

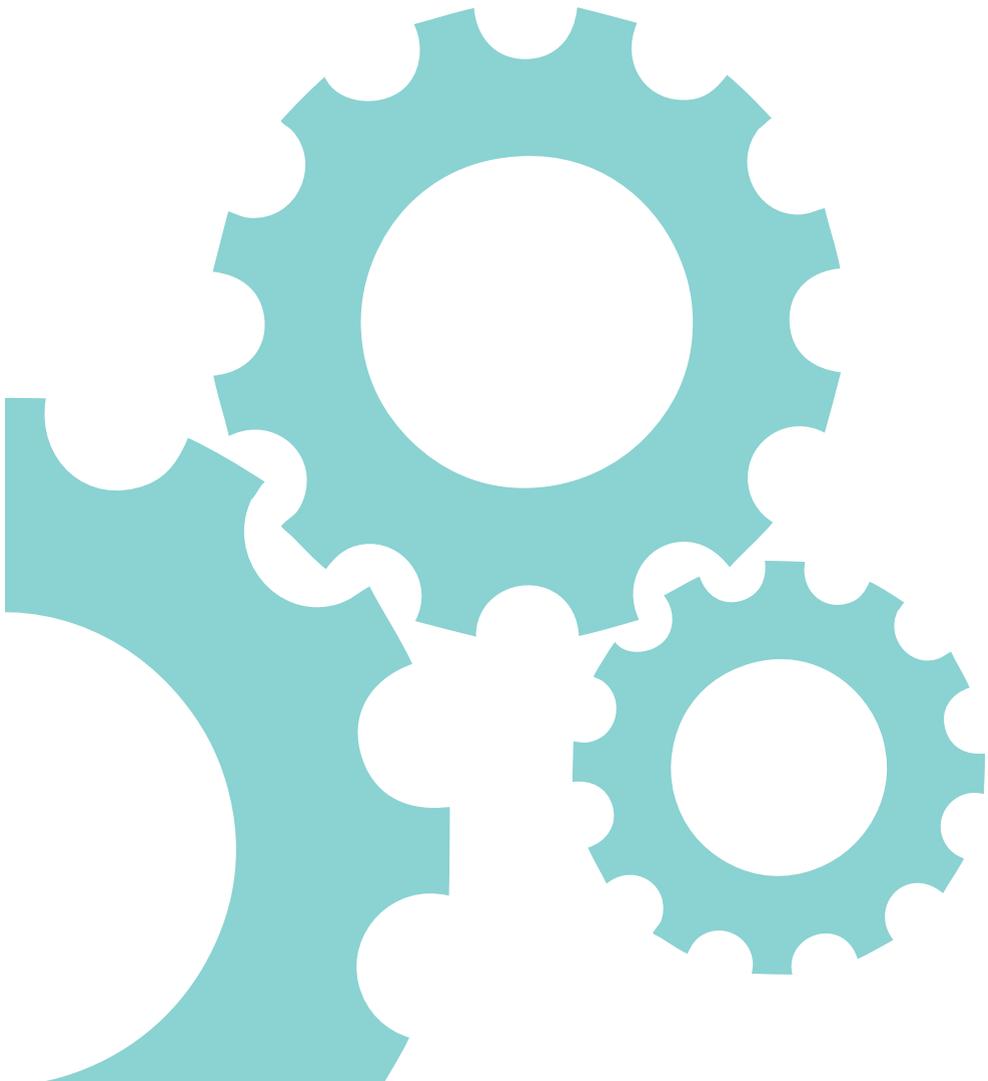
Guide to Getting Involved in the Monitoring and Reporting Process



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, habilitation and 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 can I get involved in monitoring and reporting?

The Convention clearly states that disabled people and their organisations should be involved and participate fully in the monitoring process (Article 33.3).

Background information: monitoring and reporting

The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN Disability Committee) is a committee of 18 experts set up to monitor what governments are doing to implement the Convention. The UN Disability Committee has a powerful role in holding governments to account. Although it cannot force a government to put in place its recommendations, governments do not want to lose their good reputation, and will often follow up the recommendations. Countries know their track record on disabled people's human rights will be held up for international scrutiny and publicity at regular intervals and this should help them focus on delivering real action.

In July 2011, and every four years afterwards, the UK must report to the UN Disability Committee. The Independent Mechanism and voluntary organisations can submit independent reports. These are also called 'shadow' or 'parallel' reports.

The Convention required government to designate an independent mechanism to monitor and report on its implementation. The UN Disability Committee takes a close look at government reports alongside parallel reports. It decides whether governments are meeting their obligations under the Convention. For this, they rely heavily on the parallel reports.



After looking at all the evidence and questioning the government's representatives, the Committee will issue its 'Concluding Observations'. These set out specific recommendations for government action.

Parallel reports are an important tool which disabled people can use to flag up where progress has been made or where disabled people's human rights are not being realised. Here is how the reporting process works and how you can get involved, both in the government report and in the independent mechanism parallel report - and how you can write one yourself.

When the government writes its first report to the UN Disability Committee it must explain:

- whether - and to what extent - disabled people actually enjoy each right in the Convention in practice (with statistics broken down according to sex, age, type of impairment, ethnic origin and other categories)
- what policies, strategies and laws they have put in place to ensure each Convention right becomes a reality. It should say what resources have been identified to support this and what progress has been made
- whether it has adopted comprehensive disability anti-discrimination legislation
- what systems are in place to monitor progress towards ensuring each Convention right becomes a reality for disabled people, including details of how progress will be measured

- how each Convention right is protected in law in the UK and details of any laws which exclude or single out disabled people for worse treatment
- how disabled people can get justice if their Convention rights have been violated, and
- whether there are any barriers beyond their control which are making it difficult to make the Convention rights a reality, including details of what steps are being taken to overcome them.

You have the right to be involved in monitoring

Governments must involve disabled people and their organisations in monitoring how well the Convention is being implemented. It should also involve disabled people in putting together their official reports to the UN Disability Committee.

Being involved in something means a lot more than just being 'consulted' about it. It means being empowered to shape how things are done from the start and working with government as an equal partner. Involvement needs to be:

- planned in advance
- co-ordinated
- fully accessible and inclusive
- diverse; lots of different disabled people should be able to engage in a range of different ways



- meaningful; people need to be clear what is expected of them and what the outcomes will be and to feel their expertise has been properly recognised, and
- influential; it should be clear how disabled people's views and priorities have shaped future plans.

Disabled people's input and involvement will be essential. Without it, it just will not be possible to properly measure or assess progress or to develop better policies, laws and plans.

The Office of the First and the deputy First Minister (OFMdFM) is co-ordinating the information needed to report compliance and progress on the Convention by the Northern Ireland government (statistics and other types of information). This will be added to the assessment of the progress made by in the UK report. So, there will be one UK report covering the work of the UK and devolved governments.

What you can do as an individual

- Look at the rights contained in the Convention. Think about what each of the rights means for you and which are most important to you. Do you have those opportunities in your own life? What would help you enjoy the rights in practice? For example, if you are not working but want to, think about: what things are proving helpful to you? What things are getting in your way? If you could change something, what would it be?

- Write down or record your thoughts and then share them. You could send them to OFMdFM, the Independent Mechanism for Northern Ireland, or a disability organisation. This will help them work out what is going well and what more needs to be done. They may use your evidence in their report. Get in touch using the contact details at the end of this factsheet.

As a group, you can:

- Gather evidence from your members about their experiences. Pick out the rights you think will be most relevant to them and ask them to tell you about any barriers they face and what action would help them enjoy those rights in practice.
- Use that evidence to produce a parallel report on the Convention for the UN Disability Committee, or organise the evidence (arrange it according to the relevant articles) and send it to OFMdFM, the Independent Mechanism for Northern Ireland, or a disability organisation. They may use the evidence for their reports.
- Ask to see your MP or MLA to discuss your findings. They could pick up some of the issues and start putting pressure on government to act. If you are not sure how, then a national disability organisation may be able to help you.



Why get involved in producing a parallel report?

Quite simply, this is one of the most effective ways to use the Convention to help bring about positive change for disabled people.

Even when governments are being self-critical, their reports can sometimes paint a rosy picture about people's rights – a picture that does not always reflect the reality on the ground. This is why UN monitoring committees encourage voluntary groups to provide them with reports of their own. They use this information to assess what progress is really being made and decide what the gaps and problems are and where further action is needed. The parallel reports also the Committee to decide what questions to put to each government. Sometimes they adopt voluntary groups' recommendations for change in their 'Concluding Observations'.

Writing the report also helps the voluntary organisations to collect evidence and to identify what needs to be done to improve disabled people's rights.

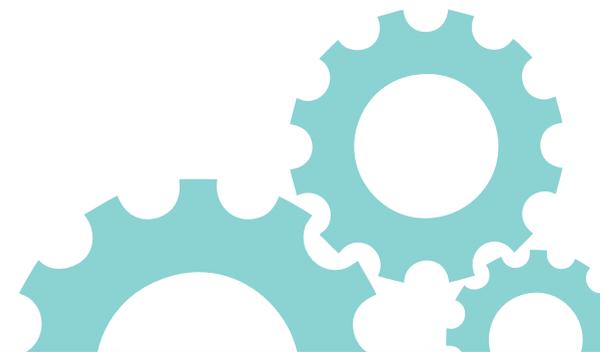
The UN Disability Committee will make recommendations ('Concluding Observations') to tell the government what steps it should take to comply with the Convention. You can use these recommendations to press the government into action. Also, when the government submits its next report, the UN Disability Committee will be expecting detailed information about action that has been taken. You can give your own views about that in another parallel report.

How do we write a parallel report?

The following is a brief guide to writing a parallel report. You can find full guidelines on the website of the International Disability Alliance (www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/). Use this guide if you are a group of disabled people feeding into another, bigger group's parallel report, or a voluntary organisation representing disabled people that has consultative status with the UN. You can also use it if you want to write an informal report based on the Convention to use in your campaigning work. Simply change the titles as you need to.

The UN Disability Committee says it wants to receive reports from disabled people and their organisations. However, it is a good idea to work together so that the UN Disability Committee does not get a large number of reports to read – many other countries also have to report. Reports that represent the views and perspectives of lots of people may also be more likely to be read by the UN Disability Committee and have more impact.

You could write a report without having seen the government's or write it as a response to the government report. Either is useful.





How to go about it

Step 1: Check the process, timetables and arrangements on the website of the UN Disability Committee. Note that the first UK report has to be sent in to the Committee by July 2011, but it will not be examined until much later, possibly October 2012. If you are sending your report to the UN, it will not be needed until a few months before the examination. If you are writing a report for local use, for example for a scrutiny committee in a public authority, then check when they meet and when you need to send in your report in time for them to discuss it at the meeting.

Step 2: Think about who you could work with to write the report. Whether you are a big organisation or a small self-advocacy group, it would be a good idea to contact other groups and ask if they would like to work with you.

Step 3: Work out what your report will cover and how you will structure it.

- Think about which rights in the Convention are most relevant and important to you and focus on those. Make sure you focus on the rights that disabled people in your group feel are most important to them.
- Look at the key issues for disabled people and the extent to which people are currently able to enjoy their Convention rights. You must use real evidence. Evidence can be from surveys, research reports, official statistics or newspaper articles. You could also include 'case studies' - real examples of how the problem affects disabled people.

- Make clear what the barriers are and how they relate to the rights in the Convention.
- If there are good things government or another public authority are doing in a particular area, then say so. If nothing has been done, then also report this.
- Make specific recommendations for change. If you want action on disability hate crime, do not just say that the government should do more to tackle disability hate crime. Think about what might be done by different bodies like the Department of Justice, the Public Prosecution Service, the police, public authorities, local councils or housing associations.
- Be clear which part of government should be making these changes. Say how you want to be involved in making the changes happen.
- If there is some information or evidence that is too long to include in the main part of your report, but you think will be useful for the UN Disability Committee to read, put it in an appendix at the end.

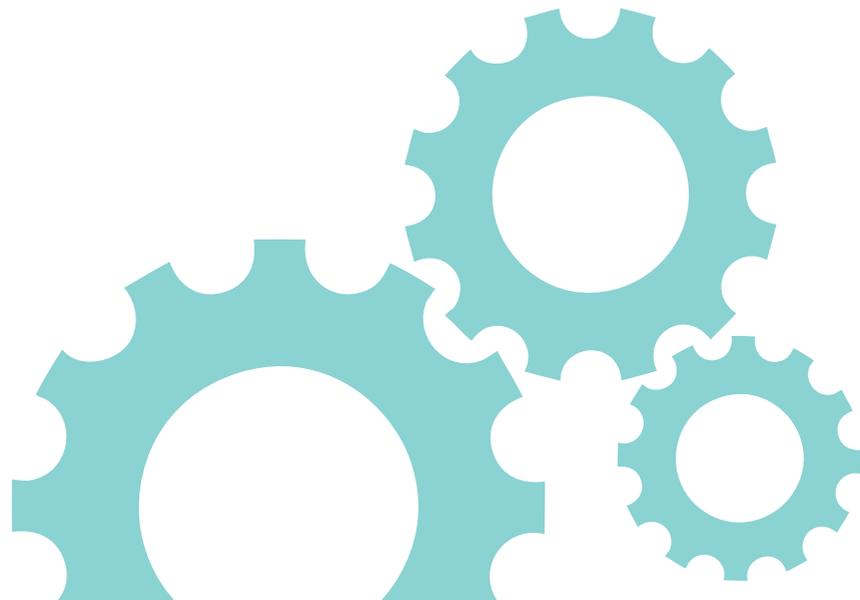
Step 4: Now write your report! Follow clear print guidelines so that it is accessible to most people. Remember to use plain English and short sentences. Do not use jargon or acronyms that Committee members may not be familiar with. Many Committee members do not have English as their first language and are from other cultures, so they do not necessarily know how the Northern Ireland or UK government works. Use numbered paragraphs. Keep it short.



Step 5: Get some people you trust to read through the report and give you feedback so you can improve it. Think about whether there are groups which might want to support it and, if appropriate, get their permission to add their logo. Also arrange for the report to be made available in a range of accessible formats.

Step 6: Publish the report and send it to the relevant parties.

Step 7: Follow up. If you are sending your report to a local committee, try to get involved in the meeting. Try to sit in on the committee meeting by checking with the committee's secretariat. It is useful to meet members of the committee in advance so, if possible, ask to meet them for a brief discussion. Place a copy of your report on your website, issue a press release and distribute copies to your members.



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

www.nihrc.org

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

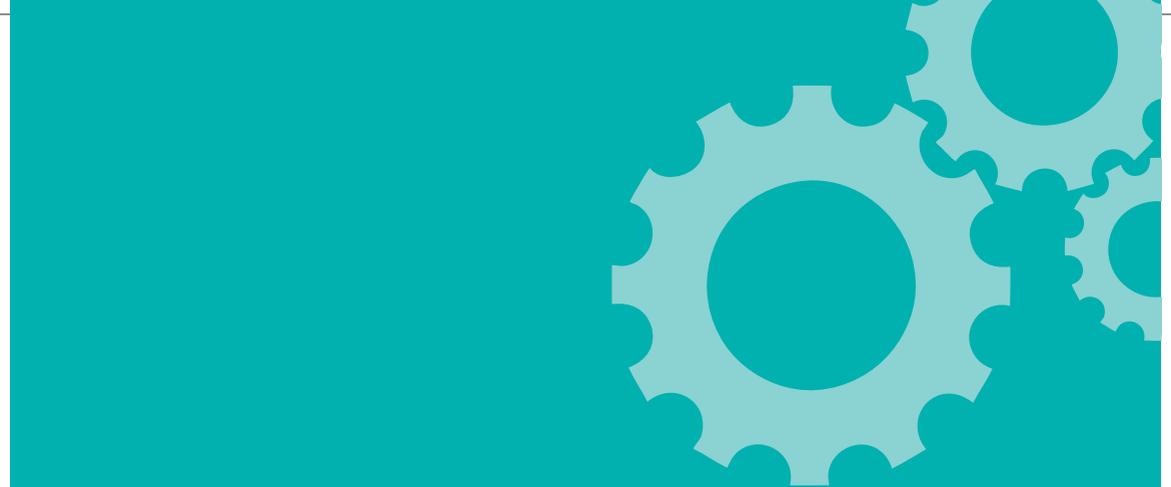
<http://www.un.org/disabilities>.

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.ofmdfmni.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

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