



14 Sept 2017

PRESS RELEASE

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland Publishes 17th Annual Report

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland has published its 17th Annual Report, covering the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

“This was a year which saw the UK vote to leave the EU and, as the year ended, the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive were in abeyance,” Dr. Michael Wardlow, Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission said. “These are developments with the potential to impact on Northern Ireland’s equality laws and protections, which we are committed to maintain and enhance.”

The Report gives details of the results achieved by the Commission measured against its four strategic priority commitments to:

1. Champion equality and good relations;
2. Challenge inequalities;
3. Put the legislation to work; and
4. Deliver equality effectively and efficiently.

“During the year, the Commission challenged discrimination across all the grounds covered by equality legislation, successfully supporting complainants in taking cases to Tribunals, County Courts, and the Court of Appeal,” Dr. Wardlow said.

“The treatment of pregnant women and working mothers in the workplace was an issue which featured prominently in our work during this period,” he said. “Many of the Industrial Tribunal cases we assisted arose from claims of pregnancy or maternity discrimination. And a major investigation by the Commission into the employment experiences of pregnant workers and mothers in Northern Ireland showed that half the women surveyed believe their career opportunities were negatively affected by pregnancy or maternity leave.”

“The Commission continues to encourage greater equality and good practice in partnership with employers and service providers, both public and private. Our ‘Every Customer Counts’ campaign encourages businesses to improve access to their services for people with disabilities; we developed a Mental Health Charter, in partnership with key mental health organisations; and we have employer networks working on STEM issues, to increase the participation of women in scientific, technological, engineering and mathematical occupations.”

We have also engaged in an extensive ongoing programme of work on key inequalities in Northern Ireland, which covers issues such as housing, education and employment,” Dr. Wardlow said. “The findings from these studies continue to feed into our efforts to advance equality across all aspects of our society. In addition, the Commission made detailed recommendations to the Northern Ireland Executive regarding the development of a Programme for Government to include a firm commitment to put equality of opportunity and good relations at the heart of public policy - and ensure its implementation. The realization of such a programme by a reconstituted Executive is essential if we are to build a more dynamic, shared and equal Northern Ireland.”

- [The Equality Commission’s Seventeenth Annual Report is available online \(pdf\)](#)

NOTE:

The 17th Annual Report of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland was laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly on 3 July 2017