

Appointments to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Right Honourable Brandon Lewis MP has today announced the appointment of Geraldine McGahey to be the new Chief Commissioner, Neil Anderson to be the Deputy Chief Commissioner, and Duane Farrell, Helen Ferguson, Jarlath Kearney, Deepa Mann-Kler and Carmel McKinney as Commissioners. The appointments will be for a period of three years ending on 28 February 2023 apart from the Chief Commissioner whose appointment will be for a period of five years ending on 28 February 2025.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

The Equality Commission was established in 1999, as part of the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. It took over the functions of the Fair Employment Commission, Equal Opportunities Commission, and Council for Racial Equality and Northern Ireland Disability Council.

The Equality Commission is a non-departmental public body established by the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Its powers and duties derive from a number of statutes which have been enacted over the last decades, providing protection against discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, race, religion and political opinion, sex and sexual orientation. It also has responsibilities arising from the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in respect of the statutory equality and good relations duties which apply to public authorities.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is responsible under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 for making appointments to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

More information can be found on the Equality Commission's website www.equalityni.org

Terms of appointment

Appointments are made in line with the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

The Chief Commissioner role is offered on both a full or part-time basis while the Deputy Chief Commissioner and Commissioner roles are part-time appointments.

Remuneration for the Chief Commissioner role will be within the range of £70,522 to £80,847 (or on a pro-rata basis for less than a full-time appointment).

The Deputy Chief Commissioner attracts a fixed remuneration of £10,000 per annum for a commitment of four days a month, while the Commissioner roles attract a fixed remuneration of £5,000 per annum for a commitment of

approximately two days a month.

Biography of Appointees

Geraldine McGahey: Geraldine is a former Chief Executive of Larne Borough Council, and SOLACE gender champion. She is currently the Deputy Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commissioner for Northern Ireland and a member of the Parades Commission for Northern Ireland.

Neil Anderson: Neil is currently head of NSPCC in Northern Ireland, with a career based in HR across a variety of organisations and sectors. He has been an Equality Commissioner for Northern Ireland since May 2019.

Duane Farrell: Duane is Chief Executive of Relate Northern Ireland. He also sits as a trustee with Grow NI and Community Evaluation NI and is a serving Equality Commissioner.

Helen Ferguson: Helen is a long-serving charity worker and former Director of Carers NI. She currently holds appointments to the Equality Commission and Human Rights Commission.

Jarlath Kearney: Jarlath is a serving Equality Commissioner. He is a former Chief Political Correspondent at the Belfast Media Group.

Deepa Mann-Kler: Deepa is a Diversity and Inclusion Specialist with Kainos PLC and visiting Professor in Immersive Futures at Ulster University.

Carmel McKinney: Carmel has held a number of senior roles in education, including Chair of the Belfast Education and Library Board. She is currently Chair of the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Board.

Political Activity

All appointments are made on merit and with regards to the statutory requirements. Political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for appointees' political activity in defined categories to be made public.

Jarlath Kearney is former member of Sinn Fein but has declared no political activity since he left the party in 2015.

Regulation

The appointment process has been regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointment (OCPA) and all stages of the process were overseen by an independent panel member.

Statutory Requirements

These appointments are made by the Secretary of State in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998.