

Research Briefing

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By Laura Abreu,
Library Specialists

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: UK implementation



Summary

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- 3 Implementation of UNCPRD via Disability strategies in the UK
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Summary

The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (UN CRPD) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2006. [The UK ratified the Convention in 2009.](#)

By following UN CRPD, the UK agrees to protect and promote the human rights of disabled people, including:

- eliminating disability discrimination
- enabling disabled people to live independently in the community
- ensuring an inclusive education system
- ensuring disabled people are protected from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse

The [UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) is a body of independent experts which monitors implementation of the Convention by the States Parties.

UN Committee investigation (2016)

In 2016 the UK was investigated under the Optional Protocol of the UN CRPD following a formal request from several disability organisations. The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities found that [“grave or systematic violations” of disabled persons’ rights had taken place because of welfare reforms in the UK since 2010](#) (opens a Word file).

The Committee said welfare reforms had “disproportionally and adversely” affected the rights of people with disabilities, citing changes to Housing Benefit entitlement, eligibility criteria for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and social care, and the ending of the Independent Living Fund.

[The UK Government said it “strongly disagree\[d\]” with the conclusions](#) (Word), saying the investigation was “too narrow in scope” and that measures, such as personal budgets, improving transport accessibility, work-related support and protections to tax and pensions credits, should have been considered.

First periodic review (2017)

The UN conducted its first periodic review of how the UK had implemented the UN CRPD in 2017. The UK Independent Mechanism (UKIM), made up of the Human Rights Commissions of the UK, is charged with monitoring implementation. [UKIM submitted an updated report to the UN Committee](#) (PDF), in July 2017 which argued the UK and devolved Governments had taken insufficient action to implement earlier UN recommendations.

[The UN Committee published concluding observations in October 2017](#) and requested the UK provide information one year later covering steps taken to implement several of the recommendations.

In October 2018, the [UKIM assessed steps taken by the UK Governments to implement the Committee's recommendations since August 2017](#). It said progress had been made in several areas, including the launch of an independent review into the Mental Health Act 1983, an increase in the number of disabled people in employment, and the announcement of a new Inter-Ministerial Group on Disability and Society.

The UKIM remained “disappointed” that UK Governments had not developed a comprehensive UK-wide strategy demonstrating how the Committee’s 2017 recommendations would be implemented.

Government responses

[The Government's response to the Committee's August 2017 recommendations was debated in Parliament](#) in June 2018.

In September 2018, [the UK Government issued its initial response to the UN](#) which covered progress in the UK and highlighted funding for social care in England, the Access to Work Scheme, and benefits for people with disabilities and long term health conditions.

In June 2019, [the UK Government launched a cross-Government approach to disability](#).

In October 2019 the [UK Government issued a response to recommendation 74 of the Committee's concluding observations on its 2017 review](#). This concerned the 2016 inquiry and called on UK Governments to initiate and follow-up on recommendations from that investigation and update the Committee on progress every 12 months until the next periodic review.

In December 2021, [the UK Government published a follow-up report from the 2016 inquiry](#) which highlighted progress with the recommendations from the 2016 investigation, including welfare benefits, social care reform,

employment strategies, access to public life and the legal system, engagement with disabled people and hate crime

[The Government answered a parliamentary question in February 2019](#) saying it would respond to the Committee's remaining concluding observations from the 2017 review during the next periodic review, which is due in 2023.

Further reading

The National Disability Strategy was published in July 2021 and is covered in section 3 of this paper. The Library's briefing [The National Disability Strategy 2021: Content and reaction looks at it in detail](#).

The Library briefing [UK disability statistics: Prevalence and life experiences](#), contains the key statistics on disability in the UK.

The Commons Library has a [disability page](#) where all the publications relating to disability are available.

1 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

1.1 An introduction to the Convention

The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (UN CRPD) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2006.¹

As at 6 May 2022, the Convention had been ratified by 184 State Parties plus the European Union, and had 164 signatories.² [The UK ratified the Convention in 2009.](#)³

The Convention places general obligations on States to “ensure and promote the full realisation of all human rights and fundamental freedoms” for all persons with disability, and to achieve this through measures, including:

- adopting appropriate policies and legislation,
- taking into account the protection and promotion of the human rights of disabled persons when making and assessing policy and
- taking measures to eliminate discrimination.⁴

The Convention defines “persons with disabilities” as including:

Those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.⁵

The Convention also describes several of the rights found within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These include:

- Equal recognition before the law
- Effective access to justice
- Living independently and being included in the community

¹ [General Assembly resolution A/RES/61/106](#). (PDF)

² United Nations, [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#), accessed 9 November 2022

³ [UN Treaty Collection, CRPD](#), accessed 8 November 2022

⁴ [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), Article 4

⁵ [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), Article 1

- The right to education
- The right to the “highest attainable standard of health”
- The right to work on an equal basis with others
- An adequate standard of living and social protection.⁶

1.2 The legal position of the convention

The Treaty is not incorporated into UK law, but is instead given effect through separate policies and legislation, including the [Equality Act 2010](#).⁷ The [UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) is the body of independent experts which monitors implementation of the Convention by the States Parties. The Committee has called on the UK to incorporate the Convention into legislation and allow domestic remedies for breaches.⁸

In 2018, the UKIM argued the UK Government should consider giving enhanced status to the Convention due to the UK leaving the European Union:

The EU is itself a party to the CRPD. Under EU law, international treaties to which the EU is party have a different status than they do under UK law. For example, EU law (unlike UK law) must be interpreted consistently with the CRPD. To ensure there is no regression, and that disabled people in the UK benefit from future progress driven by the CRPD, the UK Government should ensure these protections are incorporated into UK law, for example by giving enhanced status to the CRPD.⁹

The UK Government has consistently resisted these calls saying the UK, “as a general principle”, does not adopt international treaties into domestic law.¹⁰

The Welsh Government has committed to incorporating the convention into domestic law:

We have undertaken to strengthen the human rights framework by incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People into Welsh law.¹¹

⁶ [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), Articles 10-30

⁷ PQ 18932 [\[on Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities\]](#), 27 February 2020

⁸ UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, [Concluding observations on the initial report of the United Kingdom](#), October 2017, 7(a)

⁹ UKIM, [Progress on disability rights in the UK: UKIM update report to the UN Committee](#), October 2018, pp10-11

¹⁰ PQ 46209 [\[on Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities\]](#), 16 September 2022

¹¹ Welsh Government, [Written Statement: Welsh Government Response to the Locked Out: Liberating disabled people’s lives and rights in Wales beyond Covid-19 report](#), 2 July 2021

1.3 Parties are required to report

Subscribing Parties are required to submit reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the implementation of the Convention in their country. Initial reports are required two years after the Convention comes into force in a country, and every four years thereafter.¹²

[The UK Government published its first report in 2011](#), setting out how the respective Governments of each UK nation were meeting the Convention's obligations.¹³

[The first periodic review by the Committee following ratification by the UK took place in 2017](#). Recommendations were published in August 2017 and concluding observations in October 2017.

1.4 The UK Independent Mechanism

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI), the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) and the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) are designated by Article 33(2) as the UK Independent Mechanism (UKIM).

The UKIM's role is to promote, protect and monitor implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) in the UK.

UKIM's submissions to the UN Committee are listed on the [Equality and Human Rights Commission's website](#).

1.5 The Optional Protocol

An [Optional Protocol to the Convention](#) requires subscribing States Parties to recognise the competence of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to receive and consider communications from individuals and organisations subject to its jurisdiction who claim to be victims of a violation of their rights by that State Party.

If the Committee receives reliable information indicating "grave or systematic violations by a State Party of rights set forth in the Convention", it can undertake inquiries into that State Party and make recommendations for action.¹⁴ However, there is no enforcement mechanism.

¹² [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), Article 35

¹³ Office for Disability Issues (ODI) [Initial report on the UN CRPD](#) (PDF), 2011

¹⁴ [UN Optional Protocol to the CRPD](#), Articles 1, 6

As at May 2022, the Protocol had 94 signatories and 100 parties. The UK ratified the Optional Protocol in 2009.¹⁵

The UK was investigated under the Optional Protocol in 2016.

1.6

The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The [United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) is one of the ten human rights treaty bodies operating under the [Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#).

As noted above, the Committee acts as a body of independent experts who monitor the implementation of the UN CRPD by States Parties.

The Committee was established under Article 34 of the Convention and consists of 18 members¹⁶ elected from a list of persons nominated by States Parties at conference. Members serve a four-year term.

¹⁵ UN Treaty Collection, [Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), (accessed 9 November 2022), status as at 23 November 2015

¹⁶ United Nations, [Membership of Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), accessed 9 November 2022

2 UN Committee investigations: an overview

2.1 Optional Protocol investigation (2016)

Announcement and investigation

Following a formal request from several disability organisations in 2013 to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Committee determined they had provided “reliable information indicating grave or systematic violations”. Initial representations to the Committee were made by the charity, Disabled People Against Cuts, in 2012. They were joined by other charities and organisations the following year.¹⁷

The Committee conducted an inquiry under Article 6 of the Optional Protocol into the impact of the UK Government’s policies on the rights of disabled people.¹⁸ The proceedings and scope of any inquiry conducted under Article 6 are confidential. States Parties are given the opportunity to provide information and evidence.

In October 2016, the Committee visited London, Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff, and conducted interviews with around 200 individuals. Interviews were also conducted with representatives of the UK Government, UK Parliaments and Assemblies, the respective human rights commissions for each nation, trade unions, and non-governmental organisations.¹⁹

The Committee noted the UK Government disputed evidence submitted by the Committee’s source. In response, the Committee said it had engaged in verification exercises where facts that “appeared to be controversial” were cross-checked with multiple sources, including parliamentary reports, official statistics, academic research and non-governmental organisations.²⁰

¹⁷ [UN launches investigation into “grave” violations of disabled people’s human rights over welfare reforms](#), The Herald, 30 August 2015; [Confirmed! UN is investigating UK’s grave violations of disabled people’s rights](#), Disability News Service, 11 September 2015

¹⁸ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, [Inquiry concerning the UK: Report](#) (PDF), October 2016, Section 1

¹⁹ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, [Inquiry concerning the UK: Report](#) (Word) October 2016, Part IV

²⁰ As above, para 82

General conclusions & recommendations

The Committee's report, [Inquiry concerning the UK: Report](#) (Word), was published in October 2016. The Committee concluded there had been "grave or systematic violations of the rights of persons with disabilities" in the UK, resulting from welfare reforms since 2010:²¹

(a) The State party [the UK] has implemented a policy aimed at reforming its welfare system and the reforms have been justified in the context of austerity measures to achieve fiscal and budgetary policy consolidation;

[...]

The impact assessments conducted by the State party prior to the implementation of several measures of its welfare reform expressly foresaw an adverse impact on persons with disabilities;

[...]

(e) Measures resulting in reduction of support provided to meet the extra cost of disability, denial of reasonable accommodation in assessment procedures and realization of the right to employment have had a discriminatory effect on persons with disabilities

[...]

(i) The State party has not conducted a comprehensive human rights-based cumulative impact assessment even though reliable sources have indicated it is feasible;

(j) The State party continues its policy of reducing social benefits of persons with disabilities as reflected in the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016.²²

The welfare changes highlighted included changes to Housing Benefit, the establishment of a cap on household benefits, and changes in eligibility criteria for the mobility component under Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The Committee also said the tightening of criteria to access social care and the closure of the Independent Living Fund had "disproportionately affected persons with disabilities and hindered various aspects of their right to live independently and be included in the community."²³

The Committee cited other arguments and evidence of Convention breaches, a summary of which is provided below:

- **Work and employment:** The Committee said the process related to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) had several "flaws", including putting aside personal needs and barriers to return to work.²⁴ It said the

²¹ Further background on welfare reforms since 2010 can be found in the Commons Library briefing CBP-9090, [The aims of ten years of welfare reform \(2010-2020\)](#)

²² Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, [Inquiry concerning the UK: Report](#) (Word), October 2016, Part VII

²³ As above, p17, para 95

²⁴ [As above](#), p18, para 102

Work Programme and JobCentre plus had “no visible impact in decreasing unemployment” amongst persons with disabilities.²⁵

- **Attitudes towards persons with disabilities:** The Committee argued that, despite public awareness campaigns, persons with disabilities “continue to experience increasing hostility, aggressive behaviour and sometimes attacks on their behaviour” in society.²⁶
- **Impact assessments and monitoring:** The Committee said the Welfare Reform Act 2012 “was not thoroughly compliant” with requirements to conduct impact assessments. They cited evidence from persons with disabilities and their representative organisations saying consultations were “not meaningfully taken into account”.²⁷ The Committee said there was “no evidence of periodic monitoring” of the impact of welfare reforms on disabled people.²⁸
- **Insufficient social protections and support for independent living.** The Committee argued the Care Act 2014 “fails to properly acknowledge the elements of autonomy and control and choice” necessary for independent living, and persons with disabilities were “not being properly considered as right-holders and entitled to benefits with regard to their right to social protection”.²⁹
- **Determining eligibility for benefits.** The Committee argued the “prevalence of the medical approach in assessment procedures” did not take into account the support persons with disabilities need to perform a job or the complex nature of some conditions.³⁰ Assessments, the Committee said, should better acknowledge the diversity of persons with disabilities and better protect applicants from “anxiety, psychological strain and financial hardship”.³¹

The Committee noted measures put in place by devolved administrations to mitigate some of the reductions in social security benefits since 2010.³²

The Committee made eleven recommendations:

1. Conducting a cumulative impact assessment of measures referenced in the report introduced since 2010.
2. Ensuring welfare reform measures are “rights-based” and do not adversely affect people with disabilities.

²⁵ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, [Inquiry concerning the UK: Report](#) (PDF), October 2016, p19, para 107

²⁶ [As above](#), p15, para 85

²⁷ [As above](#), p15, para 86

²⁸ [As above](#), p16, para 93

²⁹ [As above](#), p16, para 88

³⁰ [As above](#), p16, para 89

³¹ [As above](#), p16, paras 91-92.

³² [As above](#), pp16-17, para 94

3. Addressing the core rights of persons with disabilities, such as retaining their autonomy, individualised support, equal access to community-based services, access to social security schemes, full inclusion and participation in society, and support for gaining employment.
4. Ensuring sufficient public budgets to support those with disability and fund mitigation measures.
5. Making guidance on social security, independent living schemes and employment services accessible.
6. Providing appropriate legal advice, support and means of redress.
7. Actively consulting and engaging with persons with disabilities and representative organisations.
8. Taking measures to combat negative and discriminatory prejudice.
9. Ensuring, when implementing legislation, special attention is paid to persons with disabilities on a low income or at higher risk of exclusion.
10. Setting up a mechanism and human-rights based indicators to permanently monitor policy impacts.
11. Disseminating the report's finding and providing appropriate follow up recommendations.³³

UK Government's initial response

[The UK Government response was published in October 2016.](#) Whilst “acknowledging the work undertaken by the committee”, the UK Government said it “strongly disagrees with the conclusions” and did not accept the Committee’s conclusion “that there is evidence of grave systematic violation of the rights of disabled people”.³⁴

The UK Government emphasised duties included in the Equality Act 2010 (in Great Britain) and Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Northern Ireland) and noted that the Committee had recognised health and welfare measures in place to support people with disabilities. The UK Government quoted the Committee’s statement:

At a national level, it appears that the welfare system together with a social and health care system provide a solid base for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and that the system has allowed persons with disabilities to achieve an acceptable level of autonomy and independence.³⁵

³³ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, [Inquiry concerning the UK: Report](#) (Word), October 2016, Section VIII

³⁴ [The UK Government response to the report by the UN committee](#) (Word), October 2016, para 1

³⁵ [As above](#), para 3

The response went on to say the Committee’s approach was “too narrow” and did not consider measures, such as:

- Personal budgets to increase choice and control of care and living arrangements;
- Improvements to the accessibility of housing and transport;
- The wide range of work-related support available to disabled people;
- Financial protections, such as tax and pension credits and the exemption of disability-related benefits from the benefit cap and benefits freeze.³⁶

[The UK Government’s full response](#) (Word) set out in greater detail measures taken to support people with disabilities to live independently and be included in the community, enter work and employment, and ensure an adequate standard of living and social protection. Responses to the 2016 recommendations are set out in full in the response conclusion, but included the following:

1. That the Government since 2010 has published analysis of tax, welfare and public spending policies on households, but that distributional analysis by HM Treasury is not the only means to assess the impact of public services on people with disabilities.
2. The Public Sector Equality Duty is aligned with a rights-based approach as it sets a legal duty on public authorities to consider the impact of policies on people with disabilities.
3. Social care and DWP policies, such as in personal budgets under the Care Act 2014, the Access to Work Scheme and Disability Living Allowance offer direct support, whilst Discretionary Housing Payments offer mitigation to those impacted by some welfare changes.
4. The *Equality Act 2010* and *Disability Discrimination Act 1995* provide means for redress and require compliance with equality principles.³⁷

The [UK Government also replied to the UN Committee in July 2017 on specific issues raised on behalf of all four nations](#) (Word). The Government said UK consultation guidelines “set clear expectations” for engagement; the Equality Act 2010 protects against discrimination and includes requirements to ensure accessibility; financial support and grants were available for people with disabilities and their families; and policies were in place to combat school bullying and ensure access to education, health and care.³⁸

Additional responses to the 2016 findings were published in 2018, 2019 and 2021 and are referred to in the following sections.

³⁶ [As above](#), para 7

³⁷ [As above](#), Chapter 3

³⁸ UK Government, [List of issues in relation to the initial report of the UK...Addendum Replies of the UK...to the list of issues](#), 5 July 2017

2.2

The first periodic review (2017)

The UK's first periodic review since the ratifying the treaty in 2009 took place in 2017.

Prior to the review, UKIM submitted a list of issues the Committee might wish to focus on.³⁹ The constituent members of UKIM prepared supplementary country reports relating to specific issues in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.⁴⁰

[UKIM submitted an updated report to the Committee in July 2017](#) (PDF). This report argued the UK and devolved Governments had taken insufficient action to implement the UN recommendations from 2016.⁴¹

The UK Government submitted its response to the list of issues in July 2017.⁴²

[The Committee published concluding observations in October 2017](#). It noted the “uneven implementation” of the Convention across the UK.⁴³ The 2017 report contained further recommendations, including:

- 1 Incorporating the Convention into UK legislation and aligning new and existing legislation with a human-rights mode of disability across the UK. Also, to incorporate into legislation “protection from multiple and intersectional discrimination on the basis of gender, age, race, disability, migrant, refugee and/or other status”.
- 2 Undertaking a review of legislation and policies and abolishing laws, customs and practices found to constitute discrimination.
- 3 Ensuring that the UK's departure from the European Union does not have negative consequences for persons with disabilities.
- 4 Allocating financial resources to support organisations representing people with disabilities and establish mechanisms to secure their full participation in the design and implementation of policy.
- 5 Amending abortion law to respect women's rights to reproductive and sexual autonomy “without legalizing selective abortion on the ground of fetal deficiency”.

³⁹ UKIM, [Disability Rights in the UK](#) (PDF), February 2017

⁴⁰ These reports can be found on the [EHRC website](#), accessed 9 November 2022

⁴¹ UKIM, [Disability Rights in the UK](#) (PDF), July 2017 – see section 7.2 for a summary of the issues raised by UKIM in this report.

⁴² [List of issues in relation to the initial report of the UK...Addendum Replies of the UK...to the list of issues](#), July 2017

⁴³ UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, [Concluding observations on the initial report](#), October 2017, p2, Section II

- 6 Taking steps to “mainstream” the rights of women and girls with disabilities in disability and gender equality policies.
- 7 Developing policies to support families with children with disabilities to reduce poverty, reduce school bullying, and require disability-sensitive childcare.
- 8 Addressing the affordability and accessibility of housing, technology, transport and public spaces.
- 9 Developing an inclusive framework for education and eliminating barriers in access to healthcare.⁴⁴

The Committee requested the UK Government submit a report by 8 July 2023 addressing implementation of these recommendations.

A response to measures relating to independent living and inclusion in the community, work and employment, and adequate standards of living and social protection, was requested within 12 months.⁴⁵

UK Government response

In September 2018 the UK Government issued [Concluding observations on the initial report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: initial government response](#).

This specifically addressed recommendations on independent living and inclusion, work and employment, adequate standards of living and social protection, and recommendation 74 of [the Committee’s concluding observations from the 2017 review](#).

Recommendation 74 concerned the 2016 inquiry under the Optional Protocol and called on the UK Governments to initiate and follow-up on recommendations arising from that investigation and provide the Committee with information on progress every 12 months until the next periodic report takes place.

On publication in September 2018, Sarah Newton, then-Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, issued a statement which included actions the Government was taking in areas highlighted by the Committee:

We have made available a further £9.4bn funding for social care in England between 2017/18 and 2018/19 to ensure that councils can increase the capacity of the social care system – an 8% real terms increase over the current spending review period (2016/17 to 2019/20);

We are supporting more people whose health affects the way they do their job through Access to Work – over 25,000 people in 2016/17, an 8% increase on

⁴⁴ A full list can be found in sections A and B of [Concluding observations on the initial report](#).

⁴⁵ UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, [Concluding observations on the initial report](#), October 2017, pp15, 16, paras 73 and 78

2015/16, spending £104m, up from £96m. We also introduced a new Tech Fund under Access to Work to help disabled people to benefit from the latest advances in assistive technology; and

We will be spending an estimated £54bn in 2018/19 on benefits to support disabled people and those with long term health conditions, up from £44.7bn in 2010/11 – the highest ever.⁴⁶

An updated response for the Committee was provided in October 2019.⁴⁷

In December 2021, the UK Government published [the UK Government published a follow-up report from the 2016 inquiry](#) which highlighted progress with the recommendations from the 2016 investigation, including welfare benefits, social care reform, employment strategies, access to public life and the legal system, engagement with disabled people and hate crime.⁴⁸

[The Government answered a parliamentary question in February 2019](#) saying it would respond to the Committee’s remaining concluding observations from the 2017 review during the next periodic review which is due in 2023:

We will be responding to the recommendations in the Concluding Observations during our next periodic review, currently scheduled for 2023. In the meantime, we will be preparing in due course, as recommended by the UN Committee, a progress update on the 2016 inquiry recommendations.⁴⁹

Devolved governments’ responses

The responses of the devolved governments can be found in reports submitted by the UK Government on their behalf.

In 2015, the Scottish Government launched a consultation on the [UN CRPD: The Scottish Government’s Draft Delivery Plan \(2016-2020\)](#), which set out its aim to support persons with disabilities through fifty commitments. It subsequently set up an [Advisory Group on Human Rights Leadership](#) which reported in in 2018.

[The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland’s page on the UN CRDP](#) doesn’t cite a specific response to the UN Committee’s 2016 report. The Executive was not in place from January 2016 to January 2020. In June 2022 the Equality Commission for Northern published a report on [Progress Towards the Implementation of the UN CRPD in Northern Ireland](#) (PDF) ‘that found shortfalls in public policy and programme delivery in NI relative to the Articles of the UN CRPD’.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ [HCWS939](#), 6 September 2018

⁴⁷ DWP & Office for Disability Issues, [The UK’s 2019 response to select concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), 14 October 2019

⁴⁸ Disability Unit and DWP, [Disabled people’s rights: UK 2021 follow-up report to UNCRPD 2016 inquiry](#), 14 December 2021

⁴⁹ [PQ 214659](#), 30 January 2019

⁵⁰ [Equality Commission NI](#), UN CRPD research, accessed 9 November 2022

The Welsh Assembly/Senedd Cymru published a [briefing on how the UN Committee's 2017 findings related to Wales](#). In 2019, the Welsh Government said although “there were no specific recommendations for the Welsh Government, [in the report] [...] there were a number of general recommendations to take forward in Wales”, which it would adopt in its living independently strategy.⁵¹ The resulting [Action on Disability: The Right to Independent Living, Framework and Action Plan](#) (PDF) was published in 2019.

Disabled people's organisations: responses

Overall, disability organisations welcomed the UN Committee's 2016 and 2017 findings and called for the recommendations to be implemented. For example, the UK Delegation of Deaf and Disabled People's Organisations said the report had “validated” complaints previously raised about the impact of welfare reductions on disabled persons. It also welcomed the UK Government's commitment to act on aspects of the Committee's 2016 report:

UK Government representatives committed during the review to rethinking the way they support Deaf and Disabled People to monitor our rights. We welcome this commitment. However, we are clear that our involvement must be genuine and inclusive. We cannot accept anything less than progress on delivering the human rights enshrined in the Convention.⁵²

Disability Rights UK said the UK Government should “start delivering on these excellent recommendations” and “urged devolved administrations, public service providers and the private sector to study the investigation's findings so that disabled people can access education, employment, transport and housing.”⁵³

2.3 UKIM report on progress (October 2018)

In its most recent report on progress (October 2018), UKIM gave its assessment of the steps taken by the UK Governments to implement the Committee's recommendations since August 2017.

UKIM identified progress in several areas, including the launch of an independent review into the Mental Health Act 1983, an increase in the number of disabled people in employment, and the announcement of a new Inter-Ministerial Group on Disability and Society.

⁵¹ Welsh Government, [Action on disability: The right to independent living](#) (PDF), September 2019, p7

⁵² Equal Lives, UN CRPD 2016: What happens next?, September 2017

⁵³ Disability Rights UK, [A human catastrophe- New UN condemnation for UK human rights record](#), 31 August 2017

UKIM remained “disappointed” that UK Governments had not developed a comprehensive UK-wide strategy demonstrating how the Committee’s 2017 recommendations will be implemented.⁵⁴

2.4 Shadow reports 2022

Disability rights groups published their shadow reports in March 2022, an abridged version of which will be submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities prior to the start of the next examination of the UK’s progress, expected to be 2023.

The shadow report for the UK Government was produced by Inclusion London: [Shadow report United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People Westminster Government Civil Society Shadow Report](#). The key findings were:

- The situation for Disabled people got worse after 2017 when UN last looked at the UK’s progress.
- Westminster Government (WeG) has taken some positive steps, but they have not addressed key problems.
- The COVID-19 pandemic response discriminated against Disabled people and violated our equal right to life.
- Disability equality and human rights approaches towards disability have been further undermined since 2017.
- There is insufficient monitoring and promotion of the CRDP by WeG.⁵⁵

There are separate reports for each of the devolved nations:

- [Civil Society Shadow Welsh Report on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People in Wales, Disability Wales](#), March 2022
- [Alternative Report on the Implementation of the UN CRPD in NI, Disability Action Northern Ireland](#), March 2022
- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People, Inclusion Scotland](#), March 2022

⁵⁴ UKIM, [Progress on disability rights in the UK](#), October 2018

⁵⁵ Inclusion London, [Shadow report United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People Westminster Government Civil Society Shadow Report](#), accessed 9 October 2022

3 Implementing the UNCPRD via disability strategies in the UK

In 2018, the UK Government established an [Inter-Ministerial Group on Disability and Society](#) to “drive coordinated action across Government and implement the UN CRPD.”⁵⁶

In June 2019, the UK Government [launched](#) a new cross-Government approach on disability.⁵⁷

In a [written statement](#), then-Minister for Disabled People, Justin Tomlinson, said the Government was “committed to strengthening the evidence base on disability” and “improving engagement with disabled people and disabled people’s organisations in line with relevant recommendations from the United Nations”.⁵⁸ The Minister said the cross-government approach would focus on:

- [Consulting on how employers can support people with disabilities to remain in work](#). This consultation closed in October 2019.⁵⁹ [The UK Government published its response in July 2021](#). The response took the impact of the pandemic into account.⁶⁰
- **Consulting on raising mandatory accessibility standards for all new homes**. Consultation ran from September to December 2020. The Government published a summary of responses to the consultation, its response, and plans for implementation, in July 2022.⁶¹
- **A Green Paper on health and disability support**, to “enable a conversation about building a welfare system...that is an ally of disabled people”. The Department for work and Pensions (DWP) published [Shaping future support: the health and disability green paper](#) in July 2022, the consultation ran from July to October 2022.⁶² In response to a PQ in June 2022 the Government said it would publish a Health and Disability White Paper later in the year.⁶³

⁵⁶ DWP and ODI, [2019 Progress report on the UK’s vision to build a society which is fully inclusive of disabled people](#), 14 October 2019

⁵⁷ Prime Minister, DWP, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, [PM launches new drive to tackle barriers faced by disabled people](#), 25 June 2019

⁵⁸ [HCWS1651](#), 25 June 2019

⁵⁹ DWP and DHSC, [Health is everyone’s business: Proposals to reduce ill-health related job losses](#), 15 July 2019

⁶⁰ DWP and DHSC, [Government response: Health is everyone’s business](#), July 2021

⁶¹ MHCLG, [Raising accessibility standards for homes](#), 29 July 2022

⁶² DWP, [Shaping future support: the health and disability green paper](#), 12 August 2021

⁶³ PQ 17042 [on [Employment: Disability](#)], 13 June 2022

- **Improving consumer outcomes for people with disabilities** by developing metrics to compare how well companies deliver for disabled customers.⁶⁴

Then Prime Minister, Theresa May, announced in June 2019 that the Office for Disability Issues (ODI) would transfer to the Cabinet Office from the DWP in November 2019.⁶⁵ This became the [Disability Unit](#) and is supported by the [Equality Hub](#).

[The DWP/ODI published a progress report for the UN Committee in October 2019](#). In addition to the above aims, the Government said it was in the process of setting up new regional stakeholder networks in England to draw upon views of persons with disabilities and would seek to improve employment opportunities, inclusive education and accessible transport.

In the Queen’s Speech December 2019, the UK Government committed to publishing a [National Strategy for Disabled People](#) in 2020. It also included commitments aimed at:

- Reducing the disability employment gap “alongside the existing goal to see an increase of 1 million disabled people in work between 2017 and 2027” and
- Introducing a minimum award length for Personal Independent Payments and ensure that “no one will be reassessed for at least 18 months from their last review, unless they tell us their needs have changed”.⁶⁶

The National Disability Strategy 2021

The National Disability Strategy was published in July 2021. More detailed information can be found in the Library briefing: [The National Disability Strategy 2021: Content and reaction](#).

Part 2 of the strategy addresses the longer-term ambition of “putting disabled people at the heart of the design and delivery of services.”⁶⁷ This involves working to embed five elements across Government described as complementing those of the UN CRPD and including:

Ensure fairness and equality – we will empower disabled people by promoting fairness and equality of opportunities, outcomes and experiences, including work and access to products and services.

Consider disability from the start – we will embed inclusive and accessible approaches and services to avoid creating disabling experiences from the outset.

⁶⁴ HCSW 1651, [Cross-Government approach to disability](#), 25 June 2019

⁶⁵ HCWS1652, [Machinery of Government change](#), 25 June 2019

⁶⁶ UK Government, [Queen’s Speech 2019](#), December 2019, p62

⁶⁷ DWP, Disability Hub and Equality Hub, [National Disability Strategy, Part 2: disabled people’s everyday experience at the heart of government policy making and service delivery](#), July 2021

Support independent living – we will actively encourage initiatives that support all disabled people to have choice and control in life.

Increase participation – we will enable greater inclusion of a diverse disabled population in the development and delivery of services, products and policies.

Deliver joined up responses – we will work across organisational boundaries and improve data and evidence to better understand and respond to complex issues that affect disabled people.⁶⁸

Parts of the strategy are devolved and statements from each nation are included, they each mention the UN CRPD:

Northern Ireland Executive – “The Northern Ireland Executive began work on a new Disability Strategy for Northern Ireland in September 2020” the strategy “will be outcomes-focused, rights-based and aligned with international obligations including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD).”

Scottish Government – “The Scottish Government plan, A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People, was published in 2016 as a delivery plan to 2021 for the UN CRPD.”

Welsh Government – “The Welsh Government’s Framework – Action on Disability: The Right to Independent Living, was launched by the former Deputy Minister and Chief Whip on 18 September 2019” “The Framework is based on equality and human rights and sets out how we are fulfilling our obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD).”⁶⁹

For details of the devolved nations strategies please see the Commons Library briefing [Disability strategies in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland](#)

⁶⁸ DWP, Disability Hub and Equality Hub, [National Disability Strategy: Forewords, about this strategy, action across the UK, executive summary, acknowledgements](#), July 2021

⁶⁹ DWP, Disability Hub and Equality Hub, [National Disability Strategy, Part 2: disabled people's everyday experience at the heart of government policy making and service delivery](#), July 2021

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Further Information


- [UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights \(2018\)](#)
- [Monitoring the implementation of the UN Convention](#), in 2014.
- [Updated report](#) to the UN Committee in July 2017
- EHRC, [Is Britain fairer?](#) (2018)
- EHRC, [Disability Rights in England](#) (2017)
- EHRC, [Is England fairer?](#) (2018)
- EHRC, [Is Scotland fairer?](#) (2018)
- EHRC, [Disability Rights in Wales](#) (2017)
- EHRC [Is Wales Fairer?](#) (2018)
- Equality Commission NI, [UN CRPD: Shortfalls in public policy and programme delivery](#) (2014)
- Equality Commission for NI and NI Human Rights Commission, [Working paper on implementation in Northern Ireland](#) (2017).
- DWP, Disability Hub and Equality Hub, [National Disability Strategy](#), July 2021
- [House of Commons Library, UK's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons, February 2022](#)
- House of Commons Library, [The National Disability Strategy 2021: Content and reaction, October 2022](#)

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