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PRESS RELEASE

Equality Commission comment on Border Force recruitment

Eileen Lavery, Head of Advice and Compliance at the Equality Commission, said: "The Equality Commission has been in contact with the Border Force over some time regarding issues around a recent recruitment advertisement by them for staff in Northern Ireland.

"The Commission has made the point that the requirement for a person to hold, and produce at interview a British passport, in order to meet the criterion of being a UK national, could exclude a large section of the Northern Ireland population who identify as Irish, hold no UK passport and, in many cases, hold an Irish passport.

"We have pointed out that this could raise concerns about possible discrimination on grounds covered by the Fair Employment and Treatment Order, which includes political opinion, and/or by the Race Relations Order.

"We also suggested that, in determining who qualifies as eligible for the posts, and in deciding what documents will be required as proof of that, the Border Force should give consideration to Article 1(vi) of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, which recognises the right of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both. The Agreement also confirms that their right to hold both British and Irish citizenship is accepted by both Governments.

The Commission understands that the Border Force as a matter of urgency is now reviewing this matter and the points the Commission has made.