



9 August 2022

Age Discrimination Law needs strengthened

People in Northern Ireland have no legal protection against age discrimination when accessing goods, facilities and services. Currently, Northern Ireland is the only jurisdiction on these islands without these protections and it is important that our age discrimination laws are urgently strengthened to cover this.

That's the view of Geraldine McGahey, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Eddie Lynch, Commissioner for Older People for NI and Dr Paschal McKeown, Charity Director, Age NI. These organisations are partnering in a discussion event on Wednesday 10 August 2022 at St Mary's University College, Belfast at 11am.

In a joint statement, the partners said: "We've had protection here against age discrimination in employment and in education since 2006. However, it is still not unlawful in Northern Ireland to discriminate against people on the grounds of their age when it comes to providing goods, facilities or services. This includes in the areas of health and social services, financial services, retail, transport and entertainment. So, at present, if someone discriminates against you in these areas because of your age, you have no legal right to challenge this treatment.

"We believe strongly that the age equality legislation here should be strengthened and updated to be at least as good as, and potentially even better than, the Equality Act 2010 which applies throughout Great Britain. There is opportunity for Northern Ireland to learn from the last 12 years of protection against discrimination in goods, facilities and services in Great Britain and have comprehensive age discrimination legislation here.

A great deal of work went into seeking views through a consultation by OFMDFM on proposals to extend age discrimination legislation in 2015 but it could not be agreed by the Executive at that time.

The partners said: "Both the rest of the UK and Ireland have these protections in place. It is important that we close this legislative gap. It cannot be right, that people here have less protection from age discrimination here than their peers in our nearest neighbouring countries. It's really important that we work together to get this issue back on the agenda for our politicians."

Note to Editor

The panel for the discussion event on Wednesday 10 August 2022:

- Geraldine McGahey, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
- Eddie Lynch, Commissioner for Older People for NI
- Dr Paschal McKeown, Charity Director, Age NI

The event will be chaired by journalist and broadcaster Maggie Taggart.

This event is focusing primarily on the issues for older people. There will be a separate event later this year which will look at younger age groups' access to services.