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Equality Commission Chief Meets with Strabane Ethnic Community Association on Racial Equality

Problems of racial profiling crossing the border, issues 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 yesterday's meeting with the Strabane Ethnic Community Association and Geraldine McGahey, Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission.

The Equality Commission held the meeting with Strabane Ethnic Community Association, on Tuesday 6 June, to discuss racial equality in Northern Ireland. The meeting is one of a series of Commission engagement sessions, being held with local groups across Northern Ireland, in May and June.

The Chief Commissioner and staff met with members of the Strabane Ethnic Community Association to hear first-hand 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 18 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 Strabane 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.”

Kamini Rao, Strabane Ethnic Community Association said: “The Strabane Ethnic Community Association (SECA) were delighted that the Chief Commissioner and other members of the Equality Commission came and listened to members of SECA regarding local issues that they are facing every day.”

“We work to identify and respond to the needs of Minority Ethnic Communities in the Strabane area to raise awareness and understanding within 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-brexite