

28 April 2014

Commission welcomes Assembly same-sex marriage debate

The Equality Commission welcomes the Assembly debate on a motion calling for the introduction of legislation permitting same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland.

Dr Michael Wardlow, Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission, said: “There needs to be a public debate on this issue in Northern Ireland. People are being treated differently because of their sexual orientation and that is something which should be challenged.

“The Commission supports the introduction of legislation to permit same-sex marriage with sufficient safeguards so that religious organisations and their representatives who do not wish to marry same-sex couples cannot be compelled to do so.

“We also propose that marriages of same-sex couples in other jurisdictions should be recognised in Northern Ireland and support the availability of civil partnerships to opposite-sex and same-sex couples on an equal basis.”

The Commission repeats its call for the Executive to honour the commitment made first in 2012, and again in 2013, to publish a robust and comprehensive sexual orientation strategy. We welcome the initial consultation by OFMdFM that seeks views on issues that will help inform the development of this strategy.

The Commission’s full recommendations and analysis are set out in its 2013 policy paper [‘Promoting Sexual Orientation Equality’](#).