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PRESS RELEASE

Equality Commission investigates funding decisions by Department for Communities

The Equality Commission is undertaking an investigation into funding decisions made by the Department for Communities regarding the Community Halls Pilot Programme and the Líofo Gaeltacht Bursary Scheme.

The investigation will consider whether the Department has complied with its Equality Scheme commitments relating to screening and equality impact assessment.

The Investigation was authorised by the Commission at its meeting on 26 April 2017.

The Investigation is under paragraph 11 of Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which empowers the Equality Commission to conduct an investigation where it believes that a public authority may have failed to comply with its approved Equality Scheme.

After earlier consideration by its Statutory Duties Investigation Committee, and consideration of correspondence from the Department for Communities, the Commission was satisfied that it would be appropriate to form such a belief. This is not a determination of whether or not such a failure has in fact occurred.

The Equality Commission will issue a report at the conclusion of the Investigation. It will not be commenting further upon the facts or issues involved in these matters until the investigation is complete.

NOTES

- Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, or sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependants and persons without.
- Public authorities are also required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

- Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 provides that the Equality Commission may conduct an investigation under paragraph 11 where it believes that a public authority may have failed to comply with its approved Equality Scheme.
- Under paragraph 10 of Schedule 9, a person directly affected by a designated public authority not acting in compliance with its Equality Scheme may complain, first to the public authority itself; and then, if they are dissatisfied with the response of the public authority, they may complain to the Equality Commission, who may decide to investigate their complaint.
- See details of Section 75 duties and requirements on ECNI website:
www.equalityni.org/S75duties