

Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

**United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities:  
(UNCRPD)**

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to the UN Committee**

**Introduction:**

The Executive welcomes the UNCRPD (the Convention). It is the first such Treaty in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and provides an important framework for policy and legislative developments in NI. The Convention sets an international benchmark against which States including NI will be measured. The Convention will help create a society where people with disabilities can enjoy complete and fulfilling lives. A society where the focus is on equality and rights as differentiated from perceptions of 'neediness' and on mainstreamed inclusion rather than segregation – where the contribution of disabled people is not only recognised but also welcomed and where difference is celebrated as part of an evolving and diverse culture.

Persons with disabilities are valued members of our families, communities and workplaces and add significantly to our society. However the Executive recognises that individuals with disabilities face barriers across all section of society particularly in securing access to education, employment, housing, health care and transport.

**Numbers of people in NI with a disability**

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

The Northern Ireland Survey of Activity Limitation and Disability (NISALD) indicates that in 2006/07 18% of the population living in private households had some degree of disability. The prevalence rate for adults was 21%, and 6% for children. Slightly more adult females (23%) than adult males (19%) reported a disability. In terms of physical disabilities, 19% of adults and 4% of children had some degree of physical disability.

### **Programme for Government 2008-2011**

#### **Growing a dynamic, innovative economy:**

The Executive's primary focus over the lifetime of the Programme for Government is on growing the economy. Sustainable economic growth and increased prosperity will provide the opportunities and means to enhance quality of life, reduce poverty and disadvantage, increase wealth, health and wellbeing and build stronger, more sustainable and empowered communities. Addressing poverty, disadvantage and exclusion will require co-ordinated action to support the most vulnerable and to create strong, vibrant sustainable communities which enhance quality of life and which encourage everyone to realise their potential.

The Executive's Delivery Framework is monitored and performance measured against Programme for Government (PFG) specific targets to ensure the Executive actions remain clearly focused on addressing both the challenges and opportunities presented.

### **Context**

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

On 2 December 1999 power was devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly, the First Minister, deputy First Minister and the Executive Committee of Ministers. The then six Northern Ireland Departments were restructured to create 11 Departments and, following the devolution of Policing and Justice in April 2010, an additional Department of Justice was created.

In June 2004, as part of the Executive's Anti-Poverty Strategy the Promoting Social Inclusion, Disability Working Group was established with a specific remit to identify the barriers to employment, education, transport, housing, access to information and lifelong learning for disabled children and adults and to make recommendations on how these might be removed taking account of wider policy development.

The Working Group was made up of representatives from various disability organisations, the Equality, Children's and Human Rights Commissions as well as officials from Government Departments. The Group's conclusions and recommendations represented a culmination of a significant amount of work involving a Northern Ireland Survey of people with an Activity Limiting Disability, (NISALD), and consultation with people with disabilities as well as the expert advice from within the Group itself. The recommendations were also firmly anchored around the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which aim to promote dignity, independence and access.

***Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group On Disability (PDF 1.38mb)***

***PSI Disability Subgroup Reports (PDF 731KB)***

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

The Executive Response to the PSI Working Group Report which will form the Executive's PSI Strategy on Disability will be available for consultation in early 2011 and will be finalised by late May 2011.

### **Northern Ireland PSI Strategy and Implementation Plan on Disability**

The Executive is in the process of developing the PSI Strategy on Disability, taken from the evidence base of the PSI Working Group Report and the principles of the UNCRPD. This will help NI fulfil its obligation under the Convention by establishing a framework to implement the Convention as required under article 33(2).

The purposes of the PSI Strategy on Disability include:

- Set out a high level policy framework to give coherence and guidance to NI Departments' activities across mainstream and disability specific areas of public policy,
- Drive improved performance of mainstream service setting in delivering outcomes for persons with disability, and
- Provide visibility for the needs of persons with disability and ensure they are included in thinking when developing policy or implementing initiatives which impact on persons with disability.
- The PSI Strategy is intended to be a living document that will be constantly updated during its ten year life span and against which NI can assess progress for persons with disability. Monitoring reports on

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

the Strategy will inform future contributions to UK reports on the Convention.

### **Definition of Disability in NI**

There is no universally agreed definition of disability. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) which was developed and endorsed by the World Health Organisation, views disability in terms of the interaction between the individual and the environment. The basic premise is that a person is not considered as having a disability just because they have a health condition but instead it is how the interaction, between this condition and the environment, limits or prevents the individual from taking part in society that creates a disability.

### **Disability Action Plans**

All Departments across government have disability action plans in place which are designed to ensure disability access and inclusion across the public sector and publicly funded services. These plans are monitored and reported on annually.

### **Article 5 Equality and non- discrimination**

Section 75(i) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities (which includes Government departments, local councils and statutory authorities and agencies), in carrying out their functions relating to

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation, men and women generally, persons with/without a disability, persons with/without dependants.

Schedule 9, Clause 4 (1) of the Act requires public authorities to set out in an equality scheme how they propose to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75 in relation to their relevant functions.

Equality schemes set out arrangements for assessing compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties, including on consultation; on monitoring arrangements and assessment of impact of policies arrangements; on complaints; and on publication obligations.

### **Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA)**

This legislation was enacted at Westminster but now applies specifically in Northern Ireland and provides protection in the areas of:

Employment and vocational training

Goods, facilities and service

Education

Premises

Transport.

While the DDA was originally enacted for the whole of the United Kingdom, separate secondary legislation and Codes of Practice exist for NI. Schedule 8

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

of the DDA sets out the modifications which apply to its application in NI. The Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 (SENDO), as amended, covers disability discrimination in the field of education here. SENDO extends protection to young disabled people in schools and disabled persons in further and higher education.

### **Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI)**

ECNI is tasked with advancing equality, promoting equality of opportunity, encouraging good relations and challenging discrimination through promotion, advice and enforcement. The Commission also has responsibilities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in relation to public sector equality duties.

### **Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC)**

NIHRC is recognised as a member of the worldwide network of national institutions for human rights, although it operates at sub-national level. It came into existence on 1 March 1999. It was created by Section 68 of the NI Act 1998, in compliance with a commitment made by the UK government in the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement of 10 April 1998.

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

### **Role ECNI & NIHRC**

Both Commissions are jointly designated as the independent mechanism to promote, protect and monitor implementation of the Convention in NI and to produce a parallel report on this to the UN Committee.

### **Article 6 – Women with disabilities**

The Executive recognises that disabled women can face significant discrimination, the domestic violence and sexual violence strategies are linked to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults policy (see Article 16) to ensure that all relevant staff who may engage with victims e.g. carers will be trained.

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/tackling\\_violence\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/tackling_violence_strategy.pdf)

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/8678\\_-\\_sexual\\_violence\\_web.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/8678_-_sexual_violence_web.pdf)

- A key initiative in the effort to raise the standards of care for all victims of sexual violence is the establishment of a regional Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). This will offer a range of services for all victims, both adults and children who experience rape, sexual violence or sexual abuse. The facility is a new building and will be Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant; the SARC is expected to open in 2012.

### **Article 7 – Children with Disabilities**

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

All children with disabilities in NI are entitled to enjoy their rights on an equal basis with all other children. The Children and Young People's ten year (2006 – 2016) Strategy and Action Plan monitors and tracks progress against performance indicators that include disabled children.

A Regional Autism Action Plan is in place to improve access to diagnosis and appropriate interventions for children with autism. Waiting times for diagnosis is set at maximum of 13 weeks and a further 13 weeks for necessary intervention.

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/asd\\_strategic\\_action\\_plan.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/asd_strategic_action_plan.pdf)

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/asd\\_strategic\\_action\\_plan -  
easy\\_read\\_format.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/asd_strategic_action_plan_easy_read_format.pdf)

A targeted Speech, Language and Communication Therapy Action Plan, which seeks to improve outcomes for children and young people with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCNs) is being implemented. The Action Plan focuses on early recognition, assessment, intervention, treatment, care and support for children and young people who have SLCNs. Each action has a target date for completion and accountability for the implementation of this Plan will be through an implementation group, which will be led by the Health Social Care Board (HSCB) / Public Health Agency (PHA). (Also supported by Article 12).

### **Article 8 Awareness-raising**

In NI the ECNI and the NIHRC have been tasked by the Executive to promote and raise awareness of the UNCRPD throughout NI. Both Commissions

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

hosted a very successful promotional conference and have commissioned research to gather the views of individuals with disabilities and their representative organisations. The Executive is also raising awareness across government, by hosting engagement events with disabled individuals including specific events dedicated to children with disabilities and women with disabilities along with their representative organisations. The information gathered at these events is being shared with the ECNI and the NIHRC along with the Office of Disability to be reflected both in the UK Response and the parallel report. The Executive is further promoting the Convention by using the principles of the Convention to underpin the PSI Strategy on Disability due out in 2011.

The "Protect Life - A Shared Vision" suicide prevention strategy and action plan in October 2006, specifically highlights the need to promote emotional wellbeing and to increase awareness of the protective factors relating to suicide and self-harm among the general population.

A new promoting mental health and emotional wellbeing strategy is currently being developed, this will have a particular focus on the development of programmes and awareness campaigns which seek to tackle the stigma which is currently attached to those people suffering from mental health conditions.

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/phnисуicidepreventionstrategy\\_action\\_plan-3.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/phnисуicidepreventionstrategy_action_plan-3.pdf) (Also supports Articles 12 and 15)

The Regional Autism Action Plan includes training and awareness for professionals working with children with autism and actions to ensure improved communication with those with autism.

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/asd\\_strategic\\_action\\_plan.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/asd_strategic_action_plan.pdf)

(Also supports Article 9)

A review of arrangements for supporting communication between schools and deaf or hard of hearing parents is underway. Teaching resources have also been developed and made available to support the curriculum and develop teaching staff.

### **Article 9 - Accessibility**

The Executive recognises the fundamental importance of enhancing accessibility for persons with disabilities to enable them to participate fully in all aspects of life. Legislation is in place that Health and Social Care estates must be fully accessible where community health services are delivered with specific action to improve access for people with a range of needs, including linguistic, sensory, learning and cognitive impairments. (Also supports Article 20 and 26)

Health and Social Care organisations are bound by the [Quality Standards for Health and Social Care \(DHSSPS 2006\)](#) to consider the diverse needs of the public, services users, carers and staff alike in any information and communication.

Article 26 of the [Planning \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1991](#) requires consideration of the relevant provisions of the [Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons \(Northern Ireland\) Act 1978](#); and the [Code of Practice for Access for the Disabled to Buildings](#).

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

Grant aid funding is also provided under Article 120 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 to support a range of work with disabled people and groups in relation to land use planning.

The Accessible Transport Strategy (ATS) was published in 2005 with the vision 'to have an accessible transport system that enables older people and people with disabilities to participate more fully in society, enjoy greater independence and experience a better quality of life'.

The ATS is being implemented through a series of action plans designed to reduce or dispel the barriers identified. The latest Action plan covers the period from 2009-2012.

The ATS Action Plans contain measures that will positively impact on Convention Article 20 – Personal Mobility.

### **Article 10 – Right to Life**

It is only lawful to perform an abortion in Northern Ireland where:

- It is necessary to preserve the life of the woman, or;
- There is a risk of real and serious adverse effect on her physical or mental health, which is either long term or permanent.

In any other circumstance it would be unlawful to perform such a procedure.

The Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy in Northern Ireland is currently being revised.

## **Article 12 – Equal Recognition before the Law**

The law in Northern Ireland generally presumes that adults are capable of making personal decisions for themselves and of managing their own affairs. The Mental Health (NI) Order 1986 provides a framework for the Court to manage and administer the financial property and affairs of adults who lack capacity due to a mental disorder.

A new Mental Capacity (Health, Welfare and Finance) Bill is currently being developed (for planned enactment in 2013). The Bill will incorporate mental capacity and mental health provisions and will cover a wide spectrum of areas. These will include interventions concerning an individual's welfare, their treatment for physical and mental illnesses and financial issues. The Bill will be based on four human rights principles of Autonomy, Justice, Benefit and Least Harm, designed to promote the dignity and human rights of individuals. Deriving from the autonomy principle will be a statutory presumption of capacity in all aged 16 and over, with a requirement that individuals are supported to exercise capacity and participate in decision-making as fully as possible. Only where the person lacks capacity to make a particular decision will the provisions and safeguards of the Bill be engaged. Capacity will also be decision-specific; and the more serious the intervention proposed, the greater the safeguards for the person.

The Mental Capacity (Health, Welfare and Finance) Bill, scheduled for enactment in 2013, will positively support people to exercise legal capacity. (Also supports Articles 5, 7, 8, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, 21 and 25).

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

### **Article 13 Access to Justice**

The Mental Health Review Tribunal (MHRT) in Northern Ireland is an independent judicial body responsible for deciding upon the necessity for the compulsory detention of mentally disordered patients in hospital, or the continuation of guardianship or aftercare under supervision in accordance with the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. Measures have been taken to ensure that these patients have access to justice free of charge. Advice, assistance and legal representation is provided by Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission (NILSC) which has responsibility for the provision of public funded legal services in Northern Ireland.

There are "special measures" provisions in the Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 (the 1999 Order) to help vulnerable witnesses give their best possible evidence in criminal proceedings. The definition of a vulnerable witness in the 1999 Order includes persons with disabilities.

Following a recent review, a number of amendments are being made to the Justice Bill, which is currently before the Northern Ireland Assembly, to improve the special measures provisions in the 1999 Order. These include providing for the presence of a supporter, whose role is to reduce the vulnerable witness's anxiety and stress when the witness is giving evidence in the live link room and permitting the prosecutor to ask the vulnerable witness some "warm up" questions to help them settle down before being cross-examined.

Revised good practice guidance for practitioners in interviewing vulnerable witnesses will be published early in 2011. The publication of the guidance will be accompanied by a training programme for practitioners.

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

The Northern Ireland Appropriate Adult Scheme (NIAAS) introduced on 1 June 2009 to ensure that young people and people with mental vulnerability who are detained in police custody have available to them the support and assistance of a trained Appropriate Adult. Where a parent, guardian or other responsible person is unable or unwilling to attend the police station to assist a young or mentally vulnerable person, a trained and experienced Appropriate Adult from the Scheme will attend. The Scheme is available 24 hours a day, each day of the year.

#### **Article 14 – Liberty and security of the person**

The Youth Justice Agency is committed to compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Agency premises and facilities will comply with the Act.

Disabled facilities for prisoners and visitors are available at all prisons. Prison accommodation for disabled prisoners is generally of the same standard as general prisoner accommodation. Any refurbishment of existing accommodation will include improved disability facilities.

#### **Article 16 – Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse**

A safeguarding adults-at-risk-of-harm policy is currently being developed by the Executive. The definition of an adult at risk of harm is intended to cover adults with any form of disability, who may be unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights or interests. The primary aim of the policy will be to prevent harm (that is, abuse, exploitation or neglect) occurring in the first place and to ensure that effective mechanisms are in place to deal with harm when it occurs or is at risk of occurring. It will be built on the principles of respect, dignity, consent and capacity to consent. If necessary, the policy will be underpinned by legislation.

It will also be supported by cross-sectoral, inter-agency and multi-disciplinary partnership arrangements, the aim of which will be to set the strategic direction for adult safeguarding in Northern Ireland, shored up with effective action planning. One of the key functions of the new safeguarding partnership bodies will be to establish effective mechanisms for engaging with adults at

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

risk of harm, for the purpose of enabling them to contribute to developing safeguarding strategy and policy. (Also supports Articles 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17 and 19).

New safeguarding legislation is being implemented, the aim of which is to prevent unsuitable people from gaining work with children and vulnerable adults, including children and adults with any form of disability. The legislation will create lists of individuals barred from working with children and vulnerable adults and place duties on both employers and employees as a condition of employment with vulnerable groups.

Regional strategies have been developed; 'Tackling Violence at Home' (published October 2005) and 'Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse' (published June 2008). The strategies respond to the needs of all victims/survivors (male, female and children) of domestic and sexual violence and abuse, irrespective of age, gender, sexual orientation, cultural, disability, social or ethnic background.

The strategies are implemented by action plans which translate the strategic aims and objectives into practice by setting out key activities to be achieved within defined timescales.

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/tackling\\_violence\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/tackling_violence_strategy.pdf)

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/8678\\_-\\_sexual\\_violence\\_web.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/8678_-_sexual_violence_web.pdf)

### **Article 19 – Living independently and being included in the community**

The Supporting People programme provides a range of services which are primarily advice and guidance to enable people with a range of support needs

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

including persons with a disability to live as independently as possible. In addition, the 'Supporting People' programme operates within the framework of;

The Northern Ireland Supporting People Strategy 2005 – 2010

The Northern Ireland Supporting People Strategy 2010 – 2015

The PSI Homelessness Strategy

The Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability

Ageing in an Inclusive Society

The Executive has set a target that no-one will remain unnecessarily in hospital by 2013. A Regional Resettlement Team established to ensure the resettlement of those patients in long stay hospitals who have been deemed medically fit for resettlement. Patients and their representative groups and relevant voluntary organisations have membership of the Resettlement Team and significant opportunity to have their voice heard

The Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability advocates that people with a mental illness should be treated in the community unless there are sound clinical reasons for not doing so. The Review also recommended that they should also have access to education, training, employment, housing and leisure activities enjoyed by the wider community. The aim is to ensure that people with a mental illness reach their full potential, live as normal a life as possible and participate in the life of their communities.

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/bamford\\_action\\_plan\\_2009-2011.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/bamford_action_plan_2009-2011.pdf)

The Physical and Sensory Disability Strategy - 2011-2015

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

This strategy is being developed in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability with the intention of helping to create a society in which people with disabilities are encouraged and supported to overcome obstacles in their lives and where they can access those health and social care services necessary to help them to do this. The strategy will help drive forward changes to ensure that people living with disabilities and their carers and families, form part of an inclusive and engaged society and that they are encouraged and supported to achieve and fulfil their maximum potential.

The strategy and action plan is intended to improve outcomes, services and support for individuals, regardless of age, who have a physical, sensory or communication disability. It has been developed through a collaborative partnership between service users, families and carers, many voluntary and community groups and statutory organisations. Whilst the document is predominately written from a health and social care perspective, the importance of cross governmental working is acknowledged. (Also supports Article 12 and 16)

### **Article 20 – Personal mobility**

Under the auspices of the Accessible Transport Strategy a range of measures that will improve the personal mobility of people with disabilities is being implemented. This includes increasing the number of accessible vehicles and services, concessionary fares, improving the provision of travel information and training and the use of audio/visual technology.

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

The Regional Wheelchair Services Implementation Group is working to reform the NI Wheelchair Service and improve service provision. Service users are regularly involved in service improvement through this Group and progress monitored. (Also supports Article 9)

### **Article 24 – Education**

The Department of Education recognises the importance of educating children with special educational needs or disabilities with other children so that they all have access to the same range of educational opportunities.

The Department has established statutory requirements to enhance and safeguard the needs of children and young people with disabilities and/or Special Educational Needs (SEN).

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (SENDO), which came into effect in September 2005, makes it unlawful for schools to discriminate against a child on grounds of a disability and requires them to make reasonable adjustments. It strengthens the rights of SEN pupils to be educated in mainstream schools and makes it unlawful for schools to treat pupils with a disability less favourably than other pupils in all aspects of school life. The legislation requires Education and Library Boards (ELBs) to make arrangements for services to provide parents of children with SEN with advice and information and a means of resolving disputes with schools and Boards.

Schools and school authorities are responsible for ensuring that reasonable adjustments to information and curriculum provision are made to meet pupils'

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

needs. Boards of Governors have a statutory duty to prepare, maintain and implement an Accessibility Plan, addressing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school's curriculum. The Plan must also show how the physical environment is to be improved for the purpose of increasing, within a reasonable time, the extent to which pupils with a disability can take advantage of education and associated services provided by the school.

The Sign Language Partnership Group, which involves Government and Non Government Organisations, considers projects to improve sign language interpretation services and steps are being taken to ensure more sign language interpreters are trained and qualified.

A centralised resource base is being developed which will produce a variety of textbooks and study resources in a range of formats and text to support pupils who are blind or visually impaired.

A Transition Service has been established to provide an effective support service for all pupils, from age 14+, in moving from school to adult life, for which the Board maintains a statement of Special Educational Needs. In addition, the Department chairs one of the sub-groups of the Ministerial Sub Committee on Children and Young People. The sub-group has focused on the area of transitions for children and young people with special educational needs from school or college to employment, training or social care settings. An Action Plan is developed and a range of actions is expected to be delivered in 2011/12.

Widening participation in higher education by students from those groups who are currently under-represented, in particular, students with learning difficulties and disabilities is being addressed through a number of policy initiatives and a range of specific funding mechanisms including a widening

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

access premium for students with disabilities. Institutions can use this funding to provide specialist equipment and/or specific support for such students. The level of Widening Access premium allocated to higher education institutions is based on the number of full-time undergraduate students in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance.

The Register of Support Providers is a unique service which provides one to one personal support to disabled students registered on recognised higher education courses at any of the colleges or universities in Northern Ireland. The support providers include audio-typists, note-takers, dyslexia coaches, study skills mentors, sign language interpreters and campus assistants. The Register offers support, guidance and training to those who deliver support.

### **Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)**

DSAs are awarded to Higher Education students who can show that they have a disability, mental health condition or specific learning difficulty which affects their ability to study. The amount a student gets is not dependent on household income. DSAs are paid on top of the standard student finance package, and do not have to be paid back.

### **Article 25 - Health**

The [Investing for Health](#) policy framework aims to promote healthier lifestyles in terms of positive mental health and wellbeing, smoking prevention/cessation, home accident prevention, skin cancer prevention and improved sexual health. For some policy areas there is limited information

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

available in relation to those with disabilities, however, discussions with voluntary groups representative of those with disabilities have highlighted that some people with disabilities may have particular requirements in accessing information, advice and services. Therefore whilst the strategies are population based, it is recognised that the needs of those with disabilities must be met.

Action to help address these needs include a range of initiatives such as the provision of information, support/ personal development programmes and multi-professional training. Multi-agency implementation groups oversee the implementation of these Strategies and action plans and include representation from the Public Health Authority (PHA), Health and Social Care organisations, other Departments, agencies, local government, the voluntary and community sector, and have a role in ensuring the actions promote equality of opportunity.

Specific examples include: the NI Training Framework for Smoking Cessation Services which requires those delivering smoking cessation services to demonstrate knowledge of the client population comprising people with a disability and how best they might be supported; and the Sexual Health Promotion Strategy which contains commits to the further development of programmes which take account of the needs of those with a disability. (Also supports Article 12)

### **Article 27 – Work and employment**

#### **The Disablement Advisory Service (DSA)**

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

The DSA provides a range of vocational and pre-vocational programmes to meet the needs of disabled people of working age, regardless of the nature of their disability. The particular programme or service that is appropriate for each individual is discussed and agreed with an Adviser based in Jobs and Benefits Offices/Jobcentres. The Disablement Advisory Service has a team of Occupational Psychologists to assist Advisers provide their services.

The DAS programmes include;

### **Job Introduction Scheme**

A job trial lasting up to 13 weeks to enable a disabled person and a potential employer to work together to consider if this or work in general is an appropriate way forward for that individual.

### **New Deal for Disabled People (being replaced by Work Connect in 2011/12)**

A programme for people in receipt of health related benefits. Individuals who are nearly job ready undertake a range of job preparation activities with a contracted Job Broker to assist them to find and keep a job. The Job Broker will continue to provide support in the work place for the first 26 weeks. This programme is no longer open to new entrants.

### **Access to Work**

Access to Work provides individually assessed support to assist disabled people find and keep suitable employment. A range of one off or longer term often indefinite, supports are offered. The supports include: assistance with travel to and from work; the provision of a support worker; provisions of

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

equipment, and; adaptations to premises. Additional assessment services are available from Occupational Therapists, the RNID and RNIB.

### **Workable (NI)**

This is a relatively new programme, introduced late in 2006, that provides a flexible range of long term supports to assist disabled people with substantial barriers to employment to find and keep employment. This programme is delivered by a range of organisations with extensive experience of meeting the vocational needs of disabled people. The support needs of each individual are assessed and the provision can include supports such as a Job Coach to assist the disabled worker and their colleagues adapt to the needs of the particular job; a financial subsidy to the employer; extra training, and/or disability awareness training.

### **Residential Training**

Opportunities for disabled people who are not ready to access mainstream training to undertake residential training is available.

### **Condition Management Programme**

CMP aims to address the health conditions of those clients in receipt of Incapacity Benefits with mild to moderate health conditions. It is based on short-term, work-focused support and advice supplied by healthcare professionals with a view to helping clients understand and manage their condition to assist in their return to work.

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

### **Work Preparation Programme**

Delivered by Service Providers, WPP aims to develop the motivation and confidence of clients in respect of employment and work issues related to a range of disability or health conditions. It aims to develop a client's capacity for seeking, finding and retaining employment. Through client placement in real working environments, WPP will develop the skills and competencies of clients to enable them to take advantage of future employment opportunities.

### **European Social Fund Projects**

DAS provides public match funding to a number of local projects across Northern Ireland which provide training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities of all ages.

### **Article 30 – Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport**

A number of measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life as a result of the duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in particular the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) requirement on Sport Northern Ireland (SNI). The Disability Mainstreaming Policy highlighted a number of positive actions already in place. [www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)

Additional steps have been taken to ensure equality of access is available, both in terms of physical access to buildings and facilities, and access to appropriate information in a format that is suitable to meet individuals' needs.

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

Building regulations alone are not enough to provide adequate access to sports facilities for people with disabilities, particularly in the case of wheelchair users and large numbers of sports chair users, or to provide the facilities required for some other 'disability specific' sports. This is being addressed through a capital programme which has developed the Inclusive Sports Facilities accreditation scheme alongside a technical guidance document which contains technical and operational best practice for sports facilities.

Under discretionary powers in the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966 fishing licences and permits are offered at a reduced rate for disabled anglers to encourage increased participation in the sport of angling by those with disabilities. It also provides detailed guides for disabled anglers on locations and facilities in relation to the Public Angling Estate (PAE) waters. This information is also included on the NI Direct website – [www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/leisure-home-and-community/leisure-and-recreation/outdoor-recreation/angling](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/leisure-home-and-community/leisure-and-recreation/outdoor-recreation/angling)

There is also an annual work programme for increasing access to waters in the PAE, including the construction and maintenance of fishing stands for disabled anglers.

NI Screen has mainstreamed equality considerations into its operations; in equality terms, the focus is; ensuring all groups are aware of activities and opportunities. Uptake of the various funding opportunities is monitored. The Cinema Access Programme, funded local cinemas to provide audio description and soft subtitling equipment for people with sensory impairments.

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

All information about NI Screen initiatives including their website is fully accessible to disabled people.

The Arts Council NI (ACNI) reviews external and internal communication policies, practices and procedures from a disability equality perspective.

The Arts Council runs a module of questions through the Central Survey Unit Omnibus Survey. The survey, which examines attendance and participation among the adult (aged 16+) population in Northern Ireland, generates engagement data under a number of relevant Section 75 categories including religion, age, dependents and disability and is used to inform the development of strategies, programmes and projects. Data is also used to gauge progress against strategic targets. ACNI has also commissioned extensive research into barriers to disabled people's involvement in the arts. This provides a baseline to measure progress.

The Arts Council's Capital projects follow government (CPD) guidelines on accessibility. For example, ACNI continue to recommend the appointment of independent access consultants for all funded capital projects. As part of the condition of grant all new approved schemes are required to provide an access audit report.

ACNI operates a 'Premium Payments' scheme to encourage enhanced disability access. A Premium Payment of up to £3,000 each year per successful applicant organisation has improved Section 75 related access, with most of the money allocated to disability access. In relation to Disability the Premium Payment Scheme covers: carer's costs, language translation, visual aid (e.g. Braille), sign language and hearing aid assistance.

## Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the United Nations Committee

Participation Access Group – this group was formed by the Arts Council and consists of organisations that support those with disabilities in accessing and participating in the arts. This group meets to review progress in tackling the barriers to participation in the arts for disabled people.

The Sign Language Partnership Group (SLPG) brings together representatives across government with organisations representing the Deaf community to improve access to services for sign language users and to increase the number of sign language interpreters and tutors in NI. Projects approved for funding by the SLPG are subject to agreement of a monitoring and evaluation plan which measures outcomes against these objectives.

The SLPG have also funded a 'User Fora' in 2009 which brought together members of the Deaf community with government representatives to allow them to provide information on gaps in public services and to develop recommendations for improvement. This will help inform the future strategic direction of the SLPG.

The Library policy 'Delivering Tomorrow's Libraries' states library buildings must comply with best practice in terms of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 for particular groups, such as people with disabilities or visual impairment including accessible buildings (capital investment) and accessible library stock (large print, spoken word, Braille). The library Service also has a service to the housebound.

The draft Museums policy cites the 'United Nations Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities (UNCRPD) along with current UK and Northern Ireland legislation on DDA.

Northern Ireland Executive's Contribution to the UK Government Report to the  
United Nations Committee