

Centre on Human Rights for Disabled People

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The Principles

**The United Nations Convention
on the Rights of Persons with
Disabilities**

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Disability and Human Rights

Human Rights are rights that everyone has just by being human. A right is a promise that is made to people by government¹. One of the most important human rights is the right not to be discriminated against.

Human rights cannot be taken away. This means that all people with and without disabilities have human rights. It is important that **everyone's** human rights are respected.

Some facts

It is estimated that there are at least 600 million people with disabilities across the world or approximately 10% of the global population².

In Northern Ireland, more than 1 in 5 (300,000) people has a disability³. Over one quarter of families here have experience of disability.

¹ Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2007

² G. Quinn and T. Degener, authors of a United Nations report on disability and human rights, 2003

“Throughout the ages, the treatment of people with disabilities has brought out some of the worst aspects of human nature... On paper, they have enjoyed the same rights as others; in real life, they have often been relegated to the margins and denied the opportunities that others take for granted⁴.”

The New Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a new **international agreement**.

The new Convention is important for disabled people's human rights throughout the world. The agreement, which is also known as a **treaty**, says that people with disabilities have the same human rights as everyone else.

The Convention is based on a set of important **ideas** or **principles** which tell us what the Convention means for people with disabilities. These principles are set out in Article 3 of the Convention.

³ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, 2003

⁴ UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, 2006

The Convention's Principles

- **Dignity**
People with disabilities have the same worth and value as everyone else
- **Independence**
People with disabilities are independent people
- **Freedom to make choices**
People with disabilities are free to make their own choices and decisions
- **Non-discrimination**
People with disabilities should not be discriminated against
- **Participation**
People with disabilities have the same right to participate in society as anyone else
- **Inclusion**
People with disabilities have the same right to be fully included in society as anyone else

- **Respect for difference**
People's differences should be respected
- **Acceptance by other people**
People with disabilities should be accepted for who they are
- **Equality of opportunity**
People with disabilities should have the same opportunities as everyone else
- **Access**
People with disabilities should have access to all buildings, facilities and services

Why are these principles important?

These **ideas** or **principles** show that people with disabilities are valuable members of our society.

Countries will have to use these principles when deciding what needs to be done so that people with disabilities are able to enjoy their human rights and freedoms as much as everyone else.

What countries can do

Countries can use these principles to look after disabled people's human rights in many different ways. For example, countries could:

- Give people with disabilities more say on how to make their lives better
- Give people with disabilities the support they need to make decisions and undertake activities
- Change laws and policies so that people with disabilities are included in a positive way
- Include people with disabilities when making new laws and policies
- Make information available in accessible formats
- Ask children and young people with disabilities what they think
- Make sure that buildings, transport, services and facilities are designed so that everyone can use them or they can be easily adapted

- Talk about people with disabilities in positive ways
- Make sure that people with disabilities are protected from violence, cruelty, torture and other forms of abuse
- Make sure that people with disabilities can choose where they live and who they live with
- Give people with disabilities the support to be independent
- Provide support for parents with disabilities
- Give people with disabilities the opportunity to find and keep jobs
- Make sure that people with disabilities have access to a good standard of education

More Information

To find out more information about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and how you can get involved in human rights work, please contact the Centre on Human Rights for Disabled People.