



Commonwealth Forum of
National Human Rights Institutions

Protecting disabled people's rights during COVID-19



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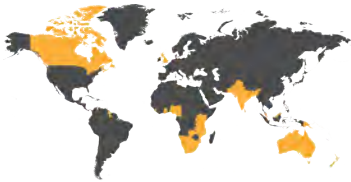
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Introduction



The **Commonwealth** Forum of **National Human Rights Institutions** has written this report to explain how Commonwealth countries have been working to be fair to disabled people during the **COVID-19 pandemic**.



The **Commonwealth** is a group of 54 countries. Most of them used to be run by the UK.



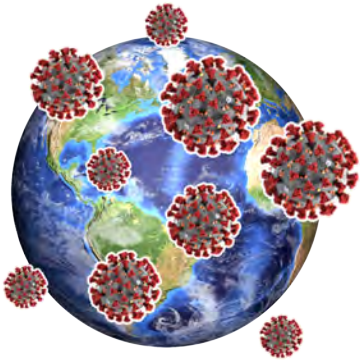
National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) are organisations in each Commonwealth country that are working to protect **human rights**.



Human rights are the basic things that every person in the world should have and be able to do.



COVID-19 is also called Coronavirus. It affects your lungs and breathing.



Pandemic means it is spreading around the world.



Countries around the world have had to change the way they do things and provide services during the COVID-19 pandemic.



These changes have affected disabled people more than other people.

Disabled people have been affected by COVID-19 more than other people.

How National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) have been helping



NHRIs have been giving advice about protecting disabled people's rights during COVID-19.



They work with experts to find out which areas need help and advice the most.



There are lots of ways that disabled people's rights can be affected during COVID-19.



NHRIs have been giving advice to:

- healthcare organisations
- shops
- local governments
- national governments.



Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)



AHRC gave advice to organisations that provide healthcare services.



They have also been helping disabled people and their families and carers to know their rights while in healthcare.



You can see the advice here:
www.humanrights.gov.au/guidelines-rights-people-disability-health-and-disability



The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) of Great Britain



EHRC gave advice to shops.



Shops in Britain have had to make changes to help stop COVID-19 spreading.



EHRC said that these changes must not affect the rights of disabled people.



You can see the advice here:
www.equalityhumanrights.com/retailers%E2%80%99-legal-responsibility-disabled-customers



The New Zealand Human Rights Commission (NZHRC)



NZHRC said that disabled people should be talked to and included when information about COVID-19 was being written.



Their advice said that **Māori** disabled people especially should be included so their rights would be protected.

Māori people are a race of people from New Zealand.



You can see the advice here:
www.covid19.hrc.co.nz/human_rights_and_te_tiriti_need_to_be_part_of_covid_19_response



The Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC)

SHRC gave advice to care homes in Scotland.



It was about people in care homes having visitors during COVID-19.



You can see the advice here:
**[www.scottishhumanrights.com/
visiting-guidance-for-adult-care-
homes/](http://www.scottishhumanrights.com/visiting-guidance-for-adult-care-homes/)**

Collecting information and keeping an eye on things



The **National Human Rights Institutions** (NHRIs) are watching to make sure countries stick to the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (CRPD).



The **United Nations** is an organisation made up of many countries working together. It works to make the world a safer and better place.



The **CRPD** is a set of rules about disabled people's rights which have been agreed by most countries in the world.



By watching what is happening, the NHRIs will see if any disabled people are not getting their rights in any country.



The Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC)

CHRC asked disabled people about the best ways to look out for things that are affecting disabled people.

You can see the results here:

www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/infographics



New Zealand's Independent Monitoring Mechanism (IMM)

IMM wrote a report called 'Making Disability Rights Real in a Pandemic.'

The IMM is made up of:

- the NZHRC
- the New Zealand Disabled People's Organisations Coalition
- the **Ombudsman**.



The **Ombudsman** deals with complaints about services.



The report says how well New Zealand have followed what the United Nations has said during the COVID-19 pandemic.

You can see it here:

www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/making-disability-rights-real-pandemic

The Independent Mechanism in Northern Ireland (IMNI)



IMNI wrote a report called 'Unequal impact? Coronavirus, disability and access to services.'

The IMNI is made up of:

- the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC)
- the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI).



They gave the report to the **UK Women and Equalities Committee** inquiry.



The **UK Women and Equalities Committee** is a committee of the UK Parliament. It checks on the work of the UK Government's Equalities Office.



The report said that information about COVID-19 was being not used to think about disabled people.



You can see the report here:
www.committees.parliament.uk/unequal-impact-coronavirus-disability-and-access-to-services/



The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR)



KNCHR collected information about problems for disabled people during COVID-19.



It gave advice to the government of Kenya about this.

The Rwanda National Commission for Human Rights (Rwanda NCHR)



Rwanda NCHR wrote a report about changes made during COVID-19.



They asked 700 people about this, including disabled people.



The Rwanda NCHR was able to see how the changes have affected disabled people's rights.



The Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC)

SHRC wrote a report on how changes made during COVID-19 have affected people who get care and support at home.



The report shows that the changes have affected the rights of:

- service users including disabled people



- unpaid carers



- people who work in social care.



You can see the report here:
**[www.scottishhumanrights.com/
commission-calls-for-immediate-
return-of-social-care-support-to-
address-human-rights-concerns](http://www.scottishhumanrights.com/commission-calls-for-immediate-return-of-social-care-support-to-address-human-rights-concerns)**

When things change quickly



During COVID-19, governments, services and businesses have had to change rules and laws quickly.



They don't always think about how that affects groups like disabled people.



This means that sometimes people's rights can be affected.



National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) try and do something about this.



Cyprus

Cyprus's government wanted children to wear masks in school, and to not let disabled children restart school with everyone else.



The Office of the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Cyprus Ombudsman) said this affected the rights of Deaf and disabled children.



Cyprus's government changed their mind and decided to let Deaf and disabled children go back to school.



Kenya

The Kenyan National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) has given advice to the government about changes made during COVID-19.



The KNCHR said there were times when the government had not thought about the rights of groups including disabled people.

Scotland



Nearly half of all deaths in Scotland from COVID-19 by July 2020 were in care homes.



Because of this, the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) wrote a report about the rights of people in care homes.



You can see it here:

**[www.scottishhumanrights.com/
briefing-care-homes-and-human-
rights-during-covid-19/](http://www.scottishhumanrights.com/briefing-care-homes-and-human-rights-during-covid-19/)**

What should happen



Disabled people are one of the groups that has been most affected by COVID-19.



The members of Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions are all worried about how COVID-19 affects disabled people's rights.



We think that:

- disabled people should be included in making decisions
- we should have better information about how disabled people are being affected
- rules, laws and information should all be written in a way that is accessible to disabled people.



By listening to National Human Rights Institutions, countries in the Commonwealth can include disabled people and protect their rights.