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PRESS RELEASE

Equality benefits everyone: Chief Commissioner speaks out in support of Pride

“Pride Week, with its cornucopia of events, is a great opportunity for LGB and T people to show and explain who they are and how far they have come,” Dr Michael Wardlow, Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, said, speaking ahead of the 2018 Pride parade in Belfast on Saturday 4 August. “It also reminds us how important it is to continue to promote and protect what have been very hard-won rights for LGB and T people.”

“Of course the Pride parade is always full of exuberance and ‘over the top’ costumes but, underneath the bling and colour, many people at the event will have their own stories of prejudice or denial of rights.

“Progress on LGB and T rights has been hard to achieve and long in coming,” Dr Wardlow said. “We can’t take the gains we’ve made for granted and we still have a lot of work to do. For example, Northern Ireland is now unique in the British Isles as a place where LGB people do not have the right to marry.

“Pride should remind us all that prejudice makes life difficult and painful for people on the receiving end,” Dr Wardlow concluded. “Recognising the rights of LGB and T people doesn’t disadvantage anyone. The existing legislation carries robust protections for faith groups, and any additions, such as for marriage, could do likewise. The clue is in the word ‘equality’ – the same rights and opportunities for everyone. Equality benefits everyone.”