



IMNI Disability Stakeholder Forum – Minutes of Sixth Meeting 30 Nov 2022

30 November 2022: 2pm in Equality House (and via tele-conference)

Present: Chair: Michael Lorimer (ML) - Omnibus Partnership
Naomi Fujitani (MF) - British Deaf Association*
Ernest Purvis (EP) - Children in NI
Ronnie Patterson (RP) – Mencap
Tony O'Reilly (TOR) – NWFPD*
Nuala Toman (NT) - Disability Action
Hannah McKee (HM) – RNIB*

In attendance: IMNI Commissioners:
Helen Henderson (HH) – NIHRC*
Steven White (SW) NIHRC
NIHRC Officers:
Colin Caughey (CC)
Lauren Shaw (LS)
Clare McCann (CM)
ECNI Officers:
Darren McKinstry (DM)
Paul Noonan (BD)
Brian Drury (BD)
BSL Interpreters:
Dee Savage (DS)*
Judith Boyd (KG)*

Apologies: Alison Lockhart (AL) - IMTAC
Bronagh Byrne (BB) – Independent
Eithne Gilligan (EG) - Age NI

*Attended via MS-Teams

1 Welcome / Matters Arising

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed participants to the sixth meeting of the IMNI Disability Forum, acknowledged apologies and noted the following developments in relation to Forum Membership:
- Ronnie Patterson was returning to the Forum to represent Mencap now that meetings have moved to a hybrid format.
 - Naomi Fujitani was in attendance to represent BDA.
 - Ernest Purvis is attending as the new representative for Children in NI.
- 1.2 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

2 UNCRPD Committee / Independent Monitoring Update

Update on UK State Party Examination

- 2.1 The UNCRPD Committee had confirmed that the scheduled UK State party examination would be delayed, potentially by a number of years, due to a significant backlog of examination, including arising from the COVID crisis.

Update on 2016 UK State Party Inquiry

- 2.2 The UNCRPD Committee have confirmed that in lieu of a full examination, the Committee would be undertaking a review in relation to progress by the UK Government to address recommendations made in their 2016 State Party Inquiry.
- 2.3 The date for this review is scheduled to be the 29th session of the Committee from 14th August 2023. The Committee have indicated that the deadline for written submissions will be the 31st July. The procedure for input is not yet finalised.
- 2.4 The Forum discussed the timeline for this submission, the key issues that are involved and how to best co-ordinate responses. Member organisations noted their intention to meet to consider how

best to engage. IMNI were giving consideration to engagement with stakeholders on key issues in c. February/March and potentially again ahead of the July 31 submission date (see also update later on continuous development).

- 2.5 **Actions:** Member Organisations to consider if / how they might seek to input into the UN Inquiry, and the merits of any coordination between Forum member organisations, IMNI, and / or wider organisations.

Members / IMNI to also consider parallel engagement with MLAs / Officials to highlight the issues being raised by the UN Committee, and how matters could be progressed in NI.

3 Advancing the CRPD in Northern Ireland

- 3.1 The IMNI Forum discussed work undertaken to support and challenge Government to give effect to CRPD obligations.

DfC: Disability Strategy

- 3.2 Meetings and progression of work by the DfC Co-design Group has been paused until a new NI Assembly and Executive is in place. The importance of law reform was noted and it was suggested that the ECNI Corporate Plan should be amended to include an explicit call for disability law reform. In response it was noted that while the Corporate Plan did not separately list disability law reform it remained one of a number of areas the Commission was highlighting as part of its engagement with the Disability Strategy and wider work, and the overarching UNCRPD work of IMNI. ECNI noted that it would be important to secure commitment to disability law reform in the Disability Strategy and any subsequent PfGs, so that related work would be resourced and delivered by Government.
- 3.3 **Action:** ToR requested that ECNI commit to review their Corporate Plan to include specific reference to the urgent for the NI Executive to deliver law reform in the area of disability discrimination to address widening gaps and shortfalls compared to the rest of the UK.
- 3.4 Representatives of IMNI have met with DFC Officials over the reporting period. Members noted the risk that the Disability Strategy might move straight to consultation without any opportunity

for the DfC Co-design group to have sight of, or shape, pre-consultation Departmental drafts

DoH: Consultation - Muckamore Abbey Hospital

- 3.5 It was noted that the Department of Health has opened a consultation on the future role of Muckamore Abbey Hospital (MAH), and is proposing its closure as a regional specialist Learning Disability hospital. It is anticipated that NIHRC and ECNI will both submit responses.
- 3.6 Members welcomed the update and indicated their intention to respond. It was noted that it was often difficult for impacted individuals to participate in public inquiries if they wish to maintain their privacy and dignity.
- 3.7 The consultation sets out that an Oversight Board will develop specific resettlement plans for each remaining patient in MAH and that Trusts will engage with families and carers as these plans are progressed. However, it is not clear what arrangements are in place to ensure that the resettlement plans meet the standards set out in Article 19 (Independent Living) of the UNCPRD and the associated General Comment No.5
- 3.8 Forum members agreed that while they welcomed the closure of Muckamore Abbey Hospital there were significant concerns about the lack of detail on what will happen after the closure and in particular what steps will be taken to ensure that former residents are fully supported to live in the community.
- 3.9 Disability Action advised of their work in this area and noted potential merits of engagement with PPS regarding arrangements in place for bespoke advocacy and best practice regarding communication with survivors of abuse at MAH; and with PSNI regarding their processes for effectively dealing with allegations of abuse
- 3.10 **Action:** Members indicated their intention to share with Forum members the main points of proposed submissions to the Department of Health, to assist in delivering a consistent message to DoH. NIHRC noted they would follow up with RP regarding his input / experiences.

Key Developments Update

- 3.11 Attendees from ECNI, NIHRC and the Forum provided updates on ongoing work and up and coming events.
- 3.12 IMNI had engaged with stakeholders in August regarding the then planned CRPD examination, and regarding the Harkin Summit.
- 3.13 ECNI provided updates on the DfC Anti-Poverty Co-Design Group; DMU report on the 'Impact of Brexit on s75 Equality groups in Northern Ireland – EU Funding'; Joint ECNI/NIHRC online event on 'Equality and Human Rights for Disabled People after Brexit'; BBC Radio Ulster Interview on disability rights to coincide with Harkin Disability Employment Summit and other media work, including use of social media.
- 3.14 NIHRC provided updates on the Annual Report of the NIHRC and ECNI on the implementation of Protocol Article 2 2021-2022; response to DoH consultation on Reform of Adult Social Care; response to DoJ consultation on live links; Briefing for Joint Committee on Human Rights on the NI Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill; Research on Brexit, Health and its potential impact on Article 2 of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol; submission to the UN Committees on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- 3.15 IMNI and Forum members shared information on a range of plans to publicise International day of persons with disabilities. Forum members also highlighted the importance of addressing BREXIT related issues such as pet passports.
- 3.16 Members also shared that the Disabled Peoples' Parliament will not occur this year in the absence of a functioning Assembly, but instead stakeholders will meet MLAs in the Senate Room. It is intended that the focus will be on the UN Inquiry (Social Protection) and the importance of Disability law reform.
- 3.17 **Action:** IMNI to share details of Disability Action led online event scheduled for 3rd December.

4 Continuous Development

- 4.1 ECNI advised it was in the early stages of scoping an initiative to provide training to key disability stakeholders on engagement and campaigning techniques that might help maximise impact into the CRPD Social Protection Inquiry, and related local engagement, in 2023 and beyond.
- 4.2 IMNI Forum members welcomed the approach in principle, making a number of suggestions about focus and potential providers, and emphasised the importance of ensuring that any training would be fully accessible and fully involve people with disabilities in the delivery of the initiative.
- 4.3 Separately, it was suggested that wider members of IMNI Forum organisations could be given the opportunity to attend meetings in a shadow capacity so as to build capacity / experience.

Action: ECNI to consider views expressed and update on proposals when further developed.

5 Any Other Business

- 5.1 IMNI were thanked for continuing to convene the IMNI Disability Stakeholder Forum, and specifically for continuing to convene meetings on a hybrid basis – which widened access and facilitated attendance and participation.
- 5.2 A Forum member suggested that IMNI could develop a skeleton / indicative forward plan, that might guide the focus of the IMNI Forum across a number of meetings. It was noted that the focus at present and for the next number of months / meetings would be the CRPD Inquiry (Social Protection) and related local engagement.
- 5.3 The date for the next meeting is anticipated to be scheduled for February / March 2023, potentially aligned with the engagement training noted further above.

Actions: IMNI officers to confirm date of next meeting.
Attendees to provide any further feedback / views to improve delivery of hybrid meeting (approach, technology issues etc).