Equality Commission FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Equality Focus

The e-newsletter of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Sept/Oct 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.

We want to hear your views

We are in the process of drafting our Corporate Plan 2009-2012 and we would like to hear what you think should be the Commissions key priorities over the next few years. This Plan will set out the framework which will govern our work over the coming years. There will be an opportunity to respond to a formal consultation towards the end of this year but we would like to hear initial views at an early stage. By **visiting our website** now, you can feed in your views.

Show you don't put up with Racism in Your Workplace!

Anti-Racist Workplace Week runs from 3-7 November and opens with a launch event at the Waterfront Hall in Belfast. Other events in the week include

- Launch event at the Waterfront Hall on Monday 3 November
- ECNI conference event at Stormont on Friday 7 November on race issues for employers.
- A special ARWW roundtable hosted by the Equality Commission and the Labour Relations Agency
- Intercultural Awareness training for staff and elected representatives at Moyle District Council
- Anti-racism training for businesses in Ballymoney District Council
- LRA/ECNI are co hosting a training seminar LRA/ ECNI on the Employment Rights of Migrant Workers in Newry on November 20

You will find further information on the week on our **website** or call Mairead Starrs, Promotion and Education Division on 028 9050 0613

Launch of guidance on provision of goods, facilities and services in the field of sexual orientation

Equality Commissioner Kit Chivers (second left) launching the new publication 'Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination in NI: A Guide on the Provision of Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises' with ECNI's Head of Promotion and Education, Fionuala Devlin, Gerry Mulligan (right), Head of Equality/Rights and Social Need Division, OFMDFM, and Colin Flinn (second right) from CoSO (Coalition on Sexual Orientation)

ECNI has launched a guide to provide advice on how to prevent discrimination against individuals on grounds of sexual orientation in accessing services, public functions and/or premises. It describes the duties on those providing service to the public and those selling, letting or managing premises. It is also designed to help individuals who believe that they have been less favourably treated on grounds of sexual orientation to understand the law and how to take a complaint of discrimination. As well as working towards the elimination of discrimination against people on the grounds of their sexual orientation, the guide also aims to encourage good practice.

The guidance is available on our **website**.

New research highlights the need for legislative reform

ECNI Commissioner Bryan Johnston launched research on older people and access to financial services.

The Equality Commission is calling for legislative reform to protect people from age discrimination in relation to the provision of Goods, facilities and services. We see the introduction of age discrimination legislation outside the workplace as vital to provide important new rights to in particular older people, in terms of accessing a range of services, including health and social care and financial services. New research findings which highlight some of the problems faced by older people when accessing financial services were launched on 2 October to coincide with age awareness week. **Click here** to view.

Promoting Equality for people with Mental Health Disabilities in the Local Government Sector

A joint conference with the Local Government Staff Commission at Stormont on November 19 will look at the way ahead for local government in dealing with the employment of people with disabilities, in particular, mental health disabilities. Speakers from outside the sector will offer their perspectives and the LGSC will put in place the groundwork for a network of 'disability champions' throughout the sector.

For more information on the event please contact Paul Oakes at poakes@equalityni.org.

Women in Local Councils Initiative

Sharon Currans, Banbridge District Council; Evelyn Collins Chief Executive, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Liam Hannaway Chief Executive, Banbridge District Council, Cllr Norah Beare, Chair of Banbridge Council, Junior Minister Jeffrey Donaldson MP, MLA and Jane Morrice, Deputy Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission.

ECNI collaborated with the Local Government Staff Commission on an event which celebrated the achievements of the "Women in Local Government" initiative at Hillsborough Castle on October 1. This initiative has been working towards increased involvement of women as officers and elected representatives in local government and in public life and it has had several notable successes.

Fore more details on the event, **click here**.

ICTU Disability Summer School

Dr Gerry Mulligan, Head of Equality, Rights and Social Need Division, OFMDFM Aidan Fitzpatrick, Employment Development Division, ECNI; Margaret Devenney, FAS Employment Support Officer; David Joyce, Equality Officer, ICTU; Brian D'Arcy, Equality Authority and Pauline Buchanan, Equality Officer, ICTU.

Over the summer, the Commission helped sponsor the ICTU Disability Summer School. This was a programme to assist Trade Union representatives develop skills and knowledge to assist their members deal with disability issues in the workplace. Commission staff presented an overview of disability legislation and the roles and responsibilities of employers at the Disability Champions Graduation. Speakers from the Equality Authority, FAS and OFMDFM also made presentations and took part in a panel discussion with participants.

Hospitality sector training

Treating customers equally is good for business... **starting on the 23rd of October**

The Commission has developed training on how equality law impacts on service provision in the hospitality sector. This half day seminar will cover the law relating to sex, race, sexual orientation, disability, religion and political opinion .This practical approach will focus on what service providers can learn from legal settlements and cases.

If you would like further information, please get in touch with Una Wilson on 028 90 500 609 or email uwilson@equalityni.org

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Have your say... Section 75 Consultation

The closing date for responses to this consultation is Friday 7 November 2008. Visit the **website** and let us know what you think.

Changes to Sex Discrimination Legislation

The Commission has produced two **Fact sheets** on important **changes to the sex discrimination legislation** which came into force on 6 April 2008.

Changes include express liability for employers if their employees are subjected to repeated harassment by third parties (such as customers or clients), and increased protection against discrimination for transsexual people, as well as pregnant women and young mothers, in relation to the provision of goods, facilities and services and premises. The fact sheets can be downloaded from the **Commission's website**.

Annual Conference

Our eighth annual conference will take place on **Wednesday 12 November at the Hilton Hotel, Belfast**. The theme of the conference will be education.

Education is a crucial area in helping the commission achieve its overall aim of a shared, integrated and inclusive society. The conference will explore what opportunities exist in the current educational reform agenda to promote equality of opportunity and ensure access to a quality educational experience for every child in Northern Ireland.

For more information on the event please contact tmoley@equalityni.org or **click here**, to view the conference programme.

Strategic Enforcement

In mid-September the Commission publicised a settlement of £55,000 made by the PSNI in connection with cases brought before the Industrial and Fair Employment Tribunal, alleging discrimination contrary to the Sex Discrimination Order, the Fair Employment and Treatment Order and the Disability Discrimination Act. **Click here** to read the full press release.

Calendar of Events

November 3	Launch event, Anti-Racist Workplace Week
November 3-7	Anti-Racist Workplace Week
November 7	Anti-Racist Workplace event for employers, Stormont
November 11	Training seminar to launch Disability Support Pack for employers
November 12	ECNI Annual Conference, Hilton Hotel, Belfast
November 19	Promoting equality for people with mental health disabilities in the Local Government Sector event, Stormont
December 1	European Day of People with Disabilities
December 1-5	Traveller Focus Week

Need advice or guidance about equality or discrimination?

The Commission provides free and confidential advice 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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