

# Joint Committee on Disability Matters

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## **How have your human rights been supported?**

To begin with, I want to thank the Committee and the Chair, Mr. Moynihan, for the invitation to this meeting and for facilitating me to attend online. I also want to thank the team at Mental Health Reform for their support throughout this event and others I've been fortunate enough to attend.

To answer the question honestly, I don't believe my human rights, or those of many citizens and/or residents of this country have been supported.

Recently, I was involved in a recent committee on December 6<sup>th</sup> 2023, discussing my experience of CAMHS. In preparation for that, I spoke to many people who had been or were still in CAMHS. To many, myself included, this is the first step for them in their mental health journey, often times seeking an answer for their struggles, which in my case was a late diagnosis of autism. The common experience (reported to me) was negative. If this is the starting point, imagine how difficult it is moving forward from that. For me my diagnosis was locked behind a pay wall as I was gaslit by a medical system that was supposed to support me and was denied an assessment I had been asking for and was forced to go private, a luxury many people cannot afford but feel forced to do as I did.

I also took part in a "Public Consultation on the Green Paper on Disability Reform" on the 9th of November 2023. This was an incredibly upsetting event as the government showed in plain terms it's complete lack of not only respect for people with varying ranges of disabilities, but also a complete lack of competence on the extent of our experiences.

The fact that what was suggested on that day made it to a stage where you looked at us, in person and online, and completely dismissed the multitude of access issues across this country and tried to force us into an inherently in-accessible employment system many of us are not a part of for good reason, shows a real lack of regard for people with disabilities.

For us, self-advocacy becomes a necessity as you have to fight to access what you are entitled to. People with disabilities are frequently infantilised, degraded and not recognised as individuals with numerous capabilities that can flourish when needs are properly met. Accessibility for everyone is just not regarded as truly important by this government and many of the obstacles are based on ignorance, ableism and stubbornness.

I would recommend better training and education across all departments on the varying needs of people with disabilities and community led initiatives that focus more on individualised support needs rather than a broad strokes approach.

I do truly believe this country and it's government is more than capable of supporting the human rights of people with disabilities, as is their responsibility to do so. As one of the richest countries in the world, we *can* fund it and people with disabilities are more than happy to return on that investment when given the proper supports.

Thank you.