

# Disability Strategy Expert Advisory Panel

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Report & Recommendations:  
Executive Summary

December 2020

## Overview

This report has been developed by the Expert Panel for the Disability Strategy. The role of the Expert Panel for the Disability Strategy is to advise the Department for Communities on the priorities and themes upon which a cross-departmental Disability Strategy and supporting action plan should be developed. The Expert Panel, appointed by the Department for Communities, comprised of Dr. Bronagh Byrne, Seán Fitzsimons, Tony O'Reilly and Professor Eilionóir Flynn. The panel conducted its work between September and December 2020.

## Report Focus

The report takes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) as the primary point of departure. The CRPD connects all d/Deaf and disabled people, of all ages, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicities and backgrounds, and was developed by and with d/Deaf and disabled people. In developing this report, the panel chose to focus on the General Principles of the CRPD set out in Article 3 of the Convention, as a guide to what should be included in any Disability Strategy.

It is critical to note that the recommendations and measures contained in the report are to be taken as a starting point – a first step. It takes an illustrative rather than exhaustive approach to the themes and topics which can be addressed in the next Disability Strategy for Northern Ireland. These should provide guidance for further work and development, especially by the Disability Strategy Co-Design Group, and by d/Deaf and disabled people themselves.

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## Recommendations

The report presents recommendations and measures across the following thematic areas:

- General measures
- Autonomy and independent living
- Equality and non-discrimination
- Accessibility
- Intersectionality

Based on this, the panel feel that there are four core priorities underpinning this present report which should be reflected in the final disability strategy:

- Participation and leadership of d/Deaf and disabled people (recognising their multiple identities and spanning the entire spectrum of disability)
- Economic security of d/Deaf and disabled people
- Autonomy of d/Deaf and disabled people
- Resources to achieve the Strategy's objectives

This must also be supported by up to date, consistent and disaggregated data on d/Deaf and disabled people's experiences of their rights in Northern Ireland; something that continues to be significantly lacking.

In our view the next Disability Strategy must be explicitly rights-based and act as the central tool for implementing the CRPD in Northern Ireland. The rich and diverse lived experiences of the disability community in Northern Ireland must be given voice in the development of responsive legislative and policy solutions and appropriate structures, services and infrastructure. In short, there must be nothing about us, without us.

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