Equality Commission
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

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PRESS RELEASE

New Disability Code Promotes Access for All to Transport

A bus that moves off before people have found a seat or a taxi driver leaving a blind person to find her own way to a car she can't see – these are among a range of problems that disabled users of transport services have reported to the Equality Commission over the last year.

The Commission is now launching a fresh "Access for All" initiative to remind service providers of their responsibilities. Chief Commissioner Bob Collins says, "It is clear that it isn't always physical access to transport that's the problem for disabled people – all too often it is the attitudes and behaviour they are confronted with."

"We all find life easier if some simple courtesies are observed, like being patient or helpful, but for some people with disabilities, these simple courtesies can make the difference of being able to access a service or not. If you are a user of buses or taxis, then the attitude of drivers, dispatchers, and other passengers is key."

To assist service providers the Commission provides free training and advice to service providers to help them improve the experiences of customers with disabilities, which includes a comprehensive Code of Practice.

To coincide with the publication of the new Code, the Commission is also reminding people with disabilities of their rights and of the range of free legal services that it can provide in its current campaign 'Access for All'.

The Access for All campaign includes a series of Disability Transport road-shows in shopping centres around Northern Ireland from now until September.

Mr Collins adds: "Part of our work under the United Nations convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities is to undertake work on accessibility of services and on attitudes. We plan to complete and publicise this later this year."

 "The law has gradually expanded protection of the rights of disabled people so as to ensure they can participate in society on equal terms. That means their ability to get to work, visit their friends or just go shopping."

"If they have a problem we can help - from simple advice to help resolve an issue to assisting a person take a case to court."

If you have a problem accessing public transport because of a disability then contact the Commission on 028 90 890 890 or email discriminationadvice@equalityni.org   All queries are dealt with confidentially.

In addition to the new Code of Practice, the Equality Commission has produced six leaflets covering the different transport groups for service users and transport operators. It is also available for download from our website, www.equalityni.org and in accessible formats. There are versions in easyread, audio, Braille and large print. There is also a BSL signed version of the 'your rights' guide on the website. Commission staff are also happy to offer training sessions for transport providers on request, subject to numbers and feasibility.

Caption: Chief Commissioner Bob Collins at an information stand with the Equality Commission´s Heather Wilson

Photo Gallery for Code of Practice Launch

Notes:

The Statutory Code of Practice is a guide to the Disability Discrimination (Transport Vehicles) Regulations which came into force in January 2010 and strengthened protections for disabled people using buses and coaches, trains, taxis, hire cars and breakdown recovery vehicles.

The Code of Practice follows a number of consultation events across Northern Ireland involvingtransport providers, advisors and disabled people on the scope of the Regulations.

The Code is available in hard copy from the Equality Commission, 028 90 890890, or for download from the website, www.equalityni.org

Since the introduction of the Regulations in January 2010, the Commission has had 33 calls to its legal advice line from disabled people who believed they had experienced discrimination in transport provision. Most of these were to do either with buses of various sorts (17) or taxis (13).

Further information is available at www.equalityni.org/accessforall