

**EQUALITY COMMISSION
FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND**

Publication Scheme

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Reviewed May 2018

Next Review May 2020



1. Introduction

This publication scheme is a guide to the information routinely published by the Equality Commission. It gives a description of the classes or types of information that are routinely available from the Commission.

How do I get information?

A wide range of the information can be found on our website at www.equalityni.org. Where information is not on the website or if you cannot access the website, the Commission will arrange for you to have the material sent to you or for you to visit the Commission's offices, if that is easier

In most cases immediate access can be provided via email but in cases where the information is being sent out to you by post, this will be undertaken within 5 working days of receipt of your request. Should you seek a visit to our offices, or should this be required due to the nature of the information, you will be contacted within 5 working days to arrange a mutually convenient appointment.

The Commission can also make information available in a range of alternative formats, for example, large print, tape, braille, etc. Information is usually provided in the language in which it is held. Some of our key publications are also available in languages other than English.

Information held by the Commission, which is not provided under this Scheme, can be requested in writing and its provision will be considered in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, within 20 working days of the request.

How much will the information cost?

The Commission's aim is to make as much information as possible, freely available and readily accessible. There may be a charge for photocopying, postage, and packing of hard copies, particularly where large volumes of material are involved. Where this is the case, costs will be kept to a minimum and you will be advised in advance of the material

being sent. Payment will be requested in advance of the material being provided.

Anyone seeking information that cannot be found on the website should contact the Commission's Secretariat at:

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DP

Tel: 02890 500 582
Textphone: 02890 500 589

Or simply email the Commission's Secretariat team at secretariat@equalityni.org

The Stationery Office

Further information of interest to you may be published by The Stationery Office (TSO) and may be viewed free of charge on the HMSO website (www.hmso.gov.uk). Printed copies are available to order (upon payment of the applicable price) from the Stationery Office's website (www.tso.co.uk/bookshop), and TSO shops in major towns and cities across the UK.

Feedback

We have published this scheme to fulfil our obligations under Section 19 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and also ensure that you, the public, are more aware of the type of information which is available from the Commission.

The purpose of the Act is to promote greater openness by public authorities. It is important therefore that the scheme meets your needs. Our aim is therefore to make the information easy for you to find and use. We welcome suggestions for additional information that you feel should be included or how we can make the information easier to obtain.

We would also welcome suggestions as to how the publications themselves could be improved.

Any questions, comments, suggestions or complaints about this scheme should be sent in writing to the Commission's Freedom of Information and Data Protection Co-ordinator.

For more information about this scheme contact:

Eoin O Neill
Freedom of Information and Data Protection Co-ordinator
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast BT2 7DP
Tel: 02890 890859 Textphone: 02890 500 589 Fax: 02890 329227
Email: eoneill@equalityni.org

2. Your right to information

In most cases you will be able to obtain the information you seek simply by consulting the Commission's website or contacting us (see contact details above).

In the event that you do need to seek to obtain information from us under the Freedom of Information Act, here is what you should do:

Making a request

- * Make your request in writing or email
- * The request should contain:
 - details about the specific information you are seeking
 - details about who you are and how you can be contacted. In the event of complex requests or potentially sensitive information a telephone number at which you can be contacted would be helpful.
 - how you would like to receive the information, eg, as a copy, summary or by physically inspecting the record. Please identify any accessibility requirements you may have and if you need to receive the information in an alternative format, eg, large print, tape, Braille, etc.
- * Make your request to our Freedom of Information and Data Protection Co-ordinator honeill@equalityni.org or at the address given below.

Our response

The Commission will respond to your request promptly and, in any event, within 20 working days.

3. Making a complaint

Overall responsibility for the operation of the Commission's policies and procedures with regard to the provision of information under Freedom of Information, Data Protection and access to Government legislation is held by the Commission's Head of Corporate Services, Keith Brown.

If you have a complaint about the Commission's information policies or the operation of this Publication Scheme, please write to or email:

Keith Brown
Head of Corporate Services
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast BT2 7DP

Telephone: 02890 500 600
Textphone: 02890 500 589
Fax: 02890 331 544

Email: kbrown@equalityni.org

4. Further information about your rights

Further information about Freedom of Information and Data Protection can be obtained from:

Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Information Line: 01625 545745
Website: www.ico.gov.uk

5. Classes of information

This section of the publication scheme lists the classes of information that the Commission produces both internally and externally. The classification is based on the guidance contained in the Information Commissioners model publication scheme for Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs).

The information includes material which has been conventionally published in hard copy, material that is available on the website or, on request, in paper copy, and information which we use internally, for example, employment policies and information used for corporate governance.

The Commission has an ongoing programme to place much of the information on its website and much of it already is. Any of the information, whether on the website or not, can be made readily available to the public.

Our information has been classified under the following headings:

- Who we are and what we do
- What We Spend and How We Spend It
- What are the Commission's Priorities and How are We Doing
- How the Commission Makes Decisions
- Policies and Procedures
- Lists and Registers
- The Services we offer

6. Who we are and what we do

Our role and remit

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is an executive non departmental public body (NDPB) sponsored by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. The Commission was 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 Disabled People (UNCPRD) with the role of promoting, protecting and monitoring the implementation of the Convention.

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

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

- Equal Pay Act (NI) 1970, as amended
- Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976, as amended
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended
- Race Relations (NI) Order 1997, as amended

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

The legislation can be accessed at www.opsi.gov.uk

The Commission's Sponsoring Department is the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. The Commission has agreed a Management Statement with OFMDFM. This sets out the relationship between the two organisations and defines the financial and administrative framework within which the Commission operates. It is supplemented by a Financial Memorandum. Both documents are available on the Commission's website.

The Commission has agreed Memorandum of Understanding with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY), The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) and the Community Relations Council (CRC). These have been placed on our website.

Our structure

The Commission consists of a Chief Commissioner, a Deputy Chief Commissioner and up to 18 Commissioners appointed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. A list of serving Commissioners is available on the Commission's website.

Commissioners establish the overall strategic direction for the organisation, set the policy framework and oversee the delivery of planned results against objectives and targets.

The Commission's Chief Executive has been designated as the Accounting Officer and the Management Executive are detailed below.

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

[See our Organisational Structure](#)

7. What We Spend and How We Spend It

Financial Information

The general framework within which we manage our financial arrangements is set out in the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum agreed with OFMDFM and both these documents are published on our website.

Details on the financial outturns is contained in our yearly Annual Report and Accounts. The Annual Report contains a full Remuneration Report, which sets out details of payments and allowances to Commissioners and senior staff.

Our Quarterly Finance Reports to Commission can also be found on the website and includes the quarterly budget outturns and variances from anticipated spend.

The Commission's financial system can report on expenditure by individual objective, which may allow the identification of specific projects or events. Specific requests may be made through our Freedom of Information and Data Protection Co-ordinator.

Although not civil servants, Commission staff are graded and paid on the basis of Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) general terms and conditions and have equivalent pension arrangements. Staff allowances, such as payment for travel and subsistence are also based on NICS arrangements. NICS pay scales and subsistence rates are available on the DfP website.

Corporate and Business Plans

The Commission's Corporate and annual Business Plans can be found on the website as can its Annual Report and Accounts. The Commission's performance against key targets is reported each year in the Annual Report. The Commission also prepares quarterly progress reports and these reports are available through the Commission's website.

External Performance reviews

The Commission has accreditation through Investors in People, Lexcel, and ISO. All of the compliance and other reviews are publicly available, through the Commission's Secretariat team. (Contact Details above).

The Commission is subject to periodic formal review undertaken on behalf of OFMDFM. The most recent review was 2005. A copy of this is available through the Commission's Secretariat.

8. How the Commission Makes Decisions

Minutes of Commission and senior level meetings

The Commission will provide, approved minutes and supporting papers of the Commission, approved minutes will be available for all committees. These will be published following the next meeting when the minutes are approved. On the same basis the Commission will also make available minutes of its Executive Team meetings.

Questions relating to these and requests for additional information or supporting material should be raised in the first instance with the Secretariat team.

9. Policies and Procedures

The Commission has a series of Policies and procedures for the conduct of Commission business and for the provision of services. The following information is available on request from the Commission Secretariat.

Employment Policies and Procedures

- * Policies and procedures concerning the recruitment, selection and development of staff including job descriptions and personnel specifications used for recruitment purposes
- * Policies and procedures giving effect to the Commission's commitment to equality of opportunity - Equal Opportunities Policy, Harassment Policy, Joint Declaration of Protection,

Policy for persons with criminal convictions, Career break policy, Job-share procedures, Flexible Working Policy

- * Learning and development policies
- * Policies for regulating the conduct of staff and dealing with their concerns - grievance policy, disciplinary policy, Code of Conduct, JCNC constitution, facilities agreement.
- * Policies for the protection of Commission staff and others - Health and Safety Policy, evacuation procedure, Statement on a smoke free workplace, Managing Absence policy.

This information will not include information about particular members of staff and other individuals.

Other information and guidance on staff terms and conditions of employment can be found in the NICS Staff Handbook which is available from the DfP website.

Customer service

The Commission's complaint's procedure can be found on the website. This document contains information on how to raise a complaint about our Publications Scheme. The Commission also undertakes regular customer surveys, which are available on request from the Secretariat.

Records management and personal data policies

The Commission's website contains dedicated Freedom of Information pages. The pages include the Policies and Procedures for responding to requests made under the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts and the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

The Commission has a Records Management Policy and this is available on request from the Secretariat.

10. Lists and Registers

Public registers and registers held as public records

The Commission maintains a Register of Trades, Businesses and other activities in which people are employed.

Under Article 47 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, the Commission is required to provide facilities for making the entries contained in the above register available for inspection by members of the public during normal office hours and free of charge. Individuals are also entitled to a copy of the information in all or any of the entries in the Register, upon payment of such reasonable fees the Commission may fix.

A hard copy of the Register is available for public consultation from the Commission's offices during normal working hours. Additionally, the Register can be consulted and downloaded from our website.

Single copies of individual entries are provided free of charge.

Asset registers and information on the asset register

The Commission's only capital assets are its IT equipment and furniture and fittings. Information on its assets are reported each year in the notes to its Financial Statements, contained in the Annual Report which is available on the Commission's website.

Disclosure logs, including the register of gifts and hospitality, any register of interest kept and other lists required by law

The Commission maintains Registers of Senior Staff and Commissioners Interests and a Gifts and Hospitality Register, which are inspected annually by the NIAO and available for public inspection.

11. The Services we Offer

Regulatory responsibilities

Class 1: Statutory Guidance

Under Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Commission is required to issue guidelines as to the form and content of Equality Schemes, following approval by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The Guide to the implementation of the statutory duties on public authorities arising from Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 is available free of charge from the Commission and is downloadable from its website.

The Commission is also empowered under the various pieces of legislation for which it has responsibilities to provide and maintain Codes of Practice. These cover the promotion of equality of opportunity in employment and other areas. Most Codes of Practice issued by the Commission are available free of charge in booklet form or via our website. A charge may be made for requests for multiple copies.

The Code of Practice for the elimination of discrimination in the field of employment against disabled persons or persons who have a disability is available from The Stationery Office (£9.95), as is the Code of Practice: Duties of trade organisations to their disabled members and applicants (£12.50).

Services for Public Authorities and Registered Employers

This information covers the guidance materials produced by the Commission to assist public bodies and registered employers comply with their statutory obligations and the information supplied under statute by those bodies to the Commission. It also covers guidance about the procedures we ourselves use for discharging our duties.

- * Compliance guidance on registration, monitoring and reviews of workforce compositions and employment practices under the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998. This includes copies of documentation used for registration and submission of

monitoring information, and materials prepared to assist with Article 55 Reviews and procedures for the audit of information received.

- * Information on the outcomes of annual monitoring returns made by registered concerns. The information made available will comply with the confidentiality requirements laid down in the Fair Employment and Treatment Order.
- * Information on the procedures for approving equality schemes submitted by designated public authorities.

Services for members of the public

This information includes:

- * Guidance about exercising individual rights under disability discrimination, fair employment and treatment, sex discrimination and equal pay, race relations and sexual orientation provisions, and about the assistance available from the Commission.
- * Guidance about complaints arising from failures of public authorities to comply with schemes approved under Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
- * Policies and procedures for processing applications and regulating the exercise of our enforcement powers.
- * Statistical information relating to our complaints casework.
- * Reports of formal investigations undertaken under the relevant sections of the specific legal provisions covering disability, fair employment, race relations and sex discrimination.

Advice and guidance

Under this heading is a wide range of information and advisory materials covering all aspects of the Commission's remit. Most of this material is available free of charge in hard copy. In the case of more recent publications, they are also available on our website. A small number of publications have been priced. A charge may also be made where multiple copies of publications are requested. All current publications are available from our website.

Media releases

All news releases and a selection of speeches made by the Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive are contained on the Commission's website.