



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Thirtieth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 710th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 18 March 2024, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Fefoame

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Activities under the Optional Protocol to the Convention (*continued*)

Follow-up to the inquiry on the United Kingdom ([CRPD/C/15/4](#) and [CRPD/C/15/4/Corr.1](#); CRPD/C/15/GBR/FIR/1, CRPD/C/15/GBR/FIR/Add.1 and CRPD/C/15/GBR/FIR/Add.2)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the United Kingdom joined the meeting.*
2. **The Chair** said that, in 2016, the Committee had adopted a report and made recommendations in the context of its inquiry concerning the United Kingdom under article 6 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention ([CRPD/C/15/4](#) and [CRPD/C/15/4/Corr.1](#)). The delegation of the United Kingdom would now inform the Committee of the implementation of those recommendations.
3. **A representative of the United Kingdom** said that the follow-up reports submitted by the United Kingdom on the 2016 inquiry under the Optional Protocol to the Convention demonstrated the ongoing commitment of the four nations of the United Kingdom – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – to supporting disabled people. The Convention was implemented in England, Scotland and Wales through the Equality Act 2010 and in Northern Ireland through the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, and through a raft of policies to address the barriers to the full participation and inclusion of disabled people in society.
4. Two landmark pieces of disability legislation had recently been adopted. The first was the British Sign Language Act 2022, which recognized British Sign Language as a language in England, Scotland and Wales, and required the United Kingdom Government to report on the use of British Sign Language by its ministerial departments in their public communications. The Government had likewise set up the British Sign Language Advisory Board, which comprised, for the most part, deaf British Sign Language users, to provide input on key issues affecting the deaf community. The second was the Down Syndrome Act 2022, the aim of which was to address the barriers encountered by people with Down syndrome and to ensure their access to the care and support they needed for enhanced life outcomes. Statutory guidance on the Down Syndrome Act 2022 was currently being drafted to enable professionals working in the health, social care, education and housing sectors to provide people with Down syndrome with more targeted support.
5. The National Disability Strategy, which had been published in 2021, brought together more than 100 government commitments and set out the long-term vision for disability policy in the United Kingdom. Its purpose was to significantly improve the daily lives of disabled people in areas such as housing, transport, work and education, consumer experiences, access to public services online, social participation and inclusion, and access to justice. As at September 2023, 47 of the 100 commitments included in the Strategy had been fulfilled.
6. The National Disability Strategy was complemented by the Disability Action Plan, which had been published in February 2024 after extensive consultations with disabled people, disabled people's organizations and other interested parties in the second half of 2023. The consultation findings had been carefully analysed and used to help to shape the Plan, which set out 32 practical actions that the United Kingdom Government would take in 2024 to improve disabled people's daily lives and lay the foundations for longer-term change, in close partnership with disabled people, disabled people's organizations, government departments and public service providers. Those actions included promoting better understanding of the Convention and its implications for public policy across the Government; making government communications and information more accessible, including in the areas of emergency and resilience planning; and amplifying the voices of families with disabled members to improve information and services intended for them.
7. The National Disability Strategy and the Disability Action Plan, which were being implemented in tandem, were accompanied by reforms in the areas of employment and welfare, guided by the white paper on health and disability published in 2023 by the Department for Work and Pensions, and by reforms in the area of adult social care, guided

by the white paper on social care published in 2021 by the Department of Health and Social Care.

8. A key priority for the United Kingdom Government was to reduce the disability employment gap. In 2017, it had set the goal of integrating 1 million more disabled people into the labour market by 2027. Between 2017 and 2022, the number of disabled people in work had already increased by 1.3 million. The latest figures for the first quarter of 2023 showed that the number of disabled people who were in work had risen by 1.6 million since the original goal had been set in 2017. Efforts would continue to maintain that positive trend.

9. In the health and disability white paper, the Government had committed to transforming the benefits system to focus on what people could do rather than what they could not, to increasing employment support for disabled people and people with health conditions and to ensuring that people could gain access to the right support at the right time and have a better overall experience when applying for and receiving health and disability benefits.

10. The white paper on social care set out the Government's 10-year vision for adult social care. Care workers remained at the heart of reform plans in that area and were being provided with opportunities to further develop their skills and advance their careers through a range of new funded training schemes. Efforts were also being made to improve the collection and sharing of data, to roll out individual care records and to fund home adaptations to help people remain independent at home. Since 2022, the Government had invested over £195 million in the implementation of reforms aimed at the digitalization of the adult social care sector, the roll-out of new care technologies, the enhancement of local authority oversight and the conduct of new data collection initiatives.

11. Supported housing also played a vital role in delivering better life outcomes, improved health and well-being, and greater independence for disabled people. The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023, which enabled the setting of national standards for support for residents and the introduction of local authority-led licensing schemes, had been adopted to prevent unscrupulous housing providers from exploiting vulnerable people and the housing benefits system. In 2022, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had decided to award £20 million to 26 councils in England between 2022 and 2025 to support the implementation of a new enforcement programme designed to improve the quality and value for money of supported housing. In England, the Affordable Homes Programme 2021–2026, which had a budget of £11.5 billion, provided for the delivery of new supported housing.

12. As part of efforts to tackle prejudices and misconceptions about disabled people in the community, in October 2023 the Disability Unit in the Cabinet Office of the United Kingdom Government had launched the "Ask Don't Assume" behaviour-change campaign. The campaign, which had been co-designed with disabled people, encouraged the public to ask disabled people about their accessibility needs and to challenge any assumptions that they might have about disabled people and their capabilities. The Department for Transport had launched a behaviour-change campaign entitled "It's Everyone's Journey" with the aim of creating a more considerate and supportive environment in which disabled people could travel with confidence.

13. The Government took a hard line on tackling disability hate crime. To that end, it had conducted nationwide public awareness-raising campaigns and funded True Vision, an online portal for reporting hate crime to the police without having to visit a police station.

14. Another government priority was to ensure that all children and young people, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, received adequate and timely support so that they could fulfil their potential and lead productive adult lives. To address that priority, the Department for Education had, in March 2023, published the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan with the aim of rebalancing the special educational needs and disabilities system by identifying the needs of and the support required by children, young people and their families earlier and by improving provision in mainstream settings in their local area. To help offset the additional cost of having a disabled child, the Department for Education provided £27.3 million per

year in funding in the form of grants to help low-income families with disabled or seriously ill children to cover the cost of non-statutory items and services.

15. The Government was committed to ensuring that everyone, including disabled people, could gain timely access to the justice system. The Ministry of Justice understood that the availability of adequate legal advice and support services was the key to helping disabled people to successfully resolve their legal issues. Since 2015, the Ministry had spent more than £25 million to support litigants and had funded a broad range of free legal support services. To ensure that persons with a hearing impairment were not prevented from performing jury service, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 had been amended to stipulate that profoundly deaf jurors were to be provided with the services of a British Sign Language interpreter in the jury deliberation room. To date, 41 jurors had served on juries with the assistance of a British Sign Language interpreter in England and Wales.

16. Interministerial coordination in implementing disability policy was guaranteed through a network of Ministerial Disability Champions, who had specific responsibility for driving forward work on disability in their respective departments. Elsewhere, government-appointed Disability and Access Ambassadors used their expertise and influence in the business sector to encourage improvements in accessibility for disabled consumers and employees.

17. Collaboration with disabled people and disabled people's organizations was central to the Government's approach to disability policy. The Disability Unit worked closely with multiple strategic disability stakeholder networks to support and supplement those efforts. In addition, individual government departments had their own networks in their respective policy areas. Pursuant to the Disability Action Plan, the Disability Unit was also working to improve the collection of data and evidence on disabled people in the United Kingdom with a view to enhancing the Government's understanding of the lived experiences of disabled people.

18. **A representative of the United Kingdom** said that the Scottish government was pursuing an ambitious and progressive agenda to ensure that equality, inclusion and human rights were embedded in all government actions. In April 2023, the First Minister of Scotland had set out his vision for Scotland and the outcomes that he and his government aimed to achieve by 2026. The Scottish Human Rights Bill was expected to be introduced in the Scottish Parliament before the end of the current parliamentary year and, once enacted, would incorporate into Scots law, within the limits of the Scottish Parliament's legislative competence, a range of internationally recognized human rights, making them directly enforceable and strengthening domestic legal protections for the people of Scotland, including disabled people. Public bodies would consequently have a greater incentive to remove the barriers preventing disabled people from participating fully in Scottish society on an equal footing with others.

19. In Scotland, the United Kingdom Government's disability living allowance for children and personal independence payment had been replaced with the child disability payment in 2021 and with the adult disability payment in 2022, respectively. The processes for applying for Scottish disability assistance had been co-designed with disabled people to ensure their accessibility. Disabled people could avail themselves of an independent advocacy service at any point during the application process.

20. The Scottish government's ambition to achieve equality was supported by its desire for a strong economy. In the Scottish budget for 2024/25, funds of up to £90 million had been earmarked for devolved employability services, including services designed to assist people facing structural barriers to entering employment, including disabled people. Steady progress had been made towards achieving the government's goal of reducing the disability employment gap in the country by 50 per cent – to 18.7 percentage points – by 2038.

21. It had recently been announced that £9 million would be invested to reopen the Independent Living Fund in 2024/25. Reopening the Fund would not only give effect to a key recommendation that had emerged from the Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland but would also allow up to 1,000 disabled people with the most complex needs to obtain the support they needed to lead independent lives. The approximately 2,000 disabled people who were already in receipt of financial support would continue to

receive it. Since December 2017, the Transition Fund of the Independent Living Fund Scotland had awarded over 5,000 grants worth more than £10 million to help disabled young people make the transition to adulthood.

22. The National Care Service (Scotland) Bill had been drafted with the aim of improving quality, fairness and consistency in the provision of community health and social care services in Scotland. The Bill was currently before the Scottish Parliament and, once enacted, would provide the statutory basis for the country's new National Care Service. The Scottish government had also legislated to ensure that, from April 2019, adults of any age, regardless of their financial situation, who were assessed as needing personal care could receive such care for free.

23. **A representative of the United Kingdom** said that the Welsh government's Programme for Government included a commitment to incorporate the Convention into Welsh law. A legislative options working group had been set up to examine how that could be achieved and was expected to produce a report outlining its recommendations later in 2024.

24. Improving skills and supporting access to employment was a key part of the Welsh government's actions to tackle poverty and to reduce the income gap between those with protected characteristics and others and was a primary objective of the Child Poverty Strategy for Wales 2024. Previously, actions by the government to facilitate access to the labour market, particularly for disabled people and people facing other barriers to employment, had been bolstered by funds received from the European Union, which had been invested in several employability schemes.

25. Over the financial years from 2022/23 to 2024/25, local authorities in Wales had been allocated £585 million through the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund. That funding would enable local authorities to deliver essential services in the communities they served, including employability support schemes tailored to the needs of the local labour market. To that end, local authorities were working with key local partners across the public, private and third sectors to maximize local resources and expertise.

26. In July 2021, the Disability Equality Forum had published a report entitled "Locked Out: Liberating Disabled People's Lives and Rights in Wales beyond COVID-19", which detailed the inequalities experienced by disabled people in Wales. In response, the Welsh government had established the Disability Rights Taskforce, which, along with its 10 multidisciplinary working groups, was responsible for implementing the social model of disability in Wales. The working groups had emphasized the need to prioritize the roll-out of inclusive infrastructure in towns and cities and accessible transportation systems and to reduce inequalities in access to services, housing, employment, health and social care, justice and education. The working groups' recommendations would support the implementation of many of the principles enshrined in the Convention. The government, disabled people and their representative organizations would work together to give effect to those recommendations through a rights-based plan.

27. **A representative of the United Kingdom** said that the Northern Ireland Executive had taken a range of measures to mitigate the effects of welfare reforms that might adversely affect disabled people. Those measures included financial support for disabled people whose benefits had been reduced or who had lost their benefits altogether following the introduction of the personal independence payment.

28. Northern Ireland had a disability prevalence rate of approximately 25 per cent; yet, despite low levels of unemployment, the disability employment gap stood at 43.3 percentage points. The Department for Communities remained committed to reducing barriers to employment for disabled persons. Extensive work had been undertaken to develop a new disability and work strategy to complement existing pre-employment and in-work support measures. The progress made in that area included the conduct of labour market research, the gathering of detailed input from stakeholders involved in co-designing the strategy and the development of a strategy narrative and action plan to address several emerging themes, including: personalized support; inclusive skills, career progression and educational transitions; supporting and enabling employers; and strategic enablers. With the Northern

Ireland Executive once again operational, the draft strategy could be submitted for ministerial consideration.

29. The Department for Communities was likewise leading efforts to develop a new executive disability strategy to address the barriers and inequalities experienced by disabled people in Northern Ireland. The strategy was being developed using a co-design approach with involvement from key stakeholders throughout the process, including representatives of the voluntary and community sectors and of equality and human rights bodies. The next steps to be taken in the development of the strategy were currently under discussion. The final content would be subject to approval by the Northern Ireland Executive.

30. In May 2019, the Department of Justice had commissioned an independent review of hate crime legislation in Northern Ireland to gauge its effectiveness in addressing such criminal conduct. Steps had been taken to implement 34 recommendations that had emerged from that review and the groundwork was being laid for a new bill on hate crime, which was expected to be introduced during the current mandate of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

31. In January 2023, the Department of Health had approved a draft strategic plan on learning disabilities with the aim of addressing the growing pressures on learning disability services for children and adults and, in December 2023, it had published an updated strategy on autism, which set out key government commitments and the actions needed to improve support for autistic people and their families. In 2021, a regional health and social care forum for disabled people, composed of service users, their carers and representatives of disabled people's organizations and the statutory, voluntary and community sectors, had been established to discuss current, emerging and future strategic policies that might affect people with a physical, sensory and/or communication difficulty and to feed back the outcome of those discussions to the Department of Health.

32. **Ms. Kayess** (Country Rapporteur) said that, despite the significant resources recently invested in the social care sector, since 2017 the Committee had found evidence of regression in the realization of the rights and the application of the standards and principles enshrined in the Convention throughout the United Kingdom.

33. She noted that the United Kingdom disability survey, which had informed the content of the National Disability Strategy, had been challenged before the courts on the basis that it did not comply with the legal requirements governing public consultations (the Gunning Principles). However, despite the High Court's having found in favour of the claimants and having declared the National Disability Strategy unlawful, the Court of Appeal had subsequently overturned that decision, arguing that the survey did not amount to a consultation. She wondered, in the light of the finding of the Court of Appeal, what steps had been taken or were envisaged to ensure close consultation with and active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the development and implementation of the National Disability Strategy going forward and how consultation efforts would be coordinated across the governments of the four nations of the United Kingdom.

34. The Committee had received reports that an increasing number of persons with disabilities were being forced to remain in hospital or to live in secure psychiatric facilities or social care homes owing to a lack of alternative housing solutions and that many persons with disabilities were effectively housebound because they did not have access to the support necessary for them to be active members of their local communities. She would like to know what measures the State party was taking to fulfil its obligation to ensure that all persons with disabilities could live independently and be included in the community. The delegation might also explain what steps were being taken to abolish the use of restraint, restrictive practices and coercive measures in all institutional settings and to end disability-based detention and compulsory treatment, including in psychiatric facilities. It would also be useful to know whether there was there a national housing and homelessness strategy in place to assist persons with disabilities who were living in unsafe, inaccessible housing or who had no fixed abode.

35. As she understood it, the overriding purpose of the State party's work capability assessments was to encourage more persons with disabilities to cease claiming social benefits and to join the workforce. However, the Committee had been informed that the associated

process was complex and onerous, that claimants were not always provided with the necessary assistance or support in assessment meetings, that assessors were often inexperienced and unqualified and that due account was not taken of claimants' specific circumstances or their need for other types of support, for example, in situations of domestic violence, mental distress or if they had caring responsibilities. The assessment process did not appear to be trauma-informed or to serve its stated purpose. She wished to know whether any parliamentary or other inquiries had been opened into the assessment process and its impact on persons with disabilities, and whether the State party planned to develop an overarching employment strategy for persons with disabilities in close consultation with and with the active involvement of those persons and their representative organizations.

36. Despite the Convention's requiring States parties to take measures to combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to persons with disabilities, in the United Kingdom, there was evidence of a pervasive rhetoric that devalued persons with disabilities and undermined their human dignity. The proposed reforms to the social benefits system were premised on the notion that persons with disabilities were somehow undeserving and were defrauding the State. That perception had resulted in hostility towards and the use of hate speech against persons with disabilities. She would be interested to know what the State party was doing to combat those phenomena and to ensure that the systems put in place to detect fraud and errors in claims for social benefits did not include artificial intelligence-based tools and algorithms that contained encoded biases that could negatively affect claimants.

37. The Committee had been informed that, in the absence of a functioning Northern Ireland Executive, civil servants had used their discretion to make changes to social welfare processes and procedures that had adversely affected persons with disabilities and that those changes had not been reversed after the new Executive had taken office. She would like to know whether any steps had been taken to review all the changes made during that time and to reverse those that had proved detrimental to persons with disabilities.

38. The Committee had received disturbing reports that, in Northern Ireland, persons with disabilities were being forced to use food banks and had been targeted for financial exploitation and illegal lending, arguably as a result of their having been largely excluded from formal responses to exploitation by criminal gangs and paramilitary organizations. Information on the measures being taken to protect persons with disabilities in Northern Ireland from exploitation would be appreciated.

39. **Ms. Jacobs** (Country Rapporteur) said that the Committee had received numerous reports of persons with disabilities in the United Kingdom facing intolerable situations, even death, while trying to satisfy the requirements to qualify for social benefits and independent living support programmes or undergoing work capability assessments. The information in the Committee's possession suggested a significant and shameful gap between the requirements of the Convention and the lived experiences of persons with disabilities in the State party. The information published on government websites about the different social benefit regimes and associated application processes was often unclear. A lack of transparency in government processes had a significant impact on the lives of persons with disabilities, since it could prevent them from successfully navigating systems relating to independent living, work and social benefits and from predicting the outcome of related applications and benefits claims.

40. Regrettably, the State party appeared to be failing in its obligation to safeguard and promote the realization of the right of persons with disabilities to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions, and their right to social protection, which included access to social protection and poverty reduction programmes. Persons with disabilities had repeatedly pointed out that the social benefits to which they were entitled were simply insufficient and that a disproportionate number of such persons were living in poverty and were unable to heat their homes or purchase food. The results of the 2018 impact assessment and analysis of public spending conducted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission had showed that, in Great Britain, persons with disabilities were among the groups worst affected by austerity measures and budget cuts and were more likely to live in

poverty. The delegation might outline the measures envisaged to ensure that social security payments were sufficient to cover the true living costs of persons with disabilities.

41. The phenomenon of so-called “benefit deaths”, or the deaths of individuals who had gone through the process of applying for social benefits in the State party, was deeply worrying. The Committee had discerned a pattern whereby an increasing number of persons with disabilities were resorting to suicide after having been denied an adequate standard of living and social protection, in violation of the Convention. A 2015 research study published by a group of academics from the United Kingdom had concluded that the State party’s initiative to reassess entitlement to incapacity benefits through a work capability assessment was linked to approximately 600 suicides in the space of three years. The Committee had also received reports from individuals who had received little or no support in dealing with mental health crises, which were often caused by the benefits application process. She wished to know what measures the State party intended to take to ensure that the processes for assessing work capability and eligibility for benefits were trauma-informed and did not cause mental health crises, suicide and death, and what redress had been provided to the families of persons who had died or to persons who had experienced trauma as a result of those processes.

42. It would be helpful to know whether factors other than medical factors were taken into account when determining the eligibility for social benefits of persons with disabilities and what the related initial and continuing eligibility assessments entailed. The delegation might also indicate what measures were being taken to ensure that benefit eligibility assessment processes did not have a negative impact on deaf persons and persons with disabilities in particular, who faced multiple forms of discrimination.

43. According to the policy paper published by the Department for Work and Pensions entitled “Completing the move to Universal Credit”, which set out the United Kingdom Government’s strategy for implementing the final phase of the universal credit initiative for the period 2020–2024, it seemed that legacy benefit claimants with disabilities could not automatically transition to universal credit. If that was the case, she would be curious to know what measures had been taken to assess the impact of that policy on legacy benefit claimants with disabilities, whether those claimants were entitled to request other forms of assistance and whether the overall number of persons with disabilities receiving social benefits was expected to fall. Had the roll-out of the universal credit system now been completed across the United Kingdom?

44. She would be grateful to receive information on the measures envisaged to ensure that persons with disabilities could make choices about living independently and living in the community on an equal basis with others and were provided with sufficient resources to thrive rather than simply subsist. The delegation might also describe the steps being taken to address the current dearth of personal assistance services for persons with disabilities and to support persons with disabilities in finding and retaining the services of qualified personal assistants. Lastly, she would like to hear more about what was being done to ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers with disabilities received sufficient social security payments to live independently in the community, and to ensure that they had access to personal assistance services, assistive devices and accessible housing, as required.

45. **Ms. Kim Mi Yeon** said that she would like to learn more about the factors that had contributed to the thousands of unexpected deaths of mental health service users in the Norfolk and Suffolk National Health Service Foundation Trust and the action taken by the State party to respond to that tragedy and to prevent further deaths from occurring. Had any steps been taken towards opening a criminal investigation or conducting a public inquiry into those deaths?

46. **Sir Robert Martin** said that the Committee would welcome information on any steps taken to replace the guardianship system and other systems based on substitute decision-making with supported decision-making mechanisms, in line with the Committee’s general comment No. 1 (2014) on equal recognition before the law. He wondered whether judicial officials and other professionals working with persons with disabilities, and the families of those persons, received training on supported decision-making. Details of any

deinstitutionalization strategy in place for persons with psychosocial disabilities and persons with intellectual disabilities would also be appreciated.

47. **Mr. Makni** said it was his impression that many of the State party's laws and policies were still based on a medical model of disability. For instance, the Care Act 2014, despite recognizing the need to promote the individual well-being of persons with disabilities and to provide those persons with assistance services that were tailored to their specific needs, failed to take into account their right to live independently and to make their own choices about where and how they lived. Moreover, the reduction in social benefits and the scaling back of support services for persons with disabilities were only making it more difficult for them to participate in the community and were effectively hampering the implementation of the human rights model of disability in the State party. He would be interested to know how the State party planned to address those problems and to ensure that persons with disabilities received the assistance they needed in a manner that respected their rights under article 19 of the Convention.

48. **A representative of the United Kingdom** said that the United Kingdom was fully committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Convention. Although the Convention had not been incorporated into national law, the Equality Act 2010 protected people in Great Britain against discrimination, harassment and victimization on the basis of nine characteristics, which included disability. The Act also included a public sector equality duty to promote equality of opportunity for all. Public sector bodies that were bound by that duty must consider the impact of their work on all individuals, including disabled people.

49. The Government attached great importance to addressing the social and environmental barriers that affected disabled people and worked closely with disabled people and disabled people's organizations to ensure that the voices of those people were properly heard.

50. The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 provided that persons must not be treated as intentionally homeless if they left supported housing that did not meet the applicable national standards.

51. **A representative of the United Kingdom** said that the United Kingdom Government had committed to delivering a cost-of-living support package worth £104 billion over the financial years from 2022/23 to 2024/25, under which cost-of-living support payments had already been made to households whose members received eligible means-tested benefits. Many people who received extra cost disability benefits and who were of pensionable age had also received a cost-of-living support payment. Benefits had been uprated in 2023 and would be uprated again in April 2024, in line with inflation. Extensive support had been provided to help the population to cover rising energy costs. Additional support was also available through the Household Support Fund, which would remain operational for a further six months.

52. The Government was pursuing the most ambitious disability policy reform agenda in a generation. It had successfully reduced the disability employment gap, enhanced legal protections against discrimination based on disability and was working to improve disabled people's experience of and trust in the social benefits system, including by trialling new initiatives, such as waiving the requirement for people with severe disabilities to complete a detailed application form or undergo an assessment. The Government was committed to ensuring that the social welfare system supported people in work while providing a vital safety net for those who needed it most. Protections for people with the most serious health conditions would be maintained. Abolishing work capability assessments in the future would reduce the number of assessments that people would need to undergo in order to have access to social benefits, give more people the confidence to try employment and enable the Government to take a more personalized approach.

53. Claimants in receipt of universal credit who had already been assessed as having limited capability for work and work-related activity received a work allowance and had access to assistance to help with childcare costs. Claimants who received an additional amount of benefit for having limited capability for work and work-related activity would continue to receive that additional amount after moving from legacy benefits to universal credit.

54. The Data Protection and Digital Information Bill, which was aimed at, among other things, addressing fraud and error in the provision of services, had been assessed in the light of the public sector equality duty and its potential impact on claimants of social benefits, including disabled people, and would be kept under review. In cases of fraud or error, the Department for Work and Pensions would receive only minimal information; however, each case would be examined individually by a case worker and no automated decisions would be taken.

55. **A representative of the United Kingdom** said that, as part of its reform of the adult social care sector, the United Kingdom Government was investing in improving training and in developing accredited qualifications for care workers to enable them to progress further in their careers. Following the publication of the white paper on social care, the Government had made available up to £8.6 billion in additional funding to support the adult social care sector over the current and next financial year.

56. Under the National Health Service Long-Term Plan, additional funds were being invested in order to improve community-based support for people with a learning disability and autistic people. As part of the Government's community-based crisis response initiative, mental health liaison services were being embedded in all accident and emergency units and mental health inpatient settings, and accident and emergency units were being provided with alternative premises to accommodate people in crisis. That measure was intended to reduce the number of cases in which persons were deprived of their liberty under the Mental Health Act 1983.

57. The Care Quality Commission, the independent regulator of health and social care in England, was responsible for ensuring that care providers, including care homes and inpatient mental health facilities, delivered safe, high-quality and people-centred services. The Commission had a range of enforcement powers, which had recently been strengthened, and would take swift action to ensure the safety of service users if serious failings in the delivery of care were brought to its attention. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care was also now empowered to intervene directly in such scenarios.

58. The issues that had been identified in mental health inpatient services in England were not limited to a particular trust. A national approach was therefore required to ensure that the mental health care provided in England was of high quality, safe and focused on helping people to recover. In June 2023, it had been announced that the Health Services Safety Investigations Body would launch an investigation into the situation in mental health inpatient settings. That investigation was expected to identify ways of improving mental health care services, patient safety and working conditions for care staff. Restrictive practices were only ever used in care settings as a last resort when all attempts to de-escalate a situation had failed. If the use of such practices became necessary, the least restrictive option was chosen.

59. The National Health Service in England had committed to investing £36 million over three years to support the implementation of the Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism Inpatient Quality Transformation Programme to tackle the root causes of unsafe and poor-quality inpatient care and to reduce the use of restrictive practices. The majority of the provisions of the Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Act 2018, which regulated the practices of seclusion, segregation and the use of restraint, had entered into force in 2022. The provisions that remained outstanding were expected to enter into force in the near future. The Draft Mental Health Bill had been published in June 2022 with the aim of reforming the Mental Health Act 1983, including by refining the criteria under which individuals could be detained to ensure that detention was imposed only in cases of absolute necessity and by granting patients, where possible, the right to express preferences regarding their care and treatment in advance and an enhanced right to appeal decisions in that regard.

60. **A representative of the United Kingdom** said that the Scottish government was committed to implementing the recommendations contained in the "Coming Home" report aimed at addressing the situation of people with learning disabilities and complex care needs who were subject to unsuitable out-of-area placements or who were inappropriately admitted to hospital owing to a breakdown in their community-based support. The steps taken to date

included the introduction of dynamic support registers to improve local case management of people with learning disabilities and complex care needs.

61. The Scottish government provided funding and support to Restraint Reduction Scotland, which was a network of key stakeholders committed to eliminating the misuse of restrictive practices through the promotion of good practices in that area.

62. In Scotland, child and adult disability payments were not means-tested, in recognition of the additional societal barriers that disabled people and people with long-term health conditions experienced. Those people thus had access to financial support regardless of their employment status or income.

63. **A representative of the United Kingdom** said that the Welsh government supported the carrying out of approximately 45,000 home adaptations for disabled people every year at a cost of over £60 million. The purpose of the disabled facilities grants awarded by the government was to provide tailored solutions to the problems of people living in a disabling environment and to allow disabled people to continue to live independently.

64. The National Transport Delivery Plan 2022–2027 set out the range of actions that the Welsh government was taking to improve the reliability, safety and frequency of public transport in Wales. An equality action plan was being developed for the transport sector to ensure that all modes of transport were accessible to and safe for people with protected characteristics, including disabled people.

65. **A representative of the United Kingdom** said that Northern Ireland had a long history of engagement with disabled people and their representative organizations in relation to both social benefits and the development of a disability strategy. Civil servants had made changes to the social benefits regime in Northern Ireland in the absence of a functioning Northern Ireland Executive to maintain parity with the social benefits system in Great Britain. All legislation drafted by civil servants would be scrutinized by elected members of the now returned Northern Ireland Assembly.

66. The Department for Communities was taking steps to ensure that eligible persons came forward to claim all the benefits to which they were entitled, including assistance to help cover the cost of food. For instance, in 2022/23, the Make the Call Service had assisted 11,700 people in requesting unclaimed benefits, services and support. An additional £54.9 million worth of benefits had been claimed as a result. Any person in Northern Ireland who found themselves in a crisis situation could apply for emergency financial support from the Discretionary Support scheme.

67. **A representative of the United Kingdom** said that the Disability Unit in the United Kingdom Government's Cabinet Office was responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Convention across the four nations of the United Kingdom.

68. **Ms. Jacobs**, thanking the delegation for having participated in the follow-up dialogue, said that, while the Committee acknowledged the efforts made by the State party to act on the recommendations that had emerged from the inquiry, she wished to urge it to devise further ways and means of advancing the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities across the four nations of the United Kingdom and to take immediate steps to remedy the issues highlighted during the dialogue. The State party should implement the Convention in a way that promoted the human rights model of disability, as outlined in the Committee's general comment No. 6 (2018) on equality and non-discrimination.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 4.30 p.m.