

UN panel criticises UK failure to uphold disabled people's rights

 [theguardian.com/society/2017/aug/31/un-panel-criticises-uk-failure-to-uphold-disabled-peoples-rights](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/aug/31/un-panel-criticises-uk-failure-to-uphold-disabled-peoples-rights)

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The UK government is failing to uphold disabled people's rights across a range of areas from education, work and housing to health, transport and social security, a UN inquiry has found.

The UN committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities examined the government's progress in fulfilling its commitments to the [UN convention on disabled people's rights](#), to which the UK has been a signatory since 2007.

Its report concludes that the UK has not done enough to ensure the convention – which enshrines the rights of disabled people to live independently, to work and to enjoy social protection without discrimination – is reflected in UK law and policy.

Although it praises some initiatives by the Scottish and Welsh governments to promote inclusion, it is scathing of the UK government's inconsistent and patchy approach to protecting disability rights and its failure to audit the impact of its austerity policies on disabled people.

It says ministers have failed to show that measures will be in place to protect disability rights when the UK leaves the European Union.

Charities and campaigners said the report was a "grim reality check" for ministers, while Labour said it highlighted how disabled people were bearing the brunt of Tory austerity policies.

Areas of concern highlighted by the report, which contains more than 60 recommendations for the UK government, include:

- The rising numbers of disabled children educated in segregated "special schools" in the UK. The report calls for legislation to ensure mainstream schools provide "real inclusion" for disabled children.
- High levels of poverty for disabled people and their families and reduced standards of living as result of multiple welfare reforms and benefit cuts. It calls for a review of benefit sanctions, which it says have a detrimental effect on recipients.
- The failure of the UK government to recognise the rights of disabled people to live independently in the community. It calls on ministers to provide sufficient resources to support disabled people to live at home.

In November the same UN committee issued a [scathing report](#) on austerity policies pursued by the UK government in welfare and social care, which it described as "systematic violations" of the rights of people with disabilities. The government [dismissed that report](#) as patronising and offensive.

Kamran Mallick, the chief executive of [Disability Rights UK](#), said: "The committee's final observations and comments represent a grim reality check for the UK government and its record on ensuring the human rights of disabled people."

Ellen Clifford, of the campaign group Disabled People Against Cuts, said the report showed the UK government was going backwards on disability rights. "It is utterly shameful that this should be happening in one of the richest nations in the world. We all now need to take a stance that enough is enough and demand that the government acknowledge reality," she said.

Debbie Abrahams MP, the shadow work and pensions secretary, said: "The UN committee has found that this Tory government is still failing sick and disabled people. Their damning report highlights what many disabled

people already know to be true: that they are being forced to bear the brunt of failed Tory austerity policies.”

A government spokesperson said: “We’re disappointed that this report does not accurately reflect the evidence we gave to the UN, and fails to recognise all the progress we’ve made to empower disabled people in all aspects of their lives.

“We spend over £50bn a year to support disabled people and those with health conditions – more than ever before, and the second highest in the G7.

“We’re committed to furthering rights and opportunities for all disabled people, which is why it is encouraging that almost 600,000 disabled people have moved into work in the UK over the last four years.

“We’re also a recognised world leader in disability rights and equality, which is why we supported the development of the UN convention.”