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PRESS RELEASE

Disability rights and reform of the law

The Equality Commission brought together 130 policy makers, employers, lawyers, representatives from the disability sector and disabled people to discuss how the law can be improved to strengthen the rights of disabled people in Northern Ireland.

Delegates had the opportunity to hear from the Junior Ministers, Jonathan Bell MLA and Jennifer McCann MLA.

Murray Watt, Commissioner, said “The Equality Commission believes that there is a pressing need for reform of disability equality law. The changes we propose will not only ensure that Northern Ireland equality law keeps pace with changes in the law in GB, they will also help to harmonise and simplify the law and strengthen the rights of disabled people and their carers.



“The Commission believes that today’s event was a valuable opportunity to bring together key decision makers, to highlight our proposals and focus on making reform happen. We know there is strong support generally on the need for equality laws, and 77% of respondents in our recently launched Equality Awareness Survey agreed that our equality laws should be strengthened to match those in GB.”

The Commission has gathered evidence which demonstrates how necessary the reforms are and how they would impact in a real and tangible way on the lives of disabled people in Northern Ireland.

Participants agreed that the disability sector, legal profession and others need to work together to highlight how the gaps and shortcomings in legislation affect real people.

Notes for Editor:

Photograph (above), taken at the event, from left to right:

Catherine Casserley BL, Cloisters Chambers; Murray Watt, Commissioner; Jennifer McCann MLA, OFMdFM Junior Minister; Evelyn Collins CBE, Chief Executive, Equality Commission; Jonathan Bell MLA, OFMdFM Junior Minister; and, Roisin Mallon, Policy Manager, Equality Commission.