

THE TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY FIFTH MEETING OF**THE EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND****Wednesday 24 September 2025 at 1.30pm****Equality House****PRESENT:**

Geraldine McGahey	Chief Commissioner
Maureen Brunt	
Lisa Caldwell	
Siobhan Cullen	
Ellen Finlay	
Monica Fitzpatrick	
Colin Kennedy	(R)
Nazia Latif	
Stephen Mathews	(R)
Jim McCooe	
John McAllister	(R)
Harry Robinson	
Preeti Yellamaty	(R)

APOLOGIES:

Neil Anderson	Deputy Chief Commissioner
Duane Farrell	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Louise Conlon	Chief Executive
Kathryn Barr	Senior Policy Officer (part of)
Keith Brown	Head of Corporate Services
Frances Fleming	Director of Communications
Alden Henderson	Director of Advice and Compliance (part of)
Lisa King	Director of Policy and Research
Martina McAuley	Research Officer (part of)
Kelly McGinley	Communications Manager

1. Introduction

The Chief Commissioner thanked everyone for attending the meeting and welcomed those joining online.

The Chief Commissioner also thanked Commissioners for their attendance at a separate short session (15mins) with the Chief Executive before the Commission meeting.

2. Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interests declared.

It was noted that Commissioner Fitzpatrick no longer has any conflict of interests in relation to the Commission's work and roadmap following the Supreme Court judgment 'For Women Scotland Ltd v the Scottish Ministers'.

3. Minutes of the two hundred and twenty fourth meeting held on Wednesday 27 August 2025

EC/25/08/01

The minutes of the two hundred and twenty fourth meeting held on Wednesday 27 August 2025 were signed as a true and accurate record.

4. Actions from previous meeting

EC/25/08/02

The actions from the previous meeting were noted.

5. Policy Issues

- Standard for Equality Bodies

EC/25/08/03

Kathryn Barr, Senior Policy Officer updated Commissioners on the EU Standards for Equality Bodies Directives and provided an overview of the potential implications for the Commission and outlined the recommendations on actions required more broadly.

Commissioners agreed the need for an expert paper to consider the potential impact more fully at a strategic discussion session. Commissioners discussed likely implications, the additional resources that would be needed to deliver the Directive and the need to ensure the Commission remains the only designated equality body in Northern Ireland. Commissioners agreed this was a significant piece of work and the pathway forward would have to be considered carefully.

Following discussion, Commissioners **noted** the update and the proposed next steps.

- Public Awareness Survey

EC/25/08/04

Martina McAuley, Research Officer, highlighted some findings from the Commission's recent public awareness survey on Article 2 of the Windsor Framework. Ms McAuley advised Commissioners that the public awareness levels have remained steady over the last 3 years, that the majority of respondents consider the equality and human rights protections under the Windsor Framework important and believe Northern Ireland should keep up with EU law changes that improve these protections. She also advised that an increasing proportion of respondents feel that attitudes towards minority ethnic people, migrant workers, and refugees and asylum seekers have worsened due to Brexit.

Commissioners found the findings useful and informative and recognised the value of this work to inform policy and communications work going forward.

Other research options to inform the work of the Dedicated Mechanism were discussed including budget required to deliver this work. It was agreed that the terminology used in relation to identities would be considered in surveys going forward.

Commissioners **noted** the survey results and the proposed next steps.

6. Other Matters for Decision

SDIC Investigations Reports:

Complainant & Derry City and Strabane District Council

EC/25/08/05

Rosalynd Harkness, Senior Investigation Officer presented the final draft report outlined at Appendix 1, which was considered by the Statutory Duty Investigations Committee on 10 September 2025 and recommended for approval by the Commission at its meeting on 24 September 2025.

The Commission **considered** and **approved** the Investigation Report with its findings and recommendations and **approved** publication of a report of the investigation of a complaint under Paragraph 10 of Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Rosalynd Harkness, Senior Investigation Officer presented the final draft report outlined at Appendix 1, which was considered by the Statutory Duty Investigations Committee on 10 September 2025 and recommended for approval by the Commission at its meeting on 24 September 2025.

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Reports from Committees

Commissioner Siobhan Cullen, Chair, SDIC Committee, provided an overview of the work carried out by the Committee and thanked staff for the work involved. Commissioner Cullen noted the strategic value of the complaints staff had investigated.

It was noted that a date had been confirmed for 12 November for follow-up to the SDIC Committee effectiveness discussion at the Commission away day in August 2025.

- SDIC Minutes of 11 June 2025

EC/25/08/07

Commissioners **noted** the oral update on SDIC Committee and the Minutes outlined above.

7. Chief Commissioner's Business

The Chief Commissioner provided an update on a number of recent engagements since the last Commission. Together with the Chief Executive the Chief Commissioner attended the British-Irish Association conference in Oxford. She provided an update on a meeting with Gabrielle Fitzpatrick and Angela Getty of Employers for Disability NI in early September to discuss their work and how they might strengthen their partnership with the Commission.

The Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive attended the Law Society dinner and had useful conversations with key stakeholders in relation to the Commission's legal work. The Chief Commissioner also provided an update on a meeting with Rt Hon Stephen Timms, MP, Minister of State (Minister for

Social Security and Disability) and other UK equality bodies regarding UKIM on 15 September.

Along with the Chief Executive and the Head of Advice and Compliance, the Chief Commissioner met with the Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons, MLA to brief the Minister on the Commission's report 'An equality review of the governance, practices and procedures applicable to Ulster Boxing'.

The Chief Commissioner also spoke at Carers NI conference, the conference was held to mark the 60th anniversary of Carers NI. Finally the Chief Commissioner advised that she had attended the Belfast Diwali 2025, Lighting Lives Beyond Lamps launch at the Long Gallery.

The Chief Commissioner asked Commissioners consider the list of discussion points from the Commissioner away day held in August 2025 that had been circulated.

EC/25/08/08

The Chief Commissioner asked Commissioners to note the final dates for 2026 Commission/Committee meetings.

Commissioners **noted** the final dates for 2026.

8. Chief Executive Report

EC/25/08/09

The Chief Executive presented her previously circulated report. She provided an update regarding preparations for the Legacy Judicial Review. An update was also provided on CLC Judicial Review and the For Women Scotland judgment and Commission roadmap. A potential Judicial Review against the Commission in relation to transgender guidance was also discussed.

She advised that procurement for IT support has concluded with the contract being awarded to Cyber Security NI Ltd. The contract will commence on 1 October 2025 to 30 September 2028 initially, with scope for further extensions.

Update was also provided regarding accommodation, pay remit and a number of other business issues.

Commissioners **noted** the update.

9. Matters for Information

Final Report to those charged with governance.

Commissioners **noted** the Final Report to Those Charged with Governance and expressed thanks to all involved.

10. Any Other Business

None

11. Date of next meeting: Wednesday 22 October 2025, in Equality House.

Meeting concluded at 4pm

Signed:



Signed: 22 Oct 2025