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PRESS RELEASE

It's So Me - New LGB web presence for NI

Today, the Equality Commission is launching a [new web-based resource](#) to help it connect one to one with lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people in Northern Ireland.

In the Commission's most recent ['Do You Mean Me?' survey](#), 53% of LGB people were likely to consider they had been subject to some form of unfair treatment, up from 34% in the last survey in 2008.

Chief Commissioner Michael Wardlow explains, "The Equality Commission's legal enquiry figures show that numbers of complaints about discrimination from LGB individuals are very low indeed.

"We already have advice and information services by phone and online, and we get about 3,000 enquiries a year. But very few of these are to do with sexual orientation, and we are concerned that the widespread homophobia and allegations of discrimination against LGB people we hear about have not resulted in more enquiries to our advice service.

"We recognise that there are very real issues that make it difficult to come forward and challenge discrimination, and that we need to do more to meet the needs of LGB people.

"So today we're launching a new web resource for LGB people in Northern Ireland – 'So Me' (www.some-ni.co.uk). It's a hub for information and contacts, but also a new way for people to report anonymously, to share their experiences without having to give their



Working together to improve lives.

names, and to access information, advice and support in a personalized, safe environment. So Me is linked to social media that are easily accessible to anyone.”

The Equality Commission’s advice and support is free and confidential, and the So Me site can be used anonymously if a person is not ‘out’. There is a quick exit tab and an online live chat button on every page.

Mr Wardlow says,“LGB people have told us that they wouldn’t report discrimination because they felt it could cause hassle in work, they feared repercussions or just didn’t want an issue made of their treatment.

“They also said that discrimination came from all sorts of people, from complete strangers to government institutions and work colleagues. It took all sorts of forms, from name calling and pointed jokes to taunting, bullying, threatened expulsion from school and refusal of service.

Commission staff have been working with individuals who are lesbian, gay and bisexual and with representative organisations for some months, gathering information to help us reach out to people who could benefit from the advice, support, knowledge and experience that Commission staff can offer.

Mr Wardlow stressed, “We clearly need to get the word out to individuals who may feel they are totally alone and have no recourse against unfair treatment that there is information, support and advice available.

“While we work towards eliminating unlawful discrimination, we can’t always prevent it. But if it does happen, LGB people need to know that we’re here to help.”

“We are very grateful for the support and cooperation of our partners in the sector who are supporting us in our work and helping us reach LGB people directly, one to one. In particular, I would like to make special mention of those people who have already shared their personal stories on the So Me website.”

“If you believe you have been treated unfairly, you don’t need to put up and shut up,” Michael Wardlow concludes. “‘So Me’ is a new and additional way to access advice and information that could really help you deal with a situation in which you’re experiencing unfair treatment.”

For further information on ‘So Me’ contact Roisin Lavery 028 90500611, email rolavery@equalityni.org

YouTube links:

[So Me - Are You In?](#)

[So Me - YouTube channel](#)