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Racism is a daily fact of life in Northern Ireland

“It is disturbing that the most striking findings of this recent research are that people from minority ethnic and migrant groups said that racism was a normal part of their daily life in Northern Ireland and that women are particularly exposed to racism. It also found that there was a widespread perception that Brexit had led to an increase in the expression of racism. We know racism is not new to Northern Ireland, and its impact is devastating.

“We’ve also been meeting with people from ethnic minorities and their support organisations across Northern Ireland to hear first-hand about their experiences of living here and the issues they face because of their race. These have been tough sessions with some very difficult stories being shared. Let me be clear, racism is never acceptable, not now, not ever,” said Geraldine McGahey, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

The Chief Commissioner’s comments come ahead of the publication of research which the Equality Commission had commissioned from the independent think tank Pivotal. It looks at the actual, perceived, and potential socioeconomic impacts of Brexit on minority ethnic and migrant people in Northern Ireland.

The research entitled ‘Impact of Brexit on minority ethnic and migrant people in Northern Ireland’ has found that life in Northern Ireland is much more difficult for many minority ethnic and migrant people following Brexit. However, in some areas, it remains difficult to identify the impact of Brexit specifically.

Speaking about the findings, Geraldine McGahey continued: “Unfortunately, it’s not surprising that the research reports that participants feel that they are not a priority for the government in Northern Ireland. They also feel that their rights and entitlements have become more complicated since Brexit.

“They reported that changes to immigration status for those from EU countries have created uncertainty and difficulty. They raised problems with the EU Settlement Scheme process and their struggles to prove entitlement to access public services such as healthcare. They also raised concerns about insufficient government funding to address community need, limited government preparation for the impacts of Brexit, as well as what they see as institutional racism and racial profiling.

“The findings of this research report and our ongoing work with the sector make for uncomfortable truths. Our society appears to have developed an acceptable level of

prejudice towards some ethnic minority and migrant people living here. This is unacceptable.

“It is positive that people are actively choosing to come to work and live in Northern Ireland. It is important that we make them feel that they belong here and that they are welcome, valued and respected.” concluded Ms McGahey.

Notes to Editor

- Download the research report: [Impact of Brexit on Minority Ethnic and Migrant People in Northern Ireland](#) (*pdf*)
- The research was commissioned by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland further to its role, with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, as the Dedicated Mechanism under Article 2(1) of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol.