Nothing about us without us!
Disabled People’s Human Rights

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Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that belong to everyone, including disabled people. But as disabled people our human rights are not always respected and protected because of things like discrimination, and because services, buildings and transport are designed without our input.

**What is the Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (CRPD)?**

Disabled people have their own Convention which sets out how our human rights should be respected and protected – the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (CRPD). The CRPD was written with the full involvement of disabled people.

The UK government ‘ratified’ the CRPD in 2009 which means they promised to do what the CRPD says and act to protect disabled people’s rights. This includes things like:

- 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 UK includes the Scottish government and public bodies in Scotland like Health Boards, education providers and councils.

For more information about the CRPD visit the United Nations website.

An Easy Read version of the CRPD can be seen on this website.

The United Nations CRPD Committee

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Disabled People oversees what countries are doing to implement the CPRD and monitors their progress.

The Committee has three main roles:

1. The Committee monitors the implementation of the CRPD in practice.

   If a ‘State’ (a country) signs up to the CRPD the Committee will review what they have done to protect and promote all of the rights in the CRPD every 4 years. This includes looking at how they have involved disabled people in the policy making and evaluation.

   After this the Committee will publish a report called ‘Concluding Observations’ setting out their findings and making recommendations. The last time the Committee looked at the UK was in 2017. You can read the 2017
Concluding Observations report for the UK on the UN website.

The Committee is due to look at the UK again in 2022.

2. The Committee can conduct inquiries if it gets reliable information which shows there might be “grave or systematic violations” (very serious abuses) by a State of any of the rights in the CRPD.

The Committee conducted an inquiry into the impact of some UK government policies on the rights of disabled people since 2010. The inquiry found that government reforms had led to “grave and systematic” violations of the rights of disabled people – the right to independent living, the right to work and employment and the right to an adequate standard of living and social protection. You can read the Committee’s report on the Inquiry into the UK’s treatment of disabled people on the UN website.

3. The Committee writes ‘General Comments’. These are documents where the Committee sets out its explanation of rights in the CRPD.

For example, General Comment 7 is about participation of disabled people and ‘Disabled People’s Organisations’ (DPOs) in implementing and monitoring the CRPD.
General Comment 7 says that states and public authorities should prioritise disabled people’s views, through their DPOs, and that they should support the capacity and empowerment of DPOs. This is to ensure that ‘priority is given to ascertaining’ the views of disabled people and DPOs in decision making and monitoring processes.

You can read General Comment 7 on the UN website.

Monitoring of the CRPD

An important part of the Committee’s role is to monitor the implementation of the CRPD. This means making sure countries are protecting and promoting disabled people’s human rights.

There are 6 main steps in the monitoring process:

1. Organisations write shadow reports

The Committee does not work alone when it reviews whether a country is protecting and promoting the rights of disabled people. Other groups in the country provide reports to the Committee so that they get a true picture of what is happening.

This includes ‘Civil society’. Civil society are organisations or movements which are separate from government and the private sector, like Inclusion Scotland.
Civil society organisations from across the UK (Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland) write reports to make sure the Committee hears about what is happening to disabled people in the UK.

These are called ‘shadow reports’ or ‘alternative reports’.

You can read the UK civil society group shadow report from 2017 on the United Nations website. An Easy Read version of the 2017 civil society report is available.

Human Rights Institutions

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) are ‘human rights institutions’ – these are official organisations that are independent of government and have the job of protecting and promoting human rights in the country.

The EHRC and SHRC are known as the ‘United Kingdom Independent Mechanism’ (UKIM) for the CRPD. UKIM has a special role to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the CRPD in the UK.

Like civil society organisations, UKIM also write a report to tell the Committee what things they should look at when they review the UK. You can read UKIM’s report to the Committee from 2017 here.
For the UK’s next review, shadow reports are due to be submitted in April 2022.

2. **The Committee publishes a ‘list of issues’**

   The United Nations Committee reads the shadow reports and uses these to come up with a ‘list of issues’.

   The list of issues is a list of things the United Nations Committee wants to ask the UK government about.

   For the UK’s next review, the Committee is expected to publish its list of issues in late summer 2022.

3. **The UK government responds to the list of issues**

   The UK government has to write a report responding to the list of issues – it needs to answer the questions the Committee asks.

   The UK government needs to do this within one year of the Committee publishing the list of issues.

   For the UK’s next review, the UK should respond by around late summer 2023.
Other organisations and groups, like civil society and UKIM, can also write a response to the list of issues.

4. **The Committee examines the government**

   After all the reports are submitted the Committee examines the UK.

   This means that they look at the report the UK government has given them at a meeting. The meeting will be open to the public.

   The Committee will talk to representatives from the UK government at the meeting. The Committee can ask them questions or make comments.

   For the UK’s next review, this should take place in late 2023 at the earliest.

5. **The Committee publishes recommendations**

   After the UK has been examined, the Committee publishes a report with recommendations. These are the things the Committee says the UK government should do to make life better for disabled people. This report is called the ‘Concluding Observations’.
For the UK’s next review, this should take place in late 2023 at the earliest.

6. Government implements recommendations

After the Committee publishes its report, the UK government should do the things that it has recommended.

Civil society organisations can use the report to put pressure on the UK government, the Scottish government and other public bodies to make changes to improve disabled people’s lives.

Other resources

CRPD:

You can visit the EHRC webpage on the CRPD to find out more about monitoring process.

The EHRC has written a guide on the CRPD which has lots of good information on:

- the history of the CRPD
- the different rights it contains
- the role of the UN and other organisations
- how you can use the CRPD
- how you can get involved in the monitoring process.

There is a BSL version of the CRPD guide
There is an Easy Read version of the CRPD guide

Disability Council International have published a guide for civil society organisations on doing a shadow report for the CRPD Committee

Human rights in the UK:

The University of Edinburgh has produced an infographic timeline of human rights in Scotland and the UK.

An Easy Read version of the human rights timeline is also available

International human rights:

The University of Edinburgh has produced an infographic explaining international human rights law

An Easy Read version of the international human rights law summary
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