

# **SECRETARY OF STATE ANNOUNCES NEW APPOINTMENTS TO THE EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Right Honourable Brandon Lewis CBE MP, has announced the appointment of eight new Commissioners to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Maureen Brunt, Siobhan Cullen, Ellen Finlay, Monica Fitzpatrick, Colin Kennedy, John McCallister, Sheena McKinney, and Preeti Yellamaty take up their appointments with effect from 1 June 2022.

## **Background**

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 Commission is responsible for policing the Statutory Duty on all public authorities in Northern Ireland to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity across a range of areas including religion, political opinion, gender, race, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability and those with and without dependants. The Commission is funded and sponsored by The Executive Office.

Further information about the work of the Commission can be found at: <https://www.equalityni.org/Home>

## **Terms of appointment**

- These positions are part-time for a period of three years ending on 30 May 2025.
- The positions receive a fixed annual remuneration of £5,000.
- The positions are not pensionable.

## **Biography of Appointees**

Maureen Brunt is a development consultant and freelance life coach, formerly employed with Ulster Bank. She is an active volunteer with Integrated Care Partnership and Trillick Leisure Centre as well as an accredited Methodist preacher.

Siobhan Cullen is currently Head of the Department of Law within Letterkenny Institute of Technology. She holds a number of board memberships including Governing Body (LYIT), member of Donegal Women's Centre and is involved with Athena Swan Charter and Advance HE.

Ellen Finlay is a Policy and Development Manager with Samaritans NI. She has worked in the community and voluntary sector for over 20 years and is a member of the NI Food Advisory Committee.

Monica Fitzpatrick is a retired Civil Servant and former Social Inclusion Policy Lead within the Department of Communities. Monica formerly held the position of Equality Advisor in the Department of Justice.

Colin Kennedy is currently Chief Executive of Maplewood Estates Ltd, Chairman of NI Charity Jordan's Gift, Chairman of the NI Football League and member of the pharmaceutical Society of NI Fitness to Practise Committee. He is a former member of the Parades Commission.

John McCallister is a land mobility manager for the Young Farmers Club of Ulster and Board Member of the Community Relations Council. He is a former member of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

Sheena McKinney is Assistant Director of Public Health Nursing and has been appointed by the Department of Justice in NI as an Independent Community Observer for the PSNI. She has experience with various committees including the Disabilities Committee, LGBT Committee Older Persons Support Network.

Preeti Yellamaty is a coordinator for Drugs and Alcohol Intervention Service for Young People (DAISY) and Regional Rapid Response Addition Services worker offering

therapeutic support. She is an independent member of the Policing and Community Safety Partnership for Lisburn and Castlereagh Council.

### **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. All of the appointees have declared that they have not been politically active in the last five years.

### **Regulation**

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointment (OCPA) regulates appointments to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

### **Statutory Requirements**

The Secretary of State makes appointments to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998.