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PRESS RELEASE

Persistent inequalities in employment need tackled says Equality Commission report

Recent reports that the Northern Ireland has reached 'effectively full employment' is good news. However, the Equality Commission Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland, published today, strikes a cautionary note.

The Statement identifies fourteen key inequalities in employment that affect disabled people, women, carers, lone parents, those under 24 and those over 50, migrant workers, and Irish Travellers. It also highlights that prejudicial attitudes within the workplace affect all these groups as well as LGBT and those of different religious beliefs.

"Whilst improvements in the unemployment rate are welcome, if we are to make further progress in terms of participation and progression in our workplaces, we must tackle these persistent and emerging inequalities," Dr Michael Wardlow, Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission said.

"Getting a job and progressing within it is a key driver for both economic and social wellbeing and is a key route to improved social mobility and inclusion as well as a route out of poverty. It is important that employment opportunities are open to everyone and the barriers faced by particular groups are reduced."

Employment equality laws dealing with religion, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation and age, and provisions for flexible working and leave, have had a considerable effect. We have seen significant progress in terms of both access to and participation in employment over the decades since they were introduced. They have helped transform the working environment for many people.

The drive to improve participation in and progression within employment for everyone in our society remains at the heart of the work of the Equality Commission."

"We want this Statement to inform the work of Government and organisations with responsibilities for, or an interest in, employment, as we all strive to create a place where people want to live and work" Dr. Wardlow said.

Notes to editors

The Statement on Key Inequalities in Employment is available for download:

- [Summary Statement](#) (pdf, 19 pages)
- [Full Statement](#) (pdf, 162 pages)
- Website section: www.equalityni.org/KeyInequalities-Employment

The Commission contracted independent research drew on research from its own archive as well as that by government, the community and voluntary sectors, and other academic research. It analysed the Labour Force Survey reports by each of the equality grounds and engaged with a wide range of stakeholder groups.

Key Inequalities identified in the Statement include:

Disability

- There is a persistent employment gap between people with and without disabilities. Only around one third of people with disabilities are in work here compared to three quarters of people without disabilities.

Gender

- Women have a lower employment rate and a higher economic inactivity rate when they have dependents.
- Women experience industrial segregation in employment, that is, men and women are distributed differently across occupations, jobs, and places of work.

Caring responsibilities

- Lone parents with dependents experience barriers to employment
- Carers experience barriers to getting and keeping a job
- Women, lone parents with dependents and carers who provide less than 49 hours of care are more likely to be in part-time employment.
- Women and lone parents experience occupational segregation in employment.

Age

- Those aged 18-24 years old have higher unemployment rates than those aged 25 years and older.
- Those aged 50-64 years old are less likely to be in employment and more likely to be economically inactive than those aged 25-49 years old.

Race

- Migrant workers, particularly those from Eastern European countries are subject to industrial and occupational segregation, face multiple barriers to employment, and are vulnerable to exploitation.
- Irish Travellers are less likely to be in employment than all other ethnic groups.

Prejudice at work

- Prejudicial attitudes (unequal treatment, harassment, discrimination), both within and outside the workplace, are experienced by people with disabilities, women, trans people, lesbian, gay and bisexual people, people from minority ethnic groups, migrant workers and those of different religious beliefs.