing process to develop a disability strategy for Northern Ireland were highlighted.
- 3.10 The Joint Committee discussed this matter and considered possible actions and also the most appropriate way to support the DPOs in raising their concerns.

3.11 **ACTION:** It was requested that it be put on record that IMNI staff had prepared a very comprehensive report on developments and thanks relayed to IMNI staff for their support in co-design group meetings. (ECNI, NIHRC)

4.0 Policy, Advice and Research Paper

4.1 IMNI officers drew attention to some key points from the Policy, Advice and Research update paper.

4.2 It was highlighted that NIHRC had submitted responses to the following consultations:

- the Northern Ireland Executive draft COVID Recovery Plan;
- Department of Health policy proposals for a duty of candour and being open.

4.3 Disability related legal enquires received by NIHRC predominantly related to Covid-19 guidelines, particularly the rules around mask-wearing and eligible exemptions.

4.4 ECNI had submitted responses to the following consultations:

- the Department of Health Regional Policy on the Use of Restrictive Practices in Health and Social Care Settings and Regional Operational Procedure for the Use of Seclusion; and
- Department of Work and Pensions Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper.

5.0 Involvement and Engagement Activities Paper

5.1 IMNI officers pointed to some key updates from the Involvement and Engagement Activities paper.

- 5.2 An overview was provided of the work of the IMNI Disability Forum. The Forum has now met three times with the most recent meeting being held last week. This meeting included a presentation from Les Allamby, the recently appointed independent Chair of the DfC's Welfare Mitigations Panel. The Panel is currently seeking engagement with the disability sector on the review of welfare reform mitigations.
- 5.3 PN advised that two continuing professional development events are scheduled in December for Forum members:
- Tuesday 7 December (2.30pm), 'Equality and Human Rights for Disabled People after Brexit' (part of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Festival);
 - Monday 13 December (2.30pm): Presentation and discussion on 'UNCRPD Monitoring & Reporting'.
- 5.4 Other aspects of ECNI's engagement work were briefly highlighted including: UNCRPD awareness videos now available online; the sponsorship of a panel discussion on creating more and better jobs for people with disabilities, as part of the Feile Festival (August).
- 5.5 An overview of work by NIHRC was provided including planning for IMNI Forum continuous development events in December and engagement with the Centre for Independent Living NI and IMTAC around the Commission's strategic planning process.
- 5.6 Positive press coverage and outrage arising from the recent disability harassment case supported by the Commission was noted.
- 5.7 In discussion, the lack of acknowledgement in the NI Executive's Covid Recovery plan of the impact of the pandemic on disabled people was noted. It was reported that DPOs were considering publishing an open letter to the NI Executive on the matter.
- 5.8 IMNI Officers were thanked for the work undertaken.

6.0 AOB

- 6.1 IMNI officers had met recently with officers from IHREC and hoped to agree some collaborative work on disability rights issues in the New Year.
- 6.2 Date of next meeting: Notification to follow.

7.0 Summary of Actions

Colin Caughey presentation

- **ACTION:** The Committee recorded their appreciation to Colin and asked that a letter of thanks to be sent to him (NIHRC).

Disability Strategy

- **ACTION:** It was requested that it be put on record that IMNI staff had prepared a very comprehensive report on developments and thanks relayed to IMNI staff for their support in co-design group meetings. (ECNI, NIHRC)