



27 August 2015

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Conference on extending the law on age discrimination – ending discrimination in the provision of goods and services**

At present there is no protection for anyone in Northern Ireland against age discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services. A consultation now under way to consider proposals made by OFMDFM to address this gap gives us all an opportunity to influence this important change in the law, which will impact on people of all ages, on businesses and on society generally in Northern Ireland.

The Equality Commission is bringing together a wide range of employers, lawyers, government bodies and community and welfare groups in the Titanic Building on Thursday the 27 August to discuss the OFMDFM proposals.

The event, chaired by Dr. Michael Wardlow, Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission, will hear from Mike Nesbitt MLA, Chair of the OFMDFM Committee, from OFMDFM officials, from Claire Keatinge, the Commissioner for Older People and from Koulla Yiasouma, the Children's Commissioner.

“We see this consultation as a key and immediate opportunity to influence the delivery of new laws on age discrimination,” Dr Wardlow said. “It gives us a welcome chance to examine and comment on OFMDFM proposals alongside some of the groups that would be affected by the new equality law. Can we in Northern Ireland learn from experiences elsewhere of an age discrimination law that applies to the provision of goods, facilities and services?”

“While people here are legally protected against age discrimination at work, we have a gap in protection in Northern Ireland that can affect people when they use services such as health and social care, finance and insurance, education and private clubs. We have been arguing for many years that the law should be extended and the consultation now under way is an important step towards achieving that.

“We are however disappointed that all age groups are not included in the proposals and continue to be of the view that the law should encompass children and young people alongside those over sixteen.”

The Commission's recommendations for reform will be set out and a legal perspective on the OFMDFM proposals will be given by Dee Masters BL, a barrister with extensive experience of issues which have arisen in Great Britain, where the law has covered this area since 2012.

Dr Wardlow concluded: "The focus of today's discussion is to give participants a greater understanding of what the main issues are and what key provisions would need to be included in the new laws, with a view to informing their own responses to the government consultation.

"What we are seeking is a law that will mean no-one may be treated less favourably, without good reason, just because they are part of a particular age group – where there are any specific exceptions these should be objectively justifiable."

- Read more about the [Equality Commission's recommendations for extending the law on age discrimination](#)