



**Equality for all**

# **A short guide to the role and services of the Equality Commission**

**Equality Commission**

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is an independent public body established under the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

# Equality for all

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The Equality Commission has the vision of Northern Ireland as a shared, integrated and inclusive place, a society where difference is respected and valued, based on equality and fairness for the entire community.

## Our Mission

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To advance equality, promote equality of opportunity, encourage good relations and challenge discrimination through promotion, advice and enforcement.

# Commission's Role:

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The Commission has a wide range of powers and responsibilities. These include:

- advice and assistance to people who believe they have been discriminated against;
- enforcing the law;
- information, education and promotion;
- overseeing the public sector's statutory duty to take equality into account in its work;
- research;
- reviewing the equality legislation.

## **The Commission is led by**

Chief Commissioner

- Bob Collins

Deputy Chief Commissioner

- Anne O'Reilly,

and 16 other Commissioners.

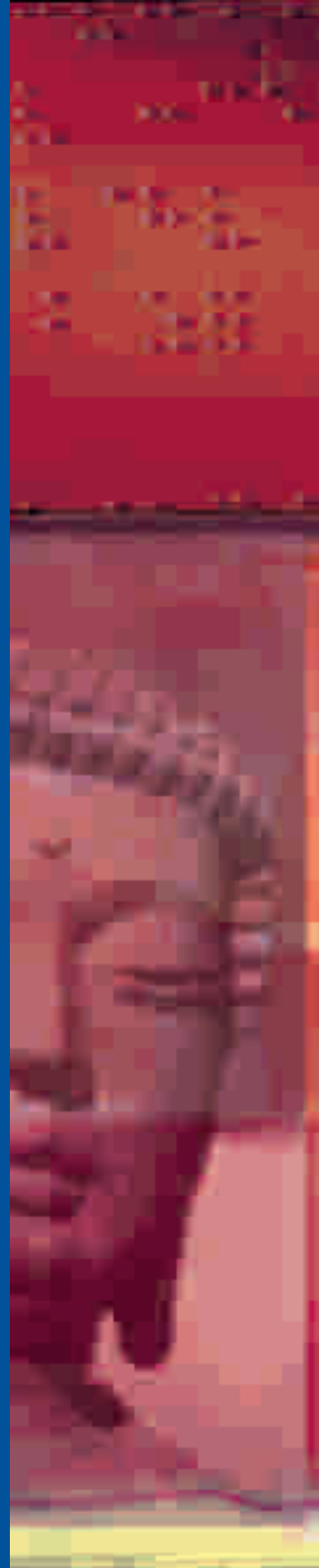
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Chief Executive

- Evelyn Collins,

leads the staff team.

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# The Legislation

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The main equality laws in Northern Ireland are:

- Equal Pay Act (Northern Ireland) 1970 (as amended)
- Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 (as amended)
- Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 (as amended)
- Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (as amended)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended)
- Equality (Disability, etc) (Northern Ireland) Order 2000
- Northern Ireland Act 1998
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 (as amended)
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006

European Directives, other European community legislation and international obligations also affect people's equality rights.

# Supporting Complainants

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We give advice and assistance to people who believe they have been discriminated against on the grounds of their:

- age;
  - colour;
  - race;
  - nationality;
  - ethnic or national origins - including being an Irish Traveller;
  - religious belief;
  - political opinion;
  - sex;
  - married status;
  - pay;
  - sexual orientation.
- or because they have a disability.

# Advice and Assistance

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Assistance by the Commission ranges from simply giving advice to, in some cases, arranging for legal representation. We can also take legal action against individuals and organisations in some circumstances - for example, if they have published an advert which is discriminatory.

The Commission does not decide whether discrimination has in fact occurred; this is for an independent industrial tribunal or court.

However, in reaching their decisions, tribunals and courts can take account of Codes of Practice produced by the Commission.

# Investigation and Enforcement

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The Commission has powers to ensure that people comply with the legislation; including some powers to investigate particular organisations or practices.

One of our key aims is to promote affirmative/positive action to bring about greater equality in employment and the wider society. We can in some circumstances use our legal powers to bring about changes in policies and practices.

Under fair employment legislation employers must register with the Commission and monitor and review the make-up of their workforces, and their employment practices. We have powers to ensure that employers carry out these duties.





# Promoting Equality and Good Relations

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Promoting and encouraging good equal opportunities practice is as important as enforcing the law. We give information, advice and training to help employers, trade unions, service providers, voluntary and community organisations and others. We also offer an information and library service to all these groups and to students, the media and the general public.

The Commission issues publications and Codes of Practice to give guidance and set standards for fairness and equality. They cover topics like employment, equal pay, housing, and the provision of goods, facilities and services. You can get a list of key publications from our information team or find them on the website [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org).

We also carry out public education campaigns to raise awareness of the issues, and work in partnership with others to help build a more equal society.


# Public Sector Statutory Duties

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Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act places significant duties on public authorities about how they carry out their work. Over 200 public bodies have so far been “designated” as coming under this part of the Act.

The designated bodies must promote equality of opportunity in: age, marital status, disability, political opinion, race, religious belief, sex, sexual orientation, and whether or not people have dependents. They must also promote good relations between people of different racial groups, religious beliefs or political opinion.

These duties include producing “equality schemes” to explain how they are going to promote equality, carrying out “equality impact assessments” on how policies will affect people from the groups listed in the Act, and asking them for their views.



The Commission oversees how effectively the duties are being carried out, including approving equality schemes, investigating complaints and giving advice and training to public authorities and others.

## Research

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To provide reliable information and inform the debate on equality issues, we undertake research and commission or pay for research which other people carry out.

## Legislative Review

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The Commission monitors the way that Northern Ireland's equality laws are working, and makes recommendations to Government on ways in which they can be improved.

# Can we help you?

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We are here to help you. If you need help or advice, or would like to find out more about the Equality Commission and its work, contact us at:

Equality Commission for  
Northern Ireland  
Equality House  
7-9 Shaftesbury Square  
BELFAST  
BT2 7DP

**Enquiry line: 028 90 890 890**

Telephone: 028 90 500 600 (switchboard)

Textphone: 028 90 500 589

Fax: 028 90 248 687

Email: [information@equalityni.org](mailto:information@equalityni.org)

Website: [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)





## Translations and Other Formats

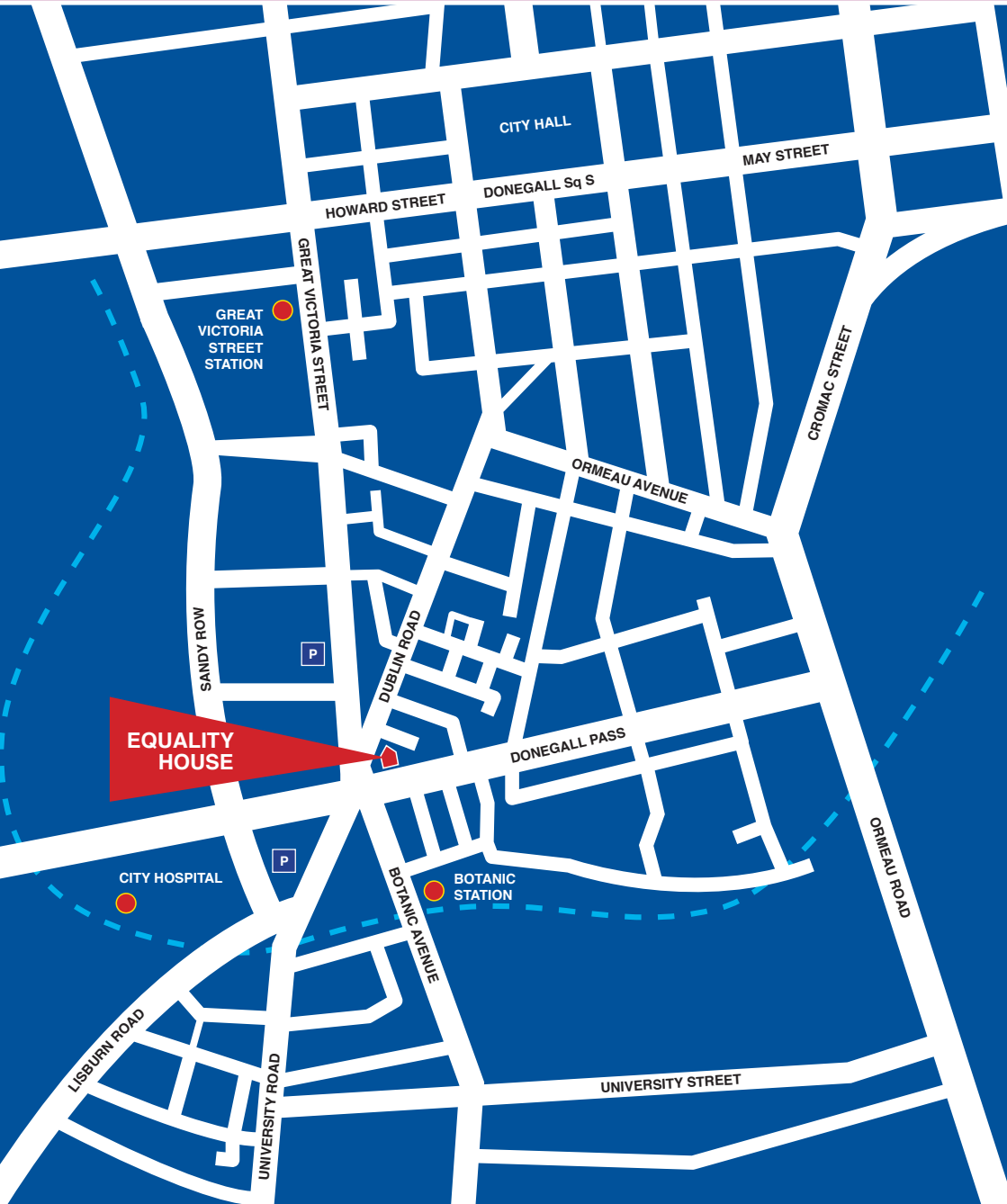
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If you would like copies of this booklet in other languages or formats, please contact us.

This booklet is available as downloadable text from our website.  
[www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)



# EQUALITY HOUSE LOCATION MAP



**EQUALITY HOUSE**

GREAT VICTORIA STREET STATION

CITY HALL

MAY STREET

HOWARD STREET

DONEGALL Sq S

GREAT VICTORIA STREET

CROMAC STREET

ORMEAU AVENUE

SANDY ROW

DUBLIN ROAD

DONEGALL PASS

CITY HOSPITAL

BOTANIC STATION

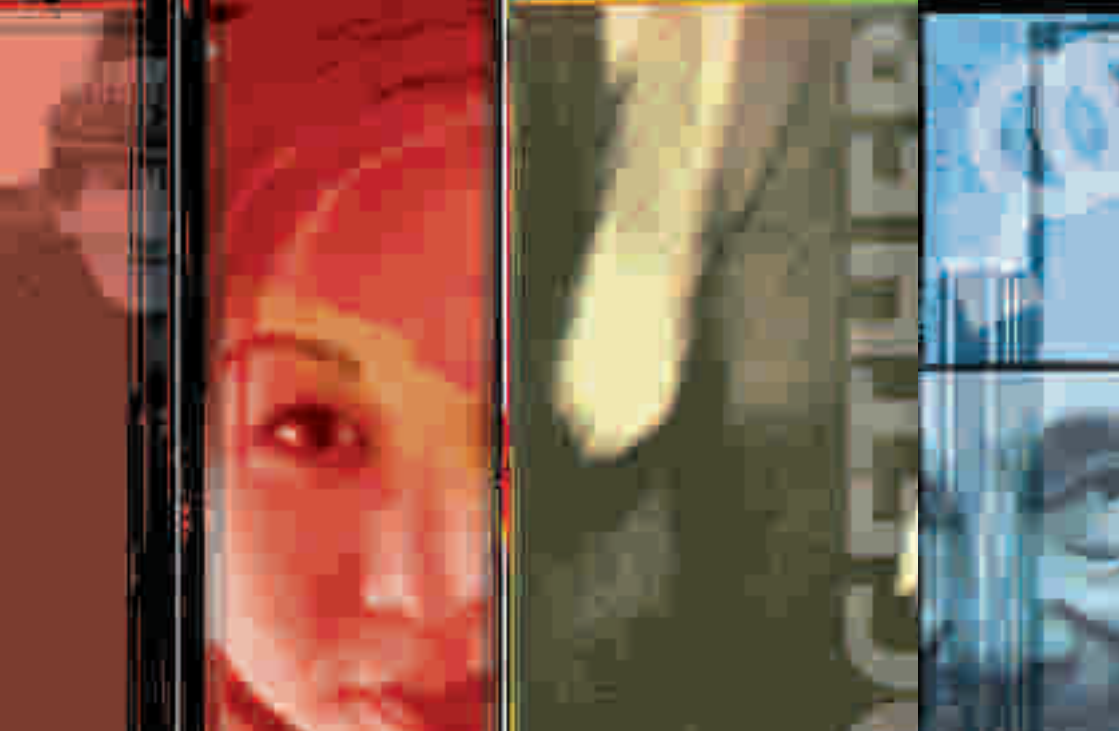
BOTANIC AVENUE

ORMEAU ROAD

LISBURN ROAD

UNIVERSITY ROAD

UNIVERSITY STREET



Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast

**Enquiry line: 028 90 890 890**

Textphone: 028 90 500 589

Tel: 028 90 500 600

Email: [information@equalityni.org](mailto:information@equalityni.org)

Website: [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)

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