



UK Disability Policy

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Key parameters

- Scepticism about application of abstract thought to politics, including terminology of 'rights'. Emphasis instead on incremental change to achieve measurable outcomes.
- Disability policy based primarily on UK experience since CS&DP Act in 1970 and first minister for the disabled in the world.
- Uneven pattern of devolved authorities, with weak local government. Policy driven by central government.
- Major effect of Paralympic Games.

Progress with UNCRDP

- Ratified by UK in 2009, including optional protocol. Some reservations (eg on Art 24 to maintain parental choice of education, Art 27 on exemption for armed forces).
- Not binding in law, but implemented through acts of parliament and regulations (eg 2010 Equality Act)
- Initial report to UN in 2011.

Key agencies

- Office for Disability Issues (ODI). Develops and promotes strategy on disability across whole government. Headed by Director and Minister for Disabled People.
- Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). Monitors compliance by public authorities, employers etc.
- Joint Committee on Human Rights. Parliamentary group which supervises departmental work.
- Disability Action Alliance. Set up by government to include disability organisations and service-providers.

Key policy documents

- *Fulfilling Potential* (2011). Followed by *Making it Happen* and *Technical Annex* (2013). Refers to UNCRDP and includes detailed policy proposals, targets and key indicators. *Building Understanding* (2013)
- *UK Initial Report* (2011) to UN.
- *JCHR report on implementation of UNCRDP* (2012). Critical of government policy.
- Other policy reports include sections on disability (eg *Transport for Everyone* (2012)).

Implementation

- Wide range of policy initiatives across several government departments, with effectiveness measured by 11 main and 49 subsidiary indicators
- Programme to strengthen DPULO's, via Facilitation Fund, 15 disabled ambassadors and action 'toolkit'.
- 50 'role models' identified to promote aspiration.
- DAA has promoted projects to improve advocacy, transport, financial support etc.
- Social care funding devolved to individual disabled people ('personalisation').

Notes and problems

- Strategy focuses on people with physical disabilities, sensory impairments and mental disorders. Separate policy for people with intellectual disabilities.
- Disabled people not a discrete group, and very diverse in character. Dangers of one sub-group determining policy for all, and of social engineering.
- Individual budgets have high transaction costs, and cuts to local authority expenditure restrict access to funding.



CHALLENGES IN UK

The Political Scene

HOSTILITY

- 1-Government and right wing press
- Hostility to rights
- Threat to leave UN Convention on Rights

- 2-Hostility to the role of government-neo liberal agenda (except for security)

HOSTILITY

- Demonization of welfare
- Growing disparity in income and conditions
- Use of words like ‘Scroungers’/’Scivers’
- Attack on disability benefits
- Demonization of disability (cancelling out Para Lympics feel good factor)

Cutbacks

- Fewer people getting services
- Those that get them often get less

IMPACT ON+ OF UNCRPD IMPLEMENTATION

- 'Rights' language may be ignored
- People preoccupied with survival

One Way Forward

- Development of 'political ecology networks'
- Disability inclusion is not about improving entry into a perfect society

2 Networks

- 1-with Other Excluded Groups-
- Especially around POVERTY

- 2-with other groups interested in sustainability-Transition Town-this latter is particularly focussed on local action