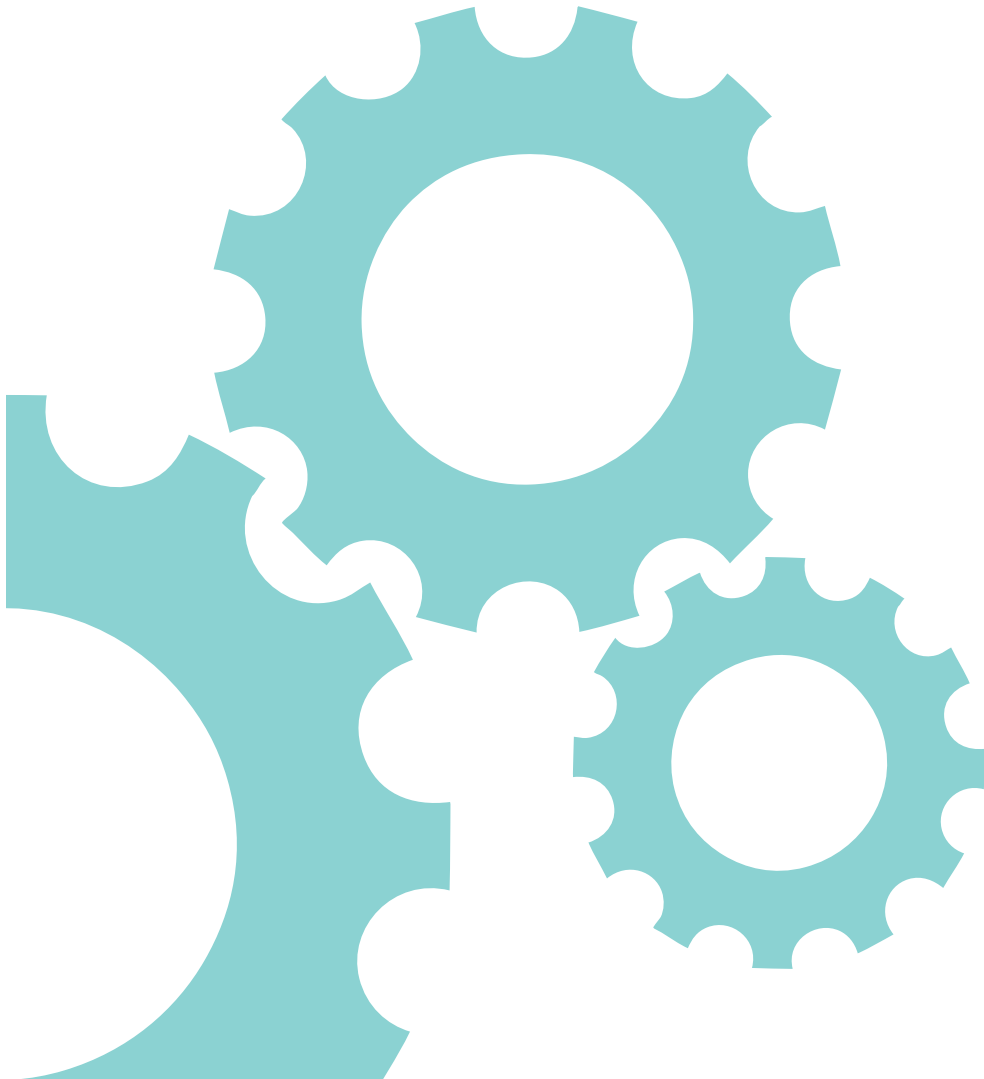


# Guide to using the CRPD to effect change



**CRPD**  
Independent Mechanism  
for Northern Ireland  
Promote | Protect | Monitor



## What is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Convention or CRPD for short) is an international agreement which reaffirms that people with disabilities have the same human rights as everyone else. The United Kingdom (UK) ratified the Convention on 8 June 2009. It agreed to promote and ensure the full realisation of all human rights for all disabled people, without discrimination of any kind. The Convention aims to ensure that disabled people enjoy the same human rights as everyone else and that they can participate fully in society by receiving the same opportunities as others.

### What does the Convention cover?

The Convention promotes and protects the human rights of disabled people in economic, social, political, legal and cultural life. This includes rights to accessibility, personal mobility, health, education, employment, rehabilitation, participation in political life, equality and non-discrimination.



## Who makes sure that the UK is implementing the Convention?

Under Article 33(2) of the Convention, government has decided that the four equality and human rights commissions will make up the UK's Independent Mechanism to promote, protect and monitor implementation of the Convention. Here, the Independent Mechanism is made up of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (the Independent Mechanism for Northern Ireland).

The Independent Mechanism for Northern Ireland is monitoring progress in implementing the Convention here and will report on that to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (**the UN Disability Committee**). As part of its monitoring work, the Independent Mechanism will engage with disabled people and their representative organisations to seek their views. Disabled people and their organisations also have a role in holding government to account. For further details, see our guide: *UNCPRD - The role of disabled people and their organisations*.

## How you can use the Convention

There are different ways for you to get involved in making the rights contained in the Convention real.

## Raising awareness among disabled people

Raising awareness of the Convention is very important. The more people know about the Convention and feel confident using it, the bigger the difference it will make.

Simple things you can do:

- Tell other disabled people in your family, your workplace or your community about this guide and encourage them to read it.
- If you have a website, add pages that tell people about the Convention – you can use text from this guide to help you. Provide links to the full text of the Convention and some of the useful contacts at the end of this guide.
- If you have a newsletter or write for someone else's, you could use this guide to write an article about the Convention. Ask your local newspaper or community newsletter if you can write an article or a letter about the Convention.
- If you are part of a group (trade union, disability or other voluntary organisation), suggest that your group produces a leaflet about the Convention.
- If you are part of a local access group or disability association or Centre for Independent Living, ask a disability rights group to send a speaker to your meeting to talk about the Convention with your members. Or do a talk yourself.



## Help raise awareness among bodies that deliver public services

If public bodies are aware of the Convention, they are more likely to understand how to respect the human rights of disabled people

- Ask public authorities (that means your council, local health Trust, schools and colleges, housing associations, day centres, care homes):
  - if staff have information about the Convention
  - if they have trained staff on the Convention
  - what plans they have to look at all their policies and practices to make sure they support the Convention

Remind them that doing so will help them comply with the Human Rights Act and disability discrimination legislation. Remind them that they could look at this as part of their duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006 (DDO) and that they should involve disabled people. Respectively, information about this is available from Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

- Get creative. You could make a short film, write and perform a song or a play, or create art about the rights in the Convention, highlighting the barriers that people face. This could help raise awareness among disabled people and get the message home to public bodies.

## How can I use the Convention to improve my life and the lives of other disabled people in Northern Ireland?

As well as raising awareness there are several ways that you can use the Convention to influence individual cases or to change services and policies – including the way that a public authority makes decisions, for example, about social care charges or public spending.

Write a letter, go to a meeting (Article 29 of the Convention says that you should be given a voice in public affairs and the DDO places a duty on public authorities to encourage participation by disabled people in public life), talk to the press, or you could put together a report and publish it. Whatever you do, make sure that you know what the Convention says and have evidence of how disabled people's human rights are affected.

### Influencing local services

Even though the Convention is not legally binding on public authorities, they have a duty to act in line with the Human Rights Act and equality legislation. The Convention can be used to interpret these laws. The Human Rights Act has been used by disabled people to challenge injustice both through legal cases and outside the courtroom in their negotiations with public services.



The Convention can be very powerful for individual advocacy as it sets clear benchmarks for the way that public authorities should treat you, especially where there are gaps in the Human Rights Act, for example, the right to health.

Finally, the Convention is an internationally agreed and accepted set of standards to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of disabled people. For these reasons, public authorities should pay full attention to the Convention.

### Some ways that you can use the Convention:

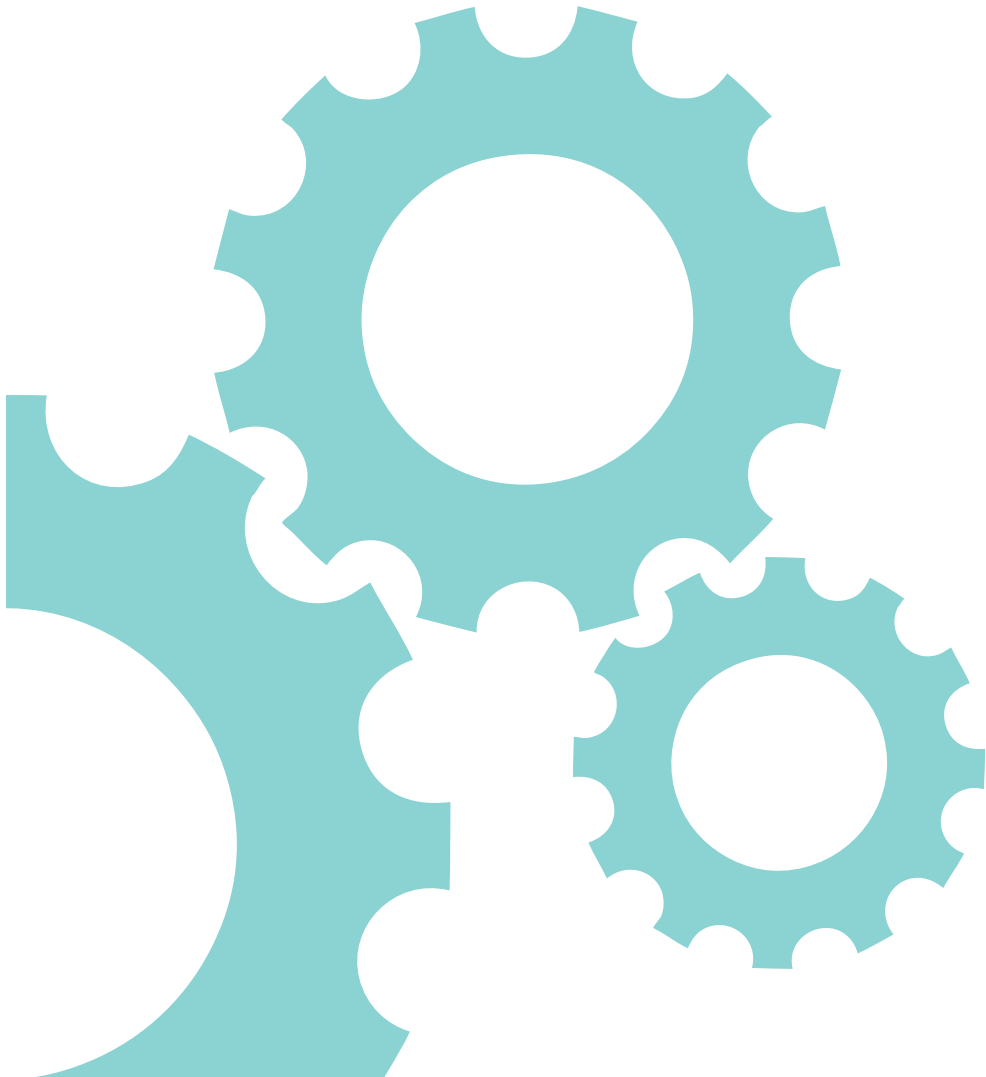
- If you are frustrated about local services, whether it is not having enough disabled parking spaces, staff attitudes or long waiting times for treatments to help with mental health conditions, you can use the Convention to promote positive changes. Work out which article or articles of the Convention are relevant. Set out how local services fall short of the standards promised in the Convention and what practical changes public bodies could make to resolve the problem.
- Ask the officer or elected member responsible for equality at your local council or health Trust to come and talk to your local group about what they are doing to implement the Human Rights Act, and how they use the Convention.
- Write or talk to your MP or MLA – they are there to represent you.

- Remember it is not acceptable – under the Convention – for countries to cut back on essential support for disabled people. If you are facing the prospect of cuts to local services, don't forget to make that point strongly.
- You can ask your local Council to discuss and endorse the Convention – write to the Chief Executive's department.

### Influencing local or national policy

Whether you are an individual or a small or large disability organisation, you can use the Convention to influence local or national policy. However, you could try to join up with others – because the more there are of you, the stronger your voice will be:

- If you are responding to a government consultation, use the relevant parts of the Convention to back up your points.
- If you are campaigning for a change in the law to get a better deal for disabled people, check what the Convention has to say about the issue. Talk about what the Convention says in your briefings for elected representatives and use it to strengthen your argument for change.
- Draw attention to the implications of draft legislation for disabled people's Convention rights when you are writing a submission to a government body, or an Assembly or Parliamentary committee.



## Where can I get more information on the Convention?

The Convention text and a short guide to the Convention are available in booklets produced by the Independent Mechanism for Northern Ireland. The text is also available in plain language, Braille and audio, from these websites:

[www.equalityni.org/uncrpd](http://www.equalityni.org/uncrpd)

[www.nihrc.org](http://www.nihrc.org)

For more information on the Convention, you can visit UN Enable, the UN website dedicated to CRPD:


<http://www.un.org/disabilities>.

For useful CRPD publications, visit the website of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/CRPDIndex.aspx>.

You can also access information on disability and the Convention from the OFMdFM website:

<http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/>



For further information about the work of the Independent Mechanism for Northern Ireland, please contact the ECNI or the NIHRC or e-mail: [CRPDEnquiries@equalityni.org](mailto:CRPDEnquiries@equalityni.org)

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