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PRESS RELEASE

Commission tracks fair employment trends

A series of four papers considering fair employment trends and fair participation in employment for members of the Protestant and the Roman Catholic communities has been produced by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Two of the papers, the *Audits of Employers' Article 55 Reviews 2009-2011* and the *Health and Social Care Trusts: Fair Employment Report*, contain information about the work of employers in utilizing their monitoring returns together with the three yearly reviews to consider employment trends and to enhance fair participation by both communities.

These papers complement two other high-level papers, *Trends in Community Proportions of Applications and Appointments to the Private and Public Sectors* (March 2012), and *Employment Monitoring: Composition of Employment – Trends Over Time* (Dec 2011), which draw together data from across 20 years of published Fair Employment Monitoring Reports.

Eileen Lavery, Head of Advice and Compliance at the Equality Commission said:

“These papers, drawn from monitoring and review exercises, highlight particular trends in fair employment in sectors of the Northern Ireland workforce and help employers and the Commission ascertain the degree to which fair participation is being provided for members of the Protestant and the Roman Catholic communities. We consider that this work may also be of wider interest.

“There are some limitations to the conclusions that can be drawn from the data. Also, the context within which the data gathered from employers is assessed will be clearer

when the analyses from the latest Census are published. The Census data will provide very valuable information on the community shares of the population and those available for work in various sectors and areas.

“We are, of course, continuing to prioritise our work to support and advise all employers to help them identify any under-representation issues in a particular workplace, and to track the impact of measures - such as affirmative action plans – which they have been taking to rectify them.”

The **Audits of Employers’ Article 55 Reviews 2009-2011** conducted by the Commission show the positive impact of the duty to carry out a review of composition and practices every three years. The Commission received 441 Article 55 Reviews in the three year period and noted the consistently high degree of employer compliance. Of these Reviews the Commission worked in greater detail with 219 employers to promote affirmative action. Of these 60% were broadly affording fair participation to both communities, 28% had some under-representation of Protestants and 12% some under-representation of Roman Catholics. Commission staff also monitored progress in implementing 70 existing affirmative action agreements, a number of which are of very long standing. While more of these workplaces have under-representations of Roman Catholics, in many of the employments the potential for change is very limited because of decreasing workforces and minimal turnover.

The Health and Social Care Trusts: Fair Employment Report is a focused review of the community background of staff in Northern Ireland’s five Health Trusts. It shows that Roman Catholics make up [51.2%] of the overall workforce and Protestants [48.8%]. The proportions, however, vary across different employment sectors and geographic locations.

For example, the proportion of Catholics in nursing and midwifery is [56%], whereas that in medical and dental is [43.8%]. Nursing and midwifery is the largest job group in the sector - 37% of all Health Trust employees.

In support services, with over 7,000 employees, the geographic area from which employees are drawn is more restricted than for other jobs. This may have an impact on

community composition and the report shows that in the Royal Hospitals over [95%] of more than 800 support staff is Roman Catholic, whereas in the Ulster Hospital almost 95% of around 500 employees is Protestant.

“In this paper we have worked in co-operation with the Trusts and drawn on the annual collation of monitoring data and the three yearly reviews carried out by them.” Eileen Lavery said. “In addition we have recently completed an audit of the three yearly ‘Article 55’ reviews conducted by all employers which shows the positive impact these exercises have in planned improvements to equality practices. We have also used the aggregated data from these recurring exercises to assess trends over time. Analyses such as these can be of great benefit both to our understanding of trends and dynamics within the workforce and to the continuing enhancement of equality of opportunity and good practice.”

The Commission also tracked trends based on the monitoring data in the paper **Trends in Community Proportions of Applications and Appointments to the Private and Public Sectors** (March 2012). This considers aggregate data on proportions of applications and appointments between Protestant and Roman Catholics and identifies an overall pattern of decline in the Protestant proportion over two ten year periods. The paper also notes that the Protestant share of appointees is below the share of Protestant applicants, though not in every sub-sector or in every individual year. It advises that the analysis of aggregate data does not allow for inferences to be drawn on whether or not individual workplaces offer ‘fair participation’ in appointments.

In the report entitled **Employment Monitoring: Composition of Employment – trends over time (Dec 2011)**, the Commission summarises the trends in the total monitored workforce over time. It finds that the composition of the monitored workforce at the Northern Ireland level, when data is aggregated across all employers, now appears to more closely mirror labour availability than was the case when fair employment monitoring was first introduced in 1990.

“The continual process of collecting and collating these statistics represents a considerable annual commitment by employers and it is gratifying that the level of

compliance is so great – each year it comes close to 100%,” Eileen Lavery said.” Of course, monitoring is not an end in itself. It is the foundation upon which a great deal of demanding and effective work is being carried out, by employers and by the Equality Commission, to promote greater equality of opportunity in the workforce and to enhance fair participation for everyone.

All the reports can be accessed on the Equality Commission website:

[Audits of Employers’ Article 55 Reviews 2009-2011](#)

[The Health and Social Care Trusts: Fair Employment Report](#)

[Trends in Community Proportions of Applications and Appointments to the Private and Public Sectors \(March 2012\)](#)

[Employment Monitoring: Composition of Employment - trends over time \(December 2011\)](#)