

Response to the Independent Human Rights Act Review Call for Evidence Ministry of Justice

March 2021

1. Introduction

Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP) welcomes the opportunity to contribute evidence to the Independent Human Rights Act Review.

NIWEP is a membership organisation of women's NGOs in Northern Ireland. Established as the Northern Ireland link to the European Women's Lobby, the EU's expert body on women's rights and gender equality, NIWEP also has special consultative status with the UN. A key role for NIWEP is promoting gender responsive policy and decision making at local, regional and national level taking account of the state's international obligations, while also ensuring women and girls are engaged in policy and decision making. NIWEP also works to share information and good practice at international level with local members and stakeholders, and highlight local learning and good practice internationally.

NIWEP's core objectives involve raising awareness and promoting implementation of key international human rights treaties and initiatives, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). NIWEP views implementing the recommendations of CEDAW as a clear roadmap and mechanism to ensuring women's human rights are fully met and upheld in Northern Ireland, and the implementation of the UK's international obligations as a cornerstone of both upholding human rights domestically and taking a leading role in advocating for human rights internationally.

2. Endorsement

NIWEP endorses the response of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Consortium to this consultation.

3. Comment

NIWEP is concerned that a review of the Human Rights Act has been triggered and would urge for no changes to the current application of the Human Rights Act. NIWEP views the Human Rights Act as critical for the protection of rights in the UK, through its role in enacting the European Convention on Human Rights in domestic law. This is a vital underpinning for the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, and has played an important role in developments in Northern Ireland since 1998. From a women's perspective, both the Human Rights Act and the Good Friday Agreement are critical linchpins of rights and equality provisions, and women have repeatedly stressed that implementation of the Good Friday Agreement is central for the continued development of a peaceful future Northern Ireland. In addition, strong human rights and equality legislation domestically is a prerequisite for the role of the UK internationally. The UK has taken a proactive role in promoting the rights of women and girls internationally, and for continued leadership in this field, which is more important than ever, NIWEP calls for the upholding of strong domestic legislation.