



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

The United Nations  
Convention on the Rights  
of Persons with Disabilities

A Summary

## **What is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?**

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international agreement which came into force on 3 May 2008. It confirms that people with disabilities have the same human rights as everyone else and binds countries to protect those rights.

## **Why is the Convention necessary?**

Approximately 10% of the world's population have a disability. Although existing human rights treaties apply to everyone, including people with disabilities, there is evidence that disabled people around the world encounter a range of physical and social obstacles, preventing them from:

- receiving an education;
- obtaining a job;
- accessing information;
- obtaining proper health care;
- getting around; and
- being accepted by society.

In the past, disabled people have been perceived as individuals who require protection and evoke sympathy rather than respect. This Convention is a major step towards changing the perception of disability and ensures that societies recognise that all people must be provided with the opportunities to live life to their fullest potential.

The Convention protects the rights of all people with disabilities in all areas of life including access to justice, personal mobility, independent living and freedom of expression.

### **How does the Convention help disabled people living in Northern Ireland?**

The UK Government ratified the Convention in June 2009, agreeing to be legally bound by it. It must promote, protect, and ensure disabled people enjoy their human rights and full equality under the law.

This means that people living with disabilities in Northern Ireland:

- have the same rights as other people;
- have the freedom to make their own choices;
- should be treated equally and with dignity and respect;
- should be involved in making decisions about their day to day lives; and
- should not be discriminated against.

## **How will the Convention be implemented?**

Article 33 of the Convention requires countries to create a framework to promote, protect and monitor its implementation. It makes clear that people with disabilities, their representative organisations and society as a whole have an essential role to play in ensuring the Convention is being implemented effectively.

Every country that has ratified the Convention must report to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on what it has done to implement the Convention.

The UK has also ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention, which allows disabled people to bring complaints to the UN Committee, if they believe their rights have been breached. The Committee can also undertake enquiries into alleged violations of the Convention.

## **Why should you understand the Convention?**

If you are a person with a disability or a representative organisation, it is important that you understand the Convention and recognise when human rights are being violated.

Everyone in society has a duty to understand the rights of people with disabilities and to ensure these rights are protected and exercised.

This document provides a summary of the articles of the Convention. For the full text, visit [www.un.org/disabilities](http://www.un.org/disabilities)

## **A summary of the articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

### **Article 1: Purpose**

The purpose of the Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities. People with disabilities include 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.

### **Article 2: Definitions**

This article defines some of the key terms used in the Convention including “communication”; “language”; “discrimination on the basis of disability”; “reasonable accommodation” and “universal design”.

### **Article 3: General principles**

The Convention is based on the principles of respect for dignity; non-discrimination; participation and inclusion; respect for difference; equality of opportunity; accessibility; equality between men and women; and respect for children.

## **Article 4: General obligations**

Countries must take a range of measures, with the active involvement of people with disabilities, to ensure and promote the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination of any kind.

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

Everyone is equal before and under the law. Everyone is entitled to the equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination.

## **Article 6: Women with disabilities**

Women and girls with disabilities experience multiple discrimination. Countries must take all appropriate measures to ensure that women with disabilities are able to fully enjoy the rights and freedoms set out in the Convention.

## **Article 7: Children with disabilities**

Children with disabilities have the same human rights as all other children. The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children with disabilities. Children with disabilities have the right to express their views on all matters affecting them.

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

Countries must raise awareness of the rights, capabilities and contributions of people with disabilities. Countries must challenge stereotypes and prejudices relating to people with disabilities through campaigning, education, media and awareness-raising programmes.

## **Article 9: Accessibility**

People with disabilities have the right to access all aspects of society on an equal basis with others including the physical environment, transportation, information and communications, and other facilities and services provided to the public.

## **Article 10: Right to life**

People with disabilities have the right to life. Countries must take all necessary measures to ensure that people with disabilities are able to effectively enjoy this right on an equal basis with others.

## **Article 11: Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies**

Countries must take all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of all persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters.

## **Article 12: Equal recognition before the law**

People with disabilities have the right to recognition as persons before the law. People with disabilities have legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life. Countries must take appropriate measures to provide support to people with disabilities so that they can effectively exercise their legal capacity.

## **Article 13: Access to justice**

People with disabilities have the right to effective access to justice on an equal basis with others, including through the provision of appropriate accommodations.

## **Article 14: Liberty and security of person**

People with disabilities have the right to liberty and security of person on an equal basis with others. Existence of disability alone cannot be used to justify deprivation of liberty.

## **Article 15: Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**

People with disabilities have the right to be free from torture and from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. No one shall be subjected to medical or scientific experimentation without his or her free consent.

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

People with disabilities have the right to be protected from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, including their gender based aspects, within and outside the home.

## **Article 17: Protecting the integrity of the person**

Every person with disabilities has a right to respect for his or her physical and mental integrity on an equal basis with others.

## **Article 18: Liberty of movement and nationality**

People with disabilities have the right to a nationality. Children with disabilities have the right to a name and to know and be cared for by their parents.

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

People with disabilities have the right to live independently in the community. Countries must ensure that people with disabilities have the opportunity to choose where they live and with whom they live, and that they are provided with the support necessary to do this.

## **Article 20: Personal mobility**

Countries must take effective and appropriate measures to ensure personal mobility for people with disabilities in the manner and time of their choice, and at affordable cost. People with disabilities also have the right to access quality mobility aids, assistive technologies and forms of live assistance and intermediaries.

## **Article 21: Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information**

People with disabilities have the right to express themselves, including the freedom to give and receive information and ideas through all forms of communication, including through accessible formats and technologies, sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, mass media and all other accessible means of communication.

## **Article 22: Respect for privacy**

People with disabilities have the right to privacy. Information about people with disabilities including personal information and information about their health should be protected.

## **Article 23: Respect for home and the family**

People with disabilities have the right to marry and to found a family. Countries must provide effective and appropriate support to people with disabilities in bringing up children, and provide alternative care to children with disabilities where the immediate family is unable to care for them.

## **Article 24: Education**

People with disabilities have a right to education without discrimination. Countries must ensure that people with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education in their own community. Countries must also provide reasonable accommodation and individualised support to maximise academic and social development.

## **Article 25: Health**

People with disabilities have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination. Countries must take all appropriate measures, including measures that are gender-sensitive, to ensure that people with disabilities have access to the same range, quality and standard of health care that is available to everyone else, and which are close to people's own communities.

## **Article 26: Habilitation and rehabilitation**

Countries must take effective and appropriate measures to enable people with disabilities to develop, attain and maintain maximum ability, independence and participation through the provision of habilitation and rehabilitation services and programmes.

## **Article 27: Work and employment**

People with disabilities have the right to work, including the right to work in an environment that is open, inclusive and accessible. Countries must take appropriate steps to promote employment opportunities and career advancement for people with disabilities.

## **Article 28: Adequate standard of living and social protection**

People with disabilities have the right to an adequate standard of living including food, water, clothing and housing, and to effective social protection including poverty reduction and public housing programmes.

## **Article 29: Participation in political and public life**

People with disabilities have the right to participate in politics and in public affairs, as well as to vote and to be elected.

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

People with disabilities have the right to take part in cultural life on an equal basis with others, including access to cultural materials, performances and services, and to recreational, leisure and sporting activities.

## **Article 31: Statistics and data collection**

Countries must collect information about people with disabilities, with the active involvement of people with disabilities, so that they can better understand the barriers they experience and make the Convention rights real.

## **Articles 32-50**

Articles 32-50 explain how countries which are bound by the Convention must give it full effect. They also explain the responsibility of countries to report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on how they are putting the Convention into effect.

Disability Action's Centre on Human Rights for People with Disabilities works to promote and protect the human rights of people with disabilities in Northern Ireland, and to foster a culture of human rights for disabled people through education, capacity building, campaigning, lobbying, influencing and legal challenge.

**For more information, please contact:**

Centre on Human Rights for People with Disabilities  
Disability Action,  
Portside Business Park,  
189 Airport Road West,  
Belfast, BT3 9ED  
Northern Ireland,  
United Kingdom

Telephone: 028 9029 7880

Textphone: 028 9029 7882

Facsimile: 028 9029 7881

Email: [humanrights@disabilityaction.org](mailto:humanrights@disabilityaction.org)

Web: [www.disabilityhumanrights.org](http://www.disabilityhumanrights.org)

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