



3 February 2023

Age discrimination law needs strengthened in NI

The need to reform our age discrimination laws and strengthen protections has been raised again today. People in Northern Ireland have no legal protection against age discrimination when accessing goods, facilities and services.

Speaking at an event, aimed at children and young people, both the Chief Commissioner of Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People expressly stated that Northern Ireland needs reform of its age laws and that the protections should be available to people of all ages.

Geraldine McGahey, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland said: "Northern Ireland has had protection against age discrimination in employment and in education since 2006. Yet it is still not unlawful 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. Our age equality legislation needs strengthened and updated. We are committed to working with partners to get this back on the political agenda, but we also need a functioning NI Executive to see this passed into legislation."

Koulla Yiasouma, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People said: "It has been long established that there is a need for legislation that protects people from discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services on the grounds of their age.

"Work began in Northern Ireland to progress this a decade ago and I have been baffled at the reluctance to view children as beneficiaries of this legislation. That children are discriminated on the grounds of their age is not in doubt and therefore I question why legally protecting them is being questioned.

"The people of Northern Ireland young and old must be protected from such discrimination. It is not an 'either/or' question – protection should be afforded to both groups."

In 2015, the then Office of the First and Deputy First Minister completed a

consultation on proposals to extend age discrimination legislation, but it was not agreed by the Executive at that time.

Note to Editor - Details for the panel discussion event

The partnership event organised by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Children's Commissioner for Children and Young People and Belfast Met will be held on: Friday 3 February 2023 at 10.30am, Central Hall, Belfast Met, Titanic Campus.

The panel for the event:

- Koulla Yiasouma, Commissioner for Children and Young People for NI
- Natalie Whelehan, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, NSPCC
- Fergal McFerran, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Children's Law Centre

The event will be chaired by Geraldine McGahey, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Please note: This event is focusing primarily on the issues for children and young people, a separate event was held in summer 2022 which looked at older age groups' access to goods facilities and services in relation to age legislation.