

## **NI Commissioners' call for age discrimination protection for all**

Issued Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> April ,  
Strictly embargoed until 00.01 on Wednesday 2nd April

### **Commissioners warn that protection needs to be put in place urgently**

The Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission, the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Commissioner for Older People have come together today to call for people of all ages to be protected under the proposed new age legislation which will cover the provision of goods, facilities and services.

The Commissioners have engaged with children, young people and older people who have reported experiencing discrimination or less favourable treatment because of their age when they try to access health, education or leisure services, for example.

This is the first time the three Commissioners' have spoken together publicly; such is the importance of this issue. The Commissioners' are united in their belief that all citizens of Northern Ireland should be covered by the new legislation whatever their age.

Speaking before the Committee session today,

Michael Wardlow, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, said: "It is important to ensure that both the youngest and oldest members of our society are covered under this new legislation. We cannot claim to respect people's dignity while tolerating discrimination against some based on their age. These protections must be to the benefit of everyone.

By extending the current age legislation to include provision for goods, facilities and services, we will be offering the same level of protections against discrimination on the ground of age as those afforded by other grounds including disability, gender, race, religion and sexual orientation.

He continued: “None of the other equality grounds have age restrictions included in their legislation and we do not believe this proposed age legislation requires it.”

Patricia Lewsley – Mooney, Commissioner for Children and Young People, said:

“Young people and their parents have told me about times when they have experienced negative treatment and attitudes because of their age.

“For example, when some parents have tried to get age appropriate health and social care services for their children they have found treatment is only available on adult wards. Other children have been denied service in a shop, simply because they are young.

“Having under 18s included in this legislation would not only offer legal protection but would help support them and their parents to make sure they get the services they require and deserve.

“Having all ages included would let our young people and older people know they are valued in our society – excluding anyone would send a very different message.

“There is no justifiable reason to exclude children and young people from having this protection; in fact doing so would be discrimination in itself.”

Claire Keatinge, Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland, said:

“No-one should be treated unfairly on the basis of their age. The delay in progressing the anti-age discrimination legislation means that people of all ages will continue to be discriminated against, without protection from the law.

“We need a strong legal framework to protect against age discrimination as set out in the Programme for Government, and along with the Equality Commissioner and Children’s Commissioner, I will be calling on the OFMDFM Committee to progress this important legislation.”

ENDS

Notes to Editor:

**C O P N I** Commissioner for **Older People**  
for Northern Ireland

- The Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission, Michael Wardlow, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Patricia Lewsley-Mooney and Evelyn Hoy Chief Executive of the Commissioner for Older People will give evidence to the OFMdFM Committee on Wednesday 2nd April at 2pm they will be joined by leading legal expert Robin Allen QC.
- The presentation to Committee session will start at 2pm it will be streamed live here  
<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Live-Coverage/Video-Live-Stream-2/>
- Please direct all media enquires to Patrice Morris, Communications and Engagement Officer at the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People on 02890 316 392, 07917 544 177 or email [Patrice@niccy.org](mailto:Patrice@niccy.org)
- You can read the [policy paper here](#) and the [briefing paper here](#)
- You can see the [Northern Ireland Executive's Commitment to extending this legislation here](#) on page 10 and page 40.