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PRESS RELEASE

Commission calls for Sexual Orientation Strategy

This is LGB&T Awareness Week (15th- 22nd May) and the Equality Commission is calling on the new Executive to produce a Sexual Orientation Strategy for Northern Ireland.

“The Commission has included this call in its paper on ‘Recommendations for Programme for Government and Budget’, Chief Commissioner, Dr Michael Wardlow said. “We sent a copy to all political parties following the Assembly elections, as they were meeting to agree a Programme for Government.”

The Commission’s recommendations include the need to tackle homophobic and transphobic hate crime; to identify and remove barriers experienced by LGBT people to health, social care and well-being; and to reform and strengthen equality law - for example, by changing the law so as to permit same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland.

The theme for this year’s LGB&T Awareness Week is ‘CHAT’ – ‘Challenge Homophobia and Transphobia’.

“Members of our LGB&T community often face discrimination and harassment, but unfortunately these issues are too often suffered in silence and are under reported,” Dr. Wardlow said. “Elected representatives can show leadership in tackling this harmful and hurtful treatment by ensuring that a robust strategy, which will strengthen, protect and promote their rights, is finalised and endorsed by the NI Assembly as soon as possible.”

“The Commission provides advice and can assist people who think they have suffered discrimination. We also work with employers and service providers, giving advice and guidance to help them ensure they comply with anti-discrimination law”, Dr. Wardlow said.

The Equality Commission is hosting an event on Tuesday 17 May in Malone House, Belfast, as part of LGBT Awareness Week, entitled “Promoting LGB Equality: key issues and good practice – a seminar for employers and service providers”.

Notes to Editor:

- The Equality Commission's paper: [Recommendations for Programme for Government and Budget](#) (pdf)
- The Equality Commission's paper: '[Promoting Sexual Orientation Equality – priorities and recommendations](#)' (pdf)