

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2016 - 2017



Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND



EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND

Annual Report and Accounts

for the year ended
31 March 2017

Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly
under paragraphs 5(3) & 7(4) of
Schedule 8 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998
by The Executive Office
on

3 July 2017

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Our Statement of Commitment

We are committed to carrying out our functions in a way which will contribute to a more equal society

Vision

A society in Northern Ireland where there is:

Equality for all and a common understanding of the benefits of a more equal society

Mission

To improve people's lives through the effective implementation of our statutory responsibilities

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Castle Buildings
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3SR

Dear First Minister and Deputy First Minister

I have pleasure in submitting to you the seventeenth annual report of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, covering the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. The report demonstrates both the breadth and depth of the Commission's responsibilities and the extent to which they have been successfully discharged.

On behalf of the Commission, I would like to express our appreciation of the assistance given to the Commission by officials of The Executive Office throughout the year.

Yours sincerely



Michael Wardlow
Chief Commissioner

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Chief Commissioner's Foreword

The year of this report – from April 2016 to March 2017 - was one of change and upheaval. The result of the referendum which commits the UK to exit from the European Union will have an impact on many aspects of our lives, and may well affect equality law and its protections.

The Equality Commission has urged that measures to promote equality and good relations are given priority in negotiations and in any final agreement with the European Union. It is vital that there is no erosion of the current levels of equality rights and protections which exist under equality law in Northern Ireland.

In addition, as the year ended, the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive were in abeyance, which has delayed progress on a number of outstanding equality issues. Northern Ireland needs a Programme for Government with a firm commitment to put equality of opportunity and good relations at the heart of public policy - and to ensure its implementation. This is essential if we are to build a more dynamic, shared and progressive Northern Ireland.

We still await the extension of the age discrimination legislation to cover goods, facilities and services. The Commission has, throughout the year, been highlighting enduring inequalities in key areas such as education and housing. Through our “Every Customer Counts” campaign we have linked up with business people in all areas of Northern Ireland, working with them to improve access to their services for people with disabilities.

An issue which featured prominently in the Commission’s work this year was the degree to which pregnant women and working mothers feel that they are disadvantaged and treated unfairly. In November we published the outcome of a major investigation into this issue and, throughout the year, the Commission publicised many cases in which we had assisted women with claims of pregnancy or maternity discrimination. This reflects a worrying level of unfair treatment which affects the finances, career opportunities and health of many women.

Two cases supported by the Commission were heard before the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal. In the case of Lee v Ashers Baking Company Ltd, the Court ruled in favour of the case made on behalf of Mr Lee. The Court also refused leave to appeal to the Supreme Court regarding its decisions. Direct application was then made to the Supreme Court by Ashers and a hearing later in the year will decide whether or not to grant leave to appeal.

In the case of McKeith v the Ardoyne Association, the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal against Ms McKeith's successful case in the Industrial Tribunal. The Tribunal had found that the Association unlawfully discriminated against Ms McKeith on grounds of her association with her disabled child for whom she is the carer. The case was remitted to the Tribunal who awarded her £18,886 in compensation.

In the past year we said goodbye to four Commissioners who left at the end of their term in office. I pay tribute to their commitment and diligence and thank them for giving so generously of their time and expertise over the years. Four new Commissioners were appointed and are bringing their experience and insight to the important task of promoting equality of opportunity and combating unlawful discrimination in Northern Ireland.

The Report which follows demonstrates the many and varied challenges which equality issues present and the range and dimensions of the work carried out by the Commission in tackling them.



Michael Wardlow
Chief Commissioner

The background features a large blue triangle on the left side, a pink diamond shape in the center, and a lime green triangle on the bottom right. A horizontal pink bar runs across the bottom of the page.

Annual Report

2016 - 2017

Performance Report

Overview

The purpose of this overview is to provide the reader of the Annual Report with an outline of the Commission's purpose and remit; a summary of its performance against its objectives and key results in 2016-17, including the challenges and key risks it has faced in delivering its outcomes; and a brief overview of the likely developments and challenges it faces in the coming year.

Statutory Background

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is an executive non-departmental public body (NDPB) sponsored by The Executive Office.

The Commission, established on 1 October 1999 under the Northern Ireland Act 1998, assumed, along with the responsibilities for statutory equality duties and new disability matters, the duties and responsibilities of four former organisations:

- The Commission for Racial Equality for Northern Ireland;
- The Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland;
- The Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland; and
- The Northern Ireland Disability Council.

Since October 1999, additional duties and responsibilities with respect to age, disability, sexual orientation and special educational needs have also been assumed.

During 2009, jointly with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, the Equality Commission was designated as the independent mechanism for Northern Ireland of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) with the role of promoting, protecting and monitoring the implementation of the Convention.

Since the Commission's inception, it has aimed to fulfil these duties by working in partnership with key stakeholders to place equality at the heart of civic, economic and political life in Northern Ireland.

The main pieces of legislation from which the Commission derives its duties and powers are:

- Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976, as amended
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended
- Race Relations (NI) Order 1997, as amended
- Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998, as amended
- Northern Ireland Act 1998
- Equality (Disability, etc.) (NI) Order 2000
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2003, as amended
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005, as amended
- Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006, as amended
- Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2006, as amended

Performance Analysis

Performance against Targets

During this year the Commission finalised a new Corporate Plan 2016-19. The Plan was formally submitted to the Commission sponsor Department, the Executive Office (TEO), in May 2016, following a period of public consultation at the end of the previous year. Approval by TEO's Departmental Board has however been deferred, pending publication of the Executive's Programme for Government (PfG). This has now been further delayed pending the outcome of ongoing discussions concerning the establishment of a new Executive.

The Commission prepares annual business plans. The Commission's Draft Business Plan 2016-17 was submitted for approval in February 2016 and, following comment from TEO officials, it was revised and resubmitted in August 2016.

In February 2017, TEO formally advised the Commission that, given the particular circumstances that existed, it was content that the Commission continues to operate under the draft Business Plan and draft Corporate Plan until such times that Ministerial approval can be secured.

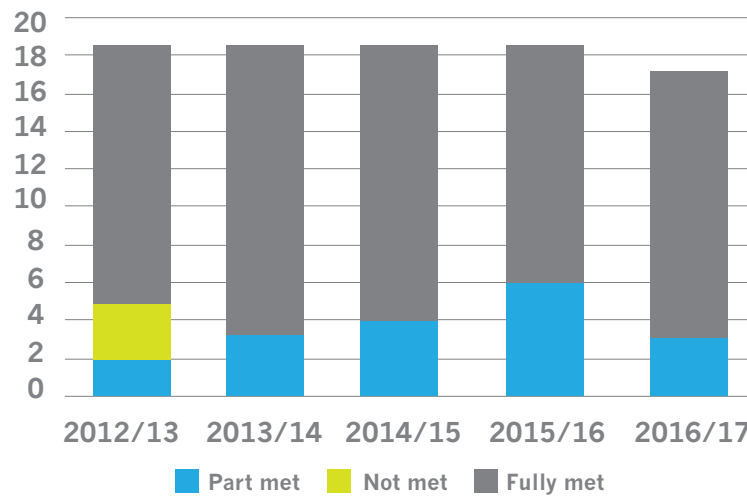
The Business Plan was aligned with the key strategic areas set out in the Corporate Plan 2016-19. The four strategic priorities are:

1. Champion equality and good relations;
2. Challenge inequalities;
3. Put the legislation to work; and
4. Deliver equality effectively and efficiently.

This year's Business Plan has 20 objectives, spread across the four strategic areas. By the end of the year 17 (85%) of these targets were fully met and 3 (15%) partially met. No targets were not met.

Performance against targets is reviewed on at least a quarterly basis by the Commission and a summary report of performance against targets is provided on a quarterly basis to the TEO sponsor team. A summary of Performance against Targets for this year and the period of the previous Corporate Plan is set out in the table below.

Performance against Targets 2012-17



The highlights of 2016-17 included:

- launch of ‘Expecting Equality’, the report of the Commission’s formal investigation into pregnancy & maternity at work and the publication of online packages of guidance for employers and for individuals;
- securing positive judgements in a number of key strategic cases, including the Lee v Ashers Baking Company Ltd and McKeith v Ardoyne Association judgements in the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal;
- publication of the Commission’s Programme for Government and Budget recommendations;
- development of Every Customer Counts and Mental Health Charter initiatives;
- continued growth in website usage and Twitter account followers;
- Investors in People Gold award and reaccreditation for ISO 9001 and Lexcel;
- evidence of continuing high levels of assurance of effective governance.

The targets partially met this year were those relating to the partial completion of a number of surveys commissioned this year and the development and dissemination of statements on key inequalities in areas such as employment and participation in public life. This work will be finalised in 2017-18.

An overview of the delivery in each of the Key Output areas is included in the section on Progress against Key Performance Indicators below.

Strategic Area 1: Championing equality and good relations

A key objective of the Commission's Corporate Plan for 2016-19 was to refocus efforts on communicating the importance of, and reinforcing the case for, equality and good relations in Northern Ireland. During this year a review of the Commission's communications objectives was undertaken and a new communications strategy was put in place. It seeks to create a framework to enable the Commission to be –

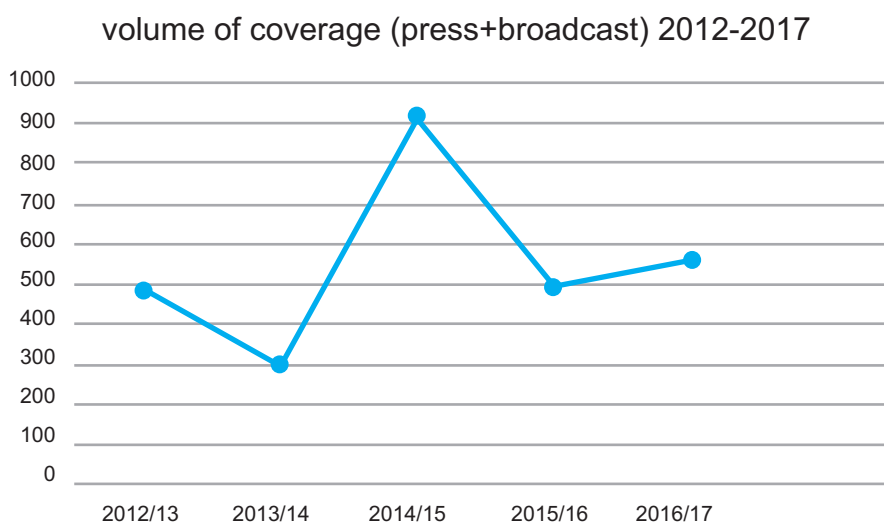
- anticipatory, responsive and relevant to its diverse stakeholders;
- strategic, confident in the positioning, tone and tenor of its communications;
- consistent and clear in its messaging;
- engaging and two-way in its interaction with its stakeholders and customers.

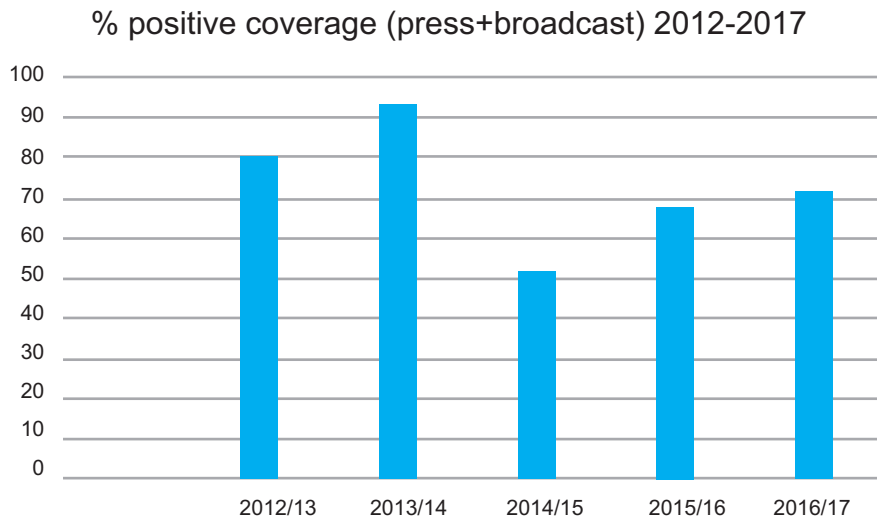
This strategy will be underpinned by a press and media plan; a digital communications plan; a community engagement plan; and a political engagement plan.

Highlighted below are the key outcomes from the media and communications work which took place in 2016-17.

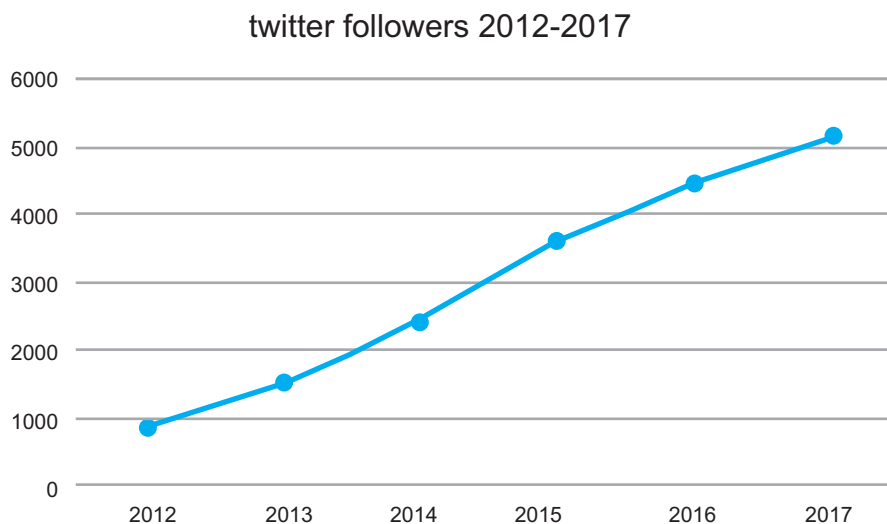
Media and Communications

Stories about the Commission's work were carried in 560 media pieces over the past year; 73% in print media; 27% in broadcast media. The chart below summarises the volume of coverage over the period 2012-13 to 2016-17. The second chart provides information on how positive the coverage was.





The Commission continued to develop its presence on social media platforms. Our corporate Twitter followers increased by 17.3% from 4,247 to 5,137.



The Commission began using LinkedIn in July 2017 and the following has been growing steadily. Use of the website continued to show growth.

'Expecting Equality', the formal investigation into pregnancy & maternity at work was a key aspect of the Commission's work this year. The Commission presented the findings of this Investigation in November 2016 at an event in Titanic Belfast. This generated significant media interest across print, broadcast and social media. The package was completed with the publication of new online guidance for employers, using the e-zine, Twitter and LinkedIn and guidance for individuals went live during the week of International Women's Day and was communicated using the same techniques.



Expecting Equality event, November 2016

A significant number of other articles, press statements and blogs were issued during 2016-17 to raise awareness of key Commission policy priorities and policy contributions. A special equality edition of *The View* magazine produced in March had articles relating to the range of the Commission's work.



The View cover photo

The Commission issued 23 ezines over the twelve-month period including specific editions for employers and service providers, public authorities, Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the race sector and general stakeholders. This continues to be a useful vehicle for promoting our work.

Rights awareness and the role of the Commission was also promoted through public engagement and our outreach programme of 54 events and 180 speaking engagements, as well as meetings with key stakeholders across all sectors. A key focus was working with NGOs representing affected groups, including around LGBT Awareness Week and Transgender Day of Remembrance, and the education sector.

An important resource for our communications work over the next few years will be the stakeholder survey work that was initiated this year. During 2016-17 fieldwork was completed on a public awareness survey looking at attitudes to equality and to the Commission and its work.

Other survey work covers a range of stakeholders, including employers and service providers. The findings from both of these will be available in 2017.

Public policy development and engagement

The draft Corporate Plan committed the Commission to working with strategic partners to shape the public policy framework to influence greater equality and good relations outcomes, including by securing key commitments in the Programme for Government (PfG), and through the full implementation of a range of Northern Ireland equality and good relations strategies.

The refocusing of the Executive's delivery framework onto an outcome focused PfG reflected the evolving focus of the Commission's own public policy work and will shape our work over the course of this corporate planning period and beyond.

Building on the Commission's recent work to develop, distil and engage with key stakeholders on priority recommendations for law, public policy and service delivery, in January 2016 the Commission published its priorities for the then incoming Programme for Government (2016-21).

Our aim this year was to increase targeted engagement with Northern Ireland elected members and Departmental officials and to work in partnership with other key stakeholders to secure commitments in support of the Commission's published PfG priorities.

The publication and consultation on, first, a PfG framework, and then a draft Programme in October (alongside the subsequent rolling dissemination of Departmental delivery plans), both intensified this work and required the Commission to redirect its focus and resources in response to the expanded scale of the PfG development process, including development of a range of draft delivery plans. Feedback from our engagement suggests that our work is having an influence on draft delivery plans and with partners and stakeholders. Despite the impact of the present political context, the Commission will continue to develop and deepen its engagement with the new Programme for Government framework and approach.

Securing legislative protections

In fulfilment of its responsibility to keep the effectiveness of the legislation under review, the Commission engages with TEO and other Departments, the Assembly and other partner organisations in order to secure legislative protections from unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

With regards to the development of protections in the area of goods, facilities and services on the grounds of age, this year has seen little progress following TEO consultation of 2015. The Commission continues to call for Age-GFS protections for all ages – including through our input into the PfG and associated delivery plans and our response to the draft Department of Education Children & Young People Strategy. In September, the Commission hosted an Age Policy roundtable engagement, with positive endorsement from partners in support of our positions on Age-GFS.

The Commission has also worked with key stakeholders to advance the reform of race and disability law reform in line with the Commission's published recommendations. This has included engagement with international mechanisms with positive outcomes – for example the report from the Advisory Committee for the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities supports ECNI recommendations on the need for race law reform. Disability law reform has also been highlighted as a priority issue in evidence to the UNCRPD Committee ahead of the 2017 examination of the UK State party.

Aligned to our recommendations, the draft PfG commits the Department for Communities to consider proposals to reform and strengthen disability and race equality law. There is also a commitment in the Racial Equality Strategy to review race equality law and for the Executive to act on the outcome of the review with a view to new legislation being in place by 2017-18.

As is evidenced above, our focus on increasingly strategic engagement in recent years has led to increased reference to, and support for, Commission recommendations in independent reports; Assembly debates; in feedback from stakeholder groups; the draft PfG and associated delivery plans; and in Government strategies such as the Racial Equality Strategy.

In the context of the referendum result in support of the UK leaving the European Union, the Commission added, mid-year, an additional area of work to its business plan – to better ensure issues relevant to Northern Ireland equality law form part of any proposals resulting from the EU referendum. Key actions included development and publication of a position paper on equality priorities in the context of an EU exit. We also undertook targeted engagement with stakeholders locally and further afield, including participation in a conference organised by the Department of Foreign Affairs and providing evidence to the House of Commons Women & Equalities Select Committee Inquiry on Brexit and impact on equality law.

Strategic Area 2: Challenging inequalities

A crucial underpinning of our public policy development and strategic engagement has been research to identify key inequalities in Northern Ireland and, building upon this, engagement with partners to distil and highlight areas for action – with regards to improving equality outcomes and to ensure the availability, and appropriate disaggregation, of relevant data across the equality grounds.

The purpose of this work is not simply to identify and highlight key inequalities in Northern Ireland but to build an evidence base to assist the Commission and others to identify key issues and track any associated progress.

During 2016-17 the Commission worked to advance research and develop statements on key inequalities in the public policy areas of education, housing, participation in public life and employment. There was ongoing engagement and consultation with stakeholders throughout the year and at the year-end a number of statements on key inequalities in housing and communities and in education were being prepared for publication in 2017-18. Statements on participation in public life and employment were being drafted and will be used for consultation and engagement with stakeholder groups ahead of being finalised next year.

Planned work to initiate research into key inequalities in Health and Social Care was put on hold due to difficulties with tendering and contracting and the position will be reviewed in the light of available resources and other competing pressures.

In December the Commission published the 26th Annual Fair Employment Monitoring Report which highlighted the continuance of the gradual upward trend in the share of the workforce held by those from a Roman Catholic community background. The report also confirmed that the proportions of people from a Protestant and Catholic background in the monitored workforce continue to be broadly reflective of the estimated composition of economically active people of working age in Northern Ireland.

The Commission is also currently finalising a survey of general public awareness of, and attitudes to, equality, equality groups and the Commission. With fieldwork completed in December a report is currently being prepared for publication and launch in 2017-18.

During 2016-17 the Commission prioritised actions associated with the Executive's PfG Framework and draft PfG, as well as Departmental PfG-related delivery plans and engagement with those Departments, to highlight and call for action to advance its policy positions in the areas of education, housing, participation in public life and employment.

The draft PfG and delivery plans currently reflect a range of Commission policy priorities.

Our engagement has also secured commitments to further develop relevant aspects of some delivery plans. For example, Department for Communities' officials have committed to address the absence of a focus on Travellers and minority ethnic groups in relevant delivery plans.

Further, the draft PfG included a number of high level commitments to the promotion of equality and good relations, as recommended by the Commission. This area of work will remain a major focus for the Commission over the coming months and years.

Strategic Area 3: Putting the legislation to work

At the core of the work we do to support the delivery of equality in Northern Ireland is our use of the range of responsibilities and powers that are contained in the legislative framework. These include giving advice, education, audit, investigation, compliance and enforcement and the duty to advise and assist individuals complaining of acts of discrimination.

A key role for us over the period of the current Corporate Plan will be putting these powers and duties to work. We will deploy the full range of our duties, from awareness raising to enforcement, to encourage improvements in organisational practices, extend good practice and to challenge poor practice. We will do so in partnership with others and by increasing the awareness and competency to deliver equality amongst both those with rights under the legislation and those with responsibilities.



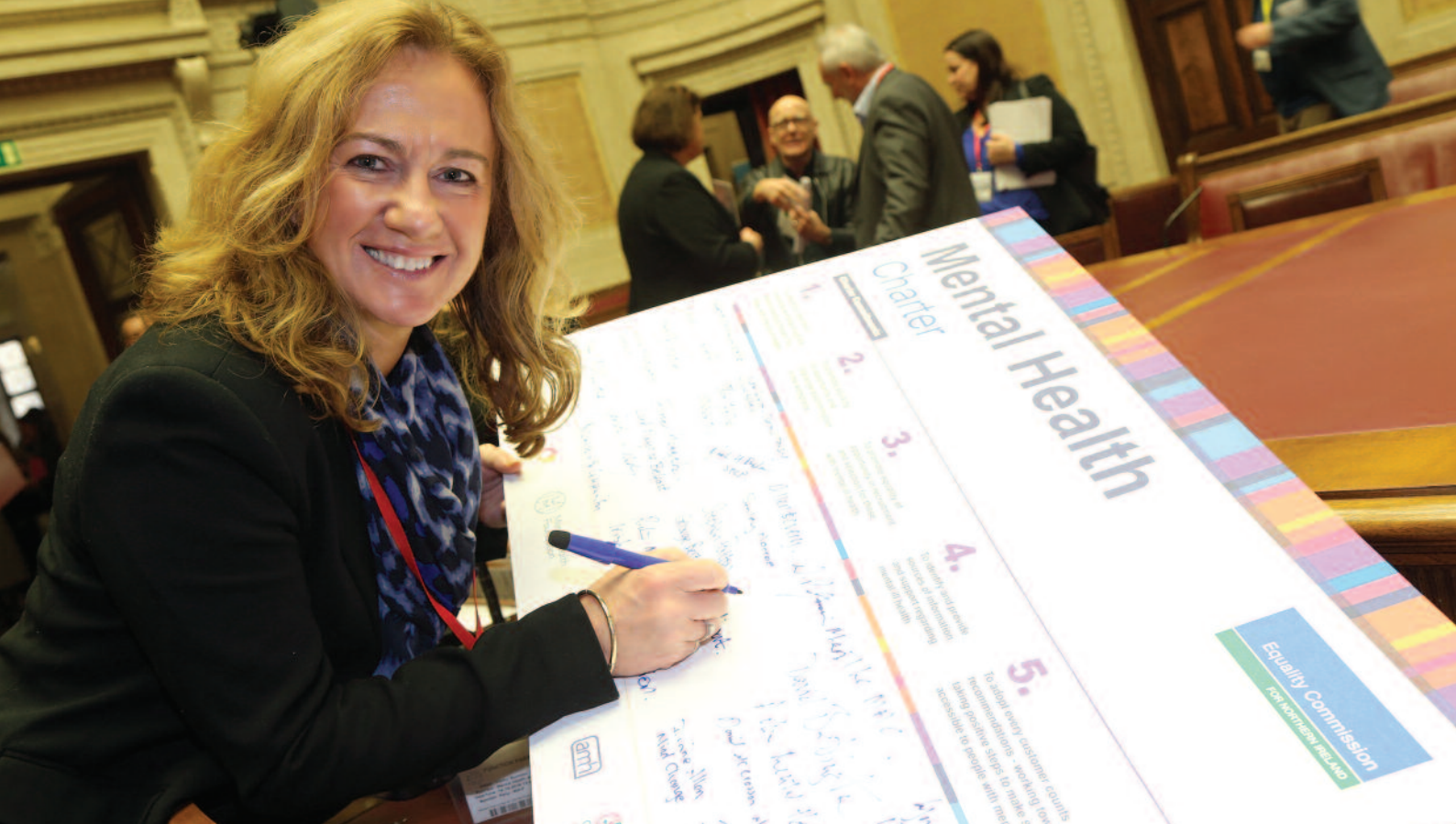
ECC event for public sector service providers

Based on previous research undertaken by the Commission, a key strand of our actions this year has been on extending access to these services by disabled people and ensuring that those accessing services can be assured of effective service delivery. Under the banner 'Every Customer Counts' we have continued with our awareness raising and educational activities, including promoting the good practice being adopted by some service providers through the use of videos and podcasts as well as a range of access audits. By the end of the year thirty service providers had committed to the Every Customer Counts Charter.

In October, to coincide with International Disability Day, the Commission launched a Mental Health Charter at the Assembly. The Charter has been developed in partnership with Action Mental Health, Change Your Mind, Disability Action, the Foundation for Mental Health, Inspire and MindWise. Over 40 employers have committed to this Charter, with the Commission providing training and support.

During the year the Commission also maintained three employer STEM networks, focusing on increasing the participation of women in occupations requiring skills and qualifications in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Employer training was also provided, in partnership with the Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment (NIUSE) and Disability Action, to promote disabled people's access to the labour market.



Jayne Magee signs the Mental Health Charter for Magee Dental Care

In addition to these specific, targeted initiatives the Commission continues to provide ongoing advice and training. Last year it responded to 3,226 advisory enquiries from employers and service providers. On a proactive basis it arranged 110 training, information and employer network events. These were attended by 1,762 individuals representing 366 organisations.

We updated our guidance for employers on flexible working and dress codes and issued 17 ezines to keep employers and service providers up to date on the work of the Commission and any new equality developments, for example Court and Tribunal decisions. We continue to review our mechanisms for communicating with employers and in this year have used a range of podcasts and videos which are promoted on our website and those of our partners e.g. Invest NI.

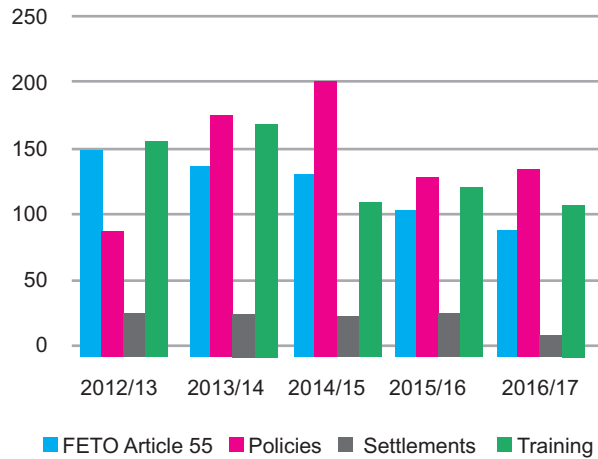


Caroline Kennedy, from IT company Synergy Learning



Around 350 employers attended our annual legal update events

Advisory work 2012-17



Ensuring compliance

Key areas of our regulatory responsibility relate to:

- registration, monitoring and review requirements placed on private and public sector employers, contained in the Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998 (FETO) and related provisions;
- section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Commission oversight in relation to the preparation by public authorities of disability action plans under sections 49A and 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA).

The Commission's work in this area focuses on the effective delivery of its compliance duties and how to best utilise the duties to drive improvements in equality and good relations practices.

Fair Employment and Treatment Order (FETO)

Each year the Commission receives around 4,000 monitoring forms from private sector employers and public authorities. Of the 4,008 returns that were audited and authorised this year, more than 99% were in compliance with the fair employment monitoring regulations.

A new Fair Employment Specification Order, which updated the list of public authorities required to comply with the fair employment duties, came into effect in August this year.

The Commission received 91 Article 55 employer reviews. Employers' compliance with the Article 55 review requirement also remains high, with all reviews in compliance. We continue to follow up the findings of these reviews with the larger private sector employers and public authorities.

This year there were 17,292 contacts with employers in relation to FETO compliance. This support ensures high levels of employer compliance with the fair employment duties.

Section 75 statutory equality and good relations duties

Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a number of duties on the Commission with respect to enforcement of section 75:

- to keep under review the effectiveness of the duties on public authorities;
- to offer advice to public authorities and others in connection with section 75;
- to approve equality schemes and request any public authority to make a revised scheme;
- to consider complaints received regarding a potential failure by a public authority to comply with its approved equality scheme, and to investigate where appropriate.

The Commission took a number of steps in furtherance of these duties during the year under review, as set out below.

Keeping the effectiveness under review

During this year the Commission examined evidence of public authority practices in relation to their statutory equality and good relations duties. This was in preparation for a formal review of the effectiveness of the duties.

A Commissioner-led working group was established to lead the preparations for the review. During 2016-17 the Working Group considered a range of issues and findings from three projects commissioned from independent researchers considering specific aspects of processes for fulfilling the statutory equality and good relations duties. By the year-end three reports were published and disseminated through the Commission's website. The Working Group concluded with a range of issues identified from the evidence of practices, which were subsequently agreed by the Commission in April 2017. The evidence and issues will be published with proposed recommendations for action to address them in the 2017-18 business year.

The Commission undertook a consultation exercise on whether to amend its advice to public authorities on the timescales for consultation arrangements recommended for Equality Schemes. The decision not to amend the Commission's present advice was subsequently communicated to all public authorities and other stakeholders.

Equality Schemes

The Commission approved Equality Schemes for Mid Ulster and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council and by year-end was finalising discussions with Derry & Strabane Council with regard to its draft Equality Scheme. Advice was provided to 15 Policing and Community Safety Partnerships to assist them in their development of Equality Schemes, Section 75 Action Plans and Disability Action Plans (DAPs). By year-end, 14 of these schemes had been received and were being audited by the Commission. Discussions with HM Revenue and Customs with regard to its draft Equality Scheme was ongoing at year end.



Training session for PCSP members

The Commission met with Northern Ireland Office officials to discuss designating public authorities for the purposes of Section 75 of the NI Act 1998. The Commission also approved exemptions from Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plans for a number of smaller public authorities. A list of current designated public authorities is maintained on the Commission's website.

The Commission has a statutory obligation to provide advice to public authorities to enable them to comply with their statutory equality and good relations duties. Throughout the year the Commission held a number of events and training for public authorities to update on statutory duty advice and to discuss Commission research into public sector Section 75 practices. The Commission also continues to engage with the public sector through a range of networks such as the Equality Practitioners Group; the Local Government Diversity Group; Health, Equality and Human Rights Forum; and the Further Education Equality Forum.

We also provide advice to individual public authorities on their equality scheme commitments. The key areas of advice include equality assessments, principally screening and equality impact assessments, as well as feedback following the submission of their annual progress reports.

In this year the advice included guidance to 31 public authorities on their assessment practices in relation to specific policies and general advice on screening. The Commission provided input to the Programme for Government on equality impact assessments and screening and wrote to each of the Senior Responsible Officers to emphasise the importance of complying with equality scheme commitments.

Section 75 Complaints and Investigations

In addition to its duties in relation to public authorities, the Commission also has a statutory duty to provide advice to individuals and others about the statutory equality and good relations duties and the complaints process when public authorities may not be complying with their Equality Scheme.

Under paragraph 10 of the Northern Ireland Act (NIA), the Commission considers complaints from affected individuals and groups, where they consider that a public authority may not have complied with its Equality Scheme. Under paragraph 11 of the Act the Commission can also undertake investigations of its own volition where it considers that there has been a breach of the NIA requirements.

During 2016-17 the Commission received eight enquiries about the procedures for making paragraph 10 complaints. All were provided with guidance and one individual made a formal complaint. At the year end this complaint was being considered. In addition to this new complaint, the Commission completed investigations into two paragraph 10 complaints that arose during the preceding year. At the year-end both of these were being prepared for publication.

The Commission completed a paragraph 10 investigation following a complaint by the NI Commissioner for Children and Young People relating to the adequacy of TEO's consultation on the proposed amendment to the age discrimination regulations to extend the scope of the legislation to include goods, facilities and services for those aged 16 years or over.

The Investigation concluded that TEO breached its Equality Scheme commitments at paragraph 3.3 – Seeking the views of those directly affected; paragraph 3.5 – Accessibility and removing barriers to consultation; and paragraph 3.11 – Making relevant information available. The Commission recommended that TEO should conduct a consultation specific to the needs of children and young people on the proposals to extend age discrimination legislation to include protection from discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services and report to it within three months on progress on the consultation with the children and young people.

At the year-end the Commission was considering paragraph 11 investigations arising from complaints of breaches of schemes by two government departments.

Public Sector Disability Duty

Out of the 144 public authorities who are required to have a Disability Action Plan (DAP) in place, 127 (88%) do so as at 31 March 2017. The 127 includes eight public authorities where the DAP was being consulted on at the year-end and two public authorities that have submitted a draft DAP. The Commission has written to and is engaging with those 17 public authorities with a DAP which is out of date or has not yet been submitted.

The Commission continues to advise public authorities to ensure that the measures contained in their DAPs are directed to the duties. In this year we provided advice to 15 public authorities on the DAP measures and provided advice to five Health and Social Care Trusts at a consultation event on their DAPs.

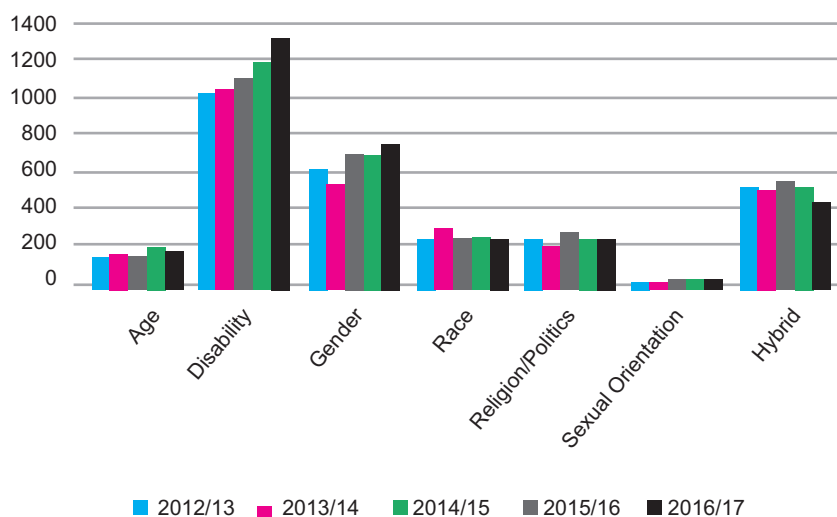
Challenging discrimination

The Commission continues to provide an important service in advising those who believe they may have been discriminated against. In its corporate plan this is undertaken through raising awareness of individual rights and challenging unlawful discrimination through the support of strategic cases.

Last year we reported that the Commission did not meet the target for completing a review of its framework policy for the provision of legal advice and assistance. This year the review was completed and at the year-end the updated policy was being prepared for wider consultation.

By the end of 2016-17 the Commission had provided advice in response to 3,454 discrimination enquiries (3,412 in 2015-16).

Pattern of discrimination enquiries and applications for assistance



Of these, 43% related to disability, including Special Educational Needs (SEND); 27% were gender related; 11% were on grounds of religious belief / political opinion; 9% were on grounds of race; 8% were age related enquiries; and 2% concerned sexual orientation. Enquirers were advised on rights and remedies, jurisdiction, time limits, lodgement of proceedings, informal resolution and Commission assistance with litigation. In the context of new outcomes based accountability developments, work is ongoing to improve the cost-effective measurement of user satisfaction and to prepare more regular reporting.

Assisting complainants

During this year 255 applications were considered by a Legal Funding Committee (LFC) and 59 (23.1%) were granted assistance under the terms of the Commission's Policy on the Provision of Legal Advice and Assistance. This is a slight percentage decrease from last year. In addition to assessing new cases for initial assistance, LFCs reviewed 69 cases which had already been granted assistance. These were reviewed in line with the Commission's adherence to staged assistance. Of these, 52 (75.4%) cases had their assistance level increased and in ten cases assistance was discontinued.



Lee v Ashers Baking Company - outside the court on the day of the appeal

Applicants may request that this decision is reviewed by another LFC. During 2016-17, nine cases were re-examined and all of the original decisions were upheld.

Six cases supported by the Commission were decided by a court or tribunal during 2016-17. Two were upheld in the Court of Appeal – Lee v Ashers Baking Company Ltd and McKeith v Ardoyne Association.

In tribunal, the case of McLoughlin v Charles Hurst Ltd was upheld in respect of the failure to make a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person; the equal pay case of Paczkowska & Golygowska v Avoca Handweavers (NI) Ltd was also upheld; as was the FETO political opinion case of Gary McClean v Waterside Neighbourhood Partnership.

A further FETO case of Banks v Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council was dismissed.

Cases on behalf of 41 individuals were concluded by way of negotiated/conciliated settlement. Effective settlements were obtained in most cases. This year, £343,500 has been recovered by way of compensation. These settlements also secured agreements from the respondents to commit to equality principles; to review policies, practices and procedures; to provide training; to provide references; and, in disability cases, to make reasonable accommodations. Significant publicity on rights and remedies and the role of the Commission arose from press coverage of these cases.



Maria McKeith, who won her case of associative disability discrimination

Strategic area 4 – Delivering equality, effectively and efficiently

This year was the first year of a new Corporate Plan and we have drafted the Business Plan 2016-17 and reported outcomes against the strategic objectives set out in that Plan. Although this was a new Plan, due to the discussion around the consultation on a new Programme for Government and particularly the Executive's commitment to a new outcome based approach, the Commission decided it should review its current plan against any anticipated or confirmed PfG outcomes and indicators. Due to the present period of political uncertainty work on this has had to be deferred. However we anticipate making further progress in 2017-18.

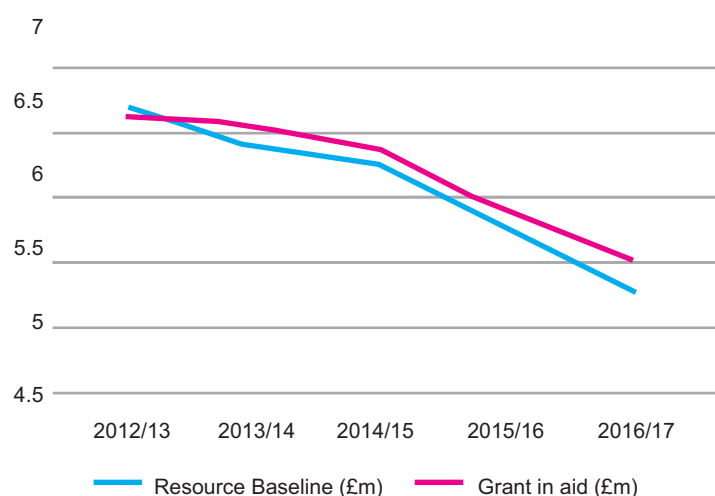
During this year, in anticipation of the changes that will be required in relation to the development of more outcome based planning and reporting, the Commission provided outcome based accountability (OBA) training for all its staff. An OBA approach has been used to guide the Commission's preparation of its 2017-18 draft Business Plan, which has been submitted to TEO for approval. An OBA approach will be used to guide the review and redrafting of the Commission's current Corporate Plan, which will be undertaken in 2017-18.

Resourcing its plans

As has been the case for much of the past decade, this year's strategic objectives were developed against the backdrop of continuing constraints on public finances. This year the Commission continued to work within a framework of reductions in both budget and grant in aid.

The chart below sets out the resource baseline budget and grant-in-aid provided by the Department over the past five years. In 2012-13 the Commission's resource budget and grant-in-aid were both almost £6.5m. By 2016-17 the levels of support had fallen to £5.24m and £5.59m respectively; reductions over the period of £1.23m (18.9%) in the resource budget and £0.9m (14.1%) in grant-in-aid.

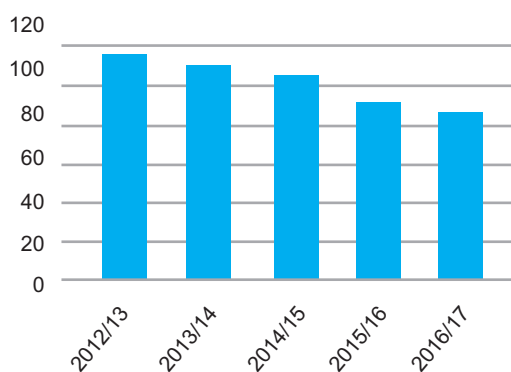
**Executive Office Funding (£M)
2012/13 – 2016/17**



In 2016-17 the reduction in the opening resource baseline was £430k (7.6%); this follows on from a £427k (7%) reduction in the previous year.

Given the labour intensive nature of the Commission's services, the greatest impact of reduced budgets has been on staffing levels. Since 2009-10, the Commission's overall staffing level has declined. The average whole time equivalent staffing level of the Commission this year, including temporary and agency staff, is 87. This compares with 138 in 2009-10, a 37% decrease. The graph below shows the reduction over the past five years, a fall of 25%. Compared with last year's total of 94, staffing levels fell by a further seven posts this year.

Staffing levels (whole time equivalent) 2012-17



The Commission has responded to budget reductions through the use of Voluntary Exit provisions, efficiency savings and sharing the costs of running its premises and corporate services, particularly ICT, with other arm's length bodies, a number of which have relocated to Equality House.

During 2016-17 the Commission used £145,907 to facilitate the voluntary exit of five of its staff. The Commission also utilised the bidding process in quarterly monitoring rounds to obtain approval for additional funding for small capital projects and some programme work.

Financial Results for the Year

The financial position of the Commission as at 31 March 2017 and other results for this year are set out in detail in our Financial Statements at page 68. The Accounting Officer authorised these financial statements for issue on 29 June 2017.

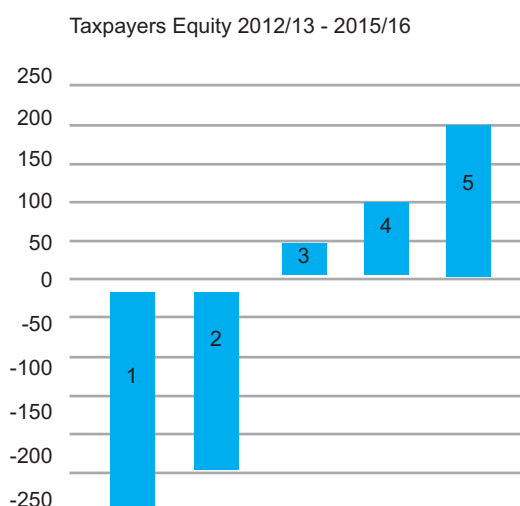
The Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) requires the Commission to treat grant-in-aid as financing rather than income. £5,588,000 (2015-16, £5,762,000) was received from TEO in the year. The Commission also shows a small increase in income from its activities.

Income from activities was £411,736 this year, which compares with £263,624 last year. The increase in income resulted mainly from the recovery of premises costs from a number of additional bodies relocating to Equality House and an accrual for the estimated impact of an ongoing rent review. Although income of £411,736 was earned, the Department only gave approval for retaining income in the amount of £246,000.

Net expenditure for the year was £5,484,520 (2015-16, £5,713,181).

There has been a movement in the Taxpayers' Equity of £107,833; from a surplus of £118,257 at 31 March 2016, to an increased surplus of £226,090 at 31 March 2017.

The movement in taxpayers' equity over the past five years is summarised in the following table.



Payment to Suppliers

The Commission is committed to the prompt payment of bills for goods and services received, in accordance with the Government's Better Payment Practice Code. Unless otherwise stated in the contract, payment is due within 30 days of receipt of the goods or services, or presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand, whichever is later.

The Northern Ireland Executive's target is for 90% of valid bills to be paid within 30 days. During the period 91.6% of bills were paid within the 30 day standard, 69.4% within 10 days. The comparative figures for 2015-16 were 96.3% and 80.9%. Although the Commission met the target this year further efforts will be made to regain the previous performance level. This year's decline was caused by changes in staffing levels.

Managing Risks

The key risks to the achievement of the Commission's objectives are set out in its Corporate Risk and Business Continuity Register. The Register is reviewed at each monthly Executive board meeting or earlier in the event of the emergence of a significant risk or 'near miss'. It is reviewed at each meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee and by the full Commission, at least twice each year.

This year the key risks to the delivery of the Commission's objectives continued to be the ongoing reduction in funding and staffing levels and, in particular, the lack of longer-term financial information to facilitate the development of robust planning assumptions and forecasts into the foreseeable future. It is anticipated that the need to manage these risks will continue into 2017-18. Difficulties this year were compounded by the change in the Department's treatment of the income received from cost recovery.

In March 2017 the Commission was provided with a cash allocation to cover the period 1 April 2017 to 31 July 2017 and was provided with an opening budget allocation on 9 June.

This year saw changes to membership of the Commission, though not to the same extent as 2015-16. Four new Commissioners replaced the four who had reached the end of their periods of appointment during 2016-17. An induction programme was delivered following their appointment in November 2016. An analysis of training needs was also undertaken. Although no major needs were identified, some further training will be undertaken in 2017-18.

Business Review

In the context of continuing reductions in the Commission's budget, the upward pressure of staff costs continues to be the main challenge which the Commission faces. The reduction in whole-time equivalent posts reported in recent years continues.

This year saw a further reduction in the average whole time equivalent (wte) headcount from 92 permanently employed staff to 84. Five staff exited the Commission this year, using the Public Sector Restructuring Fund. In response to falling staff numbers some restructuring of responsibilities has been required. This process will continue in 2017-18.

This year expenditure on Staff and Commissioners' costs was £4,150,838, a decrease of £173,664 in staffing costs compared with last year (£4,324,502). The decrease was a consequence of the continuing reduction in staff numbers.

The Voluntary Exits in 2016-17 were all on the basis of the Public Sector Restructuring Fund and no special severance payments were involved. Approval from TEO was obtained. Information on the exit packages, as required, is included in the Remuneration Report.

The Commission aims to maintain its quarterly budget and cash expenditures within 1.5% of forecasts. At the year-end this target was met both in terms of cash requirement and overall budget.

Additionally, the Commission is required to keep within budget control figures set by TEO. Against the Resource figure of £5,321k set by TEO the Commission recorded a £59k overspend. This was largely a result of the Commission being unable to fully mitigate the reduction in its authority to spend all of the income it had received from cost recovery of sharing Equality House and shared services during 2016-17 and inescapable in-year pressures resulting from the need to accrue for the anticipated outcome of a rent review, which was ongoing at the year-end. During 2017-18 the Commission will continue to discuss with the Department the impact of its treatment of income, in cash and budget, on the Commission's overall cash and budget position.

Likely Future Developments

It is anticipated that there will be a further reduction in budget and grant-in-aid in 2017-18. Discussions are ongoing in the hope of resolving the uncertainty regarding the budget position.

Progress on the Programme for Government and the outcome based approach to business planning and delivery, although affected by the ongoing political uncertainty, will continue. The Commission will begin work on preparation of an OBA focused Corporate Plan covering the period 2018-21.

Although there are no current plans for further relocation of other bodies to Equality House, it is anticipated that the Executive's Reform of Property Management project will continue to impact on the Commission's income over the coming years.

Important Events Occurring After the Year-end


There have been no significant events since the year-end which would affect this report and the accounts.

The Equality Commission's Annual Report and Accounts are prepared in accordance with Schedule 8 of the Northern Act 1998 and in a form directed by The Executive Office with the approval of the Department of Finance.

Going concern

The Equality Commission operates as a going concern. It is financed by funding from The Executive Office. Initial funding for 2017-18 has been approved and a budget is in place covering the next twelve months. Formal confirmation by The Executive Office of the budget position for the full year is anticipated. The Commission has no significant liabilities that cannot be funded over the coming period.

Management accounts are prepared on a monthly and quarterly basis and on the basis of present forecasts; the planning process can facilitate timely remedial actions. Formal arrangements for regular and frequent liaison with the Departmental sponsorship team are in place and there are no known events or conditions which would cast doubt on the Commission's ability to continue as a going concern.



Dr Evelyn Collins CBE
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
28 June 2017

Accountability Report



Accountability Report

This accountability report is made up of a **Corporate Governance Report**, including a Directors' Report setting out key aspects of the Commission's structure, naming those with the key responsibilities for directing the Commission in the delivery of its objectives. Information on Commissioners' attendance, their remuneration and any external interests can be found in the Directors' Report. The Directors' Report also provides information on any personal data incidents reported to the Information Commissioner's office.

The corporate governance report also provides information on the Accounting Officer's responsibilities in relation to preparation of the annual report and accounts and includes a Governance Statement prepared by the Accounting Officer. The Governance Statement provides a comprehensive summary of the Commission's governance framework and arrangements for risk management and assurance. Also included is a review of potential risk areas. There are no significant internal control issues at present.

Also included is a **Remuneration Report**, which sets out the policy for remunerating Commissioners and key staff with responsibilities in relation to directing and controlling the activities of the Commission, as well as statutory disclosures in relation to pensions, compensation for early retirement or loss of office, and fair pay. The remuneration report also includes additional information on staff numbers and costs, staff composition, sickness absence data and exit packages.

The **Assembly accountability and audit report** is the final section of the Accountability report. This report contains a number of additional disclosures relating to losses and special payments. In 2016-17 there were none to be disclosed.

The detailed reports are set out below.

Corporate Governance Report

Directors' Report

The Commission is led by a Chief Commissioner, supported by a Deputy Chief Commissioner. The overall number of Commissioners should be not less than 14 and not more than 20.

Including the Chief Commissioner and Deputy Chief Commissioner there are currently 16 Commissioners. The Deputy Commissioner resigned from her post on 1 March 2016 to stand for election to the Northern Ireland Assembly. She was subsequently reappointed by the Secretary of State and resumed her post on 1 June 2016.

The present Chief Commissioner is Dr Michael Wardlow. Dr Wardlow has been the Chief Commissioner since March 2012.

The Commission's Chief Executive, Dr Evelyn Collins CBE, has been designated as the Accounting Officer. Her responsibilities as the Accounting Officer are set out below at page 39. As Accounting Officer she has responsibility for maintaining a sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of the Commission's policies, aims and objectives. The Governance Statement on page 40 sets out how this responsibility has been discharged during the current year.

Commission and Chief Commissioner

The individuals set out in the table below served as members of the Commission during the reporting period. The current membership of the Commission comprises nine men and seven women.

The table also includes information on the number of Commission meetings which took place during the financial year and the number attended by each Commissioner.

Commissioner		No. of meetings	No. Attended
Michael Wardlow	Chief Commissioner	10	10
Lesley Carroll	Deputy Chief Commissioner (reappointed 1 June 2016)	8	7
Fidelma Carolan	(to 30 September)	5	5
Milton Kerr	(to 30 September)	5	5
Stephen McIlveen	(to 30 September)	5	4
Liam Maskey	(to 30 September)	5	2
Deborah Donnelly		10	10
Hazel Francey		10	8
William Gamble		10	10
Judith Gillespie		10	9
Tom Hartley		10	10
Geraldine McGahey		10	9
William McKee		10	9
Joseph McVey		10	9
Robin Mullan		10	8
David Rose		10	10
Eileen Chan-Hu	(from 8 November)	4	4
Duane Farrell	(from 8 November)	4	4
Helen Ferguson	(from 8 November)	4	4
Jarlath Kearney	(from 8 November)	4	2

Management Executive

Evelyn Collins	Chief Executive
Keith Brown	Head of Corporate and Legal Services
Eileen Lavery	Head of Policy, Research and Compliance

The composition of the Management Executive by sex and community background, as well as the composition of all employees, is included in the Remuneration and Staff Report.

Committees

Schedule 8 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 allows the Commission to make provision for the discharge of its functions by committees and the Commission has operated with a number of different Committee structures since it was established.

At present, there are three Committees of the Commission:

- Audit and Risk Committee
- Legal Funding Committee
- Statutory Duties Investigation Committee

The following Commissioners served on the Commission's Committees during the period 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017.

Audit & Risk Committee

COMMISSIONER		NO. OF MEETINGS	NO. ATTENDED
Deborah Donnelly	(Chair from 1 October 2016)	5	5
Stephen McIlveen	(Chair to 30 September 2016)	3	3
Fidelma Carolan	(to 30 September 2016)	3	3
Geraldine McGahey		5	3
Robin Mullan		5	4
David Rose		5	4
Eileen Chan-Hu	(from 26 January 2017)	1	0
Duane Farrell	(from 26 January 2017)	1	1

Statutory Duty Investigations Committee

COMMISSIONER		NO. OF MEETINGS	NO. ATTENDED
Lesley Carroll	(from 1 June 2016, Chair from 1 November)	5	4
Fidelma Carolan	(Chair to 30 September 2016)	3	2
William Gamble		6	5
Tom Hartley		6	4
William McKee		5	2
Michael Wardlow		6	6
Milton Kerr	(to 30 September 2016)	3	2
Eileen Chan-Hu	(from 26 January 2017)	1	1
Helen Ferguson	(from 26 January 2017)	1	1

Legal Funding Committee

The Legal Funding Committee normally meets fortnightly. Committee members are rotated to ensure that each meeting has three committee members present. The Chair of this Committee rotates between all members. In addition to the set meetings, Commissioners may be called upon to consider emergency applications as they arise.

During 2016-17 the following Commissioners served on Legal Funding Committees: Lesley Carroll, Deborah Donnelly, Helen Ferguson, Hazel Francey, Judith Gillespie, Tom Hartley, Jarlath Kearney, Milton Kerr, Liam Maskey, Geraldine McGahey, William McKee, Stephen McIlveen, Joe McVey and Michael Wardlow.

Commissioners' Interests

An up-to-date register of Commissioners' interests is maintained by the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer and is available for inspection at the Commission's offices in Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast BT2 7DP.

Commissioners' and Senior Executives' remuneration is included in the Remuneration Report published in this Annual Report and Accounts.

Data Protection and Freedom of Information

The Commission is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office and has in place policies, guidelines and arrangements for compliance with the Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.

One incident of data loss was referred to the Information Commissioner's Office during the year. On the basis of the nature of the data loss and the action taken by the Commission to address any weakness identified, no further action was taken by the ICO.

Statement of the Accounting Officer's responsibilities

Under Paragraph 7(2) (a) of Schedule 8 of the Northern Ireland Act 1988, the Executive Office with the approval of the Department of Finance has directed the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland to prepare for each financial year a statement of accounts in the form and on the basis set out in the Accounts Direction. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Commission and of its Comprehensive Net Expenditure, application of resources, changes in taxpayers' equity and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual and in particular to:

- observe the Accounts Direction issued by The Executive Office, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the accounts; and
- prepare the accounts on a going concern basis.

The Accounting Officer of The Executive Office has designated the Chief Executive as the Accounting Officer of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding the Commission's assets, are set out in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland, published by the Department of Finance.

Statement of Disclosure of Information to Auditors

So far as the Accounting Officer in office at the date of approval of these financial statements is aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the Commission's auditors are unaware; and
- I have taken all steps that I ought to have taken as Accounting Officer in order to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the Commission's auditors are aware of that information.

The Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and I take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and reasonable.

Governance Statement 2016-17

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for maintaining a sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of the Commission's policies, aims and objectives, whilst safeguarding the public funds and Commission assets for which I am personally responsible, in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to me in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.

The Governance Framework

The Commission

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is an executive non departmental public body (NDPB) established as a body corporate by Section 73 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Commission's primary source of financing is grant-in-aid provided by The Executive Office. Statutory authority for the payment of grant-in-aid is contained in Schedule 8 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Relationships between the Commission and the Ministers and their Department are governed by the "arm's length" principle, wherein the primary role of Ministers is to set the Commission's legal and financial framework including the structure of its funding and governance.

These responsibilities are discharged on a day-to-day basis on the Minister's behalf by the Sponsoring Department. Within this framework, it is the role of the Commission to determine its equality policies and activities in keeping with its statutory responsibilities and the objectives of Government policy.

The Commission has agreed a Management Statement with The Executive Office. This sets out the relationship between the two organisations and defines the financial and administrative framework within which the Commission operates. It also sets out the conditions under which grant-in-aid is paid to the Commission and the delegations within which the Commission operates.

It is supplemented by a Financial Memorandum agreed with the Commission and approved by The Executive Office and the Department of Finance. A new Management Statement and Financial Memorandum were agreed in June 2015.

The Commission is led by a Chief Commissioner, supported by a Deputy Chief Commissioner. Including the Chief Commissioner, there are currently 16 Commissioners. Four new Commissioners were appointed in November 2016 and an induction programme is being undertaken.

The responsibilities of the Chief Commissioner and Commissioners are set out in the founding legislation and more fully in the Code of Practice agreed between the Sponsoring Department and the Commission.

A record of Commissioners' attendance is included in the annual Corporate Governance report at page 35. Commissioners identify and update their interests and the Register of Interests is publicly available. The identification of potential conflicts is addressed at the beginning of each Commission and Audit and Risk Committee meeting. Guidance on declaration and conflict of interests is contained in the Commissioner Handbook, which is provided to all Commissioners on appointment.

Although it is primarily directed at central Government Departments, the Commission complies in all material respects with the guidance set out in Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good Practice NI (DFP, 2013).

Audit and Risk Committee

The Commission seeks to ensure high standards of corporate governance and high levels of compliance with the values of public service.

It has an Audit and Risk Committee which oversees internal audit arrangements and ensures that they are conducted in accordance with the objectives and standards of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. The Committee also oversees the Commission's arrangements for risk management.

The Committee's full responsibilities are set out in its Terms of Reference, which were last reviewed in February 2017. Its core work for the year is set in a work programme structured around the guidance in the Department of Finance's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook (NI) (March 2014).

The Audit and Risk Committee meets at least four times per year. Minutes of Audit and Risk Committee meetings are provided to the full Commission and the Chair of the Committee reports to Commission meetings at regular intervals. On an annual basis, the Audit and Risk Committee undertakes a self-assessment of its operations and a formal written report of its work is presented to the Commission.

During the current year a new Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee was appointed and a number of new Commissioners were appointed to the Committee.

Accounting Officer

The Commission's Chief Executive has been designated as the Accounting Officer. The Accounting Officer's role and responsibilities are set out in the Management Statement and in more detail in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (MPMNI).

The Equality Commission's Annual Report and Accounts are prepared in accordance with Schedule 8 of the Northern Act 1998 and in a form directed by The Executive Office with the approval of the Department of Finance.

Risk Management and Assurance

As the Accounting Officer, I have overall responsibility for the Commission's corporate business and decisions and ensuring the effective management of the key associated risks.

The Commission has appropriate procedures in place to ensure that it has identified its objectives and risks and determined a control strategy for its strategic risks.

A corporate approach to risk, involving Commissioners, the Executive Team and other staff is taken. Ownership of risks has been allocated to the relevant staff at appropriate levels and they have received the necessary training to assist them in handling these risks.

Risk management is cascaded down the organisation and Risk Registers are produced for each Division. Quarterly stewardship statements are completed by corporate risk owners and forwarded to me as Accounting Officer. These provide me with assurance that risk management processes are effective and operating in line with the Commission's risk management framework.

Staff receive regular training in Governance, Risk Management and Fraud Awareness.

As Accounting Officer, I submit a quarterly stewardship statement to the Audit and Risk Committee and to the Commission's Sponsoring Department, TEO.

The risk and control framework

The Commission has ensured that procedures are in place for verifying that risk management and internal control are regularly reviewed and reported on. Risk appetite is assessed by the Commission and targets approved by the Commission are included on the risk register.

Corporate and business continuity risk is routinely reviewed by the Management Board and at each Audit and Risk Committee meeting and the corporate risk and business continuity register updated as necessary. The Commission, its Audit and Risk Committee and the Management Board receive regular reports on internal control and monitor progress on addressing internal audit recommendations.

The system of internal control has been in place in the Commission for the year ended 31 March 2017 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Report and Accounts. It accords with Department of Finance guidance.

Consideration of risk forms the basis of the Commission's Strategic Audit Programme, which is mapped against the Corporate Risk Register. The Commission has an internal audit service, which operates to Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). The service is provided by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP. In June 2015, TEO's Head of Internal Audit completed a quality assurance review of the Commission's internal audit arrangements against the PSIAS. A high level of conformity was found.

Potential Risk Issues

The areas of potential risk outlined below are those on which the Commission reports to its Sponsoring Department on a monthly basis or any other significant issue referred to in the Commission's corporate and business continuity risk or other risk register.

Business Planning and Budgeting

The Commission submitted a revised draft Corporate Plan for the formal approval of the TEO Ministers, covering the period 2016-19. This Plan will be supported by annual Business Plans. The annual Business Plan for 2016-17 was also submitted for approval. In February 2017 the Commission was formally advised by TEO that although the plans had not secured approval prior to the fall of the Executive, the Department was content that the Commission continues to operate under the draft plans until such time as Ministerial approval can be secured. A draft plan covering the period 2017-18 was submitted to TEO in January 2017.

Information Assurance

The Commission is proactive in developing and implementing policies and procedural guidance to manage Information Risk. Information risk management is a key element of information governance and is an integral part of good management.

The Commission undertakes regular reviews of its ICT infrastructure and security arrangements and information security risks and controls are included on the Commission's Corporate ICT risk register. The Commission made a return in May 2016 to the Departmental Security Health Check (DSHC) initiated by NICS. This return was reviewed by internal audit in November 2016 and satisfactory assurance was provided.

The Commission has a Freedom of Information policy and satisfactory arrangements in place to ensure compliance. The Commission's Data Protection and Freedom of Information Officer receives regular training and Divisional coordinators are briefed. The Commission is aware of and has approved these arrangements. An internal audit review of Data Protection and Freedom of Information processes was completed in May 2015; Substantial assurance was provided. A further audit review is included in the Commission's audit programme for 2017-18.

During 2016-17 there were a number of incidents of information being sent to recipients other than the person intended. This was as a result of an error in the use of the automatic address completion facility on Microsoft Outlook. One was investigated by the Information Commissioner's Office and, following the provision of further information on the incident and the remedial action taken by the Commission, no action was taken. Access to the facility is now denied to staff working on individual complaints work and in other sensitive areas. Additionally, the Commission has procured additional Safesend software to further mitigate the risk of such errors and has reminded staff of their obligations with regard to safeguarding personal information.

Business Continuity Plans

The Commission has undertaken a business continuity risk assessment and up to date business continuity and other contingency arrangements are in place. An audit of the Commission's Business Continuity and IT Disaster Recovery was completed in October 2015 and Substantial assurance was recorded. The ICT continuity and disaster recovery arrangements are regularly tested.

Gifts and Hospitality

Appropriate arrangements for the management of Gifts and Hospitality are in place and all offers, both to Commissioners and Staff, are included on a Gifts and Hospitality Register.

Whistle blowing

The Commission's Whistle blowing procedure was reviewed and updated in May 2015, following a review against the new guidance issued by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) and others. There have been no incidences of whistle blowing during the year.

Fraud

The Commission has a Fraud Policy and Fraud Response Plan. This was reviewed and updated during this year. In September 2016, a phishing email was received and the Fraud Response plan activated. No loss was incurred. NIAO and TEO were notified as per the Fraud Policy.

Managing Attendance

A Managing Attendance Policy is in place and quarterly indicators of staff absence are provided to the Commission and to the TEO Sponsoring Team. The figure for average days due to sickness per employee during 2016-17 was 6.2 days.

Complaints

The Commission has in place a formal procedure for dealing with service complaints. The procedure has three formal stages, culminating in a final appeal to the Chief Executive. The procedure provides general advice to assist potential complainants and includes a Complaints Form and how to contact the Commission's Complaints Co-ordinator. The Complaints Co-ordinator can assist with further guidance. Should complaints not be resolved through the internal procedure, they may be referred to the Commissioner for Complaints. Information on complaints dealt with under the procedure is reported in the Annual Report. During 2016-17, the Commission received no complaints from the public under its Complaints Procedure.

During 2015-16 a review of the Commission's complaints handling procedures was undertaken by the Commission's internal auditors. Substantial assurance was provided.

Third Party Organisations

Although it has the vires to award grants under some of the legislation from which it derives its powers and duties, the Commission has not utilised its discretion in relation to the provision of such grants. The Commission provides a number of property management, ICT, financial and HR support services to a number of other arm's-length bodies.

Related party transactions are reported in the Annual Accounts.

Internal & External Audit Reports

The Commission's external auditor is the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG). The audit is carried out on his behalf by the contractor RSM UK Audit LLP (formerly RSM Northern Ireland), but he remains responsible for the certification of the Commission's Annual Report and Accounts. Following completion of the audit a Report to those charged with Governance containing the audit findings and associated recommendations is issued.

During 2016-17 the internal auditors, PwC, conducted reviews in line with their Annual Audit Plan covering:

Audit Area	Assurance Rating
Financial Processes and Administration	Satisfactory
Communications and Promotions	Satisfactory
Corporate Governance	Satisfactory
Review of the self-assessment of Information Security 2015/16	Satisfactory

In his Annual Report to the Audit and Risk Committee, the Head of Internal Audit's independent opinion provided a satisfactory level of assurance for 2016-17.

An audit plan for 2017-18 was approved at the February meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee.

Risk Management Status

The ongoing requirement for the effective management of budgetary reductions continues to be a risk facing the Commission. The Commission continued with its actions to reduce costs in staffing, the largest area of expenditure, and to deliver the efficiency savings sought by its Sponsoring Department.

The Commission continues to operate in an environment of financial constraint and uncertainty and is required to effectively manage the upward pressure from its staffing costs. To do so has involved a reduction in staff numbers over the past number of years and this continued into 2016-17.

The Commission has been able to do this through the management of flexible working arrangements, natural wastage and facilitating where practicable voluntary exit. Due to the increasing pressure on the Commission resulting from continuing budget reductions and, in particular, the 9% budget reduction in its opening resource position for 2016-17, the risk rating in this area has been increased.

I am satisfied that the controls in place to manage risks for which I am responsible are appropriate. They provide reasonable assurance that the risk will not occur or if it does occur that it will be detected and corrected in sufficient time to reduce the impact of the risk to tolerable or negligible levels.

Review of Effectiveness

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors and the executive managers within the Commission who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, and comments made by the Northern Ireland Audit Office in its Report to those charged with Governance.

I have been advised on the implications of the result of my review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control by the Commission and its Audit and Risk Committee.

The Commission's internal audit service submits reports on its work, which include the Head of Internal Audit's independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Commission's system of internal control together with recommendations for improvement.

The Commission receives quarterly reports on finance, staffing and progress against business plan targets. Minutes of each Audit and Risk Committee are presented and regular reports from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee and the Chief Executive are provided. The Commission formally approves the Corporate Risk Register at six monthly intervals and is advised on emerging risks and 'near misses'.

An assurance map has been prepared, outlining the scope and levels of assurance received and the different types and levels of data used by the Commission to undertake its governance responsibilities. A Quarterly Stewardship report provided by the Accounting Officer is considered at each Audit and Risk Committee.

The Commission considers that the information provided is sufficient to enable it to effectively discharge its strategic planning and governance responsibilities.

In January 2017 the Audit and Risk Committee undertook a self-assessment of its operations against the good practice checklist published by the National Audit Office in January 2012. The assessment, which was facilitated by the Head of Internal audit, recorded a high level of adherence to good practice.

In May 2016 internal audit completed a Review of Board and Committee Effectiveness. The report recorded substantial assurance. During 2016-17 a review of Board effectiveness was initiated. A draft report has been prepared for consideration by the Commission.

Significant internal control issues

In January 2016 the Commission requested retrospective approval for pay awards made to the Chief Commissioner during the period 2012 to 2015. The Department of Finance (DOF) has recently confirmed that retrospective approval has not been granted. Total costs incurred in respect of these unapproved pay awards up to 31 March 2017 are £15,243. Furthermore the Chief Commissioner has not received a pay increase since 2014-15 and an amount of £4,272 has been accrued for salary costs in relation to back pay owed to the Chief Commissioner for further pay awards in 2015-16 and 2016-17. Steps will be taken during 2017-18 to regularise the position.

Retrospective approval was also requested for renewing the lease of Equality House until 2021, beyond the 31 July 2016 mid-term break point. Retrospective approval has now been granted.

The background features a large blue triangle on the left side, a pink diamond shape in the center, and a lime green triangle on the right side. The shapes are separated by white lines.

Remuneration Report

Remuneration Policy

The Minister of Finance approves the pay remit for Senior Civil Service (SCS) staff. The SCS remuneration arrangements are based on a system of pay scales for each SCS grade containing a number of pay points from minima to maxima, allowing progression towards the maxima based on performance. In 2012, upon creation, there were 11 points on each scale. The minimum point has been removed in each year from 2014 to 2016 (the scales now have 8 pay points) to allow progression through the pay scales within a reasonable period of time.

Service Contracts

Commission staff appointments are made in accordance with the Commission's Recruitment Policy which requires appointment to be on merit on the basis of fair and open competition but also includes the circumstances when appointments may otherwise be made.

Unless otherwise stated below, the staff covered by this report hold appointments which are open-ended. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in the individual receiving compensation as set out in the Civil Service Compensation Scheme.

Commission members are appointed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland following open competition.

Salary and pension entitlements

The following sections provide details of the remuneration and pension interests of the Commissioners and the most senior management of the Commission.

Remuneration (including salary) and pension entitlements (Audited Information)

Commissioners

Commissioner	2016-2017						2015-2016					
	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (£'000)**	Total (£'000)	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (£'000)**	Total (£'000)		
Michael Wardlow Chief Commissioner	55-60 (FTE 70-75)	0	0	22	80-85 (FTE 95-100)	55-60 (FTE 70-75)	0	0	27	85-90 (FTE 100- 105)		
Fidelma Carolan (to 7 November 2016)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0-5		
Milton Kerr (to 7 November 2016)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0-5		
Stephen McIveen (to 7 November 2016)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0-5		
Liam Maskey (to 7 November 2016)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0-5		

Commissioner	2016-2017							2015-2016						
	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (£'000)**	Total (£'000)	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (£'000)**	Total (£'000)	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (£'000)**
Dr Lesley Carroll Deputy Chief Commissioner (from 1 June 2016)	5-10	0	0	0	5-10	5-10	0	0	5-10	0	0	0	0	5-10
Deborah Donnelly	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0-5
Hazel Francey	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0-5
Judith Gillespie	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0-5
William McKee	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0-5
Joseph McVey	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0-5
Robin Mullan	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0-5
William Gamble	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0-5
Tom Hartley	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0-5
Geraldine McGahey	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0-5

Remuneration (including salary) and pension entitlements (Audited Information)

Commissioners

Commissioner	2016-2017					2015-2016				
	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (£'000)**	Total (£'000)	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (£'000)**	Total (£'000)
David Rose	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0-5
Duane Farrell (from 8 November 2016)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0
Helen Ferguson (from 8 November 2016)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0
Jarlath Kearney (from 8 November 2016)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0
Eileen Chan-Hu (from 8 November 2016)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0

Remuneration (including salary) and pension entitlements (Audited Information)

Senior Management

Official	2016-2017						2015-2016					
	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (£'000)**	Total (£'000)	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (£'000)**	Total (£'000)		
Evelyn Collins Chief Executive	75-80	0	0	14	90-95	75-80	0	0	17	95-100		
Keith Brown Head of Corporate Services	60-65	0	0	12	75-80	60-65	0	0	13	75-80		
Eileen Lavery Head of Legal, Policy and Research	60-65	0	0	11	75-80	60-65	0	0	13	75-80		

* The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) plus (the real increase in any lump sum) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increases include increases due to inflation and any increase or decreases due to a transfer of pension rights.

Fair Pay Review Disclosure

	2016 £	2015 £
Band of Highest Paid Employee - Chief Executive	75,000 – 80,000	75,000 – 80,000
Median Other Staff Remuneration	31,135	30,081
Ratio	2.5	2.6

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest paid employee in the organisation and the median remuneration of the Commission's workforce.

The banded remuneration of the highest paid employee in the Commission in the financial year 2016/2017 was £75,000 to £80,000 (2015/2016 was £75,000 to £80,000). This was 2.5 times (2015/16, 2.6 times) the median remuneration of the workforce, which was £31,135 (2015/16, £30,081).

Salary

'Salary' includes gross salary; overtime; reserved rights to London weighting or London allowances; recruitment and retention allowances; private office allowances and any other allowance to the extent that it is subject to UK taxation and any gratia payments.

Benefits in kind

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any benefits provided by the employer and treated by HM Revenue and Customs as a taxable emolument. No benefits in kind were paid to Commissioners or staff during this period.

Bonuses

Bonuses for staff are based on performance levels attained and are made as part of the appraisal process. Bonuses relate to the performance in the year in which they become payable to the individual. The bonuses reported in 2016-2017 relate to performance in 2016-2017 and the comparative bonuses reported for 2015-2016 relate to the performance in 2015-2016.

No bonus payments were paid to Commissioners in these years.

No other employee received more than the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer in either year.

Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance related pay, benefits-in-kind as well as severance payments. It does not include employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

Pension Benefits (Audited Information)

	Accrued pension at age 60 as at 31/03/17 and related lump sum £'000	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at age 60 £'000	CETV at 31/3/17	CETV at 31/3/16	Real increase in CETV
Michael Wardlow Chief Commissioner	10-15 plus lump sum 0	0-2.5 plus lump sum 0	286	254	19
Evelyn Collins Chief Executive	30-35 plus lump sum 100-105	0-2.5 plus lump sum 2.5-5	757	710	14
Keith Brown Head of Corporate and Legal Services	20-25 plus lump sum 65-70	0-2.5 plus lump sum 0-2.5	532	517	12
Eileen Lavery Head of Policy, Research and Compliance	30-35 plus lump sum 90-95	0-2.5 plus lump sum 0-2.5	688	672	11

The Equality Commission made no employer contributions to a Partnership Pension Account for any of the above.

Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Pension arrangements

Pension benefits are provided through the Northern Ireland Civil Service pension schemes which are administered by Civil Service Pensions (CSP).

Staff in post prior to 30 July 2007 may be in one of three statutory based 'final salary' defined benefit arrangements (classic, premium and classic plus). These arrangements are unfunded with the cost of benefits met by monies voted by the Assembly each year.

From April 2011 pensions payable under classic, premium and classic plus are reviewed annually in line with changes in the cost of living. Prior to 2011, pensions were reviewed in line with changes in the Retail Prices Index (RPI). New entrants joining on or after 1 October 2002 and before 30 July 2007 could choose between membership of premium or joining a good quality 'money purchase' stakeholder arrangement with a significant employer contribution (partnership pension account).

New entrants joining on or after 30 July 2007 were eligible for membership of the nuvos arrangement or they could have opted for a partnership pension account. Nuvos is a 'Career Average Revalued Earnings' (CARE) arrangement in which members accrue pension benefits at a percentage rate of annual pensionable earnings throughout the period of the scheme membership. The current rate is 2.3%. CARE pension benefits are reviewed annually in line with changes in the cost of living.

A new pension scheme, alpha, was introduced for new entrants from 1 April 2015. The majority of existing members of the NICS pension arrangements have also moved to alpha from that date. Members who on 1 April 2012 were within 10 years of their normal pension age will not move to alpha and those who were within 13.5 years and 10 years of the normal pension age were given a choice between moving to alpha on 1 April 2015 or at a later date determined by their age. Alpha is also a 'Career Average Revalued Earnings' (CARE) arrangement in which members accrue pension benefits at a percentage rate of annual pensionable earnings throughout the period of scheme membership. The rate will be 2.32%. CARE pension benefits are reviewed annually in line with changes in the cost of living.

Increases to public service pensions are the responsibility of HM Treasury. Pensions are reviewed each year in line with the cost of living. Any applicable increases are applied from April and are determined by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) figure for the preceding September. The CPI in September 2016 was 1% and HM Treasury has announced that public service pensions will be increased accordingly from April 2017.

Employee contribution rates for all members from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 are as follows:

Scheme Year 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

Annualised rate of Pensionable Earnings (Salary Bands)		Contribution rates - Classic members or classic members who moved into alpha	Contribution rates - All other members
From	To	From 01 April 2017 to 31 March 2018	From 01 April 2017 to 31 March 2018
£0	£15,000.99	4.6%	4.6%
£15,001.00	£21,422.99	4.6%	4.6%
£21,423.00	£51,005.99	5.45%	5.45%
£51,006.00	£150,000.99	7.35%	7.35%
£150,001.00 and above		8.05%	8.05%

Benefits in classic accrue at the rate of 1/80th of pensionable salary for each year of service. In addition, a lump sum equivalent to three years' pension is payable on retirement. For premium, benefits accrue at the rate of 1/60th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. Unlike classic, there is no automatic lump sum (but members may give up (commute) some of their pension to provide a lump sum). Classic plus is essentially a variation of premium, but with benefits in respect of service before 1 October 2002 calculated broadly as per classic.

The partnership pension account is a stakeholder pension arrangement. The employer makes a basic contribution of between 8% and 14.75% (depending on the age of the member) into a stakeholder pension product chosen by the employee. The employee does not have to contribute but where they do make contributions, the employer will match these up to a limit of 3% of pensionable salary (in addition to the employer's basic contribution). Employers also contribute a further 0.5% of pensionable salary to cover the cost of centrally-provided risk benefit cover (death in service and ill health retirement).

The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach pension age, or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the scheme if they are at or over pension age. Pension age is 60 for members of **classic**, **premium**, and **classic plus** and 65 for members of **nuvos**. The normal pension age in alpha is linked to the member's State Pension Age but cannot be before age 65. Further details about the NICS pension schemes can be found at the website www.finance-ni.gov.uk/topics/working-northern-ireland-civil-service/civil-service-pensions-ni.

Cash Equivalent Transfer Values

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pensions benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies. The CETV figures, and from 2003-04 the other pension details, include the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement which the individual has transferred to the NICS pension arrangements. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their purchasing additional years of pension service in the scheme at their own cost.

CETVs are calculated in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 and do not take account of any actual or potential benefits resulting from Lifetime Allowance Tax which may be due when pension benefits are taken.

Real increase in CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV effectively funded by the employer. It does include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation and contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.

However, the real increase calculation uses common actuarial factors at the start and end of the period so that it disregards the effect of any changes in factors and focuses only on the increase that is funded by the employer.

Compensation for Loss of Office

Redundancy and other departure costs have been paid in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (Northern Ireland), a statutory scheme made under the Superannuation (Northern Ireland) Order 1972. Exit costs are accounted for in full in the year of departure. Where the NDPB has agreed early retirements, the additional costs are met by the NDPB and not by the Civil Service pension scheme. Ill-health retirement costs are met by the pension scheme and are not included in the table.

Exit package cost band	Number of compulsory redundancies	Number of other departures agreed	Total number of exit packages by cost band
<£10,000	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
£10,000 - £25,000	0	3 (5)	3 (5)
£25,000 - £50,000	0	1 (3)	1 (3)
£50,000 - £100,000	0	1 (0)	1 (0)
£100,000 - £150,000	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
£150,000 - £200,000	0	0 (0)	0 (0)
Total number of exit packages	0	5 (8)	5 (8)
Total resource cost/£	0	145,907 (204,527)	145,907 (204,527)

Staff Report

Staff and Commissioner costs comprise:

	Commissioners	Permanently employed staff	Others	2016-17 Total	2015-16 Total
		£	£	£	£
Wages and Salaries	141,039	2,827,072	70,295	3,038,406	3,189,531
Social security costs	7,844	288,161	2,872	298,877	231,460
Other pension costs	16,491	643,935	7,222	667,648	698,983
Severance	0	145,907	0	145,907	204,528
Total net costs	165,374	3,905,075	80,389	4,150,838	4,324,502

Pension Disclosure

The Northern Ireland Civil Service pension schemes are unfunded multi-employer defined benefit schemes but the Equality Commission is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities. The most up-to-date actuarial valuation was carried out as at 31 March 2012. This valuation is then reviewed by the Scheme Actuary and updated to reflect current conditions and rolled forward to the reporting date of the DoF Superannuation and Other Allowances Annual Report and Accounts as at 31 March 2017.

For 2016/2017, employer's contributions of £667,648 were payable to the NICS pension arrangements (2015/2016 £698,983) at one of three rates in the range 20.8% to 26.3% of pensionable pay, based on salary bands. The scheme's Actuary reviews employer contributions

every four years following a full scheme valuation. A new scheme funding valuation based on data as at 31 March 2012 was completed by the Actuary during 2014-15. This valuation was used to determine employer contribution rates for the introduction of alpha from April 2015. For 2017-18, the rates will range from 20.8% to 26.3%. The contribution rates are set to meet the cost of the benefits accruing during 2016-17 to be paid when the member retires, and not the benefits paid during this period to existing pensioners.

Employees can opt to open a partnership pension account, a stakeholder pension with an employer contribution. No such employer contributions were made in this year.

Average number of persons employed

			2016-17	2015-16
Number	Permanently employed staff	Others	Total	Total
Directly employed	84	1	85	93
Other	0	2	2	1
Total	84	3	87	94

The average number of whole-time persons employed during the year was as follows:

Staff Composition (not wte)

The following table provides the gender composition of Equality Commission staff at 1 January 2017.

Grade	M	F	Total
Senior Civil Service	0	1	1
Other Staff	31	63	94
Total	31	64	95

The following table provides a breakdown of Commission staff by community background.

Grade	P	RC	ND*	Total
Senior Mgt Team	2 (66.6%)	1 (33.3%)	0	3
All Staff	36 [37.9%]	59 [62.1%]	0	95

Due to voluntary exits occurring in the intervening period, there has been a further reduction in the number of employees from 100 in January 2016 to 95 in January 2017. All 5 leavers were due to Voluntary Exit.

Overall, the number of Protestant employees fell by one and the number of Roman Catholics by three. The community background of one employee who left could not be determined. The table below summarises the changes in the community composition of the Commission's workforce over the past five years.

Year (1 January)	P		RC		ND*	Total
	No.	[%]	No.	[%]	No.	No.
2013	46	[33.8]	90	[66.2]	4	140
2014	43	[33.9]	84	[66.1]	3	130
2015	44	[35.8]	79	[64.2]	3	126
2016	37	[37.4]	62	[62.6]	1	100
2017	36	[37.9]	59	[62.1]	0	95

* Community background could not be determined

Managing Attendance and Sickness Absence

The Commission's arrangements for the payment of Statutory Sick Pay and the monitoring and management of attendance are based on those in operation in the Northern Ireland Civil Service. The Commission has a Managing Attendance Policy and provides training to managers and other staff on its operation.

The Commission's number of average days lost in 2016-17 was 6.2 days, a decrease on last year's 8.2 days. Of the 6.2 days lost, 2.7 related to long-term absence (more than 20 days) and 3.5 to short-term absence (20 days or less). This compares to an equivalent 4.1 days for long and 4.1 days for short-term absence last year.

During the year no staff retired early on grounds of ill health.

Equality of Opportunity and Human Rights

The Commission is committed to the provision of equality of opportunity and fair participation to all persons regardless of sex, marital status, religious belief, political affiliation/opinion, age, family status, ethnic or racial background, sexual orientation, disability, nationality or trade union membership.

As an employer we recognise that ensuring equality in employment and eliminating workplace discrimination and harassment are essential for developing a diverse workforce, attracting high calibre employees and maximising performance. In line with this commitment, the Commission has developed its employment equality policies and practices in accordance with the requirements of each of the equality and anti-discrimination laws in Northern Ireland and with the good practice recommendations of the Equality Codes of Practice.

Almost one quarter of the Commission's employees report having a disability or long-term health condition at some time. The Commission provides a range of reasonable adjustments to facilitate such employees, including amending job criteria and duties and offering guaranteed interviews, in appropriate circumstances, when recruiting or promoting, providing flexible working arrangements, access to training, work station assessments and adaptations. The Commission also provides adjustments for clients and customers.

Employee Involvement

The Commission encourages widespread consultation and exchange of information at all levels.

This is implemented through staff briefings and the involvement of staff representatives on a Joint Consultative and Negotiating Committee. Staff are involved in key working groups dealing with business improvement and accreditation projects, equal opportunities, health and safety and corporate social responsibility.

Expenditure on Consultancy

There was no expenditure on consultancy in 2016-17 or in the previous year.

Off Payroll Engagements

There were no off payroll engagements.

Exit Packages

Information on the use of exit packages is set out in the remuneration report.

Assembly Accountability and Audit report

Assembly Accountability Disclosure Notes

i) Losses and special payments (Audited)

Losses Statement

	2016-17	2015-16
	£	£
Total number of losses	Nil	Nil
Total value of losses (£000)	Nil	Nil
Details of losses over £250,000	Nil	Nil
Cash losses	Nil	Nil
Claims abandoned	Nil	Nil
Administrative write-offs	Nil	Nil
Special Payments		
	2016-17	2015-16
Total number of special payments	Nil	2
	£	£
Total value of special payments	Nil	5,950

There were no special payments over £250,000.

Other notes

ii Fees and Charges (Audited)

There were no fees and charges for the reuse of any information the Commission holds.

iii Remote Contingent Liabilities (Audited)

The Commission has no known liabilities for which the likelihood of a transfer of economic benefit in settlement is too remote to meet the definition of contingent liability.

Signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Evelyn Collins', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Evelyn Collins CBE
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
28 June 2017

THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland for the year ended 31 March 2017 under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The financial statements comprise: the Statements of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Financial Position, Cash Flows, Changes in Taxpayers' Equity and the related notes. These financial statements have been prepared under the accounting policies set out within them. I have also audited the information in the Remuneration and Staff Report and the Assembly Accountability Disclosures that is described in that report and disclosures as having been audited.

Respective responsibilities of the Accounting Officer and auditor

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities, the Accounting Officer is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view. My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998. I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require me and my staff to comply with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

Scope of the audit of the financial statements

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of: whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland; and the overall presentation of the financial statements. In addition I read all the financial and non-financial information in the Annual Report to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements and to identify any information that is apparently materially incorrect based on, or materially inconsistent with, the knowledge acquired by me in the course of performing the audit. If I become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies I consider the implications for my certificate.

I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Opinion on financial statements

In my opinion:

- the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's affairs as at 31 March 2017 and of the net expenditure for the year then ended; and
- the financial statements have been properly prepared in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and The Executive Office directions issued thereunder.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion:

- the parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report and the Assembly Accountability Disclosures to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with The Executive Office directions made under the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
- the information given in Performance Report and Assembly Accountability Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

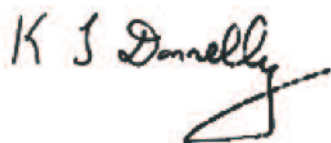
Matters on which I report by exception

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report and Assembly Accountability Disclosures to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with Department of Finance's guidance.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.



KJ Donnelly
Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
Belfast
BT7 1EU

29 June 2017



Financial Statements 2016-2017

Financial Statements

for the 12 months ended
31 March 2017

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2017

This account summarises the expenditure and income generated and consumed on an accrual basis. It also includes other comprehensive income and expenditure, which include changes to the values of non-current assets and other financial instruments that cannot yet be recognised as income and expenditure.

		2016-17	2015-16
	Note	£	£
Income			
Income from Activities	5	411,736	263,624
Total Operating Income		411,736	263,624
Expenditure			
Staff and Commissioners' Costs	2 & 3	(4,150,838)	(4,324,502)
Depreciation	6	(78,726)	(61,400)
Amortisation	7	(25,378)	(17,367)
Provision Expense	12	53,077	(39,494)
Other Expenditure	4	(1,694,391)	(1,534,042)
Total Operating Expenditure		(5,896,256)	(5,976,805)
Net Operating Expenditure		(5,484,520)	(5,713,181)
Finance Income/Expense		0	0
Net Expenditure		(5,484,520)	(5,713,181)
Other Comprehensive Net Expenditure			
	Note	2016-17	2015-16
Items that will not be reclassified to net operating expenditure:			
Net gain on revaluation of Plant and Equipment	6	4,353	1,573
Total Comprehensive Expenditure for the year		(5,480,167)	(5,711,608)

The notes on pages 74 to 86 form part of these accounts.

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2017

This statement presents the financial position of the Equality Commission for NI. It comprises three main components: assets owned or controlled; liabilities owed to other bodies; and equity, the remaining value of the entity.

	Note	2017 £	2016 £
Non-current assets:			
Plant and equipment	6	281,551	331,955
Intangible assets	7	160,706	64,026
Total non-current assets		442,257	395,981
Current assets:			
Trade and other receivables	10	106,245	87,735
Cash and cash equivalents	9	78,953	136,365
Total current assets		185,198	224,100
Total assets		627,455	620,081
Current liabilities (<1 year)			
Trade and other payables	11	(324,353)	(371,735)
Other liabilities		Nil	Nil
Total current liabilities		(324,353)	(371,735)
Total assets less current liabilities		303,102	248,346
Non-current liabilities (>1 year)			
Provisions	12	(77,012)	(130,089)
Other payables		Nil	Nil
Total non-current liabilities		(77,012)	(130,089)
Total assets less total liabilities		226,090	118,257
Taxpayers' equity			
Revaluation reserve		52,478	48,125
SoCNE reserve		173,612	70,132
		226,090	118,257

The financial statements on pages 70 to 86 were approved by the Commission on 28 June 2017 and were signed on its behalf by;



[Signed] Evelyn Collins CBE, Accounting Officer and Chief Executive
The notes on pages 74 to 86 form part of these accounts.

Statement of Cash Flows

for the year ended 31 March 2017

The statement of Cash Flows shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Commission during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Commission generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of service costs and the extent to which these operations are funded by way of income from the recipients of services provided by the Commission. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash inflows and outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Commission's future public service delivery.

	Note	2016-17 £	2015-16 £
Cash Flows from operating activities			
Net Expenditure		(5,484,520)	(5,713,181)
Adjustments for non-cash transactions			
Depreciation	6	78,726	61,400
Amortisation	7	25,378	17,367
(Increase)/Decrease in trade and other receivables	10	(18,510)	(10,243)
Increase/(Decrease) in trade payables	11	(47,382)	102,535
Increase/(Decrease) in provisions	12	(53,077)	39,494
Net cash outflow from operating activities		<u>(5,499,385)</u>	<u>(5,502,628)</u>
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of plant and equipment	6	(23,969)	(164,335)
Purchase of intangible assets	7	(122,058)	(33,052)
Net cash outflow from investing activities		<u>(146,027)</u>	<u>(197,387)</u>
Cash flows from financing activities			
Financing from TEO		<u>5,588,000</u>	<u>5,762,000</u>
Net financing		5,588,000	5,762,000
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents in the period	9	(57,412)	61,985
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period		136,365	74,380
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	9	<u>78,953</u>	<u>136,365</u>

The notes on pages 74 to 86 form part of these accounts.

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity

for the year ended 31 March 2017

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Commission analysed into 'general fund reserves' (i.e. those reserves that reflect a contribution from the Consolidated Fund). The Revaluation Reserve reflects the change in asset values that have not been recognised as income or expenditure. The SoCNE Reserve represents the total assets less liabilities of the Commission, to the extent that the total is not represented by other reserves and financing items.

	Reval Reserve	SoCNE Reserve	Total Reserves
Note	£	£	£
Balance at 31 March 2015	46,552	21,313	67,865
Changes in Taxpayers' Equity 2015-16			
Grant from TEO	0	5,762,000	5,762,000
Transfer between reserves			
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year	0	(5,713,181)	(5,713,181)
Movements in Reserves			
Additions			
Recognised in Statement of Comprehensive Expenditure	1,573	0	1,573
Balance at 31 March 2016	48,125	70,132	118,257
Changes in Taxpayers' Equity 2016-17			
Grant from TEO	0	5,588,000	5,588,000
Transfer between reserves			
Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year	0	(5,484,520)	(5,484,520)
Movements in Reserves			
Additions			
Recognised in Statement of Comprehensive Expenditure	4,353	0	4,353
Balance at 31 March 2017	52,478	173,612	226,090

The notes on pages 74 to 86 form part of these accounts.

Notes to the Accounts

1. Statement of accounting policies

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with paragraph 7(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the 2016-17 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by the Department of Finance (formerly Department of Finance and Personnel). The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be the most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Equality Commission for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by the Commission are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts.

1.1 Accounting convention

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention modified to account for the revaluation of property, and plant and equipment.

1.2 Non-current assets

Non-current assets are fully funded by The Executive Office.

Plant and equipment have been valued at historic cost revalued by indices published by the National Statistics Office. A capitalisation threshold of £500 has been applied.

Intangible assets (computer software and licences) are valued at historic cost.

1.3 Depreciation and Amortisation Rates

Depreciation and amortisation are provided on all non-current assets at rates calculated to write off the cost of each asset over its expected life with rates as follows:

IT Equipment	25-33%
Office Equipment	10-33%
Furniture	10%
Fixtures & Fittings	10-33%
Intangible Assets	25-33%

1.4 Inventories

The value of inventories of consumables is immaterial and the Commission does not attribute any value for inventories in the accounts.

1.5 Income

All income from operations is credited to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure. Income is based on full cost recovery of services provided.

1.6 Grant in Aid

Grant in Aid received, used to finance activities and expenditure which support the statutory and other objectives of the Commission, is treated as financing. It is credited to the SoCNE Reserve because it is regarded as contributions from a controlling party.

1.7 Leased Assets

Leases are classified as operating leases whenever the terms of the lease do not transfer substantially all the risks and benefits to the lessee. Rentals under operating leases are expensed to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure as incurred.

1.8 Financial Instruments

Financial assets and liabilities are recognised on the Statement of Financial Position when the Commission becomes a party to a contractual provision of the instrument.

The Commission's financial assets and liabilities are classified as Loans and Receivables and are held at cost which approximates to their fair value because of their short maturities.

1.9 Provisions

The Commission makes provision for liabilities and charges where, at the Statement of Financial Position date, a legal or constructive liability exists (that is a present obligation from past events exists), where the transfer of economic benefits is probable and a reasonable estimate can be made. IAS 37 requires that where the effect of the time value of money is material, the amount of a provision should be the present value of the expenditures expected to be required to settle the obligation. Where cash flows have been adjusted for risk the standard requires the use of a risk free discount rate.

1.10 Legal Fees

The Commission makes provision for expenditure authorised for legal assistance with letters of commitment to individuals before legal assistance is commissioned to an external provider.

1.11 Pensions

Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of Civil Service Pensions (NI). The CSP (NI) is a non-funded defined benefit scheme which produces its own resource accounts, but the Commission is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities.

The most up to date actuarial valuation was carried out as at 31 March 2012 and these details are available in the CSP (NI) resource accounts.

1.12 VAT

The Commission is not registered for VAT.

1.13 Staff Costs

Under IAS19, Employee Benefits legislation, all staff costs must be recorded as an expense as soon as an organisation is obligated to pay them. This includes the cost of any holiday pay and flexible time owed at the year end.

Notes to the Accounts

2. Statement of Operating Costs by Operating Segment

Under Schedule 8, paragraph 5 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Commission is required to give details of how resources have been divided between the functions previously exercised by the bodies dissolved at the time of its formation.

	Salaries & Associated Costs £	Programme Costs £	*Other Costs £	12 mths to 31/03/2017 Total £	Salaries & Associated Costs £	Programme Costs £	*Other Costs £	12 mths to 31/03/2016 Total £
Integrated/ New Areas	892,868	328,114	167,414	1,388,396	929,673	317,211	182,976	1,429,860
Disability	459,116	91,620	86,087	636,823	511,607	81,840	100,692	694,139
Religion & Politics	479,015	21,326	89,818	590,159	508,318	11,821	100,045	620,184
Gender	333,364	106,339	62,507	502,210	377,419	55,852	74,282	507,553
Race	236,512	40,166	44,347	321,075	256,743	79,185	50,531	386,459
Statutory Duty	313,392	26,182	58,763	398,337	325,032	15,866	63,971	404,869
Resources	816,048	0	153,015	969,063	751,901	49,867	145,974	947,742
Executive	309,242	0	57,984	367,226	297,565	0	58,566	356,131
Total Costs	3,839,557	613,747	719,935	5,173,239	3,958,258	611,642	777,037	5,346,937
Members Costs	165,374	0	0	165,374	161,716	0	0	161,716
Other Costs	145,907	0	0	145,907	204,528	0	0	204,528
Total	4,150,838	613,747	719,935	5,484,520	4,324,502	611,642	777,037	5,713,181

* Other costs include general administrative costs, premises and non-cash costs less income from activities.

Notes to the Accounts

	2016-17	2015-16
	£	£
Note		
Premises		
Rents	427,312	345,886
Rates	200,706	197,542
Service Charge	18,148	21,828
Fuel Charge	60,430	60,672
R&M Buildings	29,171	49,554
Facilities	124,160	101,078
	859,927	776,560
Programme		
Education & Advice	132,013	155,866
Legal Fees	356,278	333,113
Other	125,456	122,663
	613,747	611,642
	1,694,391	1,573,536
Non-cash Costs		
Depreciation	78,726	61,400
Amortisation	25,378	17,367
5. Income		
Source	2016-17	2015-16
	Total	Total
	£	£
Service Level Agreements	73,169	74,767
Accommodation	338,567	188,857
	411,736	263,624

All income is based on full cost recovery.

6.Plant and equipment

2016-17

	Information Technology £	Office Equipment £	Furniture £	Fixtures & Fittings £	Total £
Cost/Valuation					
At 1 April 2016	374,080	93,455	249,047	329,873	1,046,455
Additions	13,948	6,923	0	3,098	23,969
Disposals	(25,370)	0	0	0	(25,370)
Revaluations	5,928	3,177	5,977	2,639	17,721
At 31 March 2017	368,586	103,555	255,024	335,610	1,062,775
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2016	284,894	61,026	245,796	122,784	714,500
Charged in year	39,792	11,239	1,938	25,757	78,726
Disposals	(25,370)	0	0	0	(25,370)
Revaluations	4,412	2,075	5,899	982	13,368
At 31 March 2017	303,728	74,340	253,633	149,523	781,224
Carrying amount at 31 March 2017	64,858	29,215	1,391	186,087	281,551
Carrying amount at 31 March 2016	89,186	32,429	3,251	207,089	331,955
Asset Financing					
Owned	64,858	29,215	1,391	186,087	281,551
Finance lease	0	0	0	0	0
On-balance sheet	0	0	0	0	0
Carrying amount at 31 March 2017	64,858	29,215	1,391	186,087	281,551

Plant and equipment are revalued annually by reference to the indices issued by the Office for National Statistics for the different types of assets.

Notes to the Accounts

2015-16

	Information Technology	Office Equipment	Furniture	Fixtures & Fittings	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
Cost/Valuation					
At 1 April 2015	394,583	92,458	245,181	181,906	914,128
Additions	19,264	0	0	145,071	164,335
Disposals	(40,850)	0	0	0	(40,850)
Revaluations	1,083	997	3,866	2,896	8,842
At 31 March 2016	374,080	93,455	249,047	329,873	1,046,455
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2015	286,929	50,096	239,555	110,101	686,681
Charged in year	37,947	10,279	2,424	10,750	61,400
Disposals	(40,850)	0	0	0	(40,850)
Revaluations	868	651	3,817	1,933	7,269
At 31 March 2016	284,894	61,026	245,796	122,784	714,500
Carrying amount at 31 March 2016	89,186	32,429	3,251	207,089	331,955
Carrying amount at 31 March 2015	107,654	42,362	5,626	71,805	227,447
Asset Financing					
Owned	89,186	32,429	3,251	207,089	331,955
Finance lease	0	0	0	0	0
On-balance sheet	0	0	0	0	0
Carrying amount at 31 March 2016	89,186	32,429	3,251	207,089	331,955

Plant and equipment are revalued annually by reference to the indices issued by the Office for National Statistics for the different types of assets.

7. Intangible assets

Intangible assets comprise software and licences.

2016-17

	Information Technology	Software Licences	Total
Cost or Valuation			
At 1 April 2016	27,276	90,124	117,400
Additions	68,920	53,138	122,058
Disposals	0	0	0
At 31 March 2017	96,196	143,262	239,458
Amortisation			
At 1 April 2016	16,085	37,289	53,374
Charged in year	4,512	20,866	25,378
Disposals	0	0	0
At 31 March 2017	20,597	58,155	78,752
Carrying amount at 31 March 2017	75,599	85,107	160,706
Carrying amount at 31 March 2016	11,191	52,835	64,026
Asset financing:			
Owned	75,599	85,107	160,706
Finance Leased	0	0	0
Contracts	0	0	0
Carrying amount at 31 March 2017	75,599	85,107	160,706

Notes to the Accounts

2015-16

	Information Technology	Software Licences	Total
Cost or Valuation			
At 1 April 2015	26,976	121,095	148,071
Additions	7,200	25,852	33,052
Disposals	(6,900)	(56,823)	(63,723)
At 31 March 2016	27,276	90,124	117,400
Amortisation			
At 1 April 2015	18,611	81,119	99,730
Charged in year	4,374	12,993	17,367
Disposals	(6,900)	(56,823)	(63,723)
At 31 March 2016	16,085	37,289	53,374
Carrying amount at 31 March 2016	11,191	52,835	64,026
Carrying amount at 31 March 2015	8,365	39,976	48,341
Asset financing:			
Owned	0	0	0
Finance Leased	0	0	0
Contracts	11,191	52,835	64,026
Carrying amount at 31 March 2016	11,191	52,835	64,026

8. Financial Instruments

As the cash requirements of the Equality Commission are met through Grant-in-Aid provided by The Executive Office, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non-public sector body. The majority of financial instruments relate to contracts to buy non-financial items in line with the Commission's expected purchase and usage requirements and the Commission is therefore exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

9. Cash and cash equivalents

	2016-17	2015-16
	£	£
Balance at 1 April 2016	136,365	74,380
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances	(57,412)	61,985
Balance at 31 March 2017	<u>78,953</u>	<u>136,365</u>
The following balance at 31 March were held at:		
Government Banking Service	78,914	136,352
Cash In Hand	39	13
Balance at 31 March 2017	<u>78,953</u>	<u>136,365</u>

10. Trade receivables and other current assets

	2016-17	2015-16
	£	£
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Prepayments	76,222	78,946
Accrued Income	29,474	8,789
Other Receivables	549	0
	<u>106,245</u>	<u>87,735</u>

Notes to the Accounts

11. Trade payables and other current liabilities

	2016-17	2015-16
	£	£
Amounts falling due within one year		
Accruals and deferred Income	324,353	371,735
	<u>324,353</u>	<u>371,735</u>

12. Provisions for liabilities and charges

	2016-17	2015-16
	Legal Costs	Legal Costs
	£	£
Balance at 1 April 2016	130,089	90,595
Provided in the year	355,972	380,141
Provisions not required written back	(58,758)	(52,611)
Provisions utilised in the year	(350,291)	(288,036)
Balance at 31 March 2017	<u>77,012</u>	<u>130,089</u>

The Commission makes provision for expenditure authorised for legal assistance before it is committed to an external provider. It is not possible to determine the time period for each case.

13. Capital commitments

	2016-17	2015-16
Contracted capital commitments at 31 March 2017 not otherwise included in these financial statements		
Plant and equipment	0	0
Intangible assets	24,870	0
	<u>24,870</u>	<u>0</u>

14. Commitments under leases

14.1 Operating leases

Total future minimum lease payments under operating leases are given in the table below for each of the following periods.

	2016-17	2015-16
	£	£
Obligations under operating leases comprises:		
Buildings		
Not later than one year	450,240	336,000
Later than one year and not later than five years	1,500,650	1,344,000
Later than five years	0	112,000
Other:		
Not later than one year	4,421	4,421
Later than one year and not later than five years	8,841	13,262
Later than five years	0	0

14.2 Finance Leases

The Commission had no commitments under finance leases

15. Other financial commitments

The Commission had no other financial commitments at 31 March 2017.

16. Contingent liabilities disclosed under IAS 37

The Commission has no known contingent liabilities.

Notes to the Accounts

17. Related-party transactions

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Executive Office (TEO). TEO is regarded as a related party with which the Commission has had various material transactions during the year.

In addition, the Commission has had various material transactions with other central government bodies:

- TEO
(£5,588,000 of which £ Nil was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Northern Ireland Commission for Children and Young People
(£130,980 of which £ Nil was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Commission for Victims and Survivors
(£69,935 of which £13 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
(£13,347 of which £ Nil was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Commissioner for Older People Northern Ireland
(£96,533 of which £446 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission
(£700 of which £ Nil was outstanding at the year-end),
- The Community Relations Council for Northern Ireland
(£103,155 of which £89 was outstanding at the year-end).

No Commissioner or key management executive has undertaken any material transactions with the Equality Commission during the year.

There were no other related-party transactions.

18. Third-party assets

The Commission has no third-party assets.

19. Events after the Reporting Period

There were no events after the reporting period impacting on these statements.

Date of authorisation for issue

The Accounting Officer authorised the issue of these financial statements on 29 June 2017.

Notes

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Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

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