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PRESS RELEASE

Northern Ireland Assembly signs up to 'Every Customer Counts'

The Equality Commission has welcomed the Northern Ireland Assembly as the latest signatory to its 'Every Customer Counts' initiative. 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 public sector body as the Northern Ireland Assembly is signing up to our 'Every Customer Counts' initiative. We are pleased to have the Assembly as a signatory and we also acknowledge the work they have already done to make their facilities more welcoming for those with autism.

She continued: "Every Customer Counts' gives organisations and businesses across the 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



Speaker of the Assembly, Robin Newton, MLA with the Chief Executive of the Equality Commission Dr. Evelyn Collins, CBE at the Speaker's Office, Parliament Buildings.

disabled clients and customers. We are delighted that the ‘folks on the hill’ see the value of this initiative and we hope many others follow their lead in the coming weeks and months.”

Speaker of the Assembly, Robin Newton, MLA said: “I am delighted on behalf of the Northern Ireland Assembly to sign up to the ‘Every Customer Counts Initiative’. Parliament Buildings belongs to the people of Northern Ireland and we have for many years been working to support and encourage people to visit to learn more about and become involved in the democratic process.

“We have made a number of improvements to the physical layout of the building through for example; the construction of wheelchair ramps, the availability of a ‘Changing Places’ toilet facility and the creation of a ‘Quiet Room’ for people with Autism. The Northern Ireland Assembly has also been and remains dedicated to the training of staff to ensure that all visitors receive a level of service that specifically caters to individual needs and enhances the overall visitor experience.”

The Speaker concluded: “However, ensuring that everyone can access the Assembly is something that requires constant attention and there are therefore further improvements ongoing at the moment. It is vitally important that we continue to talk to and listen to our visitors so that we can regularly review and improve our facilities and services. I look forward to our participation in the ‘Every Customer Counts’ Initiative and would encourage other organisations to get involved.”

Note to Editor:

Further information on the Every Customer Counts initiative is available from www.equalityni.org/EveryCustomerCounts