



**Centre on Human
Rights for People
with Disabilities**



Understanding

Your Human Rights

Supporting people with disabilities to achieve their human rights


What are human rights?

Human rights are entitlements that every human being has to be treated fairly and involved in society. You have human rights simply because you are human.

Human rights are important as they influence our thinking, our actions and our treatment of others. They are based on a set of common values – fairness, respect, equality and dignity.

Some examples of human rights include the right to:

- healthcare;
- education;
- live independently and participate in the community;
- access justice;
- an adequate standard of living; and
- freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.



**People with disabilities
have the same human rights
as everyone else.**

How are human rights protected?

The European Convention on Human Rights (1950)

The European Convention on Human Rights is an international treaty, to protect human rights in Europe. The European Court of Human Rights was also set up as part of this Convention, which allows people to take cases to it, if they believe their human rights have not been upheld by a domestic court.

Human Rights Act (1998)

In Northern Ireland, our human rights are also supported by the Human Rights Act (1998) which came into effect in October 2000. This is an act of the Westminster parliament, which incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights into law in the United Kingdom (UK).

By making the European Convention part of the law here, the Human Rights Act allows individuals and organisations to go to court or to a tribunal to seek a remedy, if they believe that their human rights have been violated by a public authority.

Disability Discrimination Act (1995)

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the DDA) and its subsequent amendments also provide protection for people with disabilities in Northern Ireland against discrimination on the grounds of disability.

This protection applies to the following areas:

- employment;
- vocational training;
- the provision of goods, facilities and services;
- education;
- premises; and
- transport.

The DDA recognises that barriers exist within society, which present difficulties for people with disabilities and creates a positive duty on employers, education and service providers to make 'reasonable adjustments' to their policies and premises where reasonable and appropriate.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008)

Although existing international human rights agreements apply to everyone, including people with disabilities, there is evidence that disabled people around the world encounter a range of physical, cultural, social and attitudinal barriers, which prevent them from accessing the same human rights as non-disabled people.

An international agreement - the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008) (UNCRPD) - was therefore developed to confirm that people with disabilities have the same human rights as non-disabled people. It protects the rights of people with disabilities in all areas of life including healthcare, independent living, personal mobility and access to justice.



**This Convention protects
the rights of disabled people
in all areas of life**

How does this Convention help people living with disabilities in Northern Ireland?

- The Convention says that disabled people's human rights are important.
- The Government and public bodies must work in ways that take account of these human rights.
- A framework must be put in place to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the Convention.
- The Government will be accountable for its actions and must report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on what it is doing to implement the Convention.
- The Convention can be used as a tool to challenge or change the law in favour of people with disabilities.
- People with disabilities can make complaints to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, if they believe their rights have not been protected by domestic courts.
- This Committee will try to make sure that disabled people's rights are being properly looked after.

How can Disability Action's Centre on Human Rights help you?

Disability Action's Centre on Human Rights works to promote and protect the human rights of people with disabilities through education, capacity building, outreach work, campaigning, research and advocacy support.

Understanding your rights

If you are a person with a disability, a family member or a representative of a disability organisation, who would like to know more about the rights of a person with a disability, you can avail of training provided by Disability Action's Centre on Human Rights. This training is also relevant for representatives of public bodies, who have a duty to work in ways which protect the rights of people with disabilities.

Supporting your organisation

If you are a person with a disability or an organisation which works with disabled people and you would like to know more about the human rights of people with disabilities, you can speak to our Outreach Officer.

Supporting you to achieve your rights

If you are a person with a disability and you believe you have been treated unfairly and denied your human rights, you can speak to an advocate from Disability Action's Centre on Human Rights. The advocate will listen to you, identify the options available to you and support you to take action to secure your human rights.

For further information on the work of Disability Action's Centre on Human Rights, please contact:

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