

Have your say: Human Rights in Northern Ireland

Consultation on the creation of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland

This consultation was set up by the Northern Ireland Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights. The Committee wants to hear your views and understand how you feel about the creation of a Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland.

Why was the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights set up?

The Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights was set up following the New Decade, New Approach Agreement in early 2020. The Committee is tasked with considering the creation of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. That includes looking at the implications of a Bill of Rights here and what rights it might include. The Committee has discussed and received briefings from a wide range of stakeholders and experts in human rights in recent months, but a crucial part of its evidence-gathering is listening to those who are directly affected – you.

What is the consultation about?

This consultation is about the Committee getting your views, listening to what you think and taking on board how you feel about the creation of a Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland. The results of the consultation will provide valuable information to the Committee and help inform its forward work programme. The survey is completely anonymous and confidential. If you choose to provide contact details, so you are kept informed of the Committee's work, these details will not be linked to your responses.

Why should I get involved?

This is your chance to say what you think and how you feel. Your views and opinions are as important as anyone's. To get an understanding of what people who live here think about the creation of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, we need to hear from lots of different people. By getting involved you'll help to ensure that the Committee's report is reflective of society across Northern Ireland.

How do I get involved?

You can complete the consultation survey attached.

Complete our survey

This short survey should take less than ten minutes to complete. The results will provide valuable information to the Committee.

The survey is completely anonymous and confidential. If you choose to provide contact details they will not be linked to your responses.

1. Views on Human Rights

This first set of questions looks at your general view on human rights.

a. To what extent do you agree that everyone in Northern Ireland today enjoys the same basic human rights?

- A. Strongly agree
- B. Agree
- C. Neither agree nor disagree
- D. Disagree
- E. Strongly disagree
- F. Don't know

b. Why do you feel this way?

If I was born in England and live in NI, my identity is better facilitated than if I am Irish, or British and Irish. My identity is likely to be better accommodated in legislation defined outside NI. The protections to ensure the identities of NI are taken into consideration are not effective or do not exist.

The present legislative mechanisms outside NI have a material affect on those from and in NI. Anything claiming to be a Bill of Rights can only function as such if it has legal effect on those mechanisms external to NI.

I would hope this opportunity could be used to provide protection and reinforce protection for the people of NI and throughout the United Kingdom & Ireland.

Alongside abuses by several home-grown groups, the most severe impacts to Human Rights within NI have been enacted by external agencies.

There is also the separate issue of the people of NI having been, and presently, subject to significant hostility and abuse outside NI, particularly in Great Britain.

Any Bill of Rights must reach beyond NI, acknowledge this history and extend to its *people*.

2. Protections

In your view, do people in Northern Ireland need more protection for their human rights in relation to any of the following areas?

Choose as many as you like.

- A. Age
- B. Caring responsibilities
- C. Community background
- D. Criminal record
- E. Cultural background
- F. Disability
- G. Economic status or income
- H. Ethnic group
- I. Family or civil status
- J. Gender
- K. Health status
- L. Language
- M. National identity
- N. Political or other opinion
- O. Pregnancy and maternity
- P. Property
- Q. Religion or belief
- R. Sexual orientation
- S. Don't know
- T. None of the above
- U. Other

If you selected 'Other', please let us know what other areas you think should be included:

I believe the legislative measures to protect the people of NI are largely in place but the mechanisms and sanctions to ensure they are being respected are not. This is particularly obvious with agencies based in other parts or serving the whole of the United Kingdom.

I believe this leads to inequity and inequality in practice within NI, and for the people of Northern Ireland in the rest of the UK. The fencing of 'rights' to Northern Ireland without legal force and enforcement mechanism in rest of the UK, severely reduces the impact of any rights. A Bill of Rights should be the opportunity to address this gap.

An example:

Several UK national authorities/agencies are not explicitly required to monitor or adhere to NI norms. Presently, the Architects Registration Board, ARB, oversees the registration of Architects throughout the UK, including Northern Ireland. It does not engage with the people of NI appropriately in two ways:

1/Its present monitoring procedures make no accommodation for the identities of NI. Selection of National Identity is binary between British and Irish. This of course causes offence.

2/ There is no monitoring of political or social groups, so no monitoring to uncover if there is equity of access to, or representation from, the two relevant parts of the community of NI within the Architect profession. Any deficiency in representation cannot therefore be investigated or addressed.

When this has been raised with ARB, they are neither aware or concerned that different Human Rights Legislation operates in NI. On the substantive points above, EHRC have confirmed they will not address this. NIHRC has stated it has no jurisdiction to.

There is no point in having a Bill of Rights without its enforcement where it can have effect. To be truly universal rights they must be accepted by the UK and Irish Governments and adhered to throughout both jurisdictions for those it covers.

Otherwise, the exercise will lead to a choice between rights: like the right for the people of NI to reside anywhere on these isles [GFA/BA] versus being adequately protected by any Bill of Rights applicable to NI.

3. Values

In your view, which of the following values, if any, would make appropriate foundations for rights in Northern Ireland?

Choose as many as you like.

- A. Community
- B. Human dignity (everyone deserves respect)
- C. Fairness

- D. Freedom and democracy
- E. Justice
- F. Mutual respect (respect for each other)
- G. Parity of esteem (valuing all traditions equally)
- H. Respect for culture, identity, traditions and aspirations
- I. Peace and reconciliation
- J. Don't know
- K. Other

If you selected 'Other', please let us know what other foundations you think should be included:

4. Bill of Rights

Human rights are freedoms and protections belonging to everyone. A bill of rights contains human rights protections for everyone - it is a list of the laws a country agrees to make to protect all the people who live there.

a. How important, if at all, do you think a bill of rights is for Northern Ireland?

- A. Very Important
- B. Important

- C. Moderately important
- D. Slightly important
- E. Not important at all
- F. Don't know

b. To what extent, if at all, do you agree that a bill of rights for Northern Ireland should set out an aspirational vision based on guiding or foundational values?

- A. Strongly agree
- B. Agree
- C. Neither agree nor disagree
- D. Disagree
- E. Strongly disagree
- F. Don't know

c. Civil and political rights can include freedom from discrimination; the right to privacy; freedom of expression, assembly, religion and movement; and the right to a fair trial. To what extent, if at all, do you agree that a bill of rights for Northern Ireland should include civil and political rights?

- A. Strongly agree
- B. Agree
- C. Neither agree nor disagree
- D. Disagree
- E. Strongly disagree
- F. Don't know

d. What, if any, political and civil rights would you like to see in a bill of rights for Northern Ireland?

The Right to be offended.

e. Social and economic and cultural rights can include rights around standards of living, health, social security, victims, education and language. To what extent, if at all, do you agree that a bill of rights for Northern Ireland should include social, economic and cultural rights?

- A. Strongly agree
- B. Agree
- C. Neither agree nor disagree
- D. Disagree
- E. Strongly disagree
- F. Don't know

f. What, if any, social, economic and cultural rights would you like to see in a bill of rights for Northern Ireland?

-The right to evidence-based decision making (cuts across many issues).
-For Victims of our past: the right to pursue truth and to be reasonably helped in that effort.

g. To what extent, if at all, do you agree that a bill of rights for Northern Ireland should include the right to a healthy environment?

A. Strongly agree

B. Agree

C. Neither agree nor disagree

D. Disagree

E. Strongly disagree

F. Don't know

h. Do you have any other comments?

Wellbeing is key for our and our children's futures.

It is not just our physical environment: Air, water, fields. Our towns, cities, buildings but our methods of social support, healthcare, justice, and education.

The summation of that surrounding an individual's experience.

