



17 May 2021

Removal of the Teachers' exception provisions from the Fair Employment law in Northern Ireland

Geraldine McGahey, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland said: "We welcome the motion by Ulster Unionist Party MLAs, Mike Nesbitt and Robbie Butler, to be debated today. The Commission has long recommended the removal of the teachers' exception from the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998.

"Our view is that all teachers should be able to enjoy the same legislative protections as other workers, that it is no longer acceptable to exclude the entire teaching workforce from the provisions of the fair employment legislation.

"We recommend that the exception should be abolished at secondary level, with early consideration given to whether the exception should also be removed as regards primary schools. This has been our position following research and a subsequent investigation conducted in 2004.

"Since then we have continued to call for action – including in our 'Proposals for legislative reform' submitted to the then First Minister and Deputy First Minister in 2009; our 2015 recommendations on 'Sharing in education'; and our 2016 recommendations for the Programme for Government (PfG) and Budget, as well as through a number of other consultation responses and engagements in the intervening years.

"I have recently written to the First Minister and deputy First Minister to raise our position and call for law reform."

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