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PRESS RELEASE

Out and About – Listening to the Community

The Equality Commission has been busy on the festival circuit in Belfast this week, hosting discussion events at both the Eastside Arts Festival and August Féile.

At Eastside, Chief Commissioner, Dr Michael Wardlow hosted a Q&A with the audience after a performance of the play 'Jade City', to explore equality issues facing men living in east Belfast. As part of Féile, an expert panel gathered to discuss gender issues facing women at an event in An Chultúrlann.

The events are part of a series of discussions being organised by the Equality Commission to explore equality issues and listen to the views of members of the public.

Dr Wardlow said: "We are very pleased by the positive response we have had to this fresh approach. We value the opportunities presented to hear first-hand, from people across all communities in Belfast, how equality impacts on their lives. These community festivals provide an excellent platform to explore some important issues."

"The Eastside event, at the City of Belfast, Boxing Academy, has been my first ever speaking event in a boxing ring" Dr. Wardlow said. "It was a thought provoking and worthwhile session and the people present have raised some very interesting points, around issues such as access to jobs and education."

"The discussion in Féile, which focussed on gender equality issues affecting women in Northern Ireland, was very informative. It covered a wide range of topics from discrimination and childcare, to the concentration of women in low-paid jobs."

"We have come away from both these discussions with food for thought for our work in tackling inequality," Dr Wardlow concluded. "We plan to continue with this programme of events throughout the rest of this year. The success of our events so far has been driven by the willingness of members of the public to tell us their views about the equality issues raised, and engage in open discussion on them".

Notes to Editor

- The 'Jade City' post show discussion was hosted by Alice Malseed (Playwright) and Dr Michael Wardlow, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

The 'What every woman wants – equality!' event was chaired by Yvette Shapiro (Journalist), panel members included: Amanda Ferguson (Journalist), Carmel McKinney OBE (Chair NIFRS), Alison Millar (General Secretary NIPSA), and Adrienne Peltz (Campaigner).