Participation of Persons with Disabilities

Lesson Ideas
December 2019
Introduction

The overall aim of this lesson idea is to raise awareness of human rights and to be an educational resource for use in a post primary setting in Northern Ireland. Use of the lesson ideas is at the discretion of the education provider.

It is important at the outset to prepare students to discuss sensitive or controversial issues. A safe and positive learning environment which enables students to participate with confidence can be empowering. Agree strategies to use to ensure respectful yet challenging discussions:

See sheffield.ac.uk/lets/toolkit/teaching/sensitive for more ideas and guidance on creating good learning environments for teaching about sensitive and controversial issues. When dealing with mental health issues provide guidance on safety, confidentiality and where to get additional and professional help whilst following your schools guidance and policies relating to child protection.

NI Curriculum Links:

**LLW Strands**
Human rights and social responsibility, Equality and Social justice

**Local and Global Citizenship**
Identify and exercise their rights and social responsibilities in relation to local issues

Develop their understanding of the role of society and government in safeguarding individual and collective rights

Some of your students may have personal experience of the issue under discussion and may find participation in these discussions difficult. Create a safe and positive environment. Agree strategies in advance. See notes on teaching sensitive issues.
Participation of Persons with Disabilities.

This section gives you a breakdown of the relevant human rights, and any laws associated with this particular human rights issue. It also provides background information you may find useful.

Relevant Rights:
UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) Article 14 and Human Rights Act Article 14 non discrimination

The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in the ECHR and the Human Rights Act shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.

Teachers’ Notes and Background Information

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

In 2006, lots of countries agreed to make life better for disabled people.

They signed a document about this called the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Countries signed up to the CRPD to say they would follow it and make sure disabled people have their rights.

UNCRPD is an international legal agreement. It exists to protect and promote the human rights of disabled people.

The UK signed the treaty in 2009 – a commitment to promote and protect the human rights of disabled people.

The UNCRPD covers a wide range of areas including:
- Health
- Education
- Employment
- Access to justice
- Personal security
- Independent living
- Access to information
Participation of Persons with Disabilities.

Teachers’ Notes and Background Information continued

NIHRC & ECNI Independent mechanism role:
The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland have been designated as the Independent Mechanism for Northern Ireland. Together we monitor how the UK government is complying with the UNCRPD. This means we have a role to play in helping people understand more about UNCRPD so that they can demand their rights, including challenging the law. We monitor progress on how well public bodies and government are taking account of the UNCRPD and we report back to the United Nations on progress.

- 1 in 5 people in Northern Ireland have a disability.
- Only 17% of people in the UK with a disability were born with it.
- About 15% of the world’s population lives with some form of disability (World Health Organisation)
- Between 2 and 4 people out of every 100 have really severe disabilities.
- There are more people with disabilities partly because people live longer and are more likely to become disabled, as they get older.
- The UNCRPD sets an international standard for how people with disabilities should be treated i.e. equally is crucial to supporting them to achieve their full potential and realise their rights more fully.

Disabled people in Northern Ireland have all the human rights in the ECHR and other international treaties and conventions that the UK government has signed. The Disability Discrimination Order (Northern Ireland) provides extra protection against discrimination. This law means that government must:

- Make sure that buildings and services are accessible to disabled
- People – including workplaces, schools, medical facilities and transport
- Provide information intended for the general public in accessible formats and technologies such as Braille or sign language, and
- Ensure the rights of people with disabilities to equal pay for equal work, equal employment opportunities and safe and healthy working conditions.

In 2009, the government ratified (made it legally binding) the UNCRPD. This means they must make sure that the dignity, human rights and freedoms of all disabled people are respected, promoted and protected. The UNCRPD reaffirms that disabled people have the same human rights as others, and must be able to enjoy them on an equal basis with non-disabled people. People with a learning disability have the same rights and freedoms as anyone else.
What we do

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission’s job is to make sure government and public bodies protect the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland. We advocate that Northern Ireland should maintain the highest standard of human rights.

We also consider the policies and plans that government and other organisations develop and tell them if we think there could be a problem and we try to help them improve it. We are experts in human rights law, we monitor international treaties and listen to discussions in places like the United Nations.

We promote awareness of human rights through education, training and research.

What is the NIHRC doing?

The NIHRC continues to call upon the Department for Communities to develop a robust disability strategy, accompanied by a measurable plan of action for improving the living conditions of all persons with disabilities and effective monitoring arrangements. They recommend that this strategy should be developed in conjunction with people with disabilities and representative organisations.
Activities

Learning Intentions: to know and understand

- Explore the concept of disability and gain insights into the lives of those living with a disability
- Learn about participation rights of people with a disability and consider actions that could promote these
- Understand the role of the NIHRC in promoting and safeguarding these rights.

Pupils will;

- Consider different viewpoints of people living with disabilities
- Think about how disability is defined, by whom and for what purpose
- Explore how disability may or may not compromise the lives people live and their quality of life
- Understand how the UNCRPD aims to protect and promote the rights of people with disabilities

Activity One - Labels

What’s needed: Paper

What do you think of when you see the word ‘disability’? Wheelchairs? White sticks? The Paralympics?

- In groups ask students to record what they think of when they think of disability on paper. (Keep these papers to evaluate how much students’ attitudes have changed by the end of these sessions)
- Ask the students to think about their responses. Look at the language used? Is it positive? Negative? Realistic? Fair?

The label ‘disabled’ is not always helpful.

- Discuss why the label ‘disabled’ not always useful?

Look at these synonyms for disable; ‘deactivate, defuse, disarm, render inoperative, make ineffective, put out of action, make harmless’ how might being described this way make you feel?

Read the Poem

unicef.org/publications/files/Its_About_Ability_final_.pdf

I have no legs, But I still have feelings,
I cannot see, But I think all the time,
Although I’m deaf, I still want to communicate,
Why do people see me as useless, thoughtless, talkless, When I am as capable as any,
For thoughts about our world.

Coralie Severs, 14, United Kingdom

‘This poem speaks for millions of children and adults, living everywhere in the world, who have disabilities. Many face discrimination every day. Their abilities are overlooked and their capacities underestimated. They don’t get the education and health care they need, and they are excluded from activities in their community. But children and adults with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else.’
Activities

(continued)

Activity Two - Definitions

Look at the following two definitions of ‘disability’

A: This is the legal definition used in legislation in Northern Ireland;

‘A person has a disability if they have a physical, sensory or intellectual impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day to day activities.’

• ‘Substantial’ means more than minor or trivial
• ‘Long term’ means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last at least twelve months
• ‘Normal day to day activities’ include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping.

B: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines disability in a different way;

Disability is an evolving concept and that ‘disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.’

Discuss the differences between these two definitions

In the first definition disability is defined as a state of being regardless of the world around them.

In the second UN definition a person is only disabled if they cannot fully participate in the world around them.

For example, a person who is very short-sighted would only be considered disabled if they never had access to their glasses.

Even if someone meets the legal definition, they may not see themselves that way. Instead of thinking about what is ‘wrong’ with people, or noticing what they can’t do, we should be looking at how we like to live. And trying to make it possible for everyone to join in.

After all - what is normal?

People with disabilities don’t need pity. But better understanding would be a start.
Activities (continued)

Activity Three - Disability Statistics

What’s needed: Question sheet provided.

• 1 in 5 people in Northern Ireland have a disability.

• Only 17% of people in the UK with a disability were born with it.

• About 15% of the world’s population lives with some form of disability (World Health Organisation)

• Between 2 and 4 people out of every 100 have really severe disabilities.

• There are more people with disabilities partly because people live longer and are more likely to become disabled, as they get older.

Allow students to share their thoughts on these statistics and allow them time to explain why their reaction.

Ask students if they are aware of different types of disability - physical, intellectual etc include disabilities that may be less visible.

UNCRPD Article 9: Accessibility

People with disabilities have the right to access all aspects of society on an equal basis with others including the physical environment, transportation, information and communications, and other facilities and services provided to the public.

How accessible is our school for those of us with disabilities?

Divide the class in to groups and allocate each group a different type of disability to investigate accessibility issues either with in your school or in the local community.

e.g. sight impaired, wheelchair group, hearing impaired group, physical impaired group, intellectual impaired group such as attention and focus issues. If appropriate use aids such as a wheelchair, noise cancelling headphones, blindfold to simulate temporary disability to help develop insights.

Instruct each group to tour the school and use the questions below to record any areas which could cause difficulties.

Think about;

• Can they fully access all the school’s facilities e.g. toilets, computers, play areas, library, classroom, canteen, afterschool clubs etc?

• Could they fully participate in all learning activities on offer in the school? E.g. displays, resources, available in different formats

• Allow each group some time to share their findings. Ask each group to come up with ideas to improve access and participation in your school.
Activity Four - How does disability affect people?

What’s needed: Question sheet provided.

Ask students to think about access and participation in the wider community. Having a disability can affect most things in a person’s life. Think of all the things that would be different. How disability may affect people in: Employment, Education, Relationships, Healthcare and Personal mobility, e.g. School: How can I get my education? What about my future? Friends: Would they still want to hang out? Will strangers laugh at me in the street? Snogs: Am I still sexy? Who will date me now? Life: What can I do on my gap year? Can I get my own place? What job can I do? How can I earn my own money?

There are laws to prevent people with disabilities being treated unfairly. Just as sexism and racism are disgusting and illegal, so is discriminating against someone who is differently abled.

Look at the UNCRPD (Link on next page)

Give each pair of students a right from the UNCRPD (suggest articles 5-31) and give them time to illustrate it in whatever medium they can. Collect together all the rights to make a visual display of the UNCRPD which can be shared in the school.

Watch the video Participation of Disabled Persons

Watch the film about some people with disabilities in Northern Ireland. youtube.com/watch?v=TTiYMNtyRw0&t=13s

Discuss students’ reaction to the film. Use the UDHR and or the UNCRPD to What rights are they accessing? e.g. Right to rest and leisure, right to family life, right to fair employment, right to express opinions and beliefs etc.

Video script

One in 5 of us in Northern Ireland has a disability of some kind. Sometimes we can see the disability. Sometimes it's not so obvious. What matters is that we see the person.

The person who just happens to have a disability. A person, who like everyone else, wants the chance to live with fairness, with dignity and with respect. A person that wants to be treated equally with every other person. A person with human rights.

Human rights need to be promoted and protected. The rights of persons with disabilities need special protection. That's why the UNCRPD was drawn up and agreed to by the UK government.

What does it mean for a person with a disability in practical terms? It means for example that a person cannot be turned down for a job just because they have a disability. It means that everyone should have easy access to taxis and public transport. It means that everyone gets the opportunity to join social and community activities. It means that when someone needs information it is in a form that they can access. That is just for starters. What the UNCRPD really means is that everyone, the assembly, public bodies and lawmakers now have to take account of what the UNCRPD says about the rights of persons with disabilities; and how we provide services; and how we design our buildings; and how we communicate our messages; and how we plan and invest in activities so that everyone gets the opportunity to live life to the best of their ability.

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland have a role to play in helping people understand more about UNCRPD so that they can demand their rights, including challenging the law. We monitor progress on how well public bodies and government are taking account of the UNCRPD and we report back to the United Nations on progress. The UNCRPD is the first human rights treaty of the 21st century and is a major step forward in helping to ensure that the rights of persons with a disability are promoted and protected.
Activities (continued)

Additional activity

• Look at the Children’s Law Centre publication ‘Do You Know your Rights? Discrimination’ [link to publication] Section 7 on discrimination related to disability

• Can you use the internet to find out about young people denied their rights due to discrimination relating to their disability? Create a headline and a max 200 word campaign article calling on people to support their rights.

What is the UNCRPD?

You can read the full text of the UNCRPD on the UN Enable Website. We have developed a short summary of the UNCRPD below.

[link to UNCRPD summary]

Useful resources

[link to useful resources]

Organisations who can provide advice include:

Disability Action works to promote and protect the human rights of people with disabilities in Northern Ireland. [Disability Action website]

equalityni.org

See [link to UNCRPD plain language guide] for a useful plain language guide to the UNCRPD