



IMNI Joint Committee Meeting

Minutes – Wednesday 3 July 2024

Via MS Teams (Equality Commission hosting)

In Attendance:

IMNI Commissioners:

Ellen Finlay – ECNI (Chair)
Sheena McKinney – ECNI
Helen Henderson – NIHRC

ECNI Officers:

Darren McKinstry
Paul Noonan
Brian Drury

NIHRC Officers:

Julia Buchanan
Colin Caughey
Claire McCann

Apologies:

Stephen White – NIHRC
Lauren Shaw - NIHRC

1 Welcome, Minutes & Matters Arising

- 1.1 Ellen Finlay (ECNI) Chaired. The Chair welcomed everyone, invited participants to introduce themselves.
- 1.2 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.
- 1.3 It was confirmed that any matters arising from the last meeting were covered within the standing agenda items.
- 1.4 Chair noted that Ms June Best MBE, former Equality Commissioner, was elected, in May, as the new Chair of the IMNI Disability Forum, replacing Mr Michael Lorimer whose term of office had ended. Ms Best represents the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee. Thanks to both the outgoing and incoming IMNI Forum Chair were recorded.

2 Matters for Discussion: IMNI Coordination / Monitoring Implementation of the UNCRPD

- 2.1 ECNI and NIHRC officers summarised key aspects of the discussion paper (See papers for information).
- 2.2 In summary, in March 2024, the United Kingdom Independent Mechanism¹ submitted additional information to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to inform its UK Inquiry follow-up review. Officers attended the additional Hearing session in March 2024 and at part of UKIM met with Committee Members, reiterating not only our key messages, but also highlighting the risks of measures introduced since the 2016 Inquiry and the need for progress in an NI Disability Strategy and related disability policy.
- 2.3 On the 22 March 2024, the UNCRPD Committee published its Report on follow-up to the inquiry concerning the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. IMNI Chief Commissioners issued a joint statement highlighting the CRPD Committee's findings, our serious concerns, and called for action by the Executive and DfC, including with regards to a NI Disability Strategy.
- 2.4 On the latter it was noted that there have been no meetings of the DfC Disability Strategy Co-Design Group of key stakeholders during

¹ The Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Scottish Human Rights Commission.

the reporting period, and no clarity or timelines for delivery of the four social strategies, including disability.

- 2.5 Commissioners noted their disappointment at the general lack of progress by Government.
- 2.6 The actions taken by IMNI to meet with Permanent Secretaries and senior officials of DfC, DE and DfI following the August 2023 CRPD Session were welcomed, as were actions to ask IMNI Disability Stakeholder Forum members to identify co-ordinated strategic actions that could be taken with NI Executive and Department(s) to secure action regarding the CRPD Inquiry Follow-up Conclusions, including in the context of calling for prompt action to deliver a new NI Disability Strategy. It was also welcomed that, alongside specific engagement, the IMNI Forum ToR provided for one open meeting / event per year to help maximise reach and engagement of the Forum.
- 2.7 It was agreed that IMNI need to continue convey a clear and robust message, and to secure the attention of Minister(s) and Department(s) on the need for urgent action on recommendations, and to convey concern that the draft Disability Strategy has not yet been shared with the Disability Strategy Co-Design Group. While an initial focus should be on writing to Ministers, consideration should be given to what escalation might be appropriate if no progress results (e.g. on the Disability Strategy). It was considered that next steps would be best considered following the UK General Election in July, given the potential for a change in UK Government. The potential for substantive change in UK Government disability policy was however not certain.
- 2.8 Commissioners briefly discussed IMNI engagement and the operation of the IMNI Forum. It was acknowledged that locally there could now be a shift of emphasis from developing submissions and facilitating engagement at the UN level, to more engagement locally to advance implementation of the UNCRPD Committee's UK Inquiry Follow-up recommendations.
- 2.9 Commissioners highlighted the importance of IMNI engaging as widely as possible (examples flagged were disabled veterans and police officers). Commissioners thanked Officers for their engagement efforts, noting feedback from IMNI Forum members. Commissioners also welcomed most recent efforts to encourage co-ordinated action by Forum members, and to seek to seed specific discussion points on IMNI Forum agenda.

2.10

ACTIONS:

- Commissioners agreed with the proposal that IMNI would write to the relevant Ministers. This should stress the importance of the prompt delivery of a NI Disability Strategy and an accompanying prioritised, resourced and timebound action plan, fully informed by Stakeholder engagement – including refinement by the co-design group.
- Follow-up actions / potential escalation to be considered includes engagement with related NI Assembly Committees (e.g. Communities and Public Accounts Committee)
- Officers should continue with efforts to encourage co-ordinated action by IMNI Disability Stakeholder Forum members to secure action regarding the CRPD Inquiry Follow-up Conclusions, including in the context of calling for prompt action to deliver a new NI Disability Strategy.
- NIHRC to make contact with Disabled Police Officer's Group to ensure they are aware of the work of IMNI, including our events and mailing lists

3 Matters for Information:

Summary of wider Disability related Work of each Commission

- 3.1 Commission noted the written updates provided regarding the policy; advice; research; communications; and wider engagement work of each organisation.
- 3.2 While it was accepted that in some areas it is difficult to separate out work undertaken under discrete ECNI/NIHRC roles, vs the IMNI remit, it was requested that IMNI-JC papers seek to make clearer the distinction between core IMNI work; and the wider *disability* work of each organisation.

Dates of Interest

- 3.3 Key events / dates for the Q3-Q4 period noted were:
- ECNI to give evidence to the Committee for Communities on proposals for disability law reform (26 September); and to the

Committee for The Executive Office on gaps in equality law (11 September);

- International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December). ECNI are planning a 25th Anniversary event ‘Improving disabled people’s lives in Northern Ireland’ to coincide with the Day. NIHRC is at an early stage of making plans to mark International Day of Persons with Disabilities in December, more information to follow.
- NIHRC will host its next NI Sport & Human Rights Forum meeting on Tuesday 10 September (10am – 12pm) on the theme of sport and inclusion. It is planned to have a speaker on disability.
- NIHRC and ECNI are jointly planning to issue a call for expression of interest on the interaction between the UN CRPD and Article 2 of the Windsor Framework over the coming weeks.

4 Any Other Business

- 4.1 With regards to the operation of IMNI-JC, Commissioners noted that it would be helpful if future discussion papers identified key proposed actions, so that Commissioners can better focus discussion on key strategic actions most relevant to the issues at hand.

5 Date of Next Meeting

- 5.1 Aligned to the agreed timetable, the next meeting will be in Q3 (mid-November). The meeting will be hosted by NIHRC and held online.
- 5.2 It was agreed that the next meeting be held on at **2pm on Tuesday 19 November 2024.**

ACTION: IMNI Commissioners to be sent MS Teams meeting invite confirming meeting date and time.

6 Summary of Actions

1. Commissioners agreed with the proposal that that IMNI would write to the relevant Ministers. This should stress the importance of the prompt delivery of a NI Disability Strategy and an accompanying prioritised, resourced and timebound action plan, fully informed by Stakeholder engagement – including refinement by the co-design group.
2. Follow-up actions / potential escalation to be considered includes engagement with related NI Assembly Committees (e.g. Communities and Public Accounts Committee)
3. Officers should continue with efforts to encourage co-ordinated action by IMNI Disability Stakeholder Forum members to secure action regarding the CRPD Inquiry Follow-up Conclusions, including in the context of calling for prompt action to deliver a new NI Disability Strategy.
4. NIHRC to make contact with Disabled Police Officer's Group to ensure they are aware of the work of IMNI, including our events and mailing lists