

Cathie White
Clerk to the Committee for Employment and Learning
Room 373
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

19 September 2014

Dear Cathie

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

I refer to your letter of 10 September 2014 in which the Committee requested comments on a Northern Ireland Assembly Research Paper about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

The Executive's Disability Strategy '*A Strategy to improve the lives of people with disabilities 2012-15*' provides a framework for the implementation of the UNCRPD by all Departments across both general and disability-specific policy areas. The Executive is collectively responsible for the delivery of the Strategy and the fulfilment of our obligations under the UNCRPD.

Under the Strategy, OFMDFM has lead responsibility to deliver in two key areas: Disability Awareness and Advocacy; and Monitoring, Reporting and Governance.

In relation to Disability Awareness and Advocacy:

- We hosted a major, inclusive disability awareness conference for representatives across government and the disability sector to consider how current arrangements met the needs of all people with disabilities on the basis of equality.
- We worked in partnership with Disability Action to develop a DVD resource pack for teachers and youth workers to help teach pupils and young people about the rights of people with disabilities. The resource pack was launched in December 2013 and, following positive feedback from schools and youth groups, we now intend to roll the resource pack out across all schools within Northern Ireland.

- We continue to create awareness through our commitment to supporting Special Olympics Ulster and have contributed funding totalling £459,000 to date. This funding has provided people with learning disabilities with an opportunity to actively participate in public life and demonstrated the positive side of learning disabilities through sporting achievements.
- We sponsored a Symposium event organised by MENCAP and Niamh which focused on capacity building, advocacy and the rights of people with learning disabilities and mental health difficulties to make decisions in all aspects of their lives.
- We are working to establish a Disability Awareness and Advocacy Focus Group comprised of government officials, representatives from statutory, voluntary and community sectors and individuals with disabilities to discuss how we can provide greater awareness of advocacy support for people with disabilities, their families and carers.

In relation to Monitoring, Reporting and Governance:

- We have published a baseline indicator set using data derived from the 2006 Northern Ireland Survey of people with Activity Limitations and Disabilities (NISALD). We intend to consider re-running this survey in 2016 and report on progress against the indicators developed from the 2006 baseline. This will form an element of the monitoring and evaluation of the Disability Strategy.
- We have worked with a stakeholder focus group to develop a set of indicators to measure progress against the strategic priorities identified within the strategy on an annual basis.
- We intend to expand the remit of the Disability Strategy Monitoring Group to be the overarching group that will oversee, monitor and report on progress in relation to the Disability Strategy. The group will consist of representatives from the disability sector, individuals with disabilities, OFMDFM officials and NISRA statisticians.
- We have also established a Departmental Disability Strategy Focus Group to ensure a coordinated and joined up approach to the implementation of the Disability Strategy across all Departments.

Officials are currently preparing the first annual report on the Strategy which will provide a full account of the actions taken by all Departments in 2013/14 to address the identified inequalities experienced by people with disabilities and to tackle the barriers that people with

disabilities face in their daily lives. This is expected to be published in Autumn 2014, subject to Ministerial and Executive approval.

OFMDFM officials continue to participate in a cross-departmental group on transitions and post-19 provision for people with learning disabilities, led by DEL, which is working to produce an action plan for consideration by the Ministerial Group on Mental Health and Learning Disability.

We are aware of the working paper on the implementation of UNCRPD, published by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and we are considering what steps we can take to address the identified policy and programme gaps that relate to OFMDFM policy responsibilities. We have circulated the paper to all Departments to ensure that they are aware of the findings that relate to their respective policy areas.

I trust that this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Signed Colette Kerr

Colette Kerr
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer