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PRESS RELEASE

Proposed changes to law on age discrimination

The Equality Commission has welcomed the fact that there is to be a full public consultation on today's OFMDFM announcement to extend age discrimination to people aged 16 and over. While expressing its disappointment that it will not apply to people of all ages, the Commission acknowledged that this was a step in the right direction.

The Commission, together with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Commissioner for Older People, has worked over the past few years to persuade the Executive to fulfill its Programme for Government 2011-15 commitment to "extend age discrimination legislation to the provision of goods, facilities and services".

The Commission has argued strongly that protection against age discrimination should apply to people of all ages, including children and young people, as people of all ages experience discrimination in accessing goods and services.

"At present, age discrimination law applies only to employment - the only one of the six grounds of anti-discrimination legislation which does not protect people in the important areas of goods, facilities, services and access to premises." Dr. Michael Wardlow, Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission said.

"We have been working to have this serious deficit changed so that people of all ages are protected against discrimination when carrying out basic social and economic activities such as using health or financial services, purchasing goods, or accessing facilities and commercial premises," Dr. Wardlow said.

"We had urged the Executive to extend the law to cover all ages; and are disappointed that it will afford protection against discrimination only to people aged 16 and upwards. Though this is an advance on the equivalent legislation in Great Britain, which applies only from the age of 18 upwards, it still leaves a wide band of children and young people without protection against age discrimination."

"We look forward to contributing to the consultation on this important area and will continue our efforts to have the protections provided by the proposed law extended to people of all ages."

For further information:

- See the Equality Commission's [original proposals on the reform of the age discrimination law](#)