Equality for All

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for All

Equality Commission
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

STATEMENT ON KEY INEQUALITIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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October 2007

Foreword

Northern Ireland is living through a time of great hope and of excitement about the future. There is a new political environment; a new approach to sharing; an openness to work with former opponents; greater diversity in the population; optimism about the economic future; increasing job opportunities; greater opportunities generally – for self-advancement and for self-expression; people feel part of a wider world.

It is wonderful and right to delight in these developments whose recital is so starkly different from the weal and woe that many might have thought of, however wrongly, as the full story of Northern Ireland and the life its people led not too long ago. Wonderful, too, to emerge from conflict into a society where, although all is not yet perfect and many of the legacies of conflict are still with us, so much that is positive is now part of the real picture.

And that is the key point. All that is good and affirming and positive is but part of the picture. We live in a society where much inequality still exists and where not everybody has an equal opportunity to develop their talents to the full. For some, that can be difficult to understand or to accept as also it can be difficult to have a vision of equality that is broader than and more comprehensive than the issues of equality, still important though they be, that were particularly linked to aspects of the period of conflict.

That is what this Statement seeks to do - to convey a fuller extent of what equality means and to identify those areas where so many people encounter real inequality in their daily lives. Its purpose is to remind us of an enduring – in some cases new and growing – reality and to call on all of us who have any measure of responsibility for the present and future of Northern Ireland to keep these inequalities ever-present in our consciousness. Not so as to minimise the real achievements being made but so as to ensure that these very achievements can play their part in eliminating inequality.

That many are denied the opportunity to share fully in the richness of contemporary life is all too evident around us. Very many children are born into a life which will struggle to give them their basic requirements let alone full equality of opportunity. The life-enhancing and transformative power of education is absent from the experience of far too many children

in Northern Ireland. Disabled people continue to be confronted by very real obstacles in realising their capacity to participate in daily life. Too often, to be a woman is to face inequality in pay and income and to bear an unequal share of the responsibility of childcare. Those with mental health difficulties are particularly vulnerable and can face isolation that erodes opportunity. Older people, too, risk isolation and a perception that theirs is a limited potential to be part of society. Those who are different, because of race, religion, sexual orientation, can face hostility and attack. Geography can have a significant impact on securing or diminishing access to important services. And so the list goes on.

Everything has a consequence. All policy decisions by Government, by public authorities, by large private companies, whether international or national; all decisions by communities, by small companies, by individuals – all our actions have consequences that affect others, whether we wish it so or not. This is a call to those with responsibility to remember the reality of inequality, to have it in mind in the decisions they take and to adjust or modify those decisions so that they can reduce its consequences in the lives of people.

Investment decisions, by private investors or by public authorities, also have their consequences. Public investment is not neutral in terms of its impact on people and it is not only about the economy. All investment has social consequences and, while recognising the realities of the market and the entitlements of individual investors, this statement calls, particularly in the case of the investment of public moneys, for the active integration of equality of opportunity and good relations in the investment decisions being made.

It is also well to remember that in many cases the only investment needed to improve peoples' chances in life is the opening of our minds to new possibilities.

The inequalities that this statement addresses are very real. Their consequences for the lives of individuals, families and communities are also very real. They act as profound and persistent barriers to equality of opportunity. These barriers are exacerbated by poverty and socio-economic disadvantage. And although neither of these finds expression in equality legislation they cannot be absent from the framing of public policy or from the decision-making of public authorities. At the very least, they

act as major obstacles to achieving equality of opportunity for those categories that the law recognises.

In making any society a more equal place and a place where individuals and groups of people can relate well one to the other, there are some fundamental principles that must animate our thinking and our actions:

- All human beings are entitled to equal respect

- Equality of opportunity is an entitlement that derives from our inherent humanity

- Nobody is just an economic unit whose dignity, value or rights are determined or measured in terms of contributions to the economy

- The real value of a successful economy is in the opportunity for growth and development it offers individuals

- The test of our response to a successful economy is the extent to which we use its bounty to give people equal opportunities to share in it

- Difference is a source of richness not the basis for unfair treatment

- Treating everybody as if we were all identical is neither the meaning nor the measure of equality

- The persistence of inequalities diminishes us all.

This statement is neither a counsel of perfection nor an aspirational pipe-dream. It is a hard-headed and realistic reminder that equality of opportunity is far from being realised, that there are very many in this society whose lives are blighted by inequality. And it is a call to awareness and to action so that the benefits of growing peace and prosperity be used to improve equality of opportunity and, thereby, to improve and enrich the lives of many.

Contents

1   Introduction

This statement on key inequalities seeks to highlight the range and breadth of the equality agenda in Northern Ireland and to set out clearly and unequivocally some of the inequalities which remain to be addressed. While acknowledging that much progress has been made towards achieving equality in Northern Ireland over the last few decades, the quality of the lives of everyone here depends upon accelerating progress towards greater equality for all.

The Commission is launching this statement during the year designated by the European Union as European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, which aims to launch a major debate on the benefits of diversity for societies across the European Union and to promote equal opportunities generally. It's clear that, across Europe, many EU citizens feel that discrimination is widespread although this differs from country to country.

The publication of this statement also coincides with significant political change in Northern Ireland as well as developments in the equality field. This includes the prospect of single equality legislation for Northern Ireland and the refocusing of work on the equality and good relations duties established by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 following the Commission's recent review of the effectiveness of the duties.

There is significant opportunity now to make a difference and we want to use this statement on key inequalities to influence those who can make an impact on the daily lives of people here by addressing inequalities. We call on political leaders and public representatives, policy-makers, public authorities, the private sector, churches, organisations, community leaders and others to take note of these inequalities and to take steps to address them.

For our part, we will continue to use the full range of our powers and duties in terms of promotion, advice and enforcement and we are committed to working with others where we can to effect the necessary changes. Some of the issues highlighted in this document are ones which the Commission is engaged in tackling on a daily basis; others are inequalities which fall more clearly within the remit of others to address.

We will continue to identify particular priority areas for our work and we will engage in public debate so that we can be explicit about the Commission's priorities for action and where we will seek to add value to the work of others. We plan an ongoing engagement on the inequalities highlighted in this statement as we work towards a society in which the pursuit of equality and good relations for everyone becomes a reality.

2   Summary of Key Inequalities

The Commission has considered six broad areas which it believes must be addressed if we are to progress towards realising equality of opportunity in Northern Ireland society: educational under-achievement, employment, access to and availability of health and social care, housing and communities, participation in public life and the impact of prejudice.

In identifying these six broad areas, we have been guided by evidence of persistent inequalities that have not been notably improved either by legislation or by other public policy intervention.

Education plays a key role in determining a person's life chances and opportunities in terms of social and economic mobility. There is clear evidence of differential attainment by gender; of some differential in subject choices by gender; and of particular issues for Travellers, disabled students and for children from poorer households. For children from poor households, lower levels of educational attainment result in an ongoing cycle of deprivation.

Employment is a key driver of economic and social well being and presents one of the key routes to social mobility and inclusion. In Northern Ireland, successive government policies and strategies have repeatedly stressed the importance of improving access to, and progress within, employment. Alongside this, evolving and expanding anti-discrimination legislation has sought to provide protection from discrimination in relation to employment. Yet inequalities persist across all of the protected grounds.

Health and social care is fundamental to a person's quality of life and general well-being. According to recent NI research[1], the three main determinants of health inequality are related to socio-economic/environmental circumstances; lifestyle and health behaviour; and access to effective health or social care. It is of concern that the last of these three continues to prevail as an inequality in our society.

Housing is a basic human need and provides the foundation for family and community life. In many areas of Northern Ireland housing continues to be segregated on the basis of community background, particularly in

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[1] DHSSPS (2004) *Equalities and Inequalities in Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland*.

the social housing sector. Such segregation in housing polarises communities and perpetuates segregation in social and other spheres.

Participation in civic and public life, reflective of our increasingly diverse population, helps facilitate a more informed policy decision-making process. Despite recognition of this, there remains persistent and considerable under-representation of many groups in public, political and civic life, resulting in further marginalisation of such groups and a range of services that do not give expression to the experiences of people in those groups.

Prejudice leads to behaviour which sustains inequality, exclusion from employment and services and which restricts choices. It can also lead to discrimination and harassment. Although prejudice can manifest itself in a range of ways from attitudes through to behaviours and actions, one marker of the impact that prejudice can have on society is to the extent of hate crime and similar incidents. For example, statistics produced by the Police Service of Northern Ireland[2] show an increase in the number of racist incidents.

Inevitably there are significant overlaps between and amongst these areas but the aim of the Commission in publishing this at present is to identify and highlight some of the most pressing inequalities which need to be addressed and to encourage others to act.

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[2] PSNI (2007) *Statistical Report No. 3, Hate Incidents and Crimes 1 April 2006 – 31 March 2007.*

3   Inequalities in Educational Achievement

Education plays a key role in determining a person's life chances and opportunities in terms of social and economic mobility. Those with fewer qualifications and skills are disadvantaged in civic/community life and when competing for available employment opportunities. In this context, poor educational attainment can be seen as a clear barrier to labour market entry and progression. There is clear evidence of differential attainment by gender; of some differential in subject choices by gender; and of particular issues for Travellers, disabled students and for children from poorer households all of which serve to enhance the cycle of deprivation. This requires intervention from the Commission and others given the impact this has on daily lives.

In terms of **attainment by gender**, males leaving school tend to be less qualified than females and are less likely to progress to higher education. For example, in 2005/06, 38% of boys left school with at least one A-level, compared with 55% of girls while 6% of boys left school with no GCSE qualifications compared to 3% of girls. After leaving school only 56% of boys progressed to further or higher education compared to 75% of girls (2005/06). 60% of all students enrolled at the NI universities are women (2005/06)[3].

In relation to **subject choice by gender**, while the very stark differences in subject choices between girls and boys have lessened in some areas – in 1970, girls comprised only 20% of A level Chemistry entrants, now 54%; of Maths, 22% in 1970, now 45% - differences remain in others areas (for example, 97% of those studying 'Home Economics' are female compared to only 35% of those studying 'Economics')[4].

Equality Commission research into **gender stereotyping** in education[5] highlighted the extent of this problem, noting that it was feeding into career choice and equal pay issues later in life. Teachers recognised the issue as significant but reported that they were unable to prioritise it in view of resource issues and changes within schools.

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[3] DETINI (2007) Women in Northern Ireland.
[4] CCEA (2007), Overall Examination Statistics (Provisional) – Summer, Available at www.rewardinglearning.com/statistics/
[5] Equality Commission (2002) *Betty the Builder, Neil the Nurse. Sex-typing of Occupations in Primary Schools*.

In relation to the attainment levels of **Traveller children**, of the 31 Traveller pupils measured at Key Stage 3 in 2004/05, only 19% of them achieved level 5 or above in English compared to an average of 74% of all pupils[5]; At GCSE level, 92% of the Traveller community have no GCSEs or equivalent[6] (compared with 5% of all NI school leavers). Of those Traveller children who did sit GCSE exams, Department of Education (DENI) statistics record that fewer than five of 41 pupils (less than 12%) achieved 5+ GCSE grades A-C across the years 2003/04 and 2004/05[7]. This compares with 64% of all Northern Ireland pupils achieving GCSE grades A-C in 2005/06[8]. It is generally accepted that educational attainment is linked to employment outcomes and thus the figures noted above may contribute to the fact that only 11% of Travellers are in paid employment while the 70% of Travellers who are economically active have had no paid work since 1991[9] .

In terms of children from other **Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities,** there is a lack of data on the numbers and educational attainment levels of these children. However, there have been concerns identified in the adequacy of support offered to date for those children for whom English is an additional language. DENI has recently reviewed its English as an Additional Language (EAL) provisions to guide schools in developing ways to make sure that children and young people who have English as an additional language can get access to the curriculum and achieve their full potential.

In terms of **disabled students'** attainment levels, there is an extremely limited amount of data available on educational outcomes for people with disabilities and the terminology of existing data sets is ambivalent. In terms of the population, over two-fifths (41%) of disabled people had no qualifications, more than twice the proportion of non-disabled people (17%). People with a disability are less qualified than those without; for example, 13% of disabled people held higher qualifications compared with 27% of non-disabled people[10]. Recent research[11] noted that "People with a learning disability are the largest group of persons with a disability aged under 65 years" (16,366 in 2003) and that "in future years the numbers will

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[6] OFMDFM. (2000). Final Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group.
[7] DENI. *Indicators on Traveller Education.* Available via www.deni.gov.uk
[8] DENI. *Qualifications and destinations of school leavers 2005/06.* Available at www.deni.gov.uk
[9] Pavee Point Fact Sheet. *Travellers in Northern Ireland.* Available at www.paveepoint.ie
[10] DETINI (2007) *Labour Force Survey (April-June 2007)*.
[11] McConkey, R. (2006). University of Ulster. *Accessibility of healthcare information for people with a learning disability. A review and discussion paper.*

increase with more living into old age. Often those with mild or borderline learning disabilities are identified as children, but on leaving school most merge [back] into the general population and no longer make demands on services".

It is vital that the distinction between disabled children and children with Special Educational Needs is recognised and that the different needs of all these children are addressed. While not all children with disabilities have statements of Special Educational Needs, the SEN process does provide a mechanism to prescribe a child's educational needs, and to set out steps to meet them.

Statistics on educational achievement have indicated concerns about underachievement among **working class pupils and in particular working class Protestant boys[12]**. In 2001, research commissioned by OFMDFM[13] concluded that the educational non-progressor was most likely to be a Protestant working class male; 29% of Protestant pupils (boys and girls) who were entitled to free school meals (FSM) achieved 5+ GCSEs A*-C or higher (or equivalent) compared with 42% of Roman Catholic working class pupils.

In terms of **looked after children**, children in the care of the state in Northern Ireland are 10 times more likely than school leavers in general to leave without gaining *any qualifications at all* (half of all care leavers (51%) left school without gaining any qualifications, compared with 5% of all Northern Ireland school leavers). In addition, the unemployment level among care leavers was 30%, 6 times the rate among all school leavers in Northern Ireland (5%) in 2001/02[14].

With regard to children of different **sexual orientations,** while anecdotal evidence and research reports such as that by shOUT[15] identify homophobic bullying as a significant issue in schools, little firm evidence currently exists about the potential relationship between this and educational attainment. There is thus considerable potential to examine this issue, however complex it may be.

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[12] Free School Meal entitlement is used as a proxy indicator of deprivation as specific data on pupil's class background are not recorded in official DENI databases.
[13] OFMDFM (2001) *Report on Participation Rates in Further and Higher Education*.
[14] DHSSPS NI (2007) *Care Matters in Northern Ireland: Consultation Document*.
[15] shOUT (2003) *The Needs of Young People in NI who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender.*

4   Inequalities relating to Employment

It is generally accepted that improving access to, and progression within, employment is seen in public policy as a key driver of economic and social wellbeing and presents a key route to improved social mobility and inclusion as well as a route out of poverty. In Northern Ireland, successive government policies and strategies have repeatedly stressed the importance of improving access to, and progress within, employment. Alongside this, evolving and expanding anti-discrimination legislation has sought to increase protection from discrimination in relation to employment.

Northern Ireland's economy grew faster than that of any other UK region in the 1990s, with the creation of over 100,000 new jobs[16] and unemployment levels falling considerably (3.7% unemployment rate, July 2007[17]). Despite the employment rate in NI being at an historical high, it remains lower that that of any other UK region[18] and there exists a higher share of workless households (21% compared to the UK average of 16%)[19].

Over the last 30 years a central focus of employment debates in Northern Ireland has undoubtedly been in relation to labour market participation by **community background**. While the Equality Commission has since it inception focused on fairness in employment across all equality grounds, much of the public debate has remained focused on participation by community background.

In 2005, 'fair employment: a generation on'[20] sought to review progress and set out the remaining challenges in relation to fair employment. The research found that there had been a substantial improvement in the employment profile of Roman Catholics, most marked in the public sector but not confined to it. The authors noted that there had been a considerable increase in the numbers of those working in integrated workplaces, at a time when public housing, for example, remained highly segregated.

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[16] DETINI (2004) *The Future of Private Services in Northern Ireland Final Report*. Available at: www.detini.gov.uk[16]
[17] DETINI (2007) *Labour Force Survey April-June*. Available at: www.detini.gov.uk
[18] DETNI (2007)*The Northern Ireland Economic Bulletin*
[19] DETNI (2007)*The Northern Ireland Economic Bulletin.*
[20] Osborne R.D.; Shuttleworth, I.G.; (2005) *Fair Employment in Northern Ireland: A Generation On.* Blackstaff. Belfast.

The book also noted that the fair employment debate was now more complex than a generation ago and, while recognising the success in bringing about a convergence of participation rates, it highlighted the need for a closer focus on differentials such as educational attainment and aspirations between and within communities and on emerging and existing patterns of Protestant and Roman Catholic under-representation in the workforce. When aggregated, annual Employer Monitoring returns supplied to the Commission display community differentials in specific sectors, locations and occupations compared to what might be expected when compared to estimates of the aggregate community composition of those available for work across Northern Ireland.

While these aggregate differentials exist, the Commission is also mindful that fair participation must be considered at the level of the individual employer and workplace location and thus recognises that a fuller understanding of these apparent sectoral patterns will only come from individual considerations of fair participation by employers as part of their triennial review process under Article 55 of the Fair Employment and Treatment Order**.**

In November 2005, OFMDFM published a report considering Labour Market Dynamics[21] which sought to examine recent changes in the labour market. The authors noted improvements (and challenges emerging and remaining) in relation to fair employment broadly mirroring the findings noted above. They also noted that such improvements by community background were in contrast to more marked and persistent inequalities in relation to gender and disability.

Indeed, while labour market outcomes by **gender** have shown improvement over time, scope still remains both in terms of improving the accessibility of employment and of ensuring progression within employment, into a wider range of occupations and of grades.

Thirty years after the Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 and the Equal Pay Act 1970:

- Differences in occupational profiles remains an issue with almost a third of males in the monitored NI workforce (32.1%) located in the higher 'managerial' SOC groups (1-3) compared with just over one

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[21] DTZ Pieda Consulting (2005) *Report on Labour Market Dynamics.*

quarter of females (27%)[22]. In addition, some 20% of employed males are in skilled trades - the sample size of women in this occupation group was too small to provide a reliable estimate. In contrast, only 6% of males are in administrative/clerical occupations, compared with 24% of females[23].

- Although the hourly pay gap for full time work between men and women continues to narrow, in April 2006, females working full-time had median annual earnings of £19,607, over 11% less than the equivalent male figure of £21,849[24].

- However, the part-time pay gap remains significantly higher. Research into the retail sector[25] in Northern Ireland concluded that there is a large gender pay gap in this sector in the order of 30 percentage points. This reflects complex factors such as occupational segregation, under-representation of women in management and the higher proportion of women working part-time (almost two in five (39%) female employees work part-time[26] compared with 6% of male employees[27]).

- The unequal sharing of care responsibilities means that of those females who are economically inactive, almost half (45%) are unavailable for work due to family/home commitments[28].

- For males, over half of those unemployed in Northern Ireland (54%) were long-term unemployed. 28% of unemployed females were long-term unemployed.[29]

- There is emerging evidence[30] of high job exit rates among lone parents, the majority of whom are women, particularly in their first

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[22] Equality Commission (2006) *Monitoring Report No. 16 A Profile of the Northern Ireland Workforce: Summary of Monitoring Returns.*
[23] DETINI (2007), *Women in Northern Ireland: Labour Market Statistics Bulletin*., Belfast. (p.9.). Available at: http://www.detini.gov.uk/cgi-bin/downdoc?id=3173
[24] DETINI (2006) *Northern Ireland Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2006*..
[25] Dignan, T. (2003) *Gender and Pay in the Information Technology and Retail sectors in Northern Ireland.* Equality Commission: Belfast.
[26] Defined as less than 16 hours per week.
[27] DETINI (2007), *Women in Northern Ireland: Labour Market Statistics Bulletin*., Belfast. (p.7.). Available at: http://www.detini.gov.uk/cgi-bin/downdoc?id=3173
[28] DETINI (2007), *Women in Northern Ireland: Labour Market Statistics Bulletin*., Belfast. (p.3.). Available at: http://www.detini.gov.uk/cgi-bin/downdoc?id=3173
[29] DETINI (2007) *Women in Northern Ireland: Labour Market Statistics Bulletin,* Belfast. (p.12.).

year of employment. Low pay, especially when linked to part-time work and ill health were found to be important contributing factors.

- Women are more likely to be reliant on means tested benefits, and experience greater barriers to economic independence and employment, resulting in more women working part time, in less skilled work, with poorer access to training and progression and ultimately poorer access to pensions and contributions based benefits.[31]

- Difficulties in accessing affordable, quality childcare further exacerbates the difficulties experienced by those (predominately women) who wish to re-enter the labour market. Despite a 7% increase in the number of places available since 1996, Northern Ireland continues to have one of the lowest levels of childcare provision within the UK with only 92.5 day nursery places per 1,000 children aged 0-4 years (based on 2005 mid-year estimates), compared with 195.5 in England in 2006[32].

Gender related matters form the highest proportion of queries to the Commission's Legal helpline. During the period 1 April 2001 – 31 March 2007, the Commission recorded 13,917 legal enquiries[33] with the largest number relating to gender (35%). Of these, pregnancy and maternity (16%) formed the largest single category, followed by harassment and victimisation (14%), work-life balance (8%) and equal pay (7%). Enquiries relating to recruitment, selection and promotion also featured prominently.

While the above largely points to the challenges of access and progression for women, it is also true that a complex picture exists in relation to gender and employment. As the labour market reflects increasing participation rates by women and is driven by the service sector, attention must also be paid to issues of access for men. A report[34] in relation to gender trends in access to employment highlighted that there were factors relating to access to employment (for example the lower

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[30] Evans, M., Harkness, S.; Ortiz, R.; (2004). *Lone Parents Cycling Between Work and Benefits.* London: Department of Work and Pensions

[31] Evason, E.; Spence, L.; (2002). *Women and Pensions*. Belfast. Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

[32] DETINI (2007), *Women in Northern Ireland: Labour Market Statistics Bulletin*, Belfast. (p.17.). Available at: http://www.detini.gov.uk/cgi-bin/downdoc?id=3173.

[33] Equality Commission for Northern Ireland – Internal data.

[34] DETINI (2006) *Women in Northern Ireland: Labour Market Statistics Bulletin*.

educational progression and attainment of males noted elsewhere in this document) which show that this is an issue that is also relevant for some men, but for reasons different from those that apply to women.

Employment enables all, including **disabled people**, to become economically and socially active in their local community. For those with disabilities, employment can not only provide opportunities to make a recognised contribution to the economy but assists in overcoming the underlying social deprivation that so many disabled people experience in their daily lives[35].

- The employment rate for those without disabilities (79%) is over twice that of people with disabilities (32%)[36].

- 13% of the economically active disabled people were unemployed, more than double the 6% of economically active who did not have a disability and were unemployed[37].

- The Labour Force Survey (2002) indicated that only 21% of people with mental ill-health or learning disability are in employment, yet research from the United States[38] found that, with effective rehabilitation support, up to 58% of adults with severe and enduring mental ill-health are able to work using the Individual Placement and Support Approach. The Bamford Review[39] proposes that a Northern Ireland target should be set for 50% of people with mental ill-health or a learning disability to be in full-time employment.

- In general, labour market outcomes for people with work-limiting disabilities are significantly worse than for other people. Nearly

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[35] Almost half (48%) of households with at least one disabled child and disabled adult live in income poverty. From DSDNI (2005) *Households Below Average Income Report, NI 2004-2005*. Available at: http://www.dsdni.gov.uk

[36] DETINI (2007) *Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey April – June 2007.*

[37] Equality Commission (2006) *Census 2001: Limiting Long-term Illness in Northern Ireland.* (Note - the term disability was defined in the 2001 NI census as "any long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits daily activities or work)..)

[38] Drake, RE. *et al.*(1999). *Research on the Individual Placement and Support Model of Supported Employment*. In Psychiatric Quarterly, Volume 70, Number 4 (pp 289-301).

[39] DHSSPS (2007) *The Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability (Northern Ireland. Promoting the Social Inclusion of People with a Mental Health Problem or a Learning Disability, August 2007.* Available at: www.rmhldni.gov.uk

half of all people with work-limiting disabilities are in workless households[40].

Key barriers impacting on disabled people's access to employment include:

- Education – As previously noted, over twice the proportion of disabled persons have no qualification compared to non-disabled persons[41]. This therefore affects an individual's ability to compete against non disabled people.

- Attitudes – DRC research[42] found that 45% of those surveyed believe that it would be "quite/very difficult" to employ a disabled person. This is significantly higher than for employing older people, women or those from ethnic groups. This research also reported that "if the job did not work out, one in four (24%) thought that disabled employees would claim discrimination".

- Access to Transport - remains a considerable barrier to disabled people, both in terms of physical access and, in many cases, the quality of service provision. Under current government proposals, the rights and protections under the DDA in relation to GFS will not be extended fully to transport modes and services. The consequence is that disabled people would have limited protection under the DDA as regards transport, in comparison with other provisions of the legislation such as goods facilities and services and employment[43].

It is important to consider inequalities in employment and the labour market in relation to other equality groups. For example, negative assumptions about capacity which lead to discrimination are considered to be barriers for **older workers**[44] and the recent introduction of the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006 aims to address, but only partly, the issues of age discrimination in employment.

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[40] DTZ Pieda Consulting (2005) *Report on Labour Market Dynamics Phase One: A Descriptive Analysis of the Northern Ireland Labour Market*
[41] DETINI (2007) *Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey April – June 2007*
[42] Disability Rights Commission (2005). *Small Employer's Attitudes to Disability.*
[43] Equality Commission (2005). Response to consultation on DDO – Partial removal of transport exemption.
[44] Equality Commission (2007) *Awareness of Age Regulations 2006 and Attitudes of the General Public in Northern Ireland towards Age Related Issues*

Inequalities in respect of **young people** and employment are also important issues, whether they arise as a result of the minimum wage exemption and lower rate for 16 to 17 year olds and those in the development band (18 to 21 years), which impact directly and negatively on them, or as a result of stereotypical assumptions made in relation to the level of experience deemed necessary to do certain jobs.

Specific issues exist for **Carers**[45] [46] of people with a disability and people who care for young children or older relatives. These include, in particular, the complexity of the benefits system, the interaction of this with paid work, and the earnings and hours limits set to qualify for social security. The number of **'dependents'** is also important, those with more dependents being less likely to be employed and when in employment being more likely to work part-time[47]. Further, only 35% of **Travellers** aged 16-74 are economically active (compared with 62% of all economically active people in that age group)[48].   For all groups, issues of **ill health** leading to economic inactivity are also problematic.

Other barriers to employment also exist for a range of groups. With regard to **sexual orientation**, research conducted by Jarman and Tennant[49], together with evidence from recent cases supported by the Commission[50], indicates that homophobic harassment in work is a major concern for the LGB community. For members of the **BME and migrant worker communities**, high levels of racial harassment and intimidation in the community may also permeate into the workplace resulting in workplace based harassment and discrimination. A report published in 2006 by the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions[51] reported that its research confirmed 'widespread exploitation and abuse of migrant workers across Northern Ireland, with the distinct possibility that the situation may get even worse'. It also argued that 'there was ample evidence of unlawful discriminatory practice by some companies in the recruitment agency sector.'

[45] Carers UK (2004) *In Poor Health: The Impact of Caring on Health*.
[46] Evason, E. (2007) *Who Cares Now? Changes in Informal Caring 1994 to 2006*.
[47] DTZ Pieda Consulting (2005) *Report on Labour Market Dynamics Phase One: A Descriptive Analysis of the Northern Ireland Labour Market.*
[48] NISRA (2001) 2001 Census of Population. Available at: www.nisra.gov.uk
[49] Jarman, N.; Tennant, A.; (2003) *An Unacceptable Prejudice: Homophobic Violence and Harassment in Northern Ireland*. Belfast.
[50] Equality Commission Internal Data.
[51] McVeigh, R.; (2006), *Migrant Workers and their Families in Northern Ireland- A Trade Union Response'.*

Recent **inward migration** to Northern Ireland has arguably resulted in the single most significant structural change to the Northern Ireland workforce since industrialisation. A workforce that until recently was predominantly white and indigenous has developed and continues to develop into one which consists of many different nationalities and ethnic groups, speaking a range of different languages and bringing with them many diverse cultures.

The speed of change involved in this development is in large part responsible for a lack of reliable statistical data on the numbers of migrant workers coming into Northern Ireland, their average period of residency and the numbers of migrant workers leaving. In addition, for similar reasons, there is little statistical data on the experiences of migrant workers living and working in Northern Ireland. Consequently, much of the employment-related data is either qualitative or anecdotal and this is likely to remain the case in the short to medium term. We are aware that efforts are being made to examine a number of ways of trying to capture statistical data relating to migrant workers and to other new residents, through, for example, amendments to the Continuous Household Survey, Labour Force Survey, Life and Times Survey or Census.

What we do appear to be able to say with some authority is that an initial pattern of inward migration that involved young single men, coming to work in Northern Ireland for limited periods, is being replaced by a new pattern. Families are now coming to live and work in Northern Ireland. This means that the issues involved are now expanding beyond issues of employment and housing to include health care, education and wider community engagement.

5   Inequalities in Health and Social Care

The World Health Organisation has defined health as a "state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Poor health limits people's ability both to develop their skills through education and to contribute to society by means of employment and involvement in public life. A study by the Institute for Public Health[52] found that health was strongly linked with education, employment, income and housing. Improving equality in health services and outcomes is therefore essential to creating a better Northern Ireland in terms of addressing past legacies and future needs.

Migrant workers and new residents experience difficulties in accessing health and social care services. As our economy grows, reflecting a new era for Northern Ireland's prosperity, it is critical that old inequalities are not replaced by new ones. There is an emerging pattern of inequalities experienced by migrant workers and new residents here, in particular unequal access to basic health care. For example, projects such as STEP and Animate have reported difficulties for those from minority ethnic communities trying to avail of public health provision. The importance of service delivery and of removal of barriers for migrant workers and their families is supported in recent research[53].

Approximately one in five (18%) individuals living in private households in Northern Ireland has some form of **disability** (21% for adults and 6% of children)[54].

Despite disabled people being major users of health care in Northern Ireland[55], there are often many unmet needs. For example, research by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland highlighted that many disabled women have particular difficulty in accessing key services such as reproductive health care and screening[56].

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[52] Balanda, K.; Wilde, J.; (2003). *Inequalities in Perceived Health: A report on the All-Ireland Social Capital and Health Survey*.

[53] Centre for Cross Border Studies et al (2006) *Improving Government Service Delivery to Minority Ethnic Groups.*

[54] Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2007) *The Prevalence of Disability and Activity Limitations amongst Adults and Children Living in Private Households in Northern Ireland.* – First Report from the Northern Ireland Survey of people with Activity Limitations and Disabilities, Bulletin No 1.

[55] DHSSPS (2004) *Equalities and Inequalities in Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland: A statistical overview*.

[56] Equality Commission (2003) *Disabled Women in Northern Ireland: Situation, Experience and Identity*.

While we await the detailed output of the Northern Ireland Survey of Activity Limitation and Disability to update knowledge across a range of relevant themes, previous research reported that almost half (48%) of disabled people, compared with under two fifths (39%) of non-disabled people identified transport, when asked unprompted about their concerns[57]. Public transport is highly relevant to health inequality among disabled people – "households which contain a person with a limiting long-term illness are less likely to have access to a car than other households" (68% vs. 82%)[58]. A recent report[59] illustrated that, at the time of the report, 71% of Citybus vehicles were accessible and 18% of Ulsterbus vehicles were accessible. A recent DRC study[60] found that one third (35%) of disabled people found it difficult to go to their local hospital and one fifth (20%) found it difficult to get to their GP[61]. This accessibility differential may be producing a profound effect on those in rural areas, and on **older people** and **disabled people**.

In addition, initial output from the Northern Ireland Survey of Activity Limitation and Disability suggested that, while the majority reported satisfaction, of the approximately one in ten disabled people who noted they were dissatisfied with one or more primary or secondary health services, 40% were dissatisfied with the general attitude of professional medical staff.

The Bamford Review of **Mental Health and Learning Disability** found that mental ill-health affects one in every four citizens. The Review concluded that there was "clear evidence of inequalities in the investment associated with mental health and learning disability over many years compared with the other countries within the UK", despite higher levels of ill-health in Northern Ireland[62]. Describing the costs of failing to address these issues as far reaching, the Review drew attention to impacts on "the quality of life of individuals and their families, their physical health and capacity to make effective use of health services, their employment and

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[57] MORI (2002) *Attitudes of Disabled People to Public Transport*. Available at http://www.dptac.gov.uk
[58] NISRA. 2001 Census of Population. Available at www.nisra.gov.uk
[59] DRDNI (2005) *Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) for Northern Ireland 2002-2012 Annual Monitoring Report 2004-2005*.
[60] DRC (2006) *Secondary Analysis of Existing Data on Disabled People's Use and Experiences of Public Transport in Great Britain.*
[61] The Equality Commission has published a series of case studies on a similar theme - Equality Commission (2003). The Experience of Disabled People using Transport in Northern Ireland*.
[62] DHSSPS (2006) *The Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability (Northern Ireland).* Available at www.rmhldni.gov.uk

productivity and the general economic capital of the entire community"[63]. People with mental health and learning disabilities face particular barriers in society which can impact on outcomes and life chances[64].

Recent research commissioned in Great Britain highlighted the failures of the NHS in addressing the mental health needs of **older people[65]** complementing the findings of the Bamford Review in Northern Ireland. Research carried out by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission in 2004 also indicated that there were serious concerns over breaches of older patients' human rights in the level and nature of care they were receiving in the NHS across palliative, acute and ongoing care programmes[66].

In considering equality of health and social care for **women and men**, research commissioned by the Equality Commission[67] found that most health and social care strategy and policy is written in gender-neutral language with general targets set for the whole population. Women and men, however, differ in their specific health and social care needs throughout their lifetime. This research noted that there were particular groups who may be vulnerable when it came to health and well-being, eg, older women, women from minority ethnic communities, women living in rural areas, men who had experienced sexual abuse, men who had experienced domestic violence and men in their role as fathers.

Access to social care presents an obstacle to both **women and men.** Women, for example, may be more likely than men to find their access to health care limited by caring responsibilities and by a lack of transport while, for men, obstacles are more likely to include reluctance to go to a doctor, combined with the limited access associated with the inconvenience of opening times of health care facilities.[68] It is also represented that women have a more restricted access to particular

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[63] Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability (Northern Ireland), Reform and Modernisation of Mental Health and Learning Disability Services – Strategic Priorities for the First Phase of Review Implementation, Briefing Paper (October 2006).
[64] Equality Commission (forthcoming) *A formal investigation under the Disability Discrimination Act to evaluate the accessibility of health information in Northern Ireland for people with a learning disability*.
[65] ACE (2007) *Improving Services and Support for Older People with Mental Health Problems.* (The UK Enquiry into Mental Health and Wellbeing in Later Life).
[66] NIHRC (2004) *Older People's Experience of Health Services in Northern Ireland.*
[67] Equality Commission (2002) *Gender and Health in Northern Ireland: Implications for Statutory Duty.*
[68] Equality Commission (2002) *Gender and Health in Northern Ireland: Implications for Statutory Duty.*

services in Northern Ireland compared to elsewhere in the UK, specifically to reproductive health services[69].

The experience of a person facing multiple inequalities is different from those facing inequality on a single ground. For example **women** are more likely to display signs of a possible mental health problem (21%) than men (16%)[70] and other research[71] in Northern Ireland has shown that the experiences of disabled women differ from those of disabled men or of women who are not disabled.

The *Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group*[72] drew attention to significantly poorer levels of health amongst **Travellers** than amongst the majority population. Connolly and Keenan[73] have also highlighted the poor health status of the Traveller children, with mortality rates among Traveller children up to ten years of age having been found to be ten times that of children from the 'settled' population.

Carers are important in our society providing support, often on an unpaid basis, for thousands of older people and those with disabilities[74] and they suffer higher levels of ill health. Almost one in five (19%) of those providing substantial care (50+ hours per week) feel they are in poor health. This compares with 14% of the non-carer population[75]. One in five carers (21%) are aged 60 years or over. Women are more likely to be informal carers than men and over one third (34%) of female carers report that they spend at least 30 hours per week caring[76]. Providing such caring throughout life can result in multiple disadvantages in later life - it can impact on income, pension accumulation and the development of social networks[77]. These impacts of care giving on pensions, earnings, savings and career all multiply over time and impact substantially on middle aged

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[69] Women's National Commission of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (March 1999 and March 2005), Submission to the UNCEDAW Committee on the 5th and 6th Periodic Reports of the United Kingdom, Great Britain and Northern Ireland;
Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (2007) Submission to the UNCEDAW Committee on the 5th and 6th Periodic Reports of the United Kingdom, Great Britain and Northern Ireland;
DHSSPS (2007) Draft Guidelines on the Termination of Pregnancy in Northern Ireland.
[70] NISRA (2005) *Health and Well-Being Survey*.
[71] Zappone, K.; (ed.) (2003) *Re-Thinking Diversity*, Dublin: Joint Equality and Human Rights Forum.
[72] OFMDFM (2000) *The Final Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group*
[73] Connolly, P.; Keenan, M.; (2002) *Consultation with Travellers on the Recommendations of the Final Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers*. Belfast: OFMDFM.
[74] Evason, E.; (2004) *Who Cares? Changes in Informal Caring 1994 to 2006.*
[75] Carers UK (2004) *In Poor Health: The Impact of Caring on Health.*
[76] Evason, E.; (2007) *Who Cares Now? Changes in Informal Caring 1994 to 2006.*
[77] DHSSPS (2006) *Caring for Carers.*

women. 17% of women aged 60 to 74 provide care in their own household and 1 in 4 (25%) children provide informal care for a person not living with them[78].

The social inclusion of **older people** is inextricably linked to their well being and access to services. Over 80,000 older people live alone in Northern Ireland and recent work by Help the Aged indicates that 53% of older people feel that loneliness is the major issue facing older people today[79]. Social isolation is caused by a number of factors, including differential access to and availability of health and social care alongside lack of affordable public transport, and differential access to financial services. Inclusion, however, must go beyond the provision of health and social care services. For **older women**, participation is also constrained by pensioner poverty. Most of the existing pension schemes are based on the traditional model of work, that is, continuous contribution whilst in full-time work in a lifetime job. This model fails to take account of the fact that women are more likely to take career breaks for child or family related reasons, to be economically inactive outside the household, or to be in part-time employment for periods[80]. Gender differences in the labour market have a particular impact on women's situation in later life and their access to pensions, savings and benefits is thereby restricted.

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[78] ARK (2006) *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey.* The definition of 'informal care' as used in the NILT survey included tasks such as going to the shop, giving medicine, etc.
[79] NOP/GfK Spotlight survey for Help the Aged (Unpublished, January 2006)
[80] Evason, E.; Spence, L.; (2002). *Women and Pensions in Northern Ireland.* Belfast. Equality Commission.

6   Inequalities in Housing and Communities

Housing is a basic human need and provides a foundation for family and community life. Good quality, affordable housing in safe, sustainable communities is essential to ensuring health, wellbeing and a prosperous society.

At a time of increased economic prosperity and confidence in Northern Ireland's future, there exist pockets of deprivation in which households experience severe housing need, homelessness and poor housing. Action is required to reduce the inequalities caused as a result of a dramatic recent increase in homelessness[81], a rising number of households on the waiting list and in housing stress[82], and a lack of affordable housing[83]. The consequences are higher levels of social exclusion, fewer housing options and less choice. Public policymakers must recognise the impact of housing on equality, to identify where we must reduce exclusion, increase meaningful housing choice and focus our energies on achieving positive change.

The level of segregation in housing on grounds of community background in Northern Ireland is substantial, with less than 10% of social housing currently integrated. Some 70% of social housing tenants live in communities that are at least 90% Roman Catholic or Protestant. Overall, while Census evidence shows that in 2001 we were living in a more residentially-segregated society than in 1971, the dynamic is different from that of earlier decades with "a strong and growing evidence base that the 1990s did not see a widespread widening of the divide between Roman Catholics and Protestants[84]". Indeed, while acknowledging the specific issues that have faced those living in interface areas, the aspirations of the general population for a move back to less segregated living are

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[81] DSDNI (2007) Homelessness Strategy. This showed that between 1999 and 2003, the number of households who made homelessness applications to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive increased by 49% and the number accepted as homeless increased by 65%. During 2005 - 2006, a total of 20,121 households presented as homeless. This represents a 15.9% increase on the previous year.
[82] DSDNI (2007) Northern Ireland Housing Statistics. In March 2002, 25,983 people were on the Common Waiting List for social housing; of these 12,286 were in Housing Stress. By March 2006, these numbers had risen to 32,215 and 17,433 respectively.
[83] The recent Semple Review of Affordable Housing recommended that a target for social housing completions should be set at 2,000 per annum (expressed as 10,000) over the next five years.
[84] Shuttleworth, I.; Lloyd, C.; (2006) Are Northern Ireland's Two Communities Dividing?: Evidence from the Census of Population 1971-2001, Shared Space, Northern Ireland Community Relations Council.

revealed by the NILT survey which indicated that 79% of those surveyed "would prefer to live in a mixed-religion neighbourhood"[85].

Segregation in housing and communities reduces choice, represents inefficient housing allocations and a waste of public resources as it reduces the resources available for affordable housing and, ultimately, it adds to polarisation between communities. The wider development of a society whereby people feel unable to access public services which are located in a neighbouring community creates either unmet need or duplication of services, neither of which are satisfactory. Recent research estimates an indicative financial cost of segregation to be of the order of £1.5 billion per year (Deloitte[86]).

The lack of suitable housing for **disabled people** continues to create considerable hardship. In recent years new build in the social sector has adopted the 'Lifetime Home[87]' standard. However, progress has not been made in ensuring that homes in the private sector are accessible to all and, even where grants are available, adaptations can be expensive.

In 2002 a study[88] on Lifetime Homes in Northern Ireland outlined the health and social benefits of a lifetime home for all users (people with dependents, disabled people, older people and children) and examined the economic benefits of amending Part R of the current building regulations for privately owned housing to lifetime homes standards, which have applied in social housing in Northern Ireland since 1998. Benefits were found to include savings on aspects such as future adaptations, heating and costs associated with household accidents, while other benefits included delaying moves into residential care, reduced need for temporary residential care and associated savings in health care and re-housing costs. Further, new research[89] also supports investment in accessible housing as a means of reducing health and social care expenditure and removing barriers to social inclusion. Adopting the lifetime homes standard, alongside wheelchair standard housing, across

[85] ARK (2006) *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2006.*
[86] OFMDFM (not published). *Research into the financial cost of the Northern Ireland divide.* Released by Community Relations Unit, OFMDFM under Freedom of Information Act to Alliance, August 2007
[87] Lifetime homes are designed with accessibility and adaptability in mind
[88] by the Chartered Institute of Housing and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation
[89] Office of Disability Issues (May 2007); *Better outcomes lower costs: Implications for Health and Social Care Budgets of Investment in Housing Adaptations, Improvements and Equipment: A Review of the Evidence*

the public and private housing sector would increase choice and provide access to improved quality of life.

The lack of adequate housing and accommodation for **Travellers** is central to the high level of social exclusion and poverty they experience. There has been a series of unrealised commitments to make adequate accommodation provision for the Traveller community over the last thirty years[90], with the acquisition of suitable sites one of the key issues preventing the full implementation of the current Traveller accommodation plans, resulting in temporary provisions lasting for the medium to long term[91]. The *Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group*[92] pointed out that many Travellers still had extremely limited access to basic amenities such as running water, electricity and sanitation, including some of those living on serviced sites.

Many members of the wider **Black and Minority Ethnic community**, in particular **migrant workers**, are extremely vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination in housing. Accommodation is often tied to employment, meaning that if they lose their job, they also lose their home. This also creates the conditions in which exploitation is probable. The lack of a family network means that migrants are highly vulnerable to homelessness[93].

In addition, immigration legislation such as the Workers Registration Scheme denies many foreign nationals access to state housing support when they are not working, a policy decision based solely on their **nationality.**

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[90] For example, *The Report of the Northern Ireland Working Party on site provision for Travelling People* (Department of the Environment: 1984) recommended that there should be a Northern Ireland wide network of legal serviced sites completed by 31 March 1987. More recently, the *Final Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers* (OFMDFM 2003) recommended that *'Funding should be made available to take forward, within a defined timescale, a comprehensive programme to meet all the accommodation needs of Travellers and that responsibility for co-ordinating the funding arrangements for this should lie with the Department for Social Development'.* In its response the Department for Social Development accepted, in principle, the recommendation that such funding should be made available for a comprehensive programme to meet all accommodation needs but included the following caveat: *'As progress will depend on the availability of the necessary finances and given the protracted nature of that consultation and planning process, it would not be possible to set a definitive timescale'.*
[91] NIHE, Traveller Accommodation Plan 2003-8
[92] OFMDFM (2000) *Final Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group.*
[93] See ICR (2004) *Migrant Workers in Northern Ireland.* Available at www.conflictresearch.org.uk

In terms of **homelessness**, it is worrying that the number of people becoming homeless every year continues to increase; in 2005/06 it increased by 16% on the previous year and amounted to 20,121 households[94]. There has also been an upward trend in the number of older people presenting as homeless - in 2001 6% of older person households presented as homeless to NIHE, compared to 4% in 1991[95].

Last year, just under half of those presenting as homeless were deemed to be priority need, and therefore entitled to accommodation. That leaves more than ten thousand households without accommodation[96]. This group is disproportionately made up of single households, usually **men,** who are at risk of entering a cycle of homelessness and deprivation in the long term, with all the social consequences this brings.

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[94] DSDNI (2007) *Northern Ireland Housing Statistics*.
[95] The Simon Community (2002) *The Face of Older Homelessness.*
[96] DSDNI (2007) *Northern Ireland Housing Statistics*

7   Inequalities in Participation in Public Life

Diversity in public life with participation of people from all types of background and with a broad range of characteristics should ensure a more informed policy decision-making process. Diversity is important, too, in increasing the voice and influence of under-represented groups, such as women, disabled people and ethnic minorities, and in shaping the community in which they live. It provides opportunities for individuals to make a valuable and recognised contribution, ensuring that public policy and services reflect the needs of all citizens and residents. It creates the opportunity for people from under- represented groups to act as positive role models, which in turn can encourage the participation in political, public and civic life of others from those groups. Diversity can also help transform attitudes and behaviour and create an environment for equal respect. Participation in public life is vital to people's sense of status and belonging.

Participation can be at all levels, including community, regional and national. For example, it can include participation as elected representatives (such as Assembly Members or local councillors), or members of political fora. It can also include participation as board members of public bodies, or at a community level (such as members of community associations, voluntary organisations, sporting or social bodies, school Boards of Governors, school councils, or citizens' panels).

Despite recognition of the benefits of diversity in this area, there remains persistent and considerable under-representation of many groups in public, political and civic life, resulting in further marginalisation of such groups and a range of services that do not give expression to the experiences of people in those groups.

The persistent under-representation of **women** in public and political life, including political representation at both national and local level, government public appointments and judicial appointments, is significant. The equal participation of women and men in decision making processes is a key element in achieving equality in a democratic society. And yet:

- Women only make up 32% of government public appointments in NI[97].

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[97] OFMDFM (2007) *Public Appointments Annual Report 2005/06.* Available at: www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk

- Only 17% of Northern Ireland's MLAs (18 out of 108) are women[98]. This compares with the comparatively high levels of representation achieved in the Scottish Parliament (33%) and the Welsh Assembly (47%).[99]

- Only 21% of local councillors in Northern Ireland are women[100]

- 47% of the complement of the Northern Ireland judiciary (High Court, County Court, District Court, Resident Magistrates, Coroners and Lay Magistrates) are women. However, when lay magistrates are excluded, only 23% of the judiciary are women[101].

As regards women's participation in national parliaments, research in GB[102] has highlighted a range of factors that can impact on their participation. They include the type of electoral system used; party organisation (including party structure, ideological values and the degree to which parties have taken lawful positive action measures to ensure women's selection as candidates); the potential use of quotas; and the establishment of well resourced, effective and integrated Government support mechanisms (such as a Women's or Equality Unit).

Other factors that can impact on women's participation in public, political and civic life include established institutional and cultural behaviour that is difficult to change[103]. The lack of flexible working and affordable, high quality childcare provision can inhibit the participation of those with caring responsibilities. In addition, negative stereotypical attitudes and behaviour, as well as individual and systemic discrimination towards women, can also restrict their recruitment, nomination or selection and participation in public and political life positions.

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[98] Centre for the Advancement of Women in Politics (2007) *Women in Politics.* Available at: www.qub.ac.uk/cawp

[99] Women & Equality Unit (2007), Women's Representation in Politics. Available at www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk

[100] DETINI (2007) *Women in Northern Ireland: Labour Market Statistics Bulletin*., Belfast.

[101] NICtS Complement of NI Judiciary – September 2007 (response to enquiry).

[102] Squires, J. ;Wickham-Jones, M.; (2001) *Women in Parliament: A Comparative Analysis* –Available at www.eoc.org.uk .

[103] Highlighted in Hinds, B. ; Gray, A-M.; (2005) 'Women and the Review of Public Administration. Available at womeninlocalcouncils.org.uk

Government commitments under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) provide opportunities to address these issues[104], while the current Review of Public Administration provides a further opportunity to address the fair participation of women and other under represented groups, in political and policy decision-making.

In terms of the participation and profile of **disabled people**; although almost one in five persons (18%) of working-age are disabled in NI,[105] in many areas of public, political and civic life, disabled people are under-represented. For example, in 2006 only 3% of appointees to government public appointments were disabled[106]. Ability to participate could be influenced by negative attitudes resulting in discriminatory behaviour, as well as by barriers in recruitment and selection practices and procedures. In particular, it is imperative that selection practices for public bodies reflect current and future needs and are open to encouraging participation from people with a diverse range of skills, knowledge and experience.

Participation in decision making and power structures is a critical means by which people experiencing inequalities can effect change. For many, however, participation at community and civic level is hampered due to isolation, lack of appropriate public services and inequalities linked to poverty.

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[104] Equality Commission (2003) Submission by the Equality Commission for NI to the United Nations Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Available at www.equalityni.org
[105] DETINI (2007) *Labour Force Survey (April-June 2007)*
[106] OFMDFM (2006) *Public Appointments Annual Report 2005/06.* Available at: www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk

8   Prejudice

Working to counter and reduce prejudice and to promote good relations between people and groups is intrinsic to reducing inequality. The Commission has a statutory remit to promote good race relations (Article 41 of Race Relations Order 1997) and has a statutory remit to provide advice to public authorities and others in relation to effective implementation of the good relations duty under Section 75.

Prejudice leads to behaviour which sustains inequality and exclusion from employment and services. It also restricts choices. Negative attitudes and stereotypes, based on facile assumptions that personal characteristics or perceived membership of a group determine capacity or belief, can lead to discrimination, exclusion and even to harassment, aggression and violence.

The Commission's 2006 Survey "**Attitudes and Awareness of Equality Issues amongst the General Public in Northern Ireland**" revealed that while the majority of survey respondents held positive attitudes, there was a significant minority of respondents who expressed negative attitudes towards Travellers and Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual people. In particular, a sizeable minority of respondents would mind having a Traveller as a work colleague (24%), neighbour (41%), or relative by marriage (38%).   29% of respondents would mind if a relative was in a relationship with a lesbian, gay or bisexual person.

Moving beyond personally held attitudes, those perceived by respondents to be treated most unfairly in Northern Ireland were older people (56%); people of different racial and ethnic groups (53%); Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual people (53%); disabled people (52%); and Travellers (46%).

17% of respondents felt that they had experienced discrimination or harassment in the last 3 years, but only a minority of these (31%) had brought a complaint. Those indicating they were Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual people were the group most likely to report having experienced discrimination.

A survey[107] found that 88% would prefer to work in a mixed workplace and would accept a minority ethnic person as a work colleague. This survey

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[107] ARK (2005), Northern Ireland Life & Times Survey

also found that when asked if they considered their workplace to be a neutral space, 58% responded 'always or most of the time'. However, research conducted around the same time refers to 'the persistence of virulent sectarian bigotry and hostility in Northern Ireland'[108].

With regard to race relations, the 2005 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (NILT)[109] found that most respondents (68%) thought there was more **racial prejudice** in Northern Ireland in 2005 compared to 5 years previous. In addition, 25% of respondents reported they were either very prejudiced (1%) or a little prejudiced (24%) compared to 11% when surveyed in 1994. In the 2006 NILT survey, only two out of five people said they would accept an Eastern European or other **minority ethnic** person as a resident in their local area, while fewer than one in three would accept either a member of the Irish Traveller or Muslim communities as a resident in their local area. Two-thirds of respondents would not accept either an Eastern European or a member of other minority ethnic groups as a close friend. More than four in five (82%) respondents were unwilling to accept a member of the Irish **Traveller community** as a close friend.

Statistics produced by the Police Service of Northern Ireland[110] show that in 2006/07, the number of reported racist incidents increased by 111 (+12%) to 1,047; there were 1,695 sectarian incidents, 155 homophobic incidents, 136 faith/religion incidents and 48 incidents with a disability motivation. Violent crime represented 77% of those crimes with a homophobic motivation[111].

Harassment in work is central to many enquiries received by the Equality Commission. For example, the number of people contacting the Equality Commission about **racial** discrimination or harassment has increased by 46% from 220 in 2006 to 321 in 2007.[112]

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[108] OFMDFM (2005) *No longer a Problem? Sectarian Violence in Northern Ireland.* Available at: www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk

[109] Gilligan, C.; Lloyd, K.; (2006), *Racial prejudice in Northern Ireland.* Available at. www.ark.ac.uk. The 2005 NILT included a module on attitudes to minority ethnic communities, part funded by the Equality Commission.

[110] PSNI (2007) *Statistical Report No. 3, Hate Incidents and Crimes 1 April 2006 – 31 March 2007*

[111] Violent crime comprises three main offence groupings: offences against the person, sexual offences and robbery – the common thread between these is that they involve
actual violence or the threat of violence. The large majority of incidents categorised as
violent crime do not actually involve any significant injury to the victim, although some of the crimes not resulting in injury may still be traumatic for their victims, eg, threats to kill.

[112] Equality Commission Internal Data.

In relation to prejudice related to **disability**, nine out of ten **disabled people** reported that they had been harassed in the previous year because of their disability; one third of people with a learning disability had experienced such harassment on a weekly basis[113]. DRC Scotland[114] reported that one quarter of disabled people have experienced harassment related to their disability and one in 20 disabled people experience harassment on a regular basis.

In terms of **homophobia**, almost one in three people (29%) would mind if a close relative were in a relationship with a LGB person[115]. Recent research[116] points out that homophobic harassment includes assault, verbal abuse and bullying in the workplace, on the street and in social settings. This same research conducted a survey of homophobic harassment within the LGB communities in Northern Ireland, which revealed that "harassment and violence was a serious problem with 82% having experience of harassment and 55% having been subjected to homophobic violence. …The percentage of people who had experienced violence and harassment was higher than indicated by comparable surveys in Great Britain and Ireland."

Homophobic bullying in schools is widespread[117] and a Department of Education study on bullying in schools[118] found that while 82% of teachers were aware of homophobic bullying/intimidation, only 6% of 120 schools surveyed made specific reference to homophobic bullying in their anti-bullying campaigns.

Research[119] into the needs of young people in Northern Ireland who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (LGBT) found that 44% of young people were bullied at school because of their sexuality; 48% of lesbian and gay students have been violently attacked - nearly half

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[113] Mencap (2000) Living in Fear. The need to combat bullying of people with a learning disability.
[114] DRC Scotland (2002) *Disability Awareness Survey.*
[115] Equality Commission (2006) *Equality Awareness Survey*
[116] Jarman, N.; Tennant, A.; (2003) An Unacceptable Prejudice: Homophobic Violence and Harassment in Northern Ireland. Belfast.
[117] Feenan, D. et al. (2001) *Enhancing the Rights of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual people in Northern Ireland*. NIHRC: Belfast.
[118] Collins, K. et al. (2002) *Bullying in Schools: a Northern Ireland Study*. Bangor: DENI
[119] Youth Net (2003) Summary Research Document. Available at www.glyni.org.uk

of these attacks occurring in schools[120]; 64% of gay men who were bullied at school considered committing suicide.[121]

There is also evidence of continuing *polarisation* **and** *segregation* **by community background** in Northern Ireland. One quarter of people felt intimidated by loyalist symbols in 2005; 23% felt intimidated by republican symbols[122]. While the number of Northern Ireland Housing Executive clients presenting as homeless due to intimidation has decreased annually since 2002/03, there were still 764 households in this category in 2006/07[123]. Young people living in segregated neighbourhoods and those attending segregated schools were much more likely to have no friends who were of a different religion. In 2004, only 5% of respondents to the Northern Ireland Young Life and Times survey attended an integrated school, and 11% attended schools that they described as religiously mixed. There are at present 56 grant-aided integrated schools in Northern Ireland (with a total enrolment of over 17,000 pupils – just over 5% of total pupils), made up of 37 grant-maintained integrated schools and 19 controlled integrated schools (DENI website).

Research[124] has shown that children are capable of holding prejudices and negative attitudes towards others from the age of three. By the ages of ten and eleven, it is thought that many children have developed deeply ingrained sectarian attitudes[125]. 27% of all 12-17 year olds have been threatened or verbally abused because of their religion[126].

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[120] Youthnet (2003) *Research into the Needs of Young People in Northern Ireland who Identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and/or Transgender (LGBT).* Available at www.glyni.org.uk

[121] White, RG, McCracken, A., and the Rainbow Project (1999) *How Hard Can It Be Attempted Suicide of Gay Men – the Psychological Stressors and Associated Risk Factors*.

[122] NILT Survey (2005)

[123] DSDNI (2007) *Northern Ireland Housing Statistics*

[124] Connolly, P. (1999) *Community Relations Work with Pre-School Children.*

[125] Connolly, P. (1999) *Sectarianism, Children and Community Relations in Northern Ireland.*

[126] Barnardos and Save the Children (2007) *Fair Play.*

9   Conclusions

This Statement has presented information from a wide range of published sources, from official statistics to research reports, from Commission data to Government reviews. We have sought to use our experience and expertise to assess and evaluate such information to draw out the key issues. The picture the Statement paints, of persistent inequalities and of emerging challenges, should compel us all to redouble our efforts to change the situation and life chances of people experiencing inequalities.

The Commission acknowledges that there are many organisations and individuals actively working to promote equality and to secure meaningful changes for individuals across the range of strands protected by anti-discrimination law and covered by the public sector statutory duties, not least public authorities. We trust that the publication of this Statement encourages them in their efforts and that they will take the opportunity to highlight what they are doing to effect changes, in this, the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All.

We hope also that the publication of the Statement encourages others to take steps to address the inequalities highlighted in the Statement in a sustained and comprehensive way. We will seek every opportunity to engage with all relevant actors to champion equality and to encourage them to be advocates and initiators of change. Through partnerships, much can be achieved and in the coming period the Commission will also actively seek opportunities to work with others on the agenda for action set out in this Statement.

And, of course, we will continue through the exercise of our particular powers and duties and through the identification of priority areas for action in corporate plans and annual business plans to make our contribution to building Northern Ireland as a shared, integrated place, a society where difference is respected and valued, based on equality and fairness for the entire community.