

APR 08

# action!



THE MAGAZINE OF YOUNG CITIZENS IN ACTION.

bill of rights faq

volunteer profile

history of human rights

a bill of rights for  
britain?

amnesty international

amnesty international  
interview

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northern ireland?

hiv stigma



give me liberty!

equality in the search for work



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THE MAGAZINE OF YOUNG CITIZENS IN ACTION.

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Amnesty  
interview by  
Chris Guilfoyle.  
Worth checking  
this one out.

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# editors message

the man in black, the caped crusader, army of one, king for a day, desert orchid - he's known by many a name and he's back as editor, so one more time from the top...

Hello All.

This is Chris Guilfoyle here to introduce a new, special edition of action magazine. I'm once again back as editor, since I couldn't find anyone else to take the job.

Firstly I would like to say hello to Debbie Hammill, our new staff member who is taking over from Paul who left to try something new.

As I already said this is a special edition of the magazine focusing on the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. You might have seen the posters up around Northern Ireland. Another cool thing about this magazine is it's also in full colour, meaning my fan club (i.e. my granny) will have some lovely pics of me in colour for a change.

In this magazine we have lots of articles on the Bill of Rights such as a FAQ on the Bill of Rights, the timeline on the Bill of Rights and the history of human rights. We were also lucky to get an interview from the Director of Amnesty International and we have



a profile of the organisation as well. We also have a glossary on all the big words on the Bill of Rights.

Lastly we have the regulars such as volunteering profiles and how to get involved in volunteering.

If you have any questions about anything in this magazine or would like to get involved please don't hesitate to use the contact details in this magazine.

I hope you enjoy this magazine as much as we enjoyed writing it.

Until next time.

Chris

# how to get involved

you know you want to,  
it's a good thing to do,  
so get in touch,  
ah go on...

Young Citizens In Action is the youth department within Voluntary Service Bureau (VSB). The project aims to resource, support and empower young people aged 16-30 to make a valid contribution to their community through volunteering. We can offer you the opportunity to get involved in a range of youth led projects.

**Interested in getting involved? Here is a step by step guide:-**

Contact us at Voluntary Service Bureau by:-

**Telephone** 028 90200850

**Fax** 02890200860

**Website** [www.vsb.org.uk](http://www.vsb.org.uk)  
[www.youngcitizens.org.uk](http://www.youngcitizens.org.uk)

**Email** [info@vsb.org.uk](mailto:info@vsb.org.uk)



**Debbie Hammill**  
Youth Project Worker  
[debbie@vsb.org.uk](mailto:debbie@vsb.org.uk)

We will arrange for you to come into the office for an informal chat and take you through our volunteer registration form. Once the registration form is completed, we will look at what your interests are and match you with a suitable volunteer placement.

Not only can you get involved in Young Citizens In Action projects, we work with over 800 organisations registered with us within the Greater Belfast area, and North Down and Ards. Placements depend upon what you are interested in, the time you have to give and the area of Belfast you would like to volunteer in.

So why not contact us to find out more!



**Roisin Timlin**  
Senior Project Worker  
[roisin@vsb.org.uk](mailto:roisin@vsb.org.uk)

# bill of rights FAQ

don't understand the Bill of Rights?  
can't get your head around it?  
hopefully this will help answer a  
few of your questions...



## What is the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland?

Under the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, the NI Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) was asked to consult to advise the Secretary of State on the scope for creating rights which are not in the European Convention of Human Rights.

Such rights were to reflect the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland, and, taken together with the Convention, would constitute a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

## What do we mean by a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights?

As the Bill of Rights consultation process developed there was a recognition that the Consortium needed to move beyond encouraging participation to actively promoting the Bill of Rights. At that time, in appreciation of the diversity of the membership and their various issues, it was decided that we would campaign for a "strong

and inclusive Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland".

The Consortium has developed this concept further and produced a number of key principles to further our campaign work:

## We already have the Human Rights Act – isn't that sufficient? Why do we need a separate Bill of Rights?

The Human Rights Act 1998 (see [www.opsi.gov.uk](http://www.opsi.gov.uk) for info on HRA) integrated many of the rights set out in the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) into UK law. However, the HRA does not include the European Convention in its entirety, nor does it include rights not mentioned in the Convention. The ECHR is over fifty years old and is strong on civil and political rights. However it is very weak on equality, and social, economic, and cultural rights. Indeed, the Convention has already been updated and supplemented at a European level by the European Social Charter, but this document is not enforceable in domestic law.

A Bill of Rights could allow people living in Northern Ireland to build on the strengths of the European Convention and the Human Rights Acts, to consider the particular needs of Northern Ireland and at the same time update our protections with some of the important rights issues that have emerged in the past five decades.

## Why do we need a Bill of Rights now?

Creating a new legal framework and rebuilding confidence in the legal system has proven to be an essential element of transition in societies all around the world. Various international examples from countries emerging from conflicts – like South Africa and Central America – and also post-communist societies in Central and Eastern Europe, indicate that the process of creating a rights-based instrument represents an important 'fresh start'. Countries in transition have almost universally created new constitutions or rights instruments, and Northern Ireland can learn much from these experiences. These processes, like the Bill of Rights here, can allow all sections of a divided society to come together and voice their views about what rights need to be protected in their post-conflict lives.

However, Bills of Rights do not only emerge from conflict and at times of transition – a Bill of Rights is also a normal part of the constitutional furniture of most mature democratic systems. Most societies have a document such as this, which sets out in a clear and accessible way the constitutional limits and the exercise of power by the government of the day. Northern Ireland (and the UK generally) is an exception to the rule in this regard. It is time for Northern Ireland to join the international mainstream by adopting a Bill of Rights.

## Is the Bill of Rights for everyone?

Human rights are inherent in our very humanity – they apply equally to all human beings and we all stand to benefit equally from them. An important step forward in our efforts to move to a peaceful society where dignity and equality of all are respected would be to move away from the old win/lose mentality and recognise that having a Bill of Rights that protects everyone's fundamental rights is a situation where everyone wins.

A strong and inclusive Bill of Rights would protect the social and economic rights of everyone in Northern Ireland. For example, the right to shelter or housing would apply to Protestants as well as Catholics, to long-time residents as well as immigrants and to people with disabilities as well as able-bodied people.

It is also worth noting that over the past few decades, all major political parties in Northern Ireland have voiced their support for a Bill of Rights.

## Should the debate not focus on responsibilities rather than rights?

Human rights automatically imply a responsibility to accord respect to the rights of all other human beings, regardless of creed, race, gender, religion, etc., even if those rights conflict with one's own. Any person asserting their rights, whether freedom of movement, freedom of belief, right to decent housing, etc., must respect the rights of all other human beings to assert similar demands. But this does not mean that people forfeit all their human rights if they do not live up to their responsibilities to accord respect to other's rights.

Existing international human rights law not only recognises that rights may be limited to protect the interests of others, but those limitations must be in accordance with law, proportionate and necessary.

Source: Human Rights Consortium  
[www.billofrightsnri.org](http://www.billofrightsnri.org)



# volunteer profile

leanne gives us a glimpse into her choice of volunteer work. the 21 year old is based in bangor and helps out in oxfam...

My name is Leanne Donaghy. I am 22 years old. I volunteer in Oxfam, Main Street, Bangor. I volunteer every Wednesday afternoon.

At present I am in charge of the jewellery section. All jewellery must be sorted, priced and hung out in the shop. The jewellery sells well because it is very affordable to young people.

There are many different areas in the Oxfam shop where people can volunteer. The donations are brought down to the sorting room, sorted and put into their appropriate areas. The bric-a-brac is in one area, men's clothes in another, ladies in another area, books, jewellery, shoes, bed linen, scarf, hats, underwear and children's wear in other areas. I would sometimes price bric-a-brac and then display it in the shop.

In the shop we have a kitchen, bathroom, and stockroom. Upstairs we have a bridal department. We sell wedding dresses, veils, shoes, bridesmaids dresses and mother of the bride. Upstairs we have a large store room which keeps surplus stock. Also we have a separate room for storing Christmas



stock throughout the year. My mother is also a volunteer and together we priced the Christmas stock. The stock is usually put out the first week in December.

I would also use the till and deal with customers. Many of our customers tend to ask a lot of questions before making a purchase. Sometimes the questions are quite relevant but sometimes they are quite peculiar.

The shop sells unwrapped gifts which means that customers can buy items to help people in poorer countries. For instance, goats, tools or seeds etc. Oxfam helps with poorer countries and have people already based in these areas. The reason that I got involved with Oxfam is that my mother worked there and asked me to join the volunteers. Oxfam is a global movement of people working to overcome the injustice of poverty and suffering.



# the history of human rights

every country has their own take on the issue of human rights. some got it right from the start others are still working on it. here's a brief history of how things are going...



## 1948 – Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

- Followed World War II
- Developed to promote and protect human rights

## 1950 – European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)

- Binding on all European Union member states
- Protects mainly civil and political rights

## 1961 – European Social Charter (ESC)

- Fills in gaps left by the ECHR
- Protects social and economic rights

## 1966 – International Conventions on Civil and Political Rights, and Economic Social and Cultural Rights

- Makes the rights contained in the UDHR binding

## 1970s-1990s

- Increasingly specialised texts such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

## 1988 – Agreement

- Strong commitment to human rights
- NIHR asked to consult on a Bill of Rights

## 1998 – Human Rights Act

- Incorporated ECHR rights into domestic law

## International examples of Bills of Rights:

Internationally, many countries use a Bill of Rights to ensure the protection of people's rights. Usually a country's Bill of Rights will be written in a way that reflects the particular needs and concerns of the people of that country. Good examples of this include the USA, the Republic of Ireland and South Africa.

*Reference: Committee on the Administration of Justice Bill of Rights Information Pack.*

# a bill of rights for britain?

I would appreciate a detailed and clear articulation of my rights and responsibilities



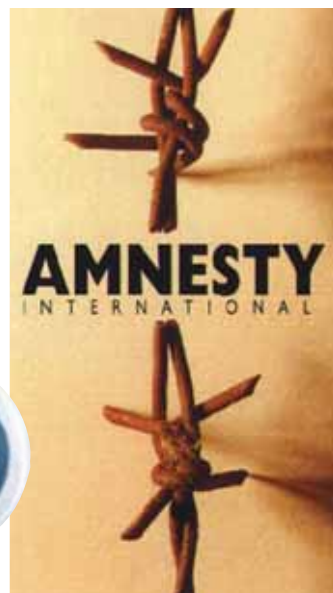
In today's changing world it seems there has never been more of a case for a codified Bill of Rights for Britain. Anyone who has witnessed the changes in the social and political landscape of Britain in the last 5-10 years will understand and appreciate the enhanced significance of language incorporating 'security' or even 'identity'. The rise of the 'Big Brother' concept and the subsequent paranoia cultivated from that has evolved and turned into genuine oppressive fear; the distrust between citizen and state it seems has never been more tangible. Many citizens feel they are being persecuted and monitored by his/her own state, whilst the same watchful eye, turns away ignorantly and blindly, dwelling on the 'ifs, buts and maybes' when faced with dilemmas regarding deporting individuals who contribute to this pervading threat. This ambiguity in the state's legislation eventually leads to

hesitation, and with continued and consistent hesitation – comes imminent danger/ disaster. Every modern doctrine/ legislative document should be modernised to confront and solve contemporary problems and it seems Britain is in desperate need of such clarification. Current Conservative party leader, David Cameron, when promoting the need for a Bill of Rights, called for a 'clear articulation of citizen's rights that British people can use in British courts'. As a young person in today's society, I know I would appreciate a detailed and clear articulation of my rights and responsibilities, in order to provide me with something clear, constructive and re-assuring. The ambiguity in many of British citizens' contemporary anxieties needs to be clarified, so that we can share a common purpose in an already abstruse age.

*by Niall McCloskey*

# amnesty international

you will have heard of this worldwide organisation but do you really know what they are all about. this article will give you a better idea...



## What is Amnesty International UK?

Amnesty is a worldwide movement of people who campaign for human rights. Its work is based on careful research and on the standards agreed by the international community.

Amnesty International UK is one of more than 50 nationally organised sections that make up the Amnesty International worldwide movement.

Amnesty International UK members elect a national board to represent them at the International Council Meeting. This is a gathering of representatives of all sections, which meets every two years to take the major policy decisions of the movement.

## What does Amnesty International do?

Amnesty works independently and impartially to promote respect for all the human rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It concentrates on ending abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination.

Amnesty campaigns for international recognition of human rights issues. This takes the form of:

- Promotion of awareness through various means including public events, fundraising activities and multimedia outreach
- Opposing specific abuses of human rights through a programme of research and action

## Is Amnesty effective?

Amnesty is based on the belief that individuals working together in international solidarity can bring about real change. In a world where those with power sometimes act with callous disregard for human suffering, this may seem hopelessly optimistic.

However, since 1961 Amnesty has made appeals on behalf of thousands of individual victims of human rights abuses and has established a concrete record of achievement over the years.

## How can I get involved?

Amnesty is a membership organisation that relies on the active participation of its members to achieve its goals. Amnesty encourages all people who support its objectives and principles to become members and take action on our campaigns.

As a member you can act individually and add another voice to our campaigns, or join a group or network. Alternatively, you can donate, fundraise, buy something or give as you spend.

## How is Amnesty funded?

Amnesty is independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion.

To ensure its independence, Amnesty does not seek or accept money from governments or political parties for its work in documenting and campaigning against human rights abuses.

Funding depends on the contributions of worldwide membership and fundraising activities.

To safeguard the independence of the organisation, all contributors are strictly controlled by guidelines laid down by the International Council.

## Where does Amnesty work?

At the latest count, there were more than 1.8 million members, supporters and subscribers in over 150 countries and territories in every region of the world.

The International Secretariat presides over 50 sections, including Amnesty International UK, which coordinate and develop campaign activities within a country.

Each section carries out Country Action Programmes (CAPs) in conjunction with the International Secretariat to prevent or oppose human rights abuses in specified countries. A country-specific At Risk of Crisis Register is issued by the International Secretariat every three months, and allocates key sections for each crisis alert.

Amnesty does not limit its work to specific countries, whenever it establishes that action is needed to protect people whose rights have been abused, it mobilises its membership.

## How does Amnesty decide what causes to support?

Each year, Amnesty produces hundreds of reports covering many different countries and issues based on thorough research and analysis by experts at the International Secretariat.

We also publish a comprehensive annual report covering developments in human rights in 150 countries.

Amnesty selects campaigning tasks in consultation with the International Secretariat. Once we have chosen our campaigning tasks and prepared the material, we send the information to the groups, networks and supporters that, in our judgement, will create the most pressure.

## I have a question that is not answered here, will you answer it?

If you have a question about Amnesty that is not shown here, please email it to [webdeveloper@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:webdeveloper@amnesty.org.uk) and we will endeavour to answer you as soon as possible.

[www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk)



# amnesty international interview



who better to answer your questions than patrick corrigan, director of amnesty international. we sent our roving reporter to get the low down...

**Name of director:**  
Patrick Corrigan

**Age**  
38

**How did you get into Amnesty International?**

I used to work for a peace organisation in Northern Ireland and I began campaigning due to the situation in Northern Ireland. When I saw the issues worldwide, Northern Ireland's problems were only a small part of wider issues.

**What part of the Bill of Rights do you favour most?**

From Amnesty International's point of view, it is crucial that the Bill of Rights stops us repeating history and stops us repeating the troubles. The troubles of the 60s were due to disrespect of each other.

**The right to protection from bullying.**

**1. What policies should schools implement to protect children from bullying?**

Children and young people should have certain rights. They should have the right for their voice to be heard in school, schools

should also have councils. They should have the right to speak out about bullying.

**Free University Education**

**2. Would this be done by the abolishment of tuition fees and student loans?**

It is unlikely to happen, it is an unrealistic demand. What is more likely is an affordable university education via fees and grants. It is unlikely for Bill of Rights to cover this, as it is more of a political demand. There can often be confusion between rights and political demands.

**Human Rights Education in School**

**3. How will this benefit young people?**

Every government has the right to deliver human rights education. However governments often fail and rely on other organisations to do it. Children and young people should find out how to stand up for their rights and understand rights in their own country and other countries. A human rights campaign has been performed in schools and has helped reduce bullying and helps children be more kind to others.



**Equality in the search for work**

**4. How will the government ensure that disabled people have the same right to work as able-bodied people?**

It is something we are very keen to see. It is much harder for those with disabilities. There should be special protection for disabled people in the Bill of Rights. They must look through the eyes of disabled people so disabled people get the same rights as others.

It will be harder for smaller employers and that will be made apparent. The changes will also be gradual.

**5. Young people looking for their first job find it difficult due to the lack of experience. Will the Bill of Rights affect this?**

It is not expected to. The Bill of Rights can not be seen as a solution to all problems great and small. The Bill of Rights isn't always the way, there are other ways.

**Congregate as a Group**

**6. How can the government ensure that young people can come together as a group without disturbing the peace of the community?**

The point is that young people are not to be

perceived as a threat, whether on their own or as a group be that in shopping centres, street corners etc.

There are community spaces available, for example schools, which could be used instead of having to build new youth centres.

**7. How important do you feel the role of the internet has played in relation to your campaign for promoting human rights on a global scale and do you feel it's significance can grow and prove to be a continual aid to your efforts?**

The internet had a massive potential for good. Amnesty International uses it extensively. Amnesty's lifeblood is information, press releases etc.

In pre-internet days, it was down to documents which only a small amount of people have access to. Now all booklets are available worldwide bar countries like China where there is a restriction on internet access.

Now you can read about the world and can send information out, for example the bloggs in Burma.

It is not perfect, for e.g. the great firewall of China, and poorer countries do not have access to the internet.



**8. With many well-known celebrities publicly championing the Amnesty International cause, do you feel there may come a point where it could prove detrimental to its image?**

It is a mistake to be dependent on celebrities to relay your message. Amnesty International does not over-rely on celebrities. It does, however, allow groups who do not normally have interest in Amnesty International, e.g. young people, who don't read newspapers or watch the news on TV to hear about the group from popstars or comedians appearing on TV.

We must be careful not to over-rely on associating ourselves with celebrities who might get in trouble later.

**9. Do you feel that Amnesty International is making steady and consistent progress with regards to the campaign to banish the death penalty on a global scale? Do you realistically see a point in the future where its extinction is completed and that it is deemed illegal in every nation?**

More and more. 2 countries per year abolish the death penalty.

For example, in December 2007 New Jersey in the United States removed the death penalty. Death penalty user countries are in the minority, for example the United States as a whole.

The battle will be won, there will be some hard line countries who will hang on due to little respect for their citizens lives.

**10. If you could hope to achieve one Amnesty International intention/ambition overnight, what would it be?**

Probably people who, to date, shouldn't be in jail. For example, in Burma many people are in jail due to protests. It is important to reunite those prisoners of conscience with their loved ones.

**11. What would you say is Amnesty International's greatest achievement to date?**

Making human rights well known, taking it out of the hands of lawyers and off the dusty shelves. Human rights is now in a lot of political debates. It doesn't mean we will all agree, but, the point is they are talking about human rights.

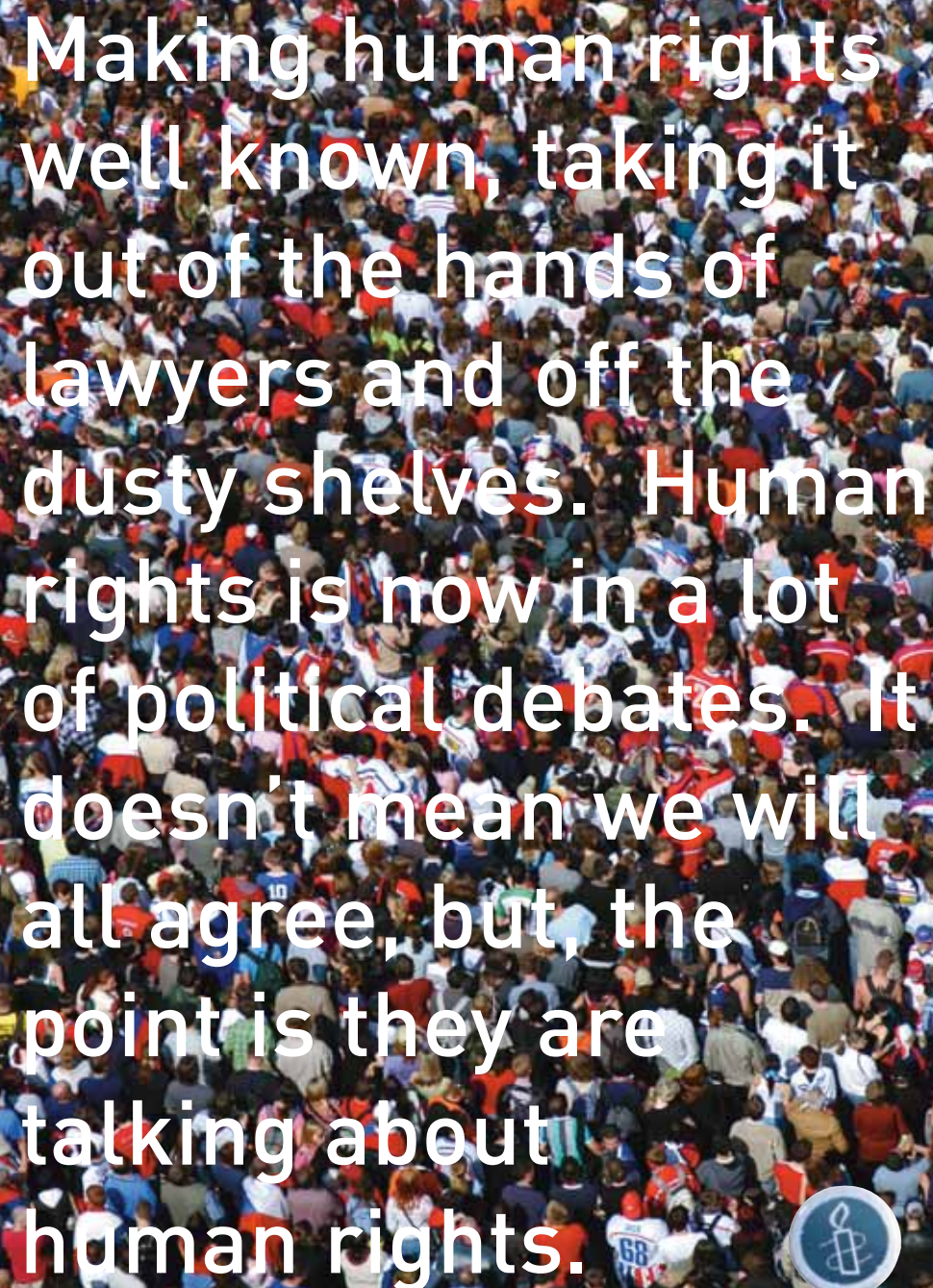
**12. Would you say that Amnesty International is often constricted to being a reactive organisation or is there much scope and possibility to make long term plans?**

It is the organisation that determines its own agenda.

Our significant plans include, the International Arms Trade Treaty, ending violence against women and human rights changes in China.

These are our priorities as well as reacting to situations.

to find out more go to  
Amnesty International  
websites  
[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)  
[www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk)



Making human rights well known, taking it out of the hands of lawyers and off the dusty shelves. Human rights is now in a lot of political debates. It doesn't mean we will all agree, but, the point is they are talking about human rights.



# discrimination

discrimination takes many different forms, are you aware of them...



My definition of the disability discrimination act is that disabled people should be treated fairly and to promote the equalisation of opportunities for disabled people. The act also wants to encourage good practice in the treatment for disabled people.

The Human Rights Commission in Northern Ireland has submitted an annual report to the equality commission.

These were their suggestions:-  
Ensure that, through the Commission's advice to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on a Bill of Rights, the requirement to promote and protect the human rights of disabled people is addressed appropriately in line with international standards.

Develop an 'easy read' guide to the human rights act using Makaton. (Makaton uses signs and symbols to teach communication, language and literacy skills to people with communication and learning difficulties).

## Gender discrimination

I feel that sometimes women are treated differently to men for example, men often receive a higher wage than a woman in the same role.

## Race discrimination

People should not be treated differently due to the colour of their skin.

## Age discrimination

People are suffering discrimination due to their age for example, an employer may not employ someone of a particular age.

## Religious discrimination

Discrimination is often subject to a person's religion.

## Victimization

If a person complains about a work colleague and is subsequently picked on by the rest of the staff.

## Human Rights and Disability

Human rights instruments at international,

religious discrimination?



European and national level all make it clear that disability is a human rights issue. Yet, all too often people with disabilities are wrongly placed outside the human rights framework. In fact, people with disabilities have human rights like everyone else, and face specific human rights and equality issues.

by Leanne Donaghy

"On paper, [people with disabilities] have enjoyed the same rights as others; in real life, they have often been relegated to the margins and denied the opportunities that others take for granted."

UN Secretary General Kofi Anan

This paragraph was taken from  
[www.disabilityaction.org](http://www.disabilityaction.org)

## "Why Not Ask Me?" update

"Why Not Ask Me?" – the findings of a recent study by Young Citizens in Action into Volunteering and Community Relations amongst young people – has been distributed to over 3200 young people and 1250 youth and community groups.

If you would like to request a young person friendly summary or a summary for organisations then please contact [info@vsb.org.uk](mailto:info@vsb.org.uk)



# equality

I feel that when the bill of rights has been finalized that they should have a section for discrimination and equality. different groups have been asked to put any ideas forward for the section on equality. one group mentioned this section was left on the bottom pile. they say that all people should be treated the same.

## **Extracts from the proposed Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland**

Everyone is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law.

Equality between men and women must be ensured.

Everyone has the right to be protected against discrimination on grounds such as sex, religion, disability, race, sexuality and political opinion.

## **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 7**

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.



## **The International Covenant on Civil and political rights (1966)**

### **Article 26**

All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political, or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status.

## **The European Convention on Human Rights (1950)**

### **Article 14**

The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention 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.

## **The Constitution of the United States of America (1789)**

### **14th Amendment**

All persons born or naturalised in the United States, and subject to the jurisdictions thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law.

## **The Constitution of the Republic of Ireland Article 40I**

All citizens shall, as human persons, be held equal before the law. This shall not be held to mean that the State shall not in its enactments have regard to differences of capacity, physical and moral, and of social function.

## **The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982)**

### **Section 15**

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

## **Extracts from the proposed Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland**

### **Social, Economic and Environmental rights**

All public bodies... shall take legislative or other measures to ensure the progressive achievement of the rights in this section.

### **Right to health care**

Everyone has the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and well-being. The state shall take all reasonable steps to promote good health and well-being, and to ensure adequate prevention and treatment of ill-health.

### **Right to adequate standard of living**

Everyone is entitled to an adequate standard of living sufficient for that person and those dependent on him/her.

### **Right to housing**

Everyone has the right to adequate accommodation appropriate to their needs.

### **Right to work**

Everyone has the right to contribute to the economic and social life of society, including the right to choose and practice a trade or profession.

Everyone has the right to just and favourable conditions of work.

### **The right to a healthy and sustainable environment**

Everyone has the right to a healthy, safe and sustainable environment.

### **Right to education**

Everyone has the right to an effective and appropriate education which enables all persons to participate effectively in the life of the community.

*This section was provided from the Northern Ireland Equality Commission website.*

# Timeline in the process of securing a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland

The process of securing a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland will be a lengthy one. There will be many opportunities for people to intervene and participate in the debate. Below is an approximate guide to the main phases of such a debate.

**Step 1:** Public launch of consultative phase; establishment of Working Groups; call for submissions (deadline for responses to the Commission – 28 February 2001)

**Step 2:** NI Human Rights Commission issues draft Bill of Rights for consultation (September 2001)

**Step 3:** Public debate; submissions to the Commission in response to their draft (deadline – December 2001)

**Step 4:** NI Human Rights Commission considers submissions and identifies issues requiring further clarification. Launches Phase 3 in December 2002 which involves deeper exploration of these issues and increased political contact.

**Step 5:** Political Parties meet with Minister David Hanson to discuss how to move Bill of Rights debate ahead (2006)

**Step 6:** Establishment of Roundtable forum involving all political parties and representatives of civil society to discuss Bill of Rights – Autumn 2006? Findings would go



to NIHRM who would likely submit a paper to then inform and advise Secretary of State.

**Step 7:** Secretary of State MAY decide to launch consultative phase (this happened in response to the Patten report, the Criminal Justice Review, and other major proposals). If this happens the normal consultation period would last 8 weeks.

**Step 8:** Secretary of State presents draft legislation before parliament. On the basis of past experience, it would seem that the earliest this could happen would be Autumn 2007.

**Step 9:** The draft legislation passes through the House of Commons and the Lords (this phase normally takes several months).

**Step 10:** The legislation comes into force and Northern Ireland has its own Bill of Rights (2008/9).

**Step 11:** Individuals and groups begin to put the Bill of Rights into practice: teaching about rights in schools, taking cases through the courts, using the rights framework to inform dispute resolution etc.

*Reference: Committee on the Administration of Justice Bill of Rights Information Pack.*



a bill of rights for Northern Ireland?



# stigma

living day to day with the stigma of HIV. our contributor describes how they reacted to the diagnosis and how their life changed.



Stigma is still something that people living with HIV have to face every day and I want to protect those I love from it as much as possible which is why I write this article anonymously.

I have HIV, I am gay, but these six letters – H-I-V-G-A-Y aren't the sum of me, they don't define who I am, they don't tell my story. I am a son, a brother, a friend, an uncle, I am loved and I am in love. I am a human being. I feel joy, rejection, sadness and hope just like everyone else. I have a life to live and I have the right to live my life, to the full, without fear of prejudice, bullying and stigma.

I was diagnosed HIV positive in 1997. For me, I had a split second in between being negative and positive but believe me they are worlds apart. Within that split second everything stopped and it was there and then that I made the decision that I was going to beat it and seize the opportunity to grow with this emotionally, spiritually and physically and I've managed to do all. Deciding who to tell and then telling my family and friends was the hardest thing I have ever had to do. I've had friends who have abandoned me but I've been very lucky. My mother, father, brother,



sisters, brother-in-law, partner and friends have been an amazing support, but I've had to fight some battles on my own and, in the process, have strengthened my resolve and make me the man I am today.

There are many people in Northern Ireland who, like me, are HIV positive. They may be sitting beside you at work or on the bus on your way home. Remember, just like me, they are someone's son or daughter and the letters H-I-V will never sum them up. Remember the words you use because negative words lead to negative action and have a great impact on my life even if it may be indirectly. It is not hard to share a kind word – those kind words lead to positive action and the payback is much greater.

I contribute to this society, as do most people I know and it's a positive contribution. My rights should not be determined solely on who I love. I live my life peacefully and I abide by the law, so I should have the right to live my life free from hate. Although, these rights are not worth the paper they are written on if the stigma and bigotry is not challenged in our schools, bars, clubs, workplace, on our streets and especially in our homes.

# volunteer profile

dagmara has a positive experience of coming to work here from her home country of poland.



Hi, my name is Dagmara Chacinska and I am originally from Gilwice, Poland. I left my home three and a half years ago to come to Co. Mayo to look after the child of a local couple. A friend from Poland was living in Belfast and I decided to come up for a visit. Within two days I had begun working in a hotel and stayed there two years. I now work in a restaurant on Stranmillis Road which I love.

In the beginning I didn't plan to stay - I thought I would only be here for a short time and then go back home to Poland- but I made new friendships and found it so hard to leave. I still keep in touch with friends I met at the hotel and have great friends whom I work with now.

My experience of being in Belfast has been very positive. I think certain aspects of life here is easier for young people, for example finding work. Compared to Belfast, housing in Poland is very high and wages are very low although education is very similar.

I have not experienced any direct forms of racism but I know of other Polish people who have. Some people here have the attitude

that because they were born in this country they have the 'right' not to work but if you are a 'visitor' to this country then you 'must' work. I came to Belfast to live and work. I went to university in Poland and have a degree in Hotel Management. Just like many young people from Northern Ireland who move abroad, I have decided to live in a different country to use my skills, gain new experiences, make new friends and enjoy myself!

After three months of living here, I had the right to register to vote but I haven't yet as I am not fully aware of the political situation here and what each party stands for. When I feel comfortable enough to make an informed choice then I will vote.

At the moment I'm not making any steadfast plans- as long as I like it here then I will stay. I love flying back to Poland to see my family but at the moment Belfast feels more like home now.

For more information - Tel: 02890249268 Email: [info@thehivsupportcentre.org.uk](mailto:info@thehivsupportcentre.org.uk)

# glossary

**Human Rights Consortium:**

Coalition of over one hundred non-governmental organisations, trade unions and community groups campaigning for a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland

**Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission:**

This statutory body works to ensure the human rights of everyone in NI are fully and firmly protected in law, policy and practice, as measured by internationally accepted rules and principles.

**European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR):**

An international law form the Council of Europe – not the European Union. It mostly contains civil and political rights. The UK and Ireland have signed up to the European Convention.

**Consultation process:**

When a public body, such as the NI Human Rights Commission, wants to find out what the public wants to see included in a Bill of Rights, it publishes a document with a list of ideas and asks people to comment on it by a certain deadline.

**International human rights law:**

International human rights law establishes a series of rights that countries all agree are important. These 'laws' apply to countries when they sign up to the treaties, for example, the UK and Ireland have signed up to the following; the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Single Equality Bill:**

A single piece of legislation that will bring together all the existing anti-discrimination legislation in Northern Ireland into one Act.

**Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA):**

This incorporates into domestic law the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

**European Social Charter:**

A Council of Europe treaty, signed in 1961, which guarantees social and economic rights.

**Human rights:**

International legal norms that aspire to protect all people everywhere from severe political, legal, social and economic abuses. Examples of human rights are the right to freedom of religion, the right to a fair trial when charged with a crime, the right not to be tortured, and the right to food and housing.

**Civil and political rights:**

Rights such as the right to vote, the right to a nationality, not to be tortured and not to be discriminated against.

**Social and economic rights:**

Rights such as the right to a proper standard of living to decent housing, to work and to be properly paid, to health care and to education.

**United Nations (UN):**

An organisation with representatives of all of the countries of the world.

**UN High Commissioner for Human Rights:**

The principal UN official with responsibility for human rights and is accountable to the Secretary General.

**Justiciable:**

Legally enforceable, i.e. something that can be judged upon in court.

the right to protection from bullying







Voluntary Service Bureau exists to support, encourage and promote citizenship and participation through voluntary activity. Young Citizens In Action is a Voluntary Service Bureau initiative supported by:

Community Fund      Youth Council for Northern Ireland      CVS  
Peace II Programme administered through Community Foundation



**young citizens in action**  
involving young people in the community  
through volunteering



# action!

THE MAGAZINE OF YOUNG CITIZENS IN ACTION.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ AGE \_\_\_\_\_

POSTCODE \_\_\_\_\_

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE LAYOUT poor 1 2 3 4 5 great

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE CONTENT poor 1 2 3 4 5 great

DO YOU THINK THE CONTENT IS YOUNG PERSON FRIENDLY YES NO

WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE AN INFO PACK ON VOLUNTEERING YES NO

To return this pop it in an envelope and use this address - no stamp necessary!  
Voluntary Service Bureau, FREEPOST, 34 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast BT2 7DB

.....leave school	16
.....work part-time	13
.....work full-time	16
.....be held criminally responsible	10
.....be held in a juvenile justice centre	10
.....be held in prison	17
.....married	18
.....make a will	18
.....do jury service	18
.....vote in elections	18
.....buy alcohol	18
.....buy a lottery ticket	16
.....look at my school records	16
.....look at my medical records	16
.....get a tattoo	18
.....open own bank account	7

\*for Northern Ireland

**AM I OLD ENUFF 2.....?**  
the law is strange, there are different age  
limits to all sorts of stuff. Check this out!