Equality Commission FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Equality Focus

The e-newsletter of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

November 2008

Welcome to Equality Focus - the e-newsletter of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. We hope you find this informative and that you will pass it on to anyone you think would find it interesting. We welcome any suggestions or comments you may have.

Special issue - Anti-Racist Workplace Week 3-7 November 2008

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Launch Event at Waterfront Hall

John Corey, NIPSA and NIC ICTU, Evelyn Collins, Chief Executive, ECNI; Brian Ambrose, CBI and Junior Minister Jeffrey Donaldson, MP, MLA.

Anti-Racist Workplace Week got off to a great start on 3 November with endorsements from Junior Minister Jeffrey Donaldson, Chairman of the CBI Brian Ambrose and John Corey, NIC-ICTU Chair and General Secretary, NIPSA.

The launch event in the Waterfront Hall attracted a capacity audience of public and private sector delegates. The drama group Artsekta performed a short piece vividly illustrating some of the attitudes to race in the health service which generated a lot of discussion over lunch afterwards.

Jeremy Adams, Community Safety Branch (Hate Crime); JP Singh Reshi, Police College and Richard Williams, all Police Service of Northern Ireland

Over 30 events took place throughout the week all over Northern Ireland, and more will take place in coming weeks.

Junior Minister Jeffrey Donaldson addressing delegates

Anne McGlade, left, and Joan McVeigh, right, of the Eastern Health and Social Services Board with Fionuala Devlin, Head of Promotion and Education, ECNI

Evelyn Collins, ECNI; Brian Ambrose, CBI and Ivy Ridge, Ballymena Inter-Ethnic Forum.

Joint Meeting of ECNI and Labour Relations Agency on Migrant Workers

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland met with the Labour Relations Agency during Anti-Racist Workplace Week to discuss issues affecting migrant workers in Northern Ireland.

The meeting, held in Equality House, focused on areas of vulnerability for these workers, and how these are being addressed. The Commission and the Agency shared information about the advice and information services provided by their respective organisations, both to individuals and to employers, and reviewed areas of joint working on initiatives such as training seminars.

The meeting discussed the Government's Strategy to Support Migrant Workers - a strategy which was produced with input from all public service providers in Northern Ireland and relevant community sector organisations, adopted by the Northern Ireland Executive in June 2008. Members of the Equality Commission and the LRA stressed the importance of adopting appropriate public policy responses to the changing demographic situation in Northern Ireland arising from inward migration and the need for public services generally to be responsive to changed circumstances.

Bob Collins, Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission,said, "This co-operation is an essential channel through which both organisations can enhance our contribution to the protection of the rights of all workers and to the promotion of greater cohesion and integration in the workforce and in society as a whole."

The Chinese Welfare Association 'Celebration of the Changing Faces of the Chinese Community in the Workplace'

The contribution of Chinese workers to the Northern Ireland economy and community was recognised at an event in Belfast on November 6 organised by the Chinese Welfare Association with the support of the Equality Commission.

Evelyn Collins, Chief Executive of the Equality Commission, joined Frankie Ho,Vice-Chair of the Chinese Welfare Association, left; Miss Li Li Bei, Chief of Staff and Consul, representing the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, Edinburgh and the Chinese Welfare Association's Chief Executive Eileen Chan Hu, right, for the event.

Delegates learnt about an employer's experience of employing Chinese staff and employees' experiences of working in Northern Ireland from a Chinese perspective.

The Chinese Welfare Association was set up in 1986, by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, to act as a support organization for Chinese People living in Northern Ireland. Currently there are around 8,000 Chinese resident in Northern Ireland.

The Chinese Welfare Association 'Celebration of the Changing Faces of the Chinese Community in the Workplace' was one of over 30 events across Northern Ireland held to mark Anti-Racist Workplace Week.

Paul McLean, PSNI; Miss Li Li Bei, Jimmy Law, PSNI, Dungannon; Evelyn Collins, Richard Williams, PSNI

Eileen Chan Hu, Miss Li Li Bei, Terry Cross, Delta Packaging, Evelyn Collins, Icarus Tang, Delta Packaging

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Relaunch of ICTU's Black and Ethnic Minority Committee

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions held an informal networking event in Belfast on 6 November to relaunch its BME committee. Union representatives were asked to bring along people from ethnic minority groups who might be interested in becoming union representatives and progressing through the trade union structure. Anyone interested should contact Pauline Buchanan at NIC ICTU, 4-6 Donegall Street Place, Belfast, BT1 2FN, tel: 028 9024 7940.

Ballymena Business Breakfast

Also on 6 November, Fionuala Devlin, Head of Promotion and Education, ECNI, attended a business breakfast for employers in Ballymena. The event showcased best practice from Allstate Technologies and Fionuala spoke on what services the ECNI can offer employers.

Cases show race is still an issue in employment

As part of its activities for Anti-Racist Workplace Week, the Equality Commission announced settlements in four recent cases which highlight some of the race-related issues that cause complaints and the different types of workplaces where these arise.

Click here to read the full text of the press release, issued 5 November.

Chief Executive Evelyn Collins says, " Northern Ireland is home now to people of many other nationalities. I cannot stress strongly enough that equality law applies to all workers, and the same standards of behaviour and fair treatment must apply to all employees, whatever their country of origin."

12.33% of enquiries/applications to the Equality Commission in the year ended 1 Oct 2008 were race issues - 377 enquiries. Of these, 75% were linked to the workplace generally.

Stormont 'best practice' event for employers

Some of Northern Ireland's leading employers attended the final event of Anti -Racist Workplace Week. Over 100 delegates were present at 'Promoting Race Equality in the Workplace' in the Long Gallery, Stormont, sponsored and introduced by Anna Lo, MLA and organized by the Equality Commission.

Speakers at the Stormont event included Stuart Crawford, Construction Industry Training Board; Maeve McKeag GEMS; Mia McKeown, Avondale Foods, Craigavon; Pauline Buchanan NIC ICTU; Evelyn Collins and Anna Lo MLA.

"Today's event shows that some of our most successful companies and organisations are also those which have made a point of promoting racial equality in the workplace," says Evelyn Collins, Chief Executive, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. "The Equality Commission has an important role to play in this. We can provide advice to members of minority ethnic groups who encounter difficulties in the workplace. We also advise employers on the action they need to take to support all employees in developing the skills and knowledge to perform and thrive in culturally diverse workplaces. We encourage all employers to develop workplace policies, procedures and practices that take account of this diversity. "

Lynn Livingston, Tesco; Jacqui McKee ECNI; Anne Corey M&S and Mia McKeown, Avondale Foods

Diane Cardwell, Glen Electric, Portadown;Jacqui McKee ECNI and Gerry McDermott, Balcas Timber, Enniskillen

Reshi Singh and Ricky Williams, PSNI with Paul Oakes ECNI

Deirdre Kelly, Tayto; Jacqui McKee ECNI; Diane Cardwell Glen Electric; Carolyn Beattie, Tayto

Maurus Flanagan, Felix O'Hare, Newry; Stuart Crawford, CITB with Jacqui McKee, ECNI

Union reps Elaine Captain and Jim Lilley, NIPSA; with Evelyn Collins and Pauline Buchanan NIC ICTU

Do you have views on Anti-Racist Workplace Week?

We would welcome your feedback on the week and its events. If you have any comments that you think would help us improve in the future, please let us know by emailing ffleming@equalityni.org Thank you!

Need advice or guidance about equality or discrimination?

The Commission provides free and confidential advice about to individuals, employers and service providers on all aspects of equality. We also provide a range of training services. Contact our Enquiry line on 028 90 890 890 or view our advisory publications here.

If you have any comments on this newsletter or would like it in other formats please email: Christina Martin, Communications Officer at **cmartin@equalityni.org**
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