

Submission 271
The Anaphylaxis Campaign

Chapter 14 Page 89 (C) Right to Health Care

The Anaphylaxis Campaign is a national charity with a very active branch in the Province. Our motto is 'Fighting for those with potentially fatal food allergies'.

As you may be aware food allergies have greatly increased over the past number of years. Allergic reactions can range from mild to life threatening ie anaphylaxis. The main causes of anaphylaxis are peanuts, tree nuts, shellfish, milk, eggs, soya, sesame, insect stings, natural rubber (Latex) and numerous drugs and antibiotics including penicillin.

It is often thought that only children have anaphylactic reactions but this is not so. Many people develop serious allergies later in life and I speak from personal experience having suffered an anaphylactic reaction as a result of a peanut allergy I developed when aged 50.

As Regional Co-ordinator of the Anaphylaxis Campaign, I would like to draw your attention to the second point highlighted in Chapter 14 Page 89 (C) Right to Health Care. 'Government shall take all reasonable steps to promote good health and well being, and to ensure adequate prevention and treatment of ill-health'. While I very much welcome this statement I am unsure what is meant by, "reasonable steps". Does this refer to promoting and providing health care/treatment only within the Government's present budget or are you highlighting that greater amounts of money must be made available for this provision ? Without the funding to implement the type of service advocated, individual rights will not be met.

Presently, Northern Ireland has only two consultant immunologists and as far as I am aware NO immunologists. The waiting list for anyone, over the age of 13 years, referred to either of the two consultants at their clinics in the Royal Victoria Hospital and the Belfast City Hospital is eighteen months. You can imagine the stress and strain this can cause to an individual who has suffered a serious allergic reaction and is unsure of the cause. This needs to be investigated and the patient allergy tested as soon as possible, not left waiting eighteen months during which time they could have suffered other serious reactions.

In order to ensure "adequate prevention and treatment of ill-health" it is essential that all general practitioners are provided with up to date information on the assessment and treatment of allergies and the resources available. Having been in contact with numerous GPs I am aware that this is not happening at present.

In conclusion, I welcome the proposed Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and as a lecturer in Child Care I have used many of the resources from your office to inform my students of this very necessary piece of legislation. However, I do feel that more

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clarification is needed for individuals in terms of their expectations and also for Government. Without this the proposed Bill of Rights is in danger of becoming just another document which sounds good in theory but has little effect on the lives of the citizens of Northern Ireland for whom it is intended.

Yours sincerely

Maureen Paul
Regional Co-ordinator