



15 June 2023

Equality Commission meets Mid & East Antrim Inter-Ethnic Forum

Problems with housing, accessing healthcare, negative racial comments, unfair treatment at work and how life has become more difficult since Brexit were just some of the issues that came up at today's meeting with the Inter-Ethnic Forum and Geraldine McGahey, Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission.

The Equality Commission held the meeting with Inter Ethnic Forum on Thursday 15 June, to hear about the issues for people in Mid and East Antrim. The meeting is one of a series of Commission engagement sessions being held with local groups across Northern Ireland in May and June to discuss racial equality in Northern Ireland.

The Chief Commissioner and staff heard first-hand from members of the Inter-Ethnic Forum what life is like in Northern Ireland for ethnic minority and migrant people living and working here. During the session, the Commission also provided advice on the protection of rights after Brexit.

These discussions will also help inform the Commission's response to the Race Law Reform Consultation from the NI Assembly Executive Office, which closes on 18th June.

Speaking at the event, Geraldine McGahey, Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission said: "We are working to tackle racism and racial inequalities in Northern Ireland and want to learn more about people's experiences about life here, especially since Brexit. Today's event in Ballymena was an opportunity to meet with local communities and hear their perspective and experiences of racism in Northern Ireland and we are very grateful for their feedback."

"Many equality rights remain in Northern Ireland after Brexit. We want to make people aware of these rights and that the Commission is here to provide advice and guidance if anybody has a concern about their rights after Brexit.

"We are also calling on the Northern Ireland Executive to make urgent changes to the race equality legislation to strengthen our current racial equality protections."

Ivy Goddard from the Inter-Ethnic Forum said: "We are delighted that the Chief Commissioner and other members of the Equality Commission came and listened to members of the Inter Ethnic Forum regarding local issues that they are facing every day."

"Our aim is to help ethnic minorities within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council area integrate, and to promote their cultures in the local community. It is very important that new and settled ethnic communities get the opportunity to share their

views of life here and we will continue to work with the Equality Commission to promote racial equality in Northern Ireland.”

More information on protecting rights after Brexit can be found at www.equalityni.org/rights-after-brexit