



EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2019 – 2020

HC 591

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Annual Report and Accounts 2019 - 2020

Laid before the Houses of Parliament
by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
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Report and Accounts of Equality Commission for Northern Ireland



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Contents

	Page
Chief Commissioner's Foreword	iv
Annual Report 2019 - 2020	
1. Performance Report	
1.1 Overview	1
1.2 Performance Analysis	12
2. Accountability Report	
2.1 Corporate Governance Report	28
2.1.1 Directors Report	28
2.1.2 Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities	32
2.1.3 Governance Statement	33
2.2 Remuneration and Staff Report	47
2.2.1 Remuneration Report	47
2.2.2 Staff Report	61
2.3 Assembly Accountability and Audit report	66
Financial Statements 2019 - 2020	
Financial Statements and Notes to the Accounts	71
Appendix 1	
Performance Delivery against planned objectives 2019 -20	89

Chief Commissioner's Foreword

It is my great privilege to write this, my first, foreword as Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission.

I was delighted when I was appointed to this role on 1 March 2020, full of excitement for the term ahead and keen to build on my experiences as a Commissioner and then Deputy Chief Commissioner.

I was also very conscious of the high standard set for me by the outgoing Chief Commissioner Dr Michael Wardlow. Michael had undertaken this role for eight years and his commitment, passion and leadership had touched us all. He left us with our deepest gratitude and best wishes for his future endeavours.

My appointment was at a time of exceptional change amongst the Commission itself, as terms of office ended for Deputy Chief Commissioner Lesley Carroll, Commissioners Eileen Chan-Hu, Debbie Donnelly, Billy Gamble, Judith Gillespie, Robin Mullan and David Rose through the year. I would like to take the opportunity to wish our former colleagues well and to thank them for their unstinted commitment and hard work.

Five Commissioners were reappointed during the year. We also welcomed seven new Commissioners and our new Deputy Chief Commissioner Neil Anderson. I look forward to working with them all. I am determined to carry on the good work of former colleagues and to build on the achievements clearly demonstrated in this annual report, which demonstrates another successful year, as we developed and refined our outcomes based accountability framework.

Only a few short weeks into my term, the Covid-19 pandemic stopped us all in our tracks. Our whole society faces unprecedented and difficult challenges, where extraordinary measures have been put in place to safeguard our health and seek to minimise the impact on the economy. The actions of political and business leaders now are vital to both protect lives and livelihoods and also to protect the future of our society for the next generation.

For the Commission, we adapted quickly to the situation, facilitating staff working from home to safeguard their health and safety and that of our customers and stakeholders. Our services continued uninterrupted providing advice and support to employers, service providers and public authorities and to provide advice to individuals on potential complaints of discrimination, including complaints arising out of treatment relating to this pandemic.

Undoubtedly we will be living with the impact of Covid-19 for many years.

Our vision for **equality for all** has never been so important, equality matters to the future of each and every person in our society. Identification and consideration of equality issues is vital in all the responses to the pandemic and the existing framework of equality duties must be central in decision-making during this difficult time.

It is already evident that there are differential impacts of Covid-19; the potential direct or indirect risk for particular equality groups including the potential adverse impacts of job loss for some, of isolation for others, and of home schooling for some children including in particular disabled people. There have been significant impacts on older people bringing the issue of age discrimination into sharp focus.

There have been, and will continue to be, many changes to the way we all live and work. These will present new, and potentially difficult, challenges within the workplace that will require new approaches to ensure that fair employment practices and equality of opportunity are adequately underpinned.

It is also inevitable that there will be significant exacerbation of existing inequalities, and the emergence of new ones, across society. The gaps in adequately disaggregated data across the various equality groupings or characteristics need to be addressed to enable better understanding and tracking of these inequalities.

To meet the challenges, it is important that we see political commitment to progressing the various equality priorities included in **New Decade New Approach**, published in January 2020.

It is my fervent hope that the growing gap between equality legislation and protections afforded in the rest of the United Kingdom and those in Northern Ireland will now be addressed. In particular, as highlighted by the emerging evidence of the current pandemic, it is now time to revisit the introduction of protection against age discrimination when accessing goods, facilities and services, including health and social care. The Executive must progress this.

Whilst I look forward to working alongside the restored Executive, Assembly and Assembly Committees to ensure these are progressed, I also recognise the important role the Commission has to challenge discrimination and to champion equality. I am determined to do this independently and robustly.

Finally, in commending this report to you, I would wish to acknowledge the leadership, diligence and commitment of Evelyn Collins and her team and on behalf of all Commissioners and myself I would formally thank them all for their hard work, dedication and resilience over the past year.

Geraldine McGahey OBE
Chief Commissioner

Performance Report

1.1 Overview

The purpose of this Performance Report 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 2019 -20, including the challenges and key risks it has faced in delivering its main objectives and strategies; and a brief overview of the likely developments and challenges it faces in the coming year.

Statutory Purpose and activities of the Commission

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

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 all of its 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; and
- Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2006, as amended.

Organisational structure, objectives and strategies

To deliver its statutory obligations the Commission sets out its approach in three-yearly corporate plans and in annual business plans. These are approved by the Executive Office and published on the Commission's website.

Following extensive consultation with a wide range of key stakeholders during 2018 and 2019, the Commission published a new Corporate Plan covering the period 2019-2022 in June 2019.

The areas that we have prioritised over the coming period were derived from; our statutory remit, evidence of persistent inequality arising through our work over recent years on key inequalities and evidence from our day to day work - across legal, advice, policy, research, investigations, and communications and from the consultative feedback received.

We identified four areas as strategic priorities for our work over the period 2019 – 2022: Employment; Education; Access and Participation; and Mainstreaming and Championing Equality, with specific areas of focus in each. Each of these areas are linked both to draft Programme for Government (PfG) population outcomes and to our statutory responsibilities, ongoing work programmes and core business objectives.

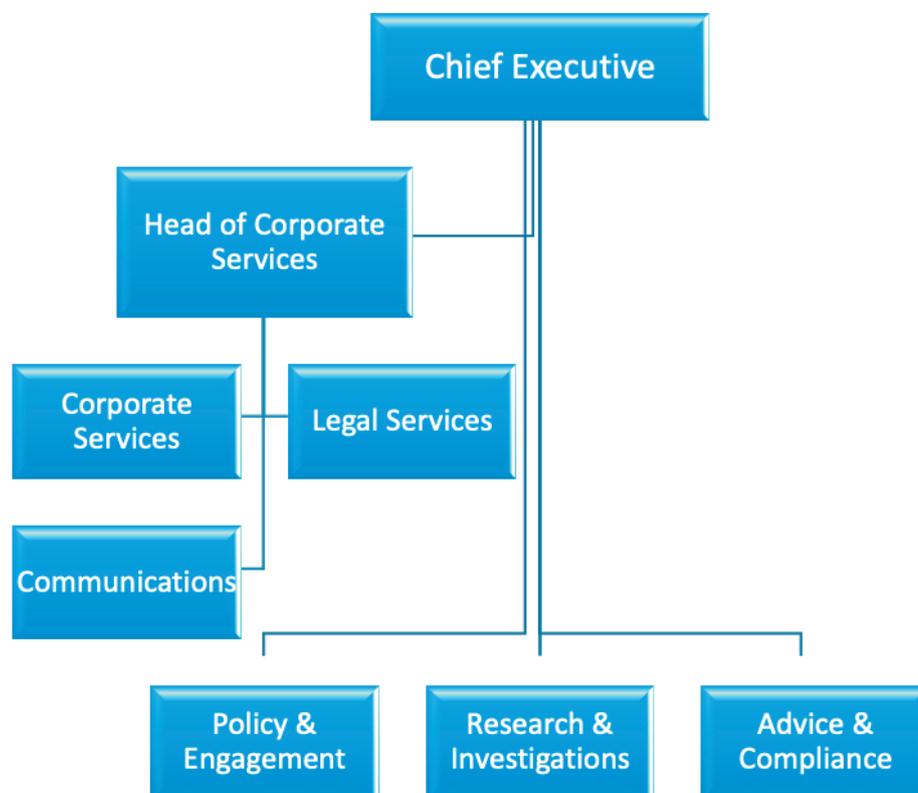
This is the first Corporate Plan for which the Commission has taken an Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) approach to the development of performance measures, following the lead set by the Executive in its draft PfG. This Plan sets out a high-level framework. It will be kept under review and further developed throughout its timespan and it will be supported by detailed annual business plans, evaluation, review and communication. Further development of our approach to OBA and our annual business plans will reflect and take account of new developments and changes in the wider environment.

Our aim is to focus the organisation on making a difference, on improving the lives of those we serve, and on identifying and measuring those actions that are most likely to effect and sustain change in the longer term. Central to this is the need for the development of clearer equality indicators aligned to the PfG, addressing data gaps and extending disaggregation of data by section 75 equality groups.

To deliver its objectives the Commission is structured into six Directorates:

- Advice and Compliance;
- Communications;
- Legal Services;
- Policy and Engagement;
- Research and Investigations; and
- Corporate Services.

Organisation Structure Chart



Successive years of budget reductions and consequent reduced staffing levels have required the Commission to prioritise the areas that we can work on to best achieve change. Difficult choices have had to be made and, in the course of planning for the three year period of the Corporate Plan, we have reviewed the choices we have made in light of the views of key stakeholders and potential partners for change over the period. We will continue to do so.

The financial environment is not the only factor that creates a challenge for the Commission and the delivery of our objectives. Even the most cursory scanning of the horizon within which we are setting out to deliver this Plan indicates that the wider political and policy environment, although much improved with the restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive in January 2020, will not be an easy one.

The absence of an Executive between 2017 and early 2020 impacted on the making of necessary and important changes to the legal framework for promoting equality of opportunity and combating discrimination. It also meant considerable delay in progressing a range of public policies to advance equality in Northern Ireland. Whereas once key aspects of equality legislation in Northern Ireland were leading the way in securing protections, over recent years, particularly with the development of the 2010 Equality Act in the rest of the UK, Northern Ireland's legislation has failed to keep pace with newer developments.

The Commission has welcomed the commitments to effect significant changes to the legal and public policy framework set out in New Decade, New Approach and the Executive's recommitment to an agreed PfG. As an Arm's Length Body, operating with specific powers and duties derived from statute, we seek both to support the delivery of the Executive's PfG and to challenge the Executive in relation to the achievement of PfG outcomes where relevant to advancing equality.

There remains uncertainty as to the precise form the UK's exit from the European Union will take, including as to the impact of this on Northern Ireland. Irrespective of the outcome, the Commission will continue to play an important role in promoting equality of opportunity and good relations, in terms of the delivery of our statutory responsibilities.

It will also continue with its challenge role, seeking to ensure the Government's commitment to no diminution of equality rights is delivered in practice. We will also want to see that any negative effects of Brexit are mitigated, particularly in respect of withdrawal of EU funding, the potential for increased racism, and uncertainty for EU workers and their employers in key sectors of the economy.

Under the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020, together with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC), the Equality Commission will form a key part of the 'dedicated mechanisms'. This is to ensure there is no diminution of the rights, standards and equality of opportunity as set out in the 'Rights, Standards and Equality of Opportunity' chapter of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement 1998 in Northern Ireland, resulting from the UK's withdrawal from the EU. This will include in the area of protection against discrimination enshrined in the provisions of EU law in Annex 1 of the Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland.

Discussions with the Northern Ireland Office, concerning the timing and resourcing of the 'dedicated mechanisms role', are ongoing.

Most recently, in March 2020, there has been the Covid-19 pandemic, whose effects have impacted and will continue to impact our work over the period of the Commission's Corporate Plan. The Commission is reviewing its draft Business Plan 2020-21, to ensure that it is fit for purpose in the context of the pandemic.

It is anticipated that the political, financial and administrative uncertainty that has marked the past few years will continue into the period of this new Corporate Plan. The economic and political uncertainty in Northern Ireland surrounding the UK's exit from the European Union is likely to continue over the period and the Covid-19 pandemic and public health and financial measures taken to combat are also likely have a profound, though as yet unclear, effect on public finances.

Irrespective of these uncertainties, the Commission will work to deliver the outcomes and objectives set out in its Corporate Plan. In respect of the Commission, there exists amongst the public:

- a high level of awareness of the protections and responsibilities provided under the current legal framework;
- a high public profile for equality and key areas of the Commission's remit; and
- high levels of client/customer awareness of and satisfaction with the services provided by the Commission.

Although more needs to be done to improve awareness of the Commission and its work, and to increase understanding and confidence in the work we do, this is a strong base on which to build from.

The Commission's Statement of Commitment sets out our vision and mission statement as:

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

These are supported by our **Values**

- ❖ we are open, honest and trustworthy;
- ❖ we act with integrity, with courage and with impartiality; and
- ❖ we listen;

and founded on a number of related operating **Principles**. We ensure that we:

- are accountable for our decisions and actions;
- act on a strong evidence base;
- provide an expert, relevant and responsive service to all;
- respect all those who have dealings with us;
- strive for excellence in all we do;
- challenge inequalities actively; and
- are both leaders and partners in driving positive change on equality and good relations.

Chief Executive's Statement for 2019-20

The overall financial environment continues to be a difficult one. This year the Commission's opening budget was £1,000 more than 2018-19. Although welcome, this was a cut in real terms and included an additional £150k to cover an increase in Employers' pension contributions, which came into effect on 1 April 2019. During the year, the Commission made use of the monitoring rounds process to mitigate the impact of financial pressures.

In spite of the constraints, the Commission continued to deliver its statutory responsibilities and the performance analysis below both reflects this and sets out where progress continues to be made and identifies a number of specific achievements this year.

Further detail on the Commission's approach to risk management, internal control and performance are outlined below and in the Governance Statement.

Managing Risks and uncertainties

The key risks to the achievement of the Commission's objectives are set out in its Corporate Risk and Business Continuity Register. Each of the risks can be related to delivery of the Commission's key objectives, which are themselves aligned with outcome areas set out in the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government.

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 uncertainty resulting from a 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 2020-21.

During the year, the planned relocation of the Commission was postponed to 2024 and the risks associated with relocation have been removed from the risk register. At the end of the year, the impact of Covid-19 on service continuity was added to the risk register. This has resulted in the Commission reviewing its business plan for 2020-21 to address the new challenges, both short and long-term, emerging from the response to the pandemic.

Ensuring effective governance and internal control

The Commission has high standards of governance and risk management as measured by internal and external audit reports and comments from the auditors. Of the three internal audit reviews undertaken this year, all provided satisfactory assurance.

There were no failures of internal control over the period and the level of near misses remains low. Further detail on these and other governance matters are included in the Governance Statement later in this report.

Financial Results for the Year

The financial position of the Commission as at 31 March 2020 and other results for this year are set out in detail in our Financial Statements at page 71. The Accounting Officer authorised these financial statements for issue on 25 June 2020.

The Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) requires the Commission to treat grant-in-aid as financing rather than income. This year, £5,203k (2018-19, £5,248k) was received from TEO in the year. The Commission shows an increase in income from its activities. Income from activities was £444k this year, which compares with £436k last year.

This increase resulted from changes in the headcounts of the various bodies sharing the accommodation and some small redistributions of space.

Net expenditure for the year was £5,147k (2018-19, £5,304k). This was within the Commission's budget allocation and set control levels. There has been an increase in the Taxpayers' Equity of £56k - from a deficit of £17k at 31 March 2019, to a surplus of £39k at 31 March 2020.

Each year, the Commission aims to operate within the allocated budget provided by TEO, avoiding overspend and managing underspend within a tolerance level of 1.5% by 31 March. At the year-end, this target was met in terms of the resource allocations. With the prior approval of TEO, a small overspend of £2k was incurred in relation to the capital budget allocation.

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, 97.0% of bills were paid within the thirty-day standard and 73.4% were paid within 10 days. The comparative figures for 2018-19 were 97.5% and 83.8% respectively.

Going concern

The Equality Commission operates as a going concern. It is financed by funding from The Executive Office. Although, confirmation of the opening budget is awaited, the Commission has been advised to plan initially on the basis of its opening budget for 2019-20, plus an increase of 2.5%. An indicative figure for grant in aid has been provided as has the first three months financing. The Commission has no significant liabilities that cannot be funded over the coming period.

Management accounts are prepared on a monthly basis based on present forecasts. This process seeks to 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 that would cast doubt on the Commission's ability to continue as a going concern.

Performance summary

This was the first year of delivery of the Commission's new Corporate Plan 2019-22. Both the draft Corporate Plan 2019-22 and draft Business Plan for 2019-2020, were approved by the Departmental Board on 29 May 2019.

Due to the political circumstances prevailing at that time, it was not possible to submit the Plans to Ministers for their approval. The Commission was advised by TEO that it was content that the Commission continued to operate under the draft Corporate Plan 2019-22 and draft Business Plan 2019-20 until such times that Ministerial approval could be secured. This remained the position at the year end. The Commission's draft Business Plan 2020-21 will be finalised on receipt of confirmation of the budget position and submitted for approval.

The four strategic outcome areas under which the Commission's work was structured in 2019-20 are: Employment; Education; Access and participation; and Mainstreaming and championing equality. The Commission also has a series of objectives relating to resourcing the plan.

Each of these areas are linked both to draft Programme for Government (PfG) population outcomes and to our statutory responsibilities, ongoing work programmes and core business objectives. These priority areas have been identified based on our statutory remit, from evidence of substantial and/or persistent inequality arising through our work over recent years on key inequalities and evidence from our day-to-day work and engagement with stakeholders. In identifying the outcome areas, we have also attempted to focus on areas where we believe that, with the use of our powers and in partnership in others, we have the potential to make a difference to the lives of people in Northern Ireland.

Given the breadth and scope of the Commission's statutory remit, covering multiple equality grounds and duties ranging from the provision of advice, consideration of assistance for complainants to processing fair employment monitoring returns, not all of our work easily falls within the four areas. We will continue to fulfil our statutory functions while also seeking to focus specific attention on the four areas we have identified. The performance analysis below provides further detail on key areas for which we have specific statutory responsibilities.

1.2 Performance analysis

Across the four outcome areas and section on resourcing the plan, there were thirteen key service objectives, each with a series of key actions. By the end of the year, seven of these objectives were met or on target and six were broadly on target to be delivered over the Corporate Plan period.

Performance against service delivery areas is reviewed on at least a quarterly basis by the Commission and a summary report of performance is provided on a quarterly basis to the TEO sponsor team.

Further analysis of performance delivery against this year's objectives is set out below and further summarised in Appendix 1.

The highlights of 2019-20 included:

- ❖ ongoing promotion of our recommendations to ensure no regression on equality rights as a result of the UK leaving the EU and inclusion of statutory role for Commission as part of 'dedicated mechanisms' in European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 and that, with the NIHRC, any new arrangements include powers and duties to monitor, advise, promote and enforce the Government's commitment to no diminution;
- ❖ good partnerships developed to progress a programme of activities to maximise pre-employment and employment support programmes for people with disabilities; and provision of programme of work to maintain employer awareness of gender issues;
- ❖ evidence that our increasing engagement with stakeholders is improving awareness and advocacy of Commission recommendations in areas such as law reform, gender pay reporting regulations, hate crime, welfare reform, anti-bullying in education, and housing and accommodation and in furthering the involvement equality groups in decision-making;

- ❖ publication of 'Priorities for Action' in the areas of Education; Housing and Communities; and Participation in Public Life, alongside associated partnership working – including for example with the Commissioner for Public Appointments for NI (CPANI) to raise awareness and facilitate people with disabilities to seek, apply for, and advocate regarding, public appointments;
- ❖ responding to a number of consultations arising from the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation) Act 2109, in respect of same sex marriage and abortion law reform;
- ❖ evidence of greater engagement by senior public servants on leadership on the Section 75 duties;
- ❖ publication of two reports of employer and employee experiences of 'Welcoming and Inclusive Workplaces';
- ❖ continuing benefits to individuals from our provision of legal advice to 3,922 new enquiries about potential discrimination and wider impact of publicising key decisions and settlements;
- ❖ important Court of Appeal decision in a disability discrimination case highlighting the importance on making reasonable accommodation in online testing for job applicants who have a disability;
- ❖ improved integration of our press and social media engagement and event management with key partnership initiatives emerging from the new OBA approach to delivering equality outcomes in partnership with others and on a more coordinated cross-commission basis;
- ❖ publication of a public opinion awareness survey on equality in Northern Ireland, showing the continuing high level of public interest in equality, and highlighting some areas where improvement is still to be made;
- ❖ publication of two Investigation Reports, which each considered a complaint made under Paragraph 10, resulting in findings of failures by a public authority to comply with its Equality Scheme and recommendations made for the public authority concerned;

- ❖ revision and publication of updated Procedures for Complaints and Investigations under Paragraphs 10 and 11 of Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, following an extensive consultation exercise;
- ❖ progress on developing report cards and overall approach in delivery and evaluation of the Commission's new outcomes based accountability (OBA) focused Corporate Plan; and
- ❖ inclusion in New Decade; New Approach of commitments to advance a number of equality strategies and introduce Age (Goods, Facilities and Services) protections should provide a strong basis for taking forward a number of key Commission public policy recommendations over the period of the current Corporate Plan.

It is clear that the last decade has been a difficult one for the Commission and for public finances more generally. Over the past decade, the Commission's opening grant-in-aid has fallen by more than £2 million. The past two corporate planning periods have seen the Commission's opening budget allocations falling by 8.7% and 12.1% respectively.

This reduction has occurred against the background of the extension, largely driven by developments in the European Union, of the Commission's statutory responsibilities under anti-discrimination legislation on grounds of age, disability and sexual orientation since our establishment. It has also occurred within a context of increasing demand for our services promoting equality, combating discrimination and addressing key inequalities in our society.

The table below gives a breakdown of Commission expenditure over the past five years.

Expenditure trends 2015 - 20

	£'000s 2015-16	£'000s 2016-17	£'000s 2017-18	£'000s 2018-19	£'000s 2019-20
Staff costs	4,325	4,151	4,023	3,930	3,793
Current expenditure	1,573	1,641	1,721	1,671	1,692
(Receipts)	(264)	(412)	(402)	(436)	(444)
Resource	5,634	5,380	5,342	5,165	5,041
Capital	197	146	60	55	52
Depreciation	79	104	109	111	110
Impairment	0	0	0	29	0
Total expenditure	5,910	5,630	5,511	5,360	5,203

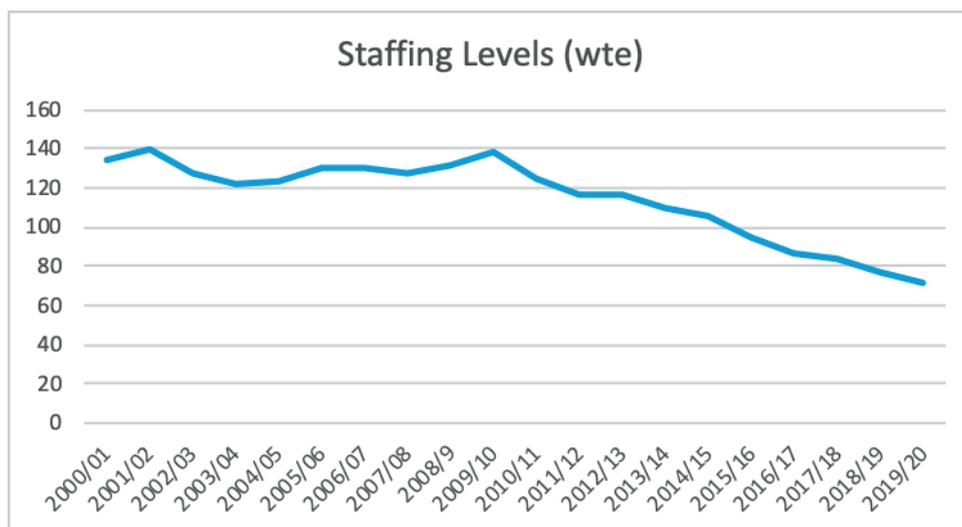
The Commission has worked hard to mitigate the impact of such a scale of reduction, through increasing its efficiency and through sharing its accommodation and sharing its services with other smaller public bodies. This year we recovered costs from such sharing of £444k. Over the period that we have been sharing our accommodation and services, in most years, the Sponsoring Department has provided for the Commission to retain the benefit of this. Without this flexibility, the Commission's operational difficulties would have been even more difficult.

The Commission also utilises the quarterly monitoring framework to increase the funding available to it. During the course of 2019-20 the total budget available to the Commission increased by £207k, from £5,042k to £5,249k at the year-end. Grant-in-aid from TEO increased from £4,957k to £5,203k.

Given the structure of the Commission and the proportion of its budget that is committed to staffing, budget reductions have a disproportionate impact on staffing levels. Consequently, in the context of continuing reductions in the Commission's budget, the downward pressure on staffing levels continues to be a very significant challenge for the Commission.

During 2019-20, the reduction in whole-time equivalent posts reported in recent years continues. This year's average whole-time equivalent (wte) staffing level is 71, a further decrease by six from last year's 77 (8.3%).

The chart below provides an illustration of the scale of staff reductions since 2000-01.



From 2009-10 until 2019-20, staff numbers fell from 138 to 71, a reduction of 48.6%. Inevitably, reductions on this scale outlined above will impact on business operations and service levels. Although the Commission has continued to deliver its statutory responsibilities, inevitably the reductions have had an effect on the scale and scope of what we have been able to deliver, across the range of our functions.

Although this year the overall level of staffing continued to fall, most of the difference in the average resulted from a significant reduction in staff during 2018-19, particularly in the latter months and voluntary exits which took place in the first quarter of this year. Over the remainder of this year, two further vacancies arose: one, very sadly, through the death of a staff member in service and the other by resignation.

This year expenditure on Staff and Commissioners' costs was £3,793k, a decrease of £137k in staffing costs compared with last year (£3,930k). The decrease was a consequence of the continuing reduction in staff numbers.

Meeting statutory responsibilities

The Commission has formal regulatory powers and responsibilities across its legislative remit, primarily with regard to:

- advising and assisting with regard to complaints of discrimination over each of the grounds covered by the anti-discrimination provisions;
- a number of duties with respect to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;
- the preparation by public authorities of disability action plans under sections 49A and 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA); and
- the 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.

Each year, in its Annual Report, the Commission outlines its work in these areas.

Complaints of discrimination

During 2019-20 advice was provided in relation to 3,922 (4,142 – 2018-19) complaints. Although this is a slight decrease on last year's figure, over recent years the overall trend has been upward. Of the enquiries, 47.5% were disability related, 25.5% were sex related, 9.5% were FETO related, 8.5% were race related 7.5% were age related and 1.5% were sexual orientation.

During the year, 337 applications for assistance were considered by the Commission's Legal Funding Committees, eight more than last year. Of these 72 (21.4%) were granted assistance, a similar figure to last year's 67 (21.1%).

In Commission assisted cases, seven decisions were delivered by Courts and Tribunals during the year. In six cases, the complaint was upheld. One case was not upheld.

Of the six cases upheld, three related to sex discrimination, two related to race discrimination and one related to disability discrimination. The case that was dismissed related to age and sex discrimination. Compensation totalling £105,870 was awarded in the successful decisions

All of the sex discrimination cases involved discrimination against women in employment, two involved sexual harassment and one involved pregnancy-related discrimination. One of the racial discrimination cases also involved harassment at work, with the other relating to discrimination in the provision of a service. In the disability case, the discrimination was against an autistic man in the administration of selection testing.

Thirty cases were settled during the business year. The Commission successfully negotiated compensation of £264,280 for claimants in settlements, along with commitments by respondents to address equality issues in follow up with the Commission.

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 the enforcement of Section 75. The Commission is required to:

- keep under review the effectiveness of the duties on public authorities;
- offer advice to public authorities and others in connection with Section 75;
- approve equality schemes and request any public authority to make a revised scheme; and
- 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

This year, the Commission continued to implement actions arising from its report, 'Section 75 – Acting on the evidence of public authority practices', published in June 2018. In May 2019, the Commission considered a progress report on the advisory actions taken in 2018-19 to deliver the recommendations of the 'Acting on the evidence' report.

The progress report identified increased engagement with the Commission by public authorities on the Section 75 duties, in terms of general enquiries and training but also that many of the issues identified in the 2018 report remained.

It was agreed that focus be maintained on public authorities and their practices, focusing on leadership and improvements to implementation of the arrangements in equality schemes.

Advice to Public Authorities

The Commission has continued to provide advice to senior officials regarding their Section 75 obligations, which has included continuing meetings with Permanent Secretaries in relation to their leadership role in improving Section 75 practices in the areas for which they are responsible.

The Chief Executive also met with the Policy Champions Network to emphasise the centrality of the Section 75 duties to the policy development process and with The Executive Office Departmental Board and The Executive Office Accounting Officer to promote initiatives to improve Section 75 practices.

Similar meetings were also held with Chief Executives and/or other senior representatives of other large public bodies. A programme of work was also completed with the local government sector, which included the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and SOLACE NI, the representative body for senior strategic managers working in local government, in support of the Commission's Section 75 Leadership Guidance, previously endorsed last year by David Sterling, Head of the NICS.

The Commission continued to provide advice through the Forum of Government Departments, jointly chaired by The Executive Office and the Commission, as well as ongoing advice to equality officers in individual public authorities.

Our focus in improving equality assessments and on the need for improved Section 75 data has included working with the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency to develop signposting guidance and ensuring the accessibility of Section 75. The guidance was due to be launched by year-end but was postponed due to coronavirus.

We worked with the NICS Centre for Applied Learning (CAL), to ensure the mainstreaming of Section 75 training in NICS training. This has included delivering Section 75 training in partnership with CAL to 50 public authorities and ongoing discussions with CAL regarding the rollout of training to improve Section 75 practices.

We also provided advice to the Project Board for NICS on the inclusion of Section 75 in its policy development modules.

Commission staff delivered 14 training sessions on the Section 75 duties to over 560 public sector staff, representing 58 public authorities. In addition, twelve training sessions were delivered specifically for six public authorities to improve their Section 75 practices. Work also continued with the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to develop a Training for Trainer programme on the equality duties.

Equality Schemes

Of the 158 designated public authorities, 144 have a scheme and the remaining 14 are exempt from producing a scheme. 135 (94%) of 144 public authorities submitted an annual progress report for 2019-20.

During the year under review, the Commission provided feedback to 57 public authorities on their annual progress report, to 22 public authorities on equality screening and to two public authorities on the five-year review of their equality schemes.

Complaints and Investigations

Under Schedule 9, Paragraph 10 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Commission considers complaints against public authorities alleging they have failed to comply with their approved scheme and it may investigate such complaints. Under paragraph 11, it can investigate public authority compliance of its own volition.

This year has seen a continuation of the considerable increase in potential and actual complaints reported last year. During 2019-20, 52 individuals were advised on complaints, potential complaints or about the Paragraph 10 complaints process. One written complaint, under Paragraph 10 of Schedule 9, was considered and the complainants were notified of reasons why the Commission was not going to investigate the complaint.

Two Investigation Reports were concluded and published this year. Both complaints, that the public authority had failed to comply with its equality scheme, were made under Paragraph 10. The two investigations, one into the Department for Infrastructure and the other into Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, found that the public authorities had failed to comply with their Equality Schemes and recommendations were made to ensure better practices in the future.

The resultant press coverage illustrated the importance of equality impact assessment of policy options and the need for these assessments to feed into decision-making. The recommendations made will be followed up with the public authorities during the 2020-21 business year.

One investigation, undertaken on the Commission's own initiative under Paragraph 11 of Schedule 9, is continuing. This is an investigation into a potential failure by the Department of Finance to comply with its Equality Scheme in relation to the 2019-20 Budget.

The Commission undertook an exercise to revise its Procedures for Complaints and Investigations under Paragraphs 10 and 11 of Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. A consultation exercise on the revised procedures was undertaken during the first part of the year and the revisions and the Procedures were agreed by the Commission in the autumn. The revised Procedures are now in place and being implemented.

Public Sector Disability Duty

Of the 158 designated public authorities, 15 are exempt from producing a Disability Action Plan (DAP). Of the 143, which are not exempt, 124 (86.7%) have a current DAP. The Commission has written to each of the 19 public authorities without a Plan and will engage further with each to ensure all public authorities have a current Disability Action Plan in place.

During the year, advice was provided to 74 public authorities to improve the quality of disability action plan measures, particularly focusing on promoting participation for disabled people. The Commission responded to eight formal consultations on Disability Action Plans.

Fair Employment and Treatment Order (FETO)

Each year the Commission receives almost four thousand monitoring return forms from private sector employers and public authorities. In 2019-20 3,719 returns were received and by the year end 3,413 (91.8%) had been audited and authorised. Of those audited, more than 99% were in compliance with the fair employment monitoring regulations.

The Commission also requested 111 Article 55 reviews for audit. By the year end, 74 had been received and eleven others submitted voluntarily. Of the 51 audited, by the year-end, 49 (96.1%) were compliant, following engagement with compliance staff. Work was ongoing with the remaining two employers to ensure compliance; 37 reviews were outstanding. At the year-end, staff were following up the findings of their reviews with 43 private sector employers and public authorities.

Annual Summary of Monitoring Returns

In February 2020, the Commission published its 29th Annual Summary of Fair Employment Monitoring Returns on its website. The report provides information on the community background of the monitored workforce based on those returns made during 2018.

The total monitored workforce in 2018 was 563,229, an increase of 22,332 (4.1%) from the previous year. This was driven by increases in both the private sector, 18,114 (5.0%) and a smaller increase in the public sector, 4,218 (2.4%), workforces.

Of that total, 254,416 (45.2%) were Protestant, 247,498 (43.9%) Roman Catholic, and 61,315 (10.9%) were Non-Determined. The comparable percentages for 2017 were 46.4% was Protestant, 44.4% Roman Catholic and 9.2% non-determined.

Looking at the composition of those from Roman Catholic and Protestant community backgrounds only, the Roman Catholic share of the monitored workforce has shown a gradual upward trend of on average 0.5 percentage points per year since 2001. This upward trend continued in 2018, from 48.9% to 49.3% this year.

That increase takes place alongside a growing percentage of Roman Catholics in the composition of those available for work, as measured by the Labour Force Survey (LFS). When compared with the LFS data, the trend indicates a closing of the gap between Roman Catholics in the monitored workforce figures from 1990 until 2011 and remaining within the LFS margins for error up until 2016. From 2016 to date, the data suggests a slight annual widening of the gap. Given the differences in methods of data collection, this is currently being kept under review and discussed with NISRA, which provides the LFS data.

The Commission is also continuing to monitor the increase in those recording employees and applicants as 'community background could not be determined' in their annual monitoring returns.

The Annual Summary was supported by additional information on company data, analysis by sector and other background information available on the Commission's website.

Corporate social responsibility and sustainability

In delivering its services, the Commission is committed to the provision of equality of opportunity to all service users. The Commission has effective policies in place and will make reasonable adjustments for disabled people to reduce barriers and increase accessibility. The Commission is committed to complying with its human rights obligations in delivering its statutory responsibilities and duties.

Further information on staffing policies, including the Commission's approach to the promotion of equality of opportunity can be found in the Staff Report.

Equality House currently has an independently assessed energy rating of 'Category C' with a score of 57. In this rating system a lower score indicates a more efficient building. A typical rating for a building of the size and occupancy of Equality House would be 100 meaning that a score of 57 is indicative of efficient operation.

This score is expected to improve further as year on year comparison show that electricity consumption has fallen by 7.9% (331k Kwh down to 305k Kwh) and gas consumption has fallen by 2.4% (340k Kwh down to 332k Kwh) during the current year.

Waste receptacles are positioned throughout the building to guide staff to sort waste. Collection records show that in 2019-20 Equality House produced 22.73 metric tonnes of waste, 4.97 metric tonnes of which was sent to land fill. The remaining 17.76 metric tonnes was recycled resulting in a recycling rate of 78%.

The Commission utilises the services of Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) for its larger contracts, such as Facilities Management and Reprographics. CPD contracts require contractors to focus on economic, environmental and social factors pertaining to their services.

The Equality Commission continues to support local small businesses and social enterprises such as local caterers and social enterprises, which supply refreshments for Commission events and meetings.

Equality House is accessible to disabled people and its facilities can be made available to community and support groups such as Guide Dogs for the Blind, GEMS, which addresses long-term unemployment in Belfast and ASCONI, representing people from the African and Caribbean diaspora communities in Northern Ireland.

More than thirty Commission staff engaged in online JAM (Just a Minute) training this year, to enhance support for those of our customers with learning difficulties.

Since 2017 Commission staff have raised £6,500 for charities through raffles, soup lunches, walks, bun sales and handbag and book sales benefitting local and national groups such as Action Cancer, Leukaemia & Lymphoma, Mindwise, South Belfast Food Bank, the Salvation Army and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP).

Staff can avail of the Commission's Bike to Work Scheme and fourteen staff, almost 20% of the workforce, have engaged in this scheme over the last seven years. Commission staff have advised other organisations in setting up their own schemes and space has been set aside in the basement car park for bikes. Public transport users can also avail of a scheme, which assists them to pay for their annual Translink Travel Cards.

Fraud Prevention and Anti-Bribery

The Commission has in place a fraud prevention policy and response Plan, which includes fraud, bribery and anti-corruption guidance for staff. A gifts and hospitality policy is in place and is maintained.

Likely Future Developments, risks and uncertainty

Set out below are the main risks and uncertainties impacting on the Commission's performance this year and anticipated as impacting over the coming year. Further information on the Commission's performance is set out above and the management of risks impacting upon performance is also included in the Chief Executive's statement, which forms part of this performance report.

Performance against service delivery areas is reviewed on at least a quarterly basis by the Commission and a summary report of performance is provided on a quarterly basis to the TEO sponsor team.

It is anticipated that the ongoing public health response to the Covid-19 pandemic will continue to impact on the Commission's work and working practices over, at least, the first half of the coming year. We also anticipate that the positive aspects from the introduction of new technology and processes, to manage remote working and service-delivery, will be adapted and utilised following our return to a more office-based working environment.

The public health response to Covid-19 is having a significant impact across equality groups, particularly in the areas of age, disability and race and this is already reflected in the debates around equality and human rights. The Commission has already adapted its business plan for 2020-21 in response.

As the pandemic continues and the impacts of changes to business and on public finances become apparent, we will adapt our corporate and business plans in response.

New Decade, New Approach contains a number of important commitments in the area of law reform and public policy. These have been welcomed by the Commission and will be important new drivers of Commission focus over coming years. Already, before the focus on the Covid-19 response, a change in pace and tone was noticeable across the public policy landscape.

The UK's withdrawal from the EU, the basis on which it takes place and the resultant impacts on the Northern Ireland economy and social attitudes, will be another major pillar, impacting on the Commission's work over coming years. The Commission, with NIHRC, has been given important new statutory responsibilities and these will be planned for and delivered in 2020-21.

It is anticipated that the discussions, with NIO and TEO, about the resourcing of the new duties, will be brought to a conclusion in 2020-21 and work will begin on recruiting the necessary new staff.

A number of ongoing recruitment exercises were brought to a halt by the lockdown. These will be progressed during 2020-21. The induction of two new Commissioners, which commenced in early April 2020, will also be completed.

Near the end of the year under review a new Chief Commissioner was appointed. The new Chief Commissioner was previously the Deputy Chief Commissioner and has been a Commissioner since September 2015.

During 2019-20, the Commission was advised that its participation in the Reform of Property Management (RPM) project had been deferred to a later phase. In anticipation of relocation, the lease for Equality House has been extended to 31 July 2023.

Discussions with the RPM team and TEO are ongoing about the impact of deferral on the lease period and its cost. After staffing, accommodation is the largest area of expenditure for the Commission.

Important Events Occurring After the Year-end

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

Annual Report and 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.

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
25 June 2020

2. Accountability Report

2.1 Corporate Governance Report

This report describes the organisation and composition of the Commission's governance structures and how they support the achievement of the Commission's objectives.

2.1.1 Directors' Report

The Directors' Report provides details of those with the key responsibilities for directing the Commission in the delivery of its objectives; their attendance and any significant external interests held by them. It also provides information on any personal data incidents reported to the Information Commissioner's Office.

The Commission is led by a Chief Commissioner, who is 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 the Deputy Chief Commissioner there are currently 14 Commissioners. Commissioners are appointed by open competition and are accountable to the Secretary of State, under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. On 1 June 2019, six new Commissioners joined the Commission. A further two new Commissioners were appointed from 1 March 2020. These replaced nine Commissioners, whose terms of office had been completed.

The present Chief Commissioner is Geraldine McGahey. Ms McGahey was appointed from 1 March 2020. Previously, from May 2019, she was the Deputy Chief Commissioner. As Chief Commissioner, she replaced Dr Michael Wardlow who had been the Chief Commissioner since March 2012.

The Commission's Chief Executive, Dr Evelyn Collins CBE, has been designated as the Accounting Officer by the Accounting Officer of The Executive Office.

The individuals who served as members of the Commission during the reporting period, and their attendance at Commission meetings is detailed in the Governance Statement below, as is the composition of key Committees.

The current membership of the Commission comprises nine women and five men.

Commission composition

The following table provides the composition of the Commission at 31 March 2020.

Gender	M	F	Total	
	5	9	14	

Community background	P	RC	Neither/ ND	Total
	4	8	2	14

Senior Executive Team

Evelyn Collins	Chief Executive
Keith Brown	Head of Corporate Services

Directorate Heads

Louise Conlon	Acting Director Communications
Lisa King	Director Research and Investigations
Jacqui McKee	Director Advice and Compliance
Anne McKernan	Director Legal Services
Darren McKinstry	Director Public Policy and Engagement

The composition of the Executive Team 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; Statutory Duties Investigation Committee; and Legal Funding Committee. The following Commissioners served on the Commission's Committees during the period 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020. Information on the Audit and Risk Committee is contained in the Governance Statement.

Statutory Duty Investigations Committee

COMMISSIONER	NO. OF MEETINGS	NO. ATTENDED
Helen Ferguson (Chair from 1 June 2019)	5	5
Lesley Carroll (Chair to 31 May 2019)	1	1
Neil Anderson	2	1
Eileen Chan-Hu	5	4
Teresa Donaldson	2	0
William Gamble	1	1
Tom Hartley	1	1
Geraldine McGahey	2	2
Dawn Purvis	2	2
Katy Radford	2	1
Michael Wardlow	5	5

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 2019-20, the following Commissioners served on Legal Funding Committees: June Best, Deborah Donnelly, Helen Ferguson, Hazel Francey, Judith Gillespie, Tom Hartley, Jarlath Kearney, Stephen Mathews, Geraldine McGahey, Joe McVey, Dawn Purvis and Michael Wardlow.

Commissioners' Interests

An up-to-date register of interests is maintained by the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer and is available on the Commission's website.

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 Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.

Three alleged data breaches were reported to the Commission this year. Following investigation by the Commission's Data Protection Officer, one breach was found to have occurred and remedial action taken. In the other two cases no breach was found to have occurred. Further information on these can be found in the Governance Statement below.

All Freedom of Information and personal data subject access requests were dealt with in line with the legislative requirements and timeframes. No data incidents required reporting to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

2.1.2 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 consent 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 income and expenditure, Statement of Financial Position 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;
- prepare the accounts on a going concern basis, and
- confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Accounting Officer of The Executive Office has appointed 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.

As the Accounting Officer, I have taken all of the steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the Equality Commission's auditors are aware of that information. So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware.

2.1.3 Governance Statement

This statement outlines the Commission's governance framework for directing and controlling its functions and demonstrates how risk is managed. It also describes the assurance provided to support me, in my role as Accounting Officer for the Commission, during the period 2019-20.

The Governance Framework

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 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, The Executive Office (TEO). 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 October 2018. The Commission is awaiting receipt of a draft Partnership Agreement.

The Commission is led by a Chief Commissioner, supported by a Deputy Chief Commissioner. Including the Chief Commissioner, there are currently 14 Commissioners.

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 contained below. Commissioners identify and update their interests and the Register of Interests is available on the Commission's [website](#). The identification of potential conflicts is addressed at the beginning of each Commission and 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).

Commissioner attendance 2019-20

Commissioner		No. of meetings	No. Attended
Geraldine McGahey	Chief Commissioner (from 1 March 2020)	9	8
Michael Wardlow	Chief Commissioner (to 29 February 2020)	8	8
Neil Anderson	(Commissioner from 1 June 2019 and Deputy Chief Commissioner from 1 March 2020)	8	7
June Best	(from 1 June 2019)	8	6
Lesley Carroll	(to 31 May 2019)	1	1
Eileen Chan-Hu	(to 29 February 2020)	8	6
Teresa Donaldson	(from 1 June 2019)	8	8
Deborah Donnelly	(to 29 February 2020)	8	6
Duane Farrell		9	8
Helen Ferguson		9	9
Hazel Francey		9	9
William Gamble	(to 31 May 2019)	1	1
Judith Gillespie	(to 31 May 2019)	1	1
Tom Hartley	(to 31 May 2019)	1	1
Jarlath Kearney		9	7

Deepa Mann-Kler	(from 1 March 2020)	1	1
Stephen Mathews	(from 1 June 2019)	8	8
Carmel McKinney	(from 1 March 2020)	1	1
Joseph McVey		9	7
Robin Mullan	(to 29 February 2020)	8	7
Dawn Purvis	(from 1 June 2019)	8	8
Katy Radford	(from 1 June 2019)	8	8
David Rose	(to 31 May 2019)	1	0

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;
- Statutory Duties Investigation Committee; and
- Legal Funding Committee.

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 2020. 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) (April, 2018).

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.

Audit and Risk Committee Attendance 2019-20

COMMISSIONER	Number of Meetings	Meetings Attended
Deborah Donnelly (Chair)	5	5
Neil Anderson (from 1 October 2019)	2	2
Eileen Chan-Hu	5	1
Duane Farrell	5	3
Stephen Mathews (from 1 October 2019)	2	2
Geraldine McGahey	5	5
Robin Mullan	5	5
Katy Radford (from 1 October 2019)	2	2
Lesley Carroll (to 31 May 2019)	1	0
David Rose (to 31 May 2019)	1	0

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. 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. A programme of risk management training was undertaken this year. This training was provided to both staff and Commissioners. On Board training was made available to newly appointed Commissioners and those Commissioners wishing to refresh their knowledge.

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

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 from 1 April 2019 to date and 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 currently by Deloitte. 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's draft Corporate Plan 2019-22 and annual Business Plan for 2019-20 were approved by the TEO Departmental Board in May 2019. Due to the prevailing political circumstances at that time, these could not be submitted to Ministers for approval. The Department has formally confirmed that in these circumstances, it was content that the Commission operate under these plans until such times that Ministerial approval could be secured. A draft Business Plan for 2020-21 was considered by the Commission at its January meeting, prior to submission to TEO.

In March 2019, the Commission was advised of its opening budget allocation. Commissioners receive quarterly reports of progress against business plan and budgetary targets throughout the year. Commissioners are also provided with regular reports of staff's work and outcomes of key policy and operational actions. Quarterly reports of communications work are presented at Commission meetings. This year, budgetary control was included within the scope of internal audit's review of core financial controls. Satisfactory assurance was provided.

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. A review of general IT controls formed part of this year's internal audit programme. Satisfactory assurance was provided. The Commission is a member of the National Cyber Security Centre's CiSP programme.

In July 2019, an alleged data breach was reported to the Information Commissioner's office (ICO) by an agency worker. This was investigated and no breach was found. There has been no contact from ICO. In August, a data breach, involving the release of a refusal for assistance to a third party, was reported to the Data Protection Officer. The individual affected was advised. Remedial action, including reminding staff of their responsibilities, was undertaken. No further action was necessary. In September, another potential data breach was reported to the Data Protection Officer. This was investigated and it was established that a complainant had sent their own personal data, mistakenly, to a third party. No breach by the Commission was found.

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.

In April 2019, internal audit undertook an advisory review of the Commission's arrangements for complying with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. The review made a number of recommendations for improvement. These were agreed and by the year-end, all but one had been addressed.

During the year, the Commission has received 17 requests for information under the Freedom of Information legislation. In each case, the relevant information was provided within the time limits required.

Three subject access request were received under the Data Protection provisions. Two of these were responded to within the legal time limit and one is ongoing.

On a quarterly basis, summary information on these requests is reviewed by the Management Board.

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. The ICT continuity and disaster recovery arrangements are regularly tested, most recently in November 2019.

An audit of the Commission's Business Continuity and IT Disaster Recovery was completed in April 2019 and limited assurance was recorded. Action was taken to address each of the recommendations made by the internal auditor. At each Audit and Risk Committee, Commissioners reviewed the progress made and by the year-end all but one had been fully implemented.

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 updated in May 2015, following a review against the guidance issued by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) and others at that time. It was further updated in November 2018 in light of dissemination of new TEO Departmental procedures. There have been no incidences of whistle blowing during the year.

Fraud

The Commission has a Fraud Policy and Fraud Response Plan, which covers fraud, bribery, corruption and how to prevent and report incidents and concerns. An updated policy and response plan was reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee at its November 2018 meeting. This has been disseminated to staff. In September 2019, staff were reminded of the key reporting procedures contained in the Commission's whistleblowing and fraud procedures.

There have been no incidences of fraud or suspected fraud reported during the year.

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 2019-20 was 8.9 days.

Although substantially higher than last year's figure of 5.5 days, much of the absence was due to the long-term absences of a small number of employees. Commissioners and the TEO sponsor team are provided with this information on a quarterly basis.

Complaints

The Commission has in place a three-stage formal procedure for dealing with service complaints. Should they not be resolved through the internal procedure, they may be referred to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO). Information on complaints dealt with under the procedure is reported in the Annual Report.

Two complaints outstanding at 31 March 2019 were resolved. There were no new complaints this year.

During 2018-19, an internal review of customer complaints and the complaints procedure took place and the procedure was updated. At the year-end, the updated procedure is still to be finalised and formally approved by the Management Board. It will then be placed on the Commission's website.

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). Work on behalf of the C&AG is contracted to ASM. Following completion of the audit of the Commission's Annual Report and Accounts, a Report to those charged with Governance containing the audit findings and associated recommendations is issued.

The Report to those charged with Governance, following the 2018-19 audit, was considered at the August 2019 Audit and Risk Committee.

The Report contained one Priority two issue and three Priority three issues. These were addressed, either during the course of the year or, in preparation for the 2019-20 audit.

A revised internal audit programme for 2019-20 was approved at the August meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee. The scope of this year's audit programme and the assurances provided to date are summarised in the table below.

Audit Area	Assurance Rating
Core Financial Controls	Satisfactory
General IT Controls	Satisfactory
Advice and Compliance Directorate	Satisfactory

In her Annual Report to the Audit and Risk Committee, the Head of Internal Audit's independent opinion provided a satisfactory level of assurance for 2019-20.

Risk Management Status

The ongoing requirement for the effective management of budgetary reductions continues to be the key risk facing the Commission. The Commission continues to operate in an environment of financial constraint and uncertainty and is required to manage the upward pressure from its staffing costs. To do so has involved a reduction in staff numbers over the past number of years.

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 the reduction in staff numbers, the risk rating in this area remains high.

To address this pressure the Commission had plans in place for funding and filling of a number of key vacancies in 2019-20. At the year-end a number of recruitment exercises were ongoing.

In the final quarter of this year, in response to the emerging Covid-19 crisis, the Commission added the risk of pandemic to its Corporate Risk Register and made preparations for the introduction of remote working. In response to Government guidance in March, all staff are working remotely on secure vpn connections and the work of the Commission has continued on a largely business-as-usual basis.

In addition to progress made in mitigating its corporate risks, Commissioners are provided with regular information on emerging risks and opportunities and information on incidents or 'near misses' which have occurred during the course of its operations. Each of the Commission's corporate risks are included on an assurance map, which highlights the key sources of information and assurances that are provided to Commissioners to facilitate their oversight of the arrangements for effective governance, risk management and internal control.

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 and the quality of data provided to the Board

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.

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 Committee provides a formal review of its work to the Board, each year. The Commission formally approves the Corporate Risk Register at six monthly intervals and is advised on emerging risks, incidents 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 to TEO, is considered at each Audit and Risk Committee.

Each year, the Board undertakes a self-assessment of its effectiveness against the good practice and checklists published by the Department of Finance and Northern Ireland Audit Office. This year the self-assessment was administered by the Commission's internal auditors against the framework they have developed. This, and other assessments undertaken over recent years, have recorded a high level of adherence to good practice.

The Commission considers that the information provided is sufficient to enable it to discharge effectively its strategic planning and governance responsibilities. In this year's survey the statement "The Board has a good understanding of the performance of the organisation and is provided with sufficient information to enable this," elicited the highest level of agreement. The survey report will be considered by the board in the coming period.

Significant internal control issues

There are no significant internal control issues at present.

Signed by:



Evelyn Collins CBE
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
25 June 2020

2.2 Remuneration and Staff Report

This report 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 and compensation for early retirement or loss of office. Fair pay disclosures are also included. The report also includes additional information on staff numbers and costs, staff composition, sickness absence data and exit packages.

2.2.1 Remuneration Report

Remuneration Policy

The pay policy for the Northern Ireland (NI) public sector, including senior civil servants (SCS), is normally approved by the Minister of Finance. In the absence of an Executive, the Department of Finance's Permanent Secretary set the 2019-20 NI public sector pay policy (October 2019) in line with the overarching HMT parameters and in a manner consistent with the approach taken by the previous Finance Minister in 2016-17. Annual NICS pay awards are made in the context of the wider public sector pay policy. The pay award for NICS staff, including SCS staff, for 2019-20 has been finalised, but not yet paid.

The pay of senior civil servants (SCS) is 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.

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	2019-20				2018-19					
	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (to nearest £'000)*	Total (£'000)	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (to nearest £'000)*	Total (£'000)
Michael Wardlow Chief Commissioner (to 29 February 2020)	60-65 (FTE 75-80)	0	0	26	90-95 (FTE 105- 110)	60-65 (FTE 75-80)	0	0	29	90-95 (FTE 105- 110)
Geraldine McGahey Chief Commissioner (from 1 March 2020; Deputy Chief Commissioner from 1 June 2019 to 29 February 2020)	55-60 (FTE 70-75)	0	0	2	55-60 (FTE 70-75)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5

Commissioner	2019-20				2018-19					
	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (to nearest £'000)*	Total (£'000)	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (to nearest £'000)*	Total (£'000)
Neil Anderson (from 1 June 2019; Deputy Chief Commissioner from 1 March 2020)	5-10	0	0	0	5-10	0	0	0	0	0
Dr Lesley Carroll Deputy Chief Commissioner (to 31 May 2019)	5-10	0	0	0	5-10	5-10	0	0	0	5-10
Deborah Donnelly (to 29 February 2020)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0-5
Hazel Francey	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0-5
Judith Gillespie (to 31 May 2019)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0-5
Joseph McVey	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0-5

	2019-20				2018-19					
	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (to nearest £'000)*	Total (£'000)	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (to nearest £'000)*	Total (£'000)
Commissioner										
Robin Mullan (to 29 February 2020)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0-5
William Gamble (to 31 May 2019)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0-5
Tom Hartley (to 31 May 2019)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0-5
David Rose (to 31 May 2019)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0-5
Duane Farrell	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0-5
Helen Ferguson	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0-5
Jarlath Kearney	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0-5
Eileen Chan-Hu (to 29 February 2020)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0-5
Theresa Donaldson (from 1 June 2019)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0

Commissioner	2019-20				2018-19					
	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (to nearest £'000)*	Total (£'000)	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (£'000)*	Total (£'000)
Stephen Mathews (from 1 June 2019)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0
Dawn Purvis (from 1 June 2019)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0
Dr Katherine Radford (from 1 June 2019)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0
June Best (from 1 June 2019)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0
Deepa Mann-Kler (from 1 March 2020)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0
Carmel McKinney (from 1 March 2020)	0-5	0	0	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0

Senior Management

Official	2019-20				2018-19					
	Salary £'000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (to nearest £'000)*	Total (£'000)	Salary £,000	Bonus Payments £'000	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Pension Benefits (to nearest £'000)*	Total (£'000)
Evelyn Collins Chief Executive	80-85	0	0	14	95-100	75-80	0	0	6	85-90
Keith Brown Head of Corporate Services	60-65	0	0	11	75-80	60-65	0	0	6	70-75
Eileen Lavery Head of Legal, Policy and Research (to 31 March 2019)	0	0	0	0	0	60-65	0	0	4	65-70

* 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.

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 2019-20 relate to performance in 2018-19 and the comparative bonuses reported for 2018-19 relate to the performance in 2017-18.

No bonus payments were paid to Commissioners or senior managers in these years.

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.

Fair Pay Disclosure (Audited)

	2019-2020	2018-2019
	£	£
Band of Highest Paid Employee - Chief Executive	80,000 - 85,000	75,000 – 80,000
Median Remuneration	32,157	31,760
Ratio	2.6	2.4

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 2019-20 was £80,000 to £85,000 (2018-19 was £75,000 to £80,000). This was 2.6 times (2018-19, 2.4 times) the median remuneration of the workforce, which was £32,157 (2018-19, £31,760).

In 2019-20, no employees received remuneration in excess of the highest paid employee, the Chief Executive.

Remuneration ranged from £18,000 to £85,000.

Pension Benefits (Audited Information)

	Accrued pension at age 60 as at 31/03/20 and related lump sum £'000	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at age 60 £'000	CETV at 31/3/20	CETV at 31/3/19	Real increase in CETV
Michael Wardlow Chief Commissioner (to 29 February 2019)	20-25	0-2.5	397	376	22
Geraldine McGahey Chief Commissioner (from 1 March 2020)	0-5	0-2.5	2	0	1
Evelyn Collins Chief Executive	35-40 (plus lump sum of 110-115)	0-2.5 (plus lump sum of 2.5-5)	875	860	14
Keith Brown Head of Corporate Services	25-30 (plus lump sum of 75-80)	0-2.5 (plus lump sum of 0-2.5)	582	571	11
Eileen Lavery Head of Legal, Policy and Research (to 31 March 2019)	0	0	0	722	0

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

Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Pension Schemes

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

The alpha pension scheme was introduced for new entrants from 1 April 2015. The alpha scheme and all previous scheme arrangements are unfunded with the cost of benefits met by monies voted each year. The majority of existing members of the classic, premium, classic plus and nuvos 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 did 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 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 is 2.32%.

New entrants joining can choose between membership of alpha or joining a '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 also a 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%.

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). From April 2011, pensions payable under classic, premium and classic plus are reviewed annually in line with changes in the cost of living. New entrants joining on or after 1 October 2002 and before 30 July 2007 could choose between membership of premium or joining the partnership pension account.

All pension benefits are reviewed annually in line with changes in 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 2019 was 1.7% and HM Treasury has announced that public service pensions will be increased from April 2020.

Employee contribution rates for all members from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 are as follows:

Scheme Year 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021

Annualised rate of pensionable earnings (Salary bands)		Percentage Contribution Rate
From	To	From 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021
£0	£23,999.99	4.6%
£24,000.00	£55,499.99	5.45%
£55,500.00	£152,499.99	7.35%
£152,500.00 and above		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 their scheme pension age, or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the scheme if they are at or over pension age. Scheme Pension age is 60 for members of **classic**, **premium**, and **classic plus** and 65 for members of **nuvos**.

The normal scheme 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/civilservicepensions-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 2015 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, 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.

2.2.2 Staff Report

Staff and Commissioner costs (audited):

				2019-20	2018-19
	Commissioners	Permanently employed staff	Others	Total	Total
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Wages and Salaries	144	2,467	154	2,765	2,845
Social security costs	8	247	0	255	272
Other pension costs	22	744	0	766	624
Severance	0	7	0	7	189
Total net costs	174	3,465	154	3,793	3,930

There were no outward secondments during 2019-20 or 2018-19.

Off Payroll Engagements

There were no off payroll engagements during 2019-20 or 2018-19.

Expenditure on Consultancy

There was no expenditure on consultancy in 2019-20 or in the previous year

Pension Disclosure

The Northern Ireland Civil Service main 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.

Government Actuary's Department (GAD) is responsible for carrying out scheme valuations. The Actuary reviews employer contributions every four years following the scheme valuation. The 2016 scheme valuation was completed by GAD in March 2019. The outcome of this valuation was used to set the level of contributions for employers from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2021.

For 2019-20 employers' contributions of £766,371 were payable to the NICS pension arrangements (2018-19 £624,313) at one of three rates in the range 28.7% to 34.2% of pensionable pay, based on salary bands.

This change is primarily due to the reduction in the SCAPE discount rate (as announced at Budget 2018) to 2.4% per annum above CPI. The contribution rates are set to meet the cost of the benefits accruing during 2019-20 to be paid when the member retires, and not the benefits paid during this period to existing pensions.

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. No employees retired on the grounds of ill-health in 2019-20 or in 2018-19.

Average number of persons employed (audited)

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

Number	Permanently employed staff	Others	2019-20	2018-19
			Total	Total
Directly Employed	71	0	71	77
Other	0	4	4	0
Total	71	4	75	77

Reporting of Civil Service and other compensation schemes – exit packages (Comparative data shown in brackets for 2018-19) (audited)

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 (0)
£10,000 - £25,000	0 (0)	0 (4)	0 (4)
£25,000 - £50,000	0 (0)	0 (2)	0 (2)
£50,000 - £100,000	0 (0)	0 (1)	0(1)
£100,000 - £150,000	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
£150,000 - £200,000	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Total number of exit packages	0 (0)	0 (7)	0 (7)
Total resource cost/£	0 (0)	0 (194,838)	0 (194,838)

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. The table above shows the total cost of exit packages agreed and accounted for in 2019-20 and 2018-19. In 2018-19 there were seven exit packages agreed. The cost of those packages was accounted for in 2018-19 (the year of approval). Four of those individuals departed in 2018-19 at a cost of £48,810 and the remaining three individuals departed during 2019-20 at a cost of £138,788. In addition, an amount of £7,240 was paid in 2019-20 relating to adjustments to compensation payments made by Civil Service Pensions in respect of prior year departures. Where the Commission has agreed early retirements, the additional costs are met by the Commission 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.

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 2019-20 was 8.9 days, an increase on last year's 5.5 days. This was largely due to the long-term illnesses of a small number of staff. Of the 8.9 days lost, 6.9 related to long term absence (more than 20 days) and 2.0 to short term absence (20 days or less). This compares to an equivalent 2.4 days for long-term absence and 3.1 days for short-term absence last year.

Staff Composition (not wte)

The following table provides the gender composition of Equality Commission staff at 1 January 2020.

Grade	M	F	Total
Senior Civil Service	0	1	1
Other Staff	26	51	77
Total	26	52	78

The following table provides a breakdown of Commission staff by community background as at 1 January 2020.

Grade	P	RC	Total
Senior Management	2 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2
All Staff	31 (39.7%)	47 (60.3%)	78

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 and to adhering to recognised human rights standards and obligations.

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.

Disabled persons

Almost one fifth of the Commission's employees report as having a disability or long-term health condition. The Commission can provide a range of reasonable adjustments to facilitate such employees, including amending job criteria and duties; providing flexible working arrangements; access to training and workstation assessments and adaptations. In recruitment and selection applicants with a disability, who meet the essential requirements will be shortlisted. The Commission also provides adjustments for disabled clients and customers.

Employee Involvement

The Commission encourages widespread consultation and exchange of information at all levels within the Commission. 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 and wellbeing. The Commission has a Health and Safety Officer, who meets regularly with a trade union side counterpart.

2.3 Assembly accountability and audit report

Assembly Accountability Disclosure Notes

i. Losses and special payments (Audited)

Losses Statement

	2019-20	2018-19
	£	£
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

	2019-20	2018-19
	£	£
Total number of special payments	Nil	Nil
Total value of special payments	Nil	Nil

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.

iv Gifts

There were no gifts received with a value greater than £50.

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
25 June 2020

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

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

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland for the year ended 31 March 2020 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, including significant accounting policies. These financial statements have been prepared under the accounting policies set out within them. I have also audited the information in the Accountability Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

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 2020 and of its net expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and The Executive Office directions issued thereunder.

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.

Basis of opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs) and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements of Public Sector Entities in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of this certificate. My staff and I are independent of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Financial Reporting Council's Revised Ethical Standard 2016 and have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. I believe that the audit evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinions.

Conclusions relating to going concern

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs(UK) require me to report to you where:

- the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland’s use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland’s ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis.

Other Information

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Accounting Officer are responsible for the other information included in the annual report. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements, the parts of the Accountability Report described in the report as having been audited, and my audit certificate and report. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, my responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact. I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion:

- the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department of Finance; and
-
- the information given in the Performance Report and Accountability Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.
-

Responsibilities of the Commission and Accounting Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer Responsibilities, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Accounting Officer are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view.

Auditor’s responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

My objectives are to obtain 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. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

In addition, 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.

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 Accountability Report 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 the 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

7 July 2020

Equality Commission

for

Northern Ireland

Financial Statements

for the 12 months ended

31 March 2020

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2020

This account summarises the expenditure and income generated and consumed on an accruals 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 or expenditure.

	Note	2019/20 £000	2018/19 £000
Revenue from contracts with customers	4	83	83
Other operating income	4	361	353
Total Operating Income		444	436
Staff Costs	3	(3,793)	(3,930)
Purchase of goods and services	3	(1,416)	(1,404)
Depreciation and impairment charges	5&6	(110)	(140)
Provisions	11	(276)	(267)
Total operating expenditure		(5,595)	(5,741)
Net Operating Expenditure		(5,151)	(5,305)
Other comprehensive net expenditure			
Items that will not be reclassified to net operating expenditure:			
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation of Plant and Equipment	5&6	4	1
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year		(5,147)	(5,304)

The notes on pages 76 to 88 form part of these accounts

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2020

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

	Note	2019/20 £000	2018/19 £000
Non-current assets:			
Plant and equipment	5	150	182
Intangible assets	6	70	92
Total non-current assets		220	274
Current assets:			
Inventories		2	19
Trade and other receivables	9	82	92
Cash and cash equivalents	8	126	179
Total current assets		210	290
Total assets		430	564
Current liabilities:			
Trade and other payables	10	(294)	(457)
Total current liabilities		(294)	(457)
Total assets less current liabilities		136	107
Non-current liabilities			
Provisions	11	(97)	(124)
Total non-current liabilities		(97)	(124)
Total assets less total liabilities		39	(17)
Taxpayers' equity and other reserves			
General fund		(22)	(74)
Revaluation reserve		61	57
Total equity		39	(17)

The financial statements on pages 72 to 88 were approved by the Board on 24/06/2020 and were signed on its behalf by



Evelyn Collins CBE, Chief Executive and Accounting Officer.
The notes on pages 76 to 88 form part of these accounts

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31 March 2020

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	2019-20 £000	2018-19 £000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net operating expenditure		(5,151)	(5,305)
Adjustments for non-cash transactions			
Depreciation		64	67
Amortisation		46	44
Impairment		0	68
Increase in provisions		276	267
Decrease in trade and other receivables		27	4
(Decrease)/increase in trade and other payables		(163)	136
Use of provisions		(303)	(307)
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(5,204)	(5,026)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of plant and equipment	5	(28)	(18)
Purchase of intangible assets	6	(24)	(37)
Net cash outflow from investing activities		(52)	(55)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Financing from TEO		5,203	5,248
Net cash flow from financing activities		5,203	5,248
Net increase/<decrease> in cash and cash equivalents in the period		(53)	167
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period		179	12
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	8	126	179

The notes on pages 76 to 88 form part of these accounts.

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year ended 31 March 2020

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Commission. The Revaluation Reserve reflects the change in asset values that have not been recognised as income or expenditure. The General Fund represents the total assets less liabilities of the Commission, to the extent that the total is not represented by other reserves and financing items.

	Note	General Fund £000	Revaluation Reserve £000	Taxpayers' Equity £000
Balance at 31 March 2018		(17)	56	39
Grant from TEO		5,248	Nil	5,248
Comprehensive net expenditure for year		(5,305)	1	(5,304)
Balance at 31 March 2019		(74)	57	(17)
Grant from TEO		5,203	Nil	5,203
Comprehensive net expenditure for year		(5,151)	4	(5,147)
Balance at 31 March 2020		(22)	61	39

The notes on pages 76 to 88 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 2019-20 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by the Department of Finance. 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, plant and equipment.

1.2 Non-Current assets

Non-current assets are fully funded by The Executive Office (formerly Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister).

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 value for consumable inventories in the accounts as required.

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, are treated as financing. They are credited to the General Fund because they are 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 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 Fee Provisions

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 completed by Government Actuary's Department (GAD) in March 2019 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.

2. Statement of operating costs by function

The Commission can be treated as a single operating segment, however under Schedule 8 para 5(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 it 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 £000	Programme Costs £000	*Other Costs £000	12 mths to 31/03/2020 Total £000	Salaries & Associated Costs £000	Programme Costs £000	*Other Costs £000	12 mths to 31/03/2019 Total £000
Integrated/ New Areas	665	196	161	1,022	713	285	178	1,176
Disability	555	104	135	794	514	93	128	735
Religion & Politics	538	18	131	687	506	14	127	647
Gender	428	119	104	651	389	73	97	559
Race	187	32	45	264	185	18	46	249
Statutory Duty	352	9	85	446	352	2	88	442
Resources	635	0	154	789	581	0	143	724
Executive	252	0	61	313	327	0	82	409
Total Costs	3,612	478	876	4,966	3,567	485	889	4,941
Members Costs	174	0	0	174	174	0	0	174
Other Costs	7	0	0	7	189	0	0	189
Total	3,793	478	876	5,147	3,930	485	889	5,304

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

3. Expenditure

	2019-20	2018-19
	£000	£000
Staff costs		
Salaries and fees	2,612	2,794
Social Security Cost	254	272
Other pension costs	766	624
Agency	154	51
Severance	7	189
Rentals under operating leases		
Buildings	516	516
Annual contracts	24	32
Rates	193	189
Fuel	90	85
Facilities Management	143	137
Repairs and Maintenance	72	46
Legal – Non-database Costs	16	24
Education and Promotions	87	112
Other Programme	99	81
Miscellaneous	79	88
External Audit Costs	12	11
Consumables	49	33
Legal Costs	(4)	30
Staff Related Costs	40	20
Depreciation and Amortisation	110	111
Impairment	0	29
Legal Provision charge	276	267
	5,595	5,741

During the year the Commission purchased no-non audit services from the Northern Ireland Audit Office.

4. Income

	2019-20	2018-19
	Total	Total
	£000	£000
Revenue from contracts with customers	83	83
Other operating income	361	353
	444	436

All income is based on full cost recovery. Revenue from contracts with customers relates to Service Level Agreements with other ALBs. Other operating income relates to offset of premises costs by co-tenants.

5. Plant and equipment

2019-20	Information Technology £000	Office Equipment £000	Furniture £000	Fixtures & Fittings £000	Total £000
Cost/Valuation					
At 1 April 2019	403	106	264	343	1,116
Additions	28	0	0	0	28
Disposals	0	0	0	0	0
Revaluations	11	3	3	7	24
At 31 March 2020	442	109	267	350	1,168
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2019	365	90	264	215	934
Charged in year	19	6	0	39	64
Disposals	0	0	0	0	0
Revaluations	10	3	3	4	20
At 31 March 2020	394	99	267	258	1,018
Carrying amount at 31 March 2020	48	10	0	92	150
Carrying amount at 31 March 2019	38	16	0	128	182
Asset Financing					
Owned	48	10	0	92	150
Finance lease	0	0	0	0	0
Carrying amount at 31 March 2020	48	10	0	92	150

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

Note 5 Continued

2018-19	Information Technology £000	Office Equipment £000	Furniture £000	Fixtures & Fittings £000	Total £000
Cost/Valuation					
At 1 April 2018	388	106	260	342	1,096
Additions	18	0	0	0	18
Disposals	(4)	0	0	0	(4)
Revaluations	1	0	4	1	6
At 31 March 2019	403	106	264	343	1,116
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2018	345	84	260	176	865
Charged in year	23	6	0	38	67
Disposals	(4)	0	0	0	(4)
Revaluations	1	0	4	1	6
At 31 March 2019	365	90	264	215	934
Carrying amount at 31 March 2019	38	16	0	128	182
Carrying amount at 31 March 2018	43	22	0	166	231
Asset Financing					
Owned	38	16	0	128	182
Finance lease	0	0	0	0	0
Carrying amount at 31 March 2019	38	16	0	128	182

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

6. Intangible assets

Intangible assets comprise software and licenses.

2019-20	Information Technology £000	Software Licences £000	Total £000
Cost or Valuation			
At 1 April 2019	29	215	244
Additions	0	24	24
Disposals	0	0	0
At 31 March 2020	29	239	268
Amortisation			
At 1 April 2019	28	124	152
Charged in year	1	45	46
Disposals	0	0	0
At 31 March 2020	29	169	198
Carrying amount at 31 March 2020	0	70	70
Carrying amount at 31 March 2019	1	91	92
Asset financing:			
Owned	0	70	70
Finance Leased	0	0	0
Carrying amount at 31 March 2020	0	70	70

Note 6 Continued

2018-19	Information Technology £000	Software Licences £000	Total £000
Cost or Valuation			
At 1 April 2018	96	178	274
Additions	0	37	37
Impairment	(67)	0	(67)
At 31 March 2019	29	215	244
Amortisation			
At 1 April 2018	25	83	108
Charged in year	3	41	44
Disposals	0	0	0
At 31 March 2019	28	124	152
Carrying amount at 31 March 2019	1	91	92
Carrying amount at 31 March 2018	71	95	166
Asset financing:			
Owned	1	91	92
Finance Leased	0	0	0
Carrying amount at 31 March 2019	1	91	92

7. 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.

8. Cash and cash equivalents

	2019-20 £000	2018-19 £000
Balance at 1 April	179	12
Net change in cash and cash equivalents	(53)	167
Balance at 31 March	126	179
The balance at 31 March was held at the Government Banking Service	126	179
Cash In Hand	0	0
Balance at 31 March	126	179

9. Trade receivables and other current assets

	2019-20 £000	2018-19 £000
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Inventories	2	19
Prepayments	80	92
Accrued Income	2	0
Other Receivables	0	0
	84	111

10. Trade payables and other current liabilities

	2019-20 £000	2018-19 £000
Amounts falling due within one year		
Accruals and deferred Income	(294)	(457)
	(294)	(457)

11. Provisions for liabilities and charges

	2019-20	2018-19
	Legal Costs	Legal Costs
	£000	£000
Balance at 1 April	124	164
Provided in the year	433	322
Provisions not required written back	(157)	(55)
Provisions utilised in the year	(303)	(307)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Balance at 31 March	97	124

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.

12. Capital commitments

	2019-20	2018-19
	£000	£000
Contracted capital commitments at 31 March 2020 not otherwise included in these financial statements		
Plant and equipment	0	0
Intangible assets	0	0

13. Commitments under leases

13.1 Operating leases

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

	2019-20 £000	2018-19 £000
Obligations under operating leases comprises:		
Buildings		
Not later than one year	516	516
Later than one year and not later than five years	1,372	688
Later than five years	0	0
Other:		
Not later than one year	0	4
Later than one year and not later than five years	0	1
Later than five years	0	0

13.2 Finance Leases

The Commission had no commitments under finance leases.

14. Other financial commitments

The Commission had no other financial commitments at 31 March 2020 or 31 March 2019.

15. Contingent liabilities disclosed under IAS 37

On 17 June 2019, the Court of Appeal ruled, in respect of Northern Ireland Tribunal's November 2018 decision, on cases taken against the PSNI on backdated holiday pay. It is recognised that the final detail remains to be determined by the Industrial Tribunal, who will be guided by the Court of Appeal's judgement.

This is an extremely rare and complex case with a significant number of issues that still need to be resolved, including further legal advice with regards to the judgement; the scope; timescales; process of appeals and engagement with Trade Unions. The legal issues from this judgement and the implications for the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) and wider public sector will need further consideration. The Department of Finance (DoF) is leading a piece of work across the NICS, reviewing the implications for each of the major staffing groups across the public sector.

Until there is further clarity when this work has concluded, and based on the inherent uncertainties in the final decision that will be made, a reliable estimate cannot be provided at this stage.

16. 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
(£5,203,000 of which £0 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Northern Ireland Commission for Children and Young People
(£150,713 of which £0 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Commission for Victims and Survivors
(£77,780 of which £20 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
(£12,900 of which £0 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Commissioner for Older People Northern Ireland
(£100,963 of which £0 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission
(£700 of which £0 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Community Relations Council for Northern Ireland
(£113,084 of which £133 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.

17. Third-party assets

The Commission had no third-party assets at 31 March 2020 or 31 March 2019.

18. 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 26 June 2020.

Performance Delivery against planned objectives 2019-20

Strategic Outcome Area 1 Employment

Business Plan objective	Assessment			Evidence for delivery / explanation for non-delivery	
	Achieved or On Track	Broadly on track	Behind target and doubt about delivery		Not expected to be achieved
1.1 More and better jobs for disabled people	✓				<p>Outcome based accountability (OBA) report card prepared and action plan being delivered. Considerable engagement with strategic partners established in year one (Y1).</p> <p>Key partners include Disability Employment Stakeholder's Forum, Disability Employment Operational Engagement Forum, Department for Communities (DfC), NI Union of Supported Employment (NIUSE) and Disability Action.</p> <p>Working with partners, this year's work programme has included the delivery of training for DfC Job Market Advisors, employer training and support for employer-led initiatives, the production of new guidance on reasonable adjustment and positive action, rights leaflets and infographics.</p>

					<p>There has been a concerted social media campaign to promote this work and raise awareness of the issue. A key employment case this year was Meier v BT. BT had appealed against a successful finding in favour of Mr Meier at Industrial Tribunal, that it had discriminated against him on grounds of his disability through not making reasonable accommodation for him in online testing. The Commission supported Mr Meier at the Court of Appeal, which also held that Mr Meier was discriminated against. The issue of neuro-diversity and on-line testing was well publicised.</p> <p>There is evidence of stakeholders advocating Commission recommendations on disability law reform.</p>
1.2	<p>Increased access for women in employment</p>	✓			<p>Outcome based accountability (OBA) report card prepared and action plan being delivered.</p> <p>Key highlights from actions delivered this year included the publication and dissemination of the Commission's recommendations on the Gender Pay Gap Reporting Regulations and the Executive's Gender Pay Strategy and the engagement to raise awareness of these and obtain support from key stakeholders.</p>

						<p>Other key areas of work included, action to implement the Concluding Observations on women's economic independence under the United Nations international treaty obligations in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Raising awareness of the Commission's childcare recommendations was another focus of this year's work.</p> <p>During the year, the Commission also reviewed employer policies, provided training and advice and assisted twelve legal cases relating to various aspects of sex equality in employment.</p>
1.3	Freedom from prejudice and harassment		✓			<p>Development of an OBA focused report card and draft cross Commission action plan commenced this year and a programme of key actions was delivered</p> <p>Research reports into employer and employee perceptions of Welcoming and Inclusive Workplaces, were published and further qualitative and quantitative analyses were undertaken. The full results of this work will be published in 2020.</p> <p>A programme of training and guidance for employers in reviewing and updating harassment policies was also undertaken.</p> <p>Harassment at work remains an important area for our complainant assistance role and during the year ten cases were assisted.</p>

Strategic Priority Area 2 Education

Business Plan objective	Assessment				Evidence for delivery / explanation for non-delivery
	Achieved or On Track	Broadly on track	Behind target and doubt about delivery	Not expected to be achieved	
2.1 Freedom from prejudiced-based bullying at school		√			<p>Work to develop initial draft OBA report card in this area was deferred into 2020-21 to allow the Commission to focus its policy work on new developments arising from the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation) Act 2019 during the year.</p> <p>Throughout the year policy staff continued to maintain momentum on encouraging positive developments with some evidence of success.</p> <p>A key focus was to engage with the Northern Ireland Anti Bullying Forum (NIABF) and Department of Education (DE) to inform their development of anti-bullying guidance, including mainstreaming of equality considerations. The resultant anti-bullying guidance submitted to the Department of Education (DE) reflects a range of our recommendations</p>

						<p>The final Department of Education Children and Young People's Strategy 2019-2029 now includes a commitment to 'continue to work to fully implement the Addressing Bullying in Schools (NI) Act 2016'. Introduction of the legislation has been paused.</p> <p>The Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF) guidance submitted to Department of Education (DE) reflects range of our recommendations. The Commission is a member of NIABF.</p> <p>The Commission's Education - 'Priorities for Action', were disseminated by the Education Authority (EA) as part of its training for boards of governors. We also worked to encourage DE, Education Authority and others to capture appropriately disaggregated equality data on bullying and motivations by schools. Training being provided to schools by DE, including on equality recording requirements will contribute towards this.</p> <p>LGBT awareness and Anti-bullying weeks provided the opportunity for the Commission to highlight its priorities, particularly through social media. The Commission was able to highlight its anti-bullying priorities as part of an expert panel at the "Are the LGBTQ+ kids alright" conference.</p>
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2.2	<p>Address inequalities in attainment and access</p>		√		<p>Across the Education area work on report cards and formal action plans was disrupted by other priorities. Our work has centred on raising awareness of our policy positions and advocating for the necessary changes. As with our anti-bullying work, there is some evidence of this having effect.</p> <p>A number of these developments were in the areas of support for Traveller, Roma and Newcomer children, which is one of our priority areas.</p> <p>We worked to inform the development of Newcomer guidance and encourage review of the Traveller education policy. The Children and Young People's Strategy 2019-2029 includes a commitment to explore school experience and improve non-formal educational experience of newcomers; the Traveller and Roma communities. Steps have now also been taken by DE / others to provide and ensure update of dual language resources.</p> <p>We have engaged with the Intercultural Education Service reiterating calls for data analysis; and with DE officials, and Racial Equality subgroup members to shape work on 'Supporting Newcomer Pupils' Awareness of our position was maintained through input to the DE Newcomer reference group. We called on DE to ensure early review of its Traveller Policy.</p>
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						<p>We also worked to advocate for action to advance the provision of available, accessible, affordable and high-quality childcare and early-years provision. Working in partnership remains key, and we saw groups such as the Women's Policy Group call for change aligned to the Commission's recommendations.</p> <p>Other engagement on childcare and early years provision and on our recommendations for change took place with NIC ICTU, WPG and the Women's Caucus, the Democratic Unionist Party, Sinn Fein and the All Party Working Group on Childcare.</p> <p>The importance of data collection was a key focus in meetings arranged with representatives of the Department for Education, the Education Authority and its Intercultural Education Service.</p>
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Strategic Priority Area 3 Access and Participation

Business Plan objective	Assessment				Evidence for delivery / explanation for non-delivery
	Achieved or On Track	Broadly on track	Behind target and doubt about delivery	Not expected to be achieved	
3.1 Participation in public and political life	✓				<p>Although considerable progress has been made, further work is required to finalise the report card and action plan and help focus discussions with external partners. A programme of work to impact on outcome was delivered this year, in the areas of increasing women's participation and that of disabled people.</p> <p>The Commission finalised and published 'Participation in Public and Political Life' recommendations and priorities for action. Key recommendations were disseminated to a wide range of key stakeholders, including political parties. Some of these were reflected in the Women's Policy Group Manifesto and there was positive engagement with Women's Caucus and across the women's sector, seeking to develop partnership working on priorities for action.</p>

At the core of our partnership approach this year was our cooperation with the Commissioner for Public Appointments (CPANI), including in the area of disability. Together, with CPANI, we organised a disability-focused 'Demystifying Public Appointments' event to encourage and facilitate those with disabilities to seek public appointments and to apply for public appointments. Videos developed in support of the event were used to further spread the message across social media.

CPANI has committed to further partnership work including further disability focussed sessions to aid participation; and training for independent assessors.

We also engaged with the TEO Appointments Unit with regard the guidance provided to public authorities. Training is being arranged for Independent assessors, who participate in the recruitment of public appointees through CPANI. In support of this work, advice was provided to 74 public authorities to improve the quality of disability action plan measures, focusing on promoting participation for disabled people.

A briefing was provided to NI peers for the House of Lords debate brought by Lord Holmes on Government action to ensure public boards are more representative.

						<p>Again, in cooperation with CPANI, the Commission also partnered with, the Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA) and Reclaim the Agenda to organise an event to mark International Women's Day, which concentrated on women and participation in public life. Minister Deirdre Hargey, Minister for Communities, and the Commissioner for Public Appointments were keynote speakers at this event aimed at the women's sector.</p> <p>We partnered with Boardroom Apprentice to produce a range of videos with individuals which captured real life examples and is being promoted widely.</p>
3.2	Accessible facilities and services for disabled people		✓			<p>Work that has been delivered this year has included the publicity and follow up discussions with sector bodies, resulting from the settlement of discrimination complaints about disabled customers' access to services in the banking and tourism sectors. The latter has included engagement with Tourism NI to promote accessibility of its affiliated accommodation.</p> <p>Training on Every Customer Counts was delivered to sixteen outreach workers from Disability Action.</p>

3.3	Addressing housing needs and available, adapted housing for disabled people		✓		<p>Work on this report card re-prioritised pending further consideration in context of development of 20-21 Business Plan priorities.</p> <p>The Commission published Housing and Community policy recommendations and priorities for action early in the year. Much of our work over the rest of the year involved raising awareness of, and seeking to ensure endorsement for them, with key agencies and stakeholders, for example – the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and Department for Communities.</p>
3.4	Access to information and digital services		✓		<p>During the year, work was refocused on the delivery of new responsibilities for public bodies introduced by the Web Accessibility Regulations 2018 and which require the compliance of existing websites by September 2020. The draft action plan and report card are still to be finalised.</p> <p>This year, a Memorandum of Understanding was agreed with Cabinet Office’s Government Digital Service (GDS), which is the main monitoring and reporting body overseeing compliance with the regulations. The Commission has an enforcement role, through use of its existing powers. The effectiveness and resourcing of these arrangements are being kept under review.</p> <p>Considerable work has also been undertaken on the Commission’s own compliance with the Regulations and in the review of its accessibility statement.</p>

Strategic Priority Area 4 Mainstreaming and Championing Equality

Business Plan objective	Assessment				Evidence for delivery / explanation for non-delivery
	Achieved or On Track	Broadly on track	Behind target and doubt about delivery	Not expected to be achieved	
4.1 Mainstreaming equality	✓				<p>Our work to encourage mainstreaming equality in public policy focused on a number of key areas.</p> <p>The importance of high-level leadership for the effective implementation of the Section 75 duties and the importance of mainstreaming equality has been raised in meetings with Permanent Secretaries and with Policy Champions Network this year. The Commission now co-chairs TEO's Departmental Section 75 Forum.</p> <p>Throughout the year, the Commission utilised contacts with key stakeholders to raise awareness and encourage advocacy of key policy positions. This has been reinforced both in direct meetings with high-level officials and in meetings with the various fora on which the Commission is represented.</p>

These key issues have included:

- disability and race law reform;
- the extension of welfare mitigation payments with associated budget allocations;
- the review of the Personal Independence Payments (PIP) assessment system;
- the application of the Section 75 duties to the NI budget (2020-2021).

Underpinning the effective operation of the Section 75 duties is adequate data on equality groups. In partnership with the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research agency, signposting guidance has been developed. The Covid-19 crisis resulted in its launch being postponed until Q1 in 2020-21.

In addition to central government Departments, the Commission works with a range of other public bodies and their representative bodies to improve Section 75 practices. During this year, this included local government bodies and health sector bodies.

This is supported by training delivery and advice-giving. This year's work included a Section 75 training session delivered in partnership with the Centre for Applied Learning (CAL). Discussions are ongoing with CAL regarding the roll out of training to improve Section 75 practices. This included the provision of advice to the Project Board for NICS on the inclusion of Section 75 in its policy development training modules.

During the year, feedback on Section 75 Annual Progress Reports was provided to 57 public authorities.

The Commission approved the revised Procedures for Complaints and Investigations under Schedule 9 in September 2019, following public consultation earlier in the year. The final document and associated website materials were prepared and published in December, with a report on the Consultation. Stakeholders were notified by e-zine of the revised Procedures, which were being implemented through Q4. The strategic approach to investigations will be further developed in the 2020-21 Business Plan.

Work is ongoing to improve the information provided on the website for Section 75 complaints and investigations procedures. New revised guidelines uploaded to the Investigations section as pdf publication and publicised on social media and e-zine.

Development of a performance measurement framework for the Commission's actions on mainstreaming is now being incorporated into planned actions to develop the Commission's performance measures in the 2020-21 business year.

4.2	<p>Championing equality for all</p>	✓			<p>At the centre of much of our work on championing equality has been developments in the delivery of our communications. This year has seen an increased focus on working in partnership with key partners and the continuation of the progress in developing our use of social media.</p> <p>We now have 7,788 twitter followers, an increase of 12% this year. Other platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram are growing more quickly, but from a much smaller base. Website traffic increased this year by 23% and we now have 10,200 subscribers to our ezines. Our use of traditional media outlets resulted in coverage generating more than 22 million opportunities to see.</p> <p>The central event marking the 20th Anniversary of the NI Human Rights Commission and ourselves, was a public speech on identity politics by Lord Patten. The event, attended by 180 people was widely covered by the press, recorded and re-used by other stakeholders and media outlets. Live streaming of events has been a useful innovation this year.</p> <p>The Commission continued to champion equality in key policy areas over the year, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the need to ensure no regression of equality rights as a result of the UK leaving the EU;
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						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the importance of compliance with international obligations in respect of abortion law framework in NI and of ensuring equality in marriage for same sex couples, both commitments arising from the NI (Executive Formation) Act 2019; and - the need for and adequacy of protection for equality groups from Hate Crime, in the context of the Hate Crime Law Review. <p>We also continued to highlight the need for Government to implement the UNCRPD and the recommendations set out in the Concluding Observations. The need for a disability strategy, for a regional disability forum and for sufficient funding for Disabled People's organisations was also highlighted throughout the year, in various fora.</p> <p>Traveller engagement and work on championing the rights of Travellers was developed during the year and was focused on the NIHE Strategy on Traveller Engagement and its Traveller accommodation needs assessment Steering Group and participation on the Public Health Agency's Travellers' Forum.</p> <p>To highlight the multi-dimensional nature of the inequalities faced by Travellers an infographic was developed and publicised. The Chief Commissioner attended Craigavon Travellers' 20th Anniversary event.</p>
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						Scoping of project on assessing equality matters in Northern Ireland is behind schedule and will be taken forward in 2020-21. Public Opinion survey work undertaken in December 2019 was publicised.
						The Commission continued to deliver its statutory advisory, investigatory and complaints-handling obligations, under the various anti-discrimination provisions and under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act.

Strategic Priority Area 5 Resourcing and Supporting the Plan

Business Plan objective	Assessment	Evidence for delivery / explanation for non-delivery					
		Achieved or On Track	Not expected to be achieved				
5.1 Effectively supporting and resourcing the Commission's business plan	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Achieved or On Track</td> <td>Broadly on track</td> <td>Behind target and doubt about delivery</td> <td>Not expected to be achieved</td> </tr> </table>	Achieved or On Track	Broadly on track	Behind target and doubt about delivery	Not expected to be achieved	✓	At the year-end there was an overall underspend of £48k (0.9%). This was largely due to delays in recruitment of posts this year. The Commission remained within the target parameters set by TEO.
Achieved or On Track	Broadly on track	Behind target and doubt about delivery	Not expected to be achieved				

5.2	<p>Ensuring effective governance and internal control</p>	✓			<p>Annual Report and Accounts for 2018-19 were certified and laid in line with the schedule agreed with the Northern Ireland Audit Office. The resultant Report to those charged with governance identified one Priority 2 and three priority 3 issues.</p> <p>All of the three internal audit reviews undertaken this year - Finance, IT and Advice and Compliance Directorate, provided Satisfactory assurance.</p> <p>On a number of occasions throughout the year, the Commission's Audit and Risk Committee reviews a Governance Statement prepared by the Accounting Officer and sees the quarterly assurance statement submitted to TEO.</p> <p>The Commission has considered reports into its board effectiveness during the course of the year.</p> <p>The Commission has a new business improvement strategy in place this year and an ongoing programme of work, which includes preparing for an Investor in People (IIP) assessment and making initial preparations for an EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) re-accreditation next year.</p> <p>2019-20 staff training programme completed.</p>
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