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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Labour Relations Agency signs up to ‘Every Customer Counts’**

The initiative was designed to encourage organisations and businesses across Northern Ireland to consider if they can improve the service they offer to clients and customers with a disability.

Through the work of ‘Every Customer Counts’, it is recognised that a significant proportion of our population may not be receiving the same standard of service that those without a disability enjoy every day. In Northern Ireland 21% of the adult population and 5% of children have a disability. The Equality Commission initiative aims to assist organisations to reduce any visible gap in service experienced by disabled people by providing a toolkit to assist them to identify how they can improve their service.

Dr. Evelyn Collins, CBE, Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland said: “It is very encouraging that such a high profile body as the Labour Relations Agency is signing up to our ‘Every Customer Counts’ initiative. We are pleased to have the LRA as a signatory and we also acknowledge the work they have already done to improve access to wheelchair users and hearing impaired people in particular.”

She continued: “‘Every Customer Counts’ gives organisations and businesses across both public and private sectors the opportunity to really think about how they offer their service to those with a disability. The changes they make can be small and subtle or big and bold but all will ultimately be changes which will improve the service offered to their disabled clients and customers. We are delighted that the LRA see the value of this initiative and we hope many others follow their lead in the coming weeks and months.”

Suzanne Hamilton, Compliance Officer, said: “The Agency is delighted to be a part of this initiative driven by the Equality Commission. As a customer focused organisation it is essential we ensure compliance with high standards of accessibility to our services and premises.

“The Agency is celebrating 40 years (1976-2016) of improving employment relations in NI and it seems fitting, in this milestone year, to commit resources to the promotion of, and improvements in, accessibility for all disabled customers.

“Recently we made a number of improvements to the physical layout of our head office building through the construction of wheelchair ramps (interior and exterior) improving access and egress from the premises. We also upgraded our fire safety equipment to include strobe lighting to assist the hearing impaired in emergency evacuations, introduced vibrating pager emergency alarms and installed induction loop hearing facilities in two conference rooms.

“The Agency is committed to auditing the accessibility of both head office and the regional office and developing an action plan, which will include using the professional services the Agency offer to promote the Every Customer Counts initiative through good practice employment relations workshops and seminars.

“We would encourage other public and private sector organisations to get involved in the ECC initiative.”

Further information on the Every Customer Counts initiative is available online at:  
[www.equalityni.org/EveryCustomerCounts](http://www.equalityni.org/EveryCustomerCounts)