



## **EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

### **ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2024 – 2025**

HC 1109

# Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

## Annual report and accounts 2024-2025

for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

Presented to the Houses of Parliament by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in accordance with Paragraph 5(4) of Schedule 8 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998, Paragraph 12(2) and 12(4) of the Schedule to the Northern Ireland Act 2000 and Paragraph 34 of the Schedule to the Northern Ireland Act 2000 (Proscribed Documents) Order 2004

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## **CHIEF COMMISSIONER'S FOREWORD**

This year brought renewed urgency for addressing inequality in Northern Ireland. Wider political developments and social tensions created both opportunities and challenges for advancing equality and good relations.

This year also saw the arrival of a new UK Government and Secretary of State, alongside the publication of the Northern Ireland Programme for Government 2024–2027. We welcomed the Programme for Government's commitment to tackle inequalities, and recognition that promoting equality of opportunity and good relations are central to shaping a fairer and peaceful society.

The importance of this was highlighted starkly when we saw a deeply troubling surge in race-related violence across several parts of Northern Ireland. These incidents served as a reminder of the hostility and fear still faced by many people from minority ethnic communities. We responded quickly, engaging with community leaders, and publicly calling for action, solidarity, and zero tolerance for racism in all its forms. The rise in such incidents has strengthened our resolve to press for reform of race equality legislation in the coming year and support the development of a renewed Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Within the Commission, we have taken important steps to plan for the future. We finalised our new Corporate Plan for 2025–2028, shaped by public consultation and influenced by the Programme for Government. It sets out a strategy that reflects both the changing context and our mission. That mission remains unchanged: to promote equality, challenge discrimination in Northern Ireland.

We also marked the 25th anniversary of the Commission's establishment this past year. It was a chance to reflect on progress since 1999, and how much more needs to be done. We celebrated progress across a range of equality areas, while acknowledging the gaps that remain, particularly in our outdated legislative framework. Northern Ireland continues to lag behind the rest of the UK and Ireland in important protections, including the absence of legislation on age discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services.

Our discrimination advice line responded to 3,327 calls this year, a clear indication that discrimination remains a lived reality for many people here. Disability and sex discrimination again accounted for the largest number of queries.

We also welcomed a new Chief Executive this year. Louise Conlon took up the role in 2024. Louise's strong track record and a deep commitment to the values of equality and inclusion have been in evidence throughout her career within the Commission. I look forward to working with her and with all our staff and Commissioners as we take forward our plans for the years ahead.

This year we were also deeply saddened by the passing of our esteemed Board Member, Carmel McKinney OBE. Carmel was a dedicated and passionate advocate for equality.

Finally, I want to thank all those individuals and organisations who work alongside us. Whether through partnership working or shared commitments, your contributions are vital.

Together, we can build a more inclusive and equal Northern Ireland.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geraldine McGahey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Geraldine McGahey OBE**  
**Chief Commissioner**

# Performance Report

This Performance Report provides an outline of the Commission's purpose and remit; a summary of its performance against its objectives and key results in 2024-25, including the challenges and key risks it has faced in delivering its main objectives and strategies; and a brief overview of the likely developments and challenges it faces in the coming year.

## 1.1 Performance Overview

### **Statutory Purpose and activities of the Commission**

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is an executive non-departmental public body (NDPB) sponsored by The Executive Office (TEO).

The Commission, established on 1 October 1999 under the Northern Ireland Act 1998, assumed, along with the responsibilities for statutory equality duties and new disability matters, the duties and responsibilities of four former organisations:

- The Commission for Racial Equality for Northern Ireland;
- The Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland;
- The Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland; and
- The Northern Ireland Disability Council.

Since October 1999, additional duties and responsibilities with respect to age, disability, sexual orientation and special educational needs have also been assumed.

Since 2009, jointly with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, the Equality Commission was designated as the independent mechanism for Northern Ireland of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) with the role of promoting, protecting and monitoring the implementation of the Convention.



Under the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement, the UK Government committed, in Article 2 of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol (now ‘the Windsor Framework’), to ensuring that certain equality and human rights in Northern Ireland will continue to be protected after Brexit. To ensure that the UK Government meets its commitment, the Equality Commission and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) have powers and responsibilities under Schedule 3 of the EU (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020. This Act amended the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and conferred additional powers and duties on the Commission to monitor, advise, report on and enforce the UK’s adherence to its commitment.

In February 2023 the UK and EU announced a new ‘Windsor Framework’ to make changes to the Protocol, including the introduction of a new ‘Stormont Brake’ mechanism. These changes were subsequently introduced. No changes were made to the text of Article 2 of the original Protocol.

Since the Commission’s inception, it has aimed to fulfil all of its duties by working in partnership with key stakeholders to place equality at the heart of civic, economic and political life in Northern Ireland. The main pieces of legislation from which the Commission derives its duties and powers are:

- Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976, as amended;
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended;
- Race Relations (NI) Order 1997, as amended;
- Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998, as amended;
- Northern Ireland Act 1998, as amended;
- Equality (Disability, etc.) (NI) Order 2000;
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2003, as amended;
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005, as amended;
- Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006;
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006, as amended;
- Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2006, as amended, and
- Schedule 3 of the EU (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020.

## Organisational structure, objectives and strategies

To deliver its statutory obligations the Commission sets out its approach in three-yearly corporate plans and in annual business plans. These are approved by The Executive Office (TEO) and published on the Commission's website. A draft Corporate Plan covering the period 2022-25, was submitted to TEO for approval on 4 May 2022. In the absence of Ministers, the Departmental Board approved it for publication. Following the return of the Executive, the Plan received ministerial approval on 23 August 2024.

In preparing its new Corporate Plan, the Commission confirmed its Vision and Mission and revised its core values.

### Vision

An equal society.

### Mission

Improving people's lives by promoting equality and combatting discrimination.

These are supported by our **Values**:

- **Committed** – We actively challenge discrimination and inequality, and we are committed to promoting equality. We care deeply about delivering high standards of public service and take pride in being courageous, dedicated and passionate about our work.
- **Open** – We are honest, approachable and responsive.
- **Respectful** – We treat people as equals, respect diversity and act fairly. We appreciate and support our colleagues' efforts, and we care for ourselves and others. We listen.
- **Enterprising** – We are innovative, forward thinking, outward-looking, adaptable and continuously improving how we work.

To deliver its objectives the Commission is structured into seven Directorates:

- Advice and Compliance;
- Communications;
- Dedicated Mechanism Unit;
- Legal Services;
- Public Policy and Strategic Engagement;
- Research and Investigations; and
- Corporate Services.

The Commission's Organisation Chart has been included in Appendix 2.

### **Chief Executive's Statement for 2024-25**

On 1 September, I assumed the role of Chief Executive and Accounting Officer. My appointment followed a period of uncertainty and significant staffing changes for the Commission.

This transition also coincided with the rollout of a new Programme for Government (PfG) which had been agreed by the Executive six months previously. This provided an opportunity for the Commission to align its work within its draft Corporate Plan 2025-2028 to the PfG. Of course, while the opportunities presented by the new PfG, and the potential for legislative and policy landscape reform, are welcomed, the Commission's ambitions will be moderated by the financial environment in which it will operate during the period covered by its new Plan.

Three-quarters of the Commission's overall resource budget consists of staffing costs. This makes the Commission susceptible to budget reductions and pay increases, which are beyond its control. For over a decade, this has led to ongoing reductions in staffing levels. In recent years, this issue has been further impacted by staff moving to other public bodies with more flexible pay scales and grading arrangements.

This report demonstrates the financial challenges the Commission has encountered this year. The Commission received its initial budget in late June 2024, which was based on the previous year's position. No additional funding was provided for the NICS pay awards for August 2022/23 and August 2023/24, estimated at £293k (6.5% of the non-dedicated resource allocation).

With the exception of a small Capital allocation, initial in-year bids for funding were unsuccessful, resulting in financial constraints throughout most of the year. However, following the October monitoring round, additional funding of £298k was made available.

In the incoming business year, we will begin with an improved financial situation compared to this year. However, we will continue to operate within strict financial constraints and with a reduced staff to implement our work plans.

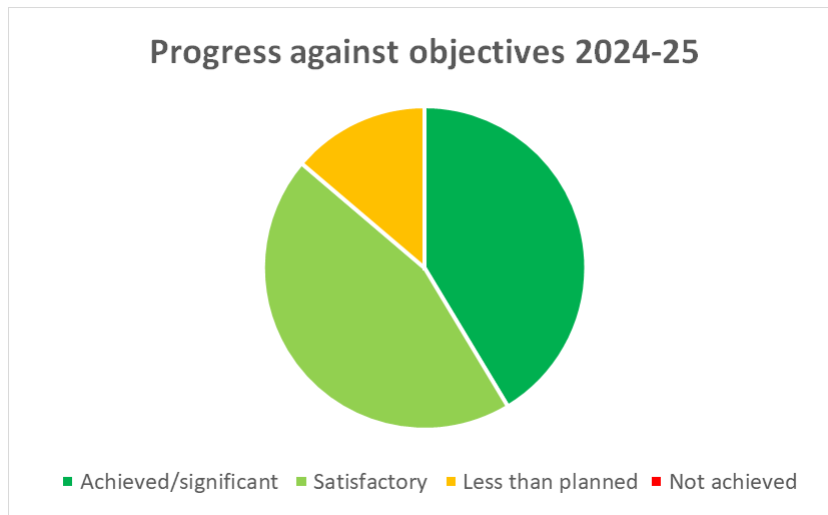
It has been 25 years since the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the establishment of the Commission. During this period, its “core” staffing levels have decreased to two-fifths of the original number. While the Commission acknowledges changes in public sector employment and the ongoing impact of long-term funding reductions across the sector, this significant reduction exceeds what was anticipated by the Northern Ireland Act. The Commission continues to seek a comprehensive review of its funding and staffing levels.

Despite facing various challenges, the Commission and its staff consistently demonstrate resilience and commitment to delivering on behalf of all stakeholders. Governance standards remain high, as evidenced by the Board Effectiveness review completed this year and the information provided throughout this Annual Report. Although the recent Investors in People report showed the impact of staffing pressures with reduced scores in certain areas, the Commission retained its silver level accreditation. While challenges persist, evidence of delivery in key areas continues, and with some additional resourcing, there is potential to reinvigorate Northern Ireland’s equality framework.

This year marked the conclusion of the Commission’s Corporate Plan 2022-25. After the Executive’s return, the plan received Ministerial approval in August 2024. The TEO Board approved this year’s Business Plan in January 2025.

The Corporate Plan 2022-25 outlined five strategic priorities, with the Commission’s annual Business Plans based around these priorities and an additional priority on Resourcing the Plan added. This year, there were 29 objectives across the six priority areas.

This year, twelve key objectives were either achieved or substantial progress was made towards longer-term corporate plan objectives. Additionally, 13 objectives were partly achieved, with performance close to the targeted outcome or satisfactory progress being made towards longer-term goals. In four areas, progress was significantly less than planned. Notably, there were no instances where no progress was made towards achieving the objectives.



The Commission reviewed performance against key actions at least quarterly, and a summary report of this performance was provided quarterly to the TEO sponsor team.

The Commission's governance and controls over business performance management were audited this year, providing satisfactory assurance. The audit recommended improving key performance indicators and targets, which are being implemented in the 2025-26 corporate and business planning. A draft Corporate Plan and Business Plan for 2025-26 have been submitted to TEO for approval. The performance analysis section summarises progress against the key actions this year.

## Managing risks and uncertainties

The key risks to the achievement of the Commission's objectives are set out in its Corporate Risk and Business Continuity Register. The Register is reviewed at each monthly Executive Board meeting or earlier in the event of the emergence of a significant risk or 'near miss'. It is reviewed at each meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and by the full Commission at least twice each year.

A more detailed review of the Commission's risks and risk management is included in the Performance Analysis section below.

## **Ensuring effective governance and internal control**

The Commission has high standards of governance and risk management, as measured by internal and external audit reports and comments from the auditors. Further detail on this and other governance matters are included in the Governance Statement later in this report.

## **Financial Results for the Year**

The financial position of the Commission as at 31 March 2025 and other results for this year are set out in detail in our Financial Statements at page 93. The Accounting Officer authorised these financial statements for issue on 25 June 2025.

The Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) requires the Commission to treat grant-in-aid as financing rather than income. This year, £6,500k (2023-24, £6,373k) was received in grant-in-aid, including £1,141k, for work on the dedicated mechanism arrangements.

The Commission showed a small decrease in income from its activities. Income from activities was £329k this year, which compares with £342k last year. This decrease was the Commission no longer providing IT support to other bodies, through its own staff. To some extent this was mitigated by an increase rental income resulting from an additional tenant sharing Equality House.

Net expenditure for the year was £5,593k (2023-24, £7,122k). The decrease mainly resulted from the change in the treatment of potential dilapidations costs in future years. £750k was provided for last year. This year potential dilapidations costs are being treated as a contingent liability. This resulted in a net movement in net expenditure of £1.5 million.

The deficit in Taxpayers' Equity decreased this year from £1,044k last year to £150k at 31 March 2025. Again, this is largely due to the change in the treatment of potential dilapidations.

Each year, the Commission aims to operate within the allocated budget provided by TEO, avoiding overspend and managing underspend within a tolerance level of 1.5% by 31 March. At the year-end, across the Commission DEL resource and DEL Capital totals, the outturn was an underspend of 0.1%.

## **Going concern**

The Equality Commission operates as a going concern. It is financed by funding from The Executive Office. The Commission was advised of its confirmed opening budget on 6 March 2025. The Commission has no significant liabilities that cannot be funded over the coming period.

Management accounts are prepared on a monthly basis based on present forecasts. This process seeks to facilitate timely remedial actions. Formal arrangements for regular and frequent liaison with the Departmental sponsorship team are in place and there are no known events or conditions that would cast doubt on the Commission's ability to continue as a going concern.

## **1.2 Performance analysis**

This section contains a review of the Commission's overall performance in the areas set out in its 2024-25 Business Plan. It provides information on the Commission's delivery against its key statutory responsibilities; further information on the financial results for the year, set in the context of longer-term patterns and trends; a summary of its management of risks during the year and an assessment of future developments and risks and opportunities to be addressed in the coming year. Further information is provided in Appendix 1.

## **Working for a stronger legal and policy framework for equality**

The Commission advocates for enhancing and streamlining equality laws and addressing the disparity between Northern Ireland's protections and those in the rest of the United Kingdom. Additionally, the work aims to mitigate the risk of divergence between Northern Ireland and the European Union, as well as other international equality standards.

This year, the Committee for the Executive Office conducted an Inquiry into Gaps in Equality Legislation. The Commission provided oral and written evidence and engaged with Committee members, MLAs, and various stakeholders. The Committee is expected to publish its Report and findings early in 2025-26.

In September 2024, the Executive launched its consultation of its draft Programme for Government (PfG), *Doing What Matters Most*. While the Plan did identify priorities that the Commission and others have long advocated for, specific commitments and references to equality were limited. In October, the Commission responded to the consultation and engaged with departmental officials working on the PfG. Key actions in this area were delivered. The Commission's views were published on the website, publicised on social media, and shared with Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and other stakeholders across various sectors.

The final PfG was published in March 2025. We welcomed a broader focus on childcare accessibility and quality, and a more substantive focus on poverty, along with a commitment to developing an Anti-Poverty Strategy. Importantly, its targets and metrics are now more substantive and acknowledge the need to track impacts across Section 75 grounds. This year, the Commission advised on applying Section 75 to the PfG and will continue engagement in 2025-26.

In the context of an ongoing judicial review application by the Children's Law Centre, the Commission prepared updated guidance on the NI Budget for the Department of Finance, NIO, and public authorities. This guidance has been shared with the involved parties, the Court, and more broadly. At the year-end, the engagement with the judicial review and the Department of Finance regarding the budget process for 2025-2026 and its equality scheme was ongoing.

The judicial review hearing is now scheduled for October 2025 having been initially scheduled for June 2025. The Commission has also communicated with several other government Departments on the application of Section 75 to their budget processes, as well as with interested stakeholder groups.



In August 2024, TEO published a summary of responses to its Review of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 consultation. The report analysed responses, suggested potential solutions, and highlighted areas for further consideration. It was encouraging that much of the content aligned with the Commission's recommendations. Key points included the need for Ethnic Equality Monitoring and areas to strengthen the Commission's powers.

Stakeholders raised concerns about resource pressures on the Commission and the number of racial discrimination cases it supports. They also commented on the Commission's accessibility to minority ethnic communities. TEO brought these issues to the Commission's attention. As part of its new Corporate Plan, the Commission will work with TEO and the sector to update racial equality legislation and address these concerns.

In response to the summer's incidents of racist violence, the Assembly passed a motion condemning such actions. This motion included a proposal to expedite the renewed race relations order and outlined the process for replacing the racial equality strategy 2015-2025. Additionally, the Commission provided a detailed response to the recent TEO Call for Views on developing a new strategic approach to racial equality.

As in previous years, the Commission has advocated for the introduction of draft hate crime legislation and has actively engaged with the Department of Justice to encourage progress, including efforts to broaden the scope of protections. The Commission's recommendations have also been discussed within the framework of various initiatives such as the Committee of the Executive Office's Inquiry on Equality Law, the Housing Executive's (NIHE) Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy, the Policing Board's Policing Plan 2025-2030, and the Policing Services (PSNI) Race and Ethnicity Action Plan. Combatting hate crime will remain a priority in the forthcoming year.

The Commission has consistently been concerned about the lack of age discrimination protection in goods, facilities, and services, particularly for older people. The proposal to address this through a Private Member's Bill is a positive step and appears to have support from across political parties.

The Commission presented its recommendations in written evidence and to Assembly Committees and all-party groups. It will continue to engage with this issue over the next year.

The Commission has diligently worked to present its recommendations for law reform and policy change to key international bodies, including the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). As part of the Independent Mechanism for Northern Ireland and in its own capacity, the Commission actively engaged public bodies in consultations on various health, welfare, pensions, employment, and other related issues. This year, the Commission appeared before the CERD Committee to articulate its positions on several matters, including race law reform, the Racial Equality and Refugee Integration strategies, hate crime, and the impact of Brexit on minority ethnic and migrant populations.

The Commission's work this year included several important areas, which will continue into next year's business plan. These areas include the European Union Directives on Pay Transparency and Standards for equality bodies, Gender Pay Gap Reporting, the Good Jobs Bill, and social inclusion strategies sponsored by the Department for Communities, such as those addressing active ageing, disability, gender, and sexual orientation.

The Commission has published reports for the six areas of life included in its Measuring Equality in Northern Ireland initiative. These reports are organised around equality outcome areas and indicators and are available on the Commission's website for use by policymakers and others.

## **Using our powers to combat discrimination and promote equality of opportunity**

The Commission has formal regulatory powers and responsibilities across its legislative remit, primarily with regard to:

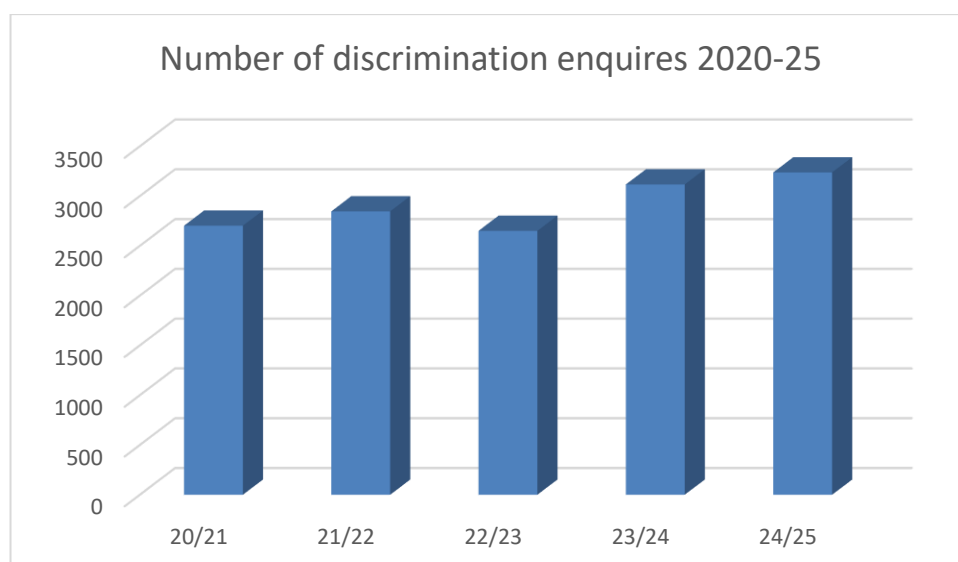
- advising and assisting with regard to complaints of discrimination over each of the grounds covered by the anti-discrimination provisions;
- a number of duties with respect to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;
- the preparation by public authorities of disability action plans under Sections 49A and 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA); and

- the registration, monitoring and review requirements placed on private and public sector employers, contained in the Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998 (FETO) and related provisions.

Each year, in this Annual Report, the Commission outlines its work in these areas.

## Complaints of discrimination

During 2024-25 advice was provided in relation to 3,327 enquiries, an increase on last year's figure of 3,116. The level of enquiries from individuals about potential discrimination is slowly returning to pre pandemic levels.



Of the enquiries received during this year, covered by the Commission's remit, excluding hybrid enquiries (last year's figures in brackets):

- 55.7% (55.5%) were about disability discrimination, including SENDO;
- 19.9% (19.5%) were about sex discrimination;
- 10.4% ( 9.5%) were about racial discrimination;
- 7.5% ( 7.5%) were about age discrimination;
- 6.6% ( 6.8%) were about religious/political discrimination; and
- 1.7% ( 1.2%) were about sexual orientation discrimination.

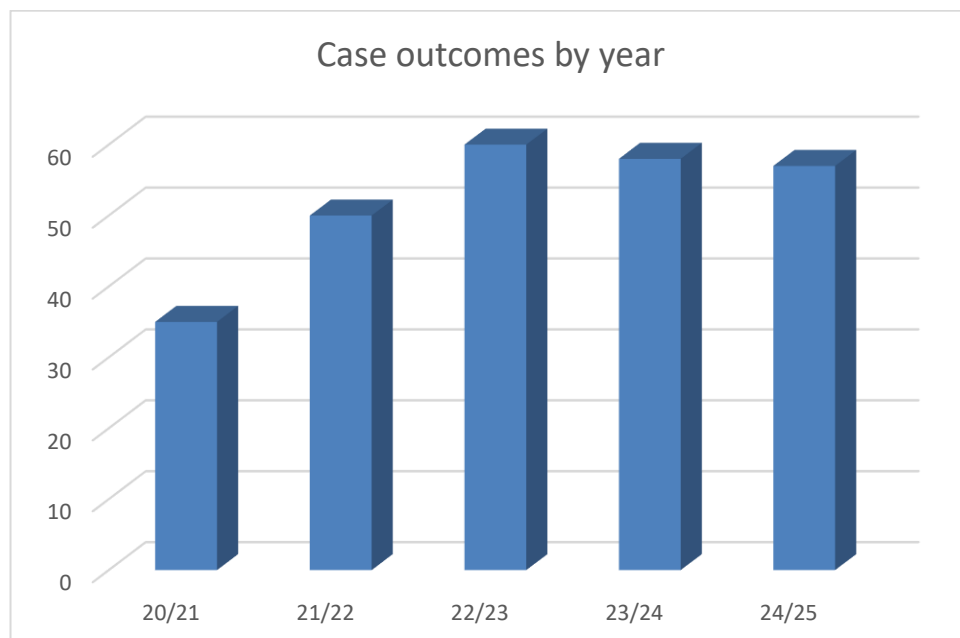
Disability discrimination still remains the largest ground of enquiry, with sex discrimination following. This year has seen a slight increase in the number and percentage of racial discrimination enquiries. Enquiries about discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation remain low.

Employment remains the single largest area of enquiry, with 67% (70%) of enquiries relating to this field. This is followed by Goods, Facilities and Services enquiries, which made up 22% (20%) of enquiries and then education at 6% (5%), with other complaints making up the balance.

In 2024-25, the Commission received 405 applications for assistance (AFAs). This was a 10.7% increase on the 366 applications for assistance received in 2023-24.

During the year, 348 applications for assistance were considered by the Commission's Legal Funding Committees, an increase on last year's 300. Of the 348, 71 (20.4%) were granted assistance. This compares to last year's figure of 63 (21%).

By the end of the year, 57 assisted cases reached an outcome. This compares to 58 cases having reached an outcome in 2023-24.



There were two judgements in Tribunals this year, one upheld and one dismissed. There were no decisions emanating from a Court. The case that was upheld involved harassment on the grounds of sex. The claimant, a woman working part-time as a waitress, was awarded £25,000 plus interest, by the Tribunal. In the unsuccessful case, the allegations, of age discrimination, constructive dismissal and victimisation, were dismissed in their entirety. The Tribunal found that poor communication, in itself, did not amount to unlawful discrimination.

This year settlements were reached in 34 assisted cases. Compensation of £582,151 was recovered for individuals, along with settlement terms including remedial action. This compares with 38 settlements for last year with a total compensation of £810,655.

Twenty-six settlements were referred to Advice & Compliance in 2024-25. Of these 26, the terms have been met in 16 cases, with work continuing on nine of the remaining ten cases. One settlement was referred back to legal services as not being implemented. Follow up work was also completed on seven settlements reached in 2023-24.

Following a SEN Tribunal decision with Lumina Christi school, advice was provided to assist the school to develop a range of relevant policies and training was delivered for the school's teachers and board members. Similar training and policy work was undertaken with Ballymoney High School and St Mary's Primary School following SEN settlements. A settlement relating to the Ulster Boxing Federation was referred to the Commission with agreed settlement terms, on which work is ongoing.

## **Section 75 statutory equality and good relations duties**

Each year, the Commission reports on any steps which, during the year, have been taken by it and other public authorities to promote such equality of opportunity as is mentioned in Section 75(1) of the Act. The Commission took a number of steps in furtherance of these duties during the year under review, as set out below.

## **Keeping the effectiveness of the duties under review**

By year end, of the 161 designated public authorities, 145 are required to have an equality scheme, and 144 have an approved scheme in place. The Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR) is finalising its draft equality scheme, to be considered for approval by the Commission early in 2025/26. This year, we provided advice to 14 public authorities reviewing their equality schemes.

Section 75 annual progress reports (APR) for 2023-24 were requested from 143 public authorities (PA) required to submit their APR by the end of August. By the end of March 2025, 138 (97%) APRs had been received. In 2023-24, 131 PAs had submitted their APR (92%). Feedback was provided to 31 public authorities on their 2023-24 APRs. This compares to 53 in the previous year.

## **Advice to Public Authorities**

In addition to work on the budget, reported above, this year the Commission continued its engagement to improve the application of the Section 75 duties across Government Departments and other public bodies more generally. Of necessity, our Section 75 work is focused on larger public authorities, such as Government Departments and the larger areas of the public sector, such as local Councils, health and education. The Commission also responded to 20 public authorities on 32 Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA).

This year, the Commission's Section 75 Leadership Guidance was revised, and three leadership training events were held to publicise the revised guidance. Through engagement with NICS and TEO, a programme of training was delivered on Section 75 screening, impact assessment and monitoring. This was attended by 180 people from 45 public bodies.

## **Complaints and Investigations**

Under Schedule 9, Paragraph 10 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Commission considers complaints of non-compliance with an Equality Scheme, made against a public authority. It may investigate such complaints. Under paragraph 11, it can investigate public authority compliance with an Equality Scheme on its own initiative.

This year, advice was provided in response to 36 enquiries (44 in 2023-24) about Equality Scheme compliance and complaints under Paragraph 10. Six written complaints, made under Paragraph 10, were received by the Commission by 31 March 2025. This was the same number as last year.

The Statutory Duty Investigations Committee (SDIC) considered and decided on six Paragraph 10 complaints during 2024-25, (five in 2023-24) in terms of whether to investigate the complaint or give reasons for not investigating. The Committee authorised three of these for investigation. Work on these investigations is ongoing. One request for review of Committee's decision was considered. The Committee decided there were no grounds to review its decision.

Two investigations of Paragraph 10 complaints, initiated in 2023-24, were progressed. One was completed and the other ongoing at the year-end.

### **Public Sector Disability Duty**

Of the 145 public authorities required to have a Disability Action Plan (DAP), all have one in place. This year, advice was provided to 37 public authorities to improve their disability action measures. By year-end, seven public authorities had revised and updated their DAP, taking account of our advice.

### **Fair Employment Monitoring and Review**

Fair Employment monitoring is a continuous process throughout the year with specified public authorities and registered concerns with registration dates in different months and a return date four months after their registration. There is therefore a time delay with receipt and authorisation, which crosses the calendar and business year.

This year, 3,922 (4,020) monitoring forms covering 2023-25 were received. 3,895 (99.3%) were received within 2-months of their due date. 3,681 forms were authorised this year. This compares with 4,044 last year. Authorisation will continue throughout the coming year.

The process for prosecution of the five employers, whose returns have been outstanding since the pandemic has begun. At the year-end they had been given a deadline to submit their outstanding monitoring forms. Legal proceedings will issue without further notice if the returns are not made.

<b>Monitoring Return Forms (MRF)</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Total MRFs due / *to date	3,813	3,837	3,882	3,898	*1,358	
Already received	3,808	3,832	3,783	280	0	
Received in 2024-25	0	0	94	3,556	272	3,922
Authorised in 2024-25	0	1	2,092	1,588	0	3,681
Remaining to be authorised	0	0	0	2,305	272	2,577
Not submitted / Still to be submitted	5	5	5	62	1,086	

The Commission continued to ensure that employers due to conduct their Article 55 Reviews in this year were provided with advice to do so. This year, the Commission requested 50 Article 55 Reviews, of which 47 (94%) were submitted. This compares with figures of 58 and 39 (67%), respectively for 2023-24. Of the 47 reviews submitted, by the year end 36 had been audited and were in compliance with the requirements of Article 55. Feedback to the organisations was provided. Auditing of the remaining 11 is ongoing.

Advice was also provided to 17 private sector employers and five public authorities, through follow-up on Article 55 Reviews and affirmative action measures. The comparative figures for 2023-24 were 35 and five.

During the year, staff made 17,164 email and telephone contacts with employers re FETO compliance and delivered 30 workshops on completion of a monitoring return form or an Article 55 review. This compares with 21,511 contacts and 30 workshops in the previous year.

### **Removal of the Teachers exception**

On 12 May 2024, the Fair Employment (Schools Teachers) Act (NI) 2022, enacted two years previously, came into effect and revokes the remaining part of the “teachers’ exception” provided by Article 71 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order (FETO)1998.



This year, the removal of the teachers' exemption necessitated the consideration of registration of a further 64 schools. Each of these schools was engaged directly by Advice and Compliance. As a result, 47 schools have been added to the register, a further eleven are not required to register and contact with the six remaining schools is ongoing, involving consideration of possible exemption.

The Education Authority and CCMS have submitted monitoring returns, which now include teaching staff in schools for which they are responsible. Both returns have seen a substantial increase in employees covered. Teaching staff cannot be differentiated from non-teaching staff on the monitoring return; both authorities have been advised to retain monitoring data by individual school location so that consideration can be given to the composition of those employed in and ceasing to be employed as part of the article 55 triennial review requirement.

During the year, a small number of training events were organised for schools, including through Comhairle Na Gaelscolaíochta to five schools from the Irish Medium Sector. Detailed advice was provided to CCMS on its review of its Teaching Appointment Scheme.

## **Annual Summary of Monitoring Returns**

The Fair Employment Monitoring Report No.33 was completed and published on the Commission's website in July 2024.

The report provides information on the community background of the monitored workforce based on those returns made during 2022. Percentages in square brackets [ ] exclude individuals recorded as non-determined.

This year's report shows that the total monitored workforce was 578,403.

- Overall, 245,329 (42.4%) were Protestant, 246,804 (42.7%) Roman Catholic, and 86,270 (14.9%) were non-determined.
- In 2022, for the first time since monitoring began, the share of the total monitored workforce from members of the Roman Catholic community [50.1%] was greater than that of members of the Protestant community [49.9%].

- The Roman Catholic community share of applicants to the monitored workforce was [52.3%], with [47.7%] from the Protestant community.
- The Roman Catholic community represented [52.5%] of appointees to the monitored workforce in 2022; the Protestant community represented [47.5%].
- Leavers from the Roman Catholic community comprised [51.9%] of leavers from the monitored workforce and [48.1%] from the Protestant community.
- In 2022, women accounted for more than half (52.5%) of all monitored employees in Northern Ireland.

In terms of high-level trends in the Monitored Workforce, the findings continue to show a gradual increase in the Roman Catholic share of the monitored workforce; this has been evident since 2001.

The Fair Employment Monitoring Report No.34, based on those returns made during 2023, is due for publication in June.

## **Employer Guidance and Training**

At the core of the advisory services is a confidential enquiry line and training services. In this year we dealt with over 2,610 enquiries (2,724 last year), from employers and service providers on a range of issues, including recruitment and selection, disability and reasonable adjustments.

This year 47 employer webinars or other training events were delivered, reaching 1,225 participants. This compares with 30, attended by 1,029 participants last year. This year, 99% of attendees said their awareness had increased as a result of the training and 72% of attendees committed to reviewing their existing policies or developing new policies. Work to survey a sample of employers, on their experience of the Commission and its work, was ongoing at the year end.

As part of its building of a new website, all of the Commission's employer advice is being reviewed. Work on the fair employment registration, monitoring and Article 55 review sections were completed this year.

## **Safeguarding our rights and protections in a changing Europe**

The Commission has performed its duties and responsibilities, in collaboration with NIHRC to maintain equality and human rights in Northern Ireland after Brexit, and with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission on issues concerning the entire island.

Our core work in this area involves monitoring and reporting on the UK Government's compliance with Article 2 in the Windsor Framework, using our legal powers to advise, assist individuals, and intervene in cases of alleged breaches.

This year, the Joint Dedicated Mechanism Annual Report on the implementation of Article 2 for the period 2023-24 was prepared and released. It has been submitted to the Secretary of State and the Executive Office for their review and response.

The Commission reviewed the progress on implementing the recommendations from previous annual reports in January 2025. It is regrettable to observe the absence of a substantive response from either the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland or The Executive Office.

Effective collaboration with NIHRC and IHREC was demonstrated in the completion and release of the joint three Commission annual report for 2023-24.

The Commission monitors the UK Government's compliance with Article 2 of the Windsor Framework. Throughout the year, in addition to annual reports, it provided recommendations to the NI Affairs Committee's inquiry on the Windsor Framework in NI and a joint response to the House of Lords European Affairs Committee's inquiry on data adequacy for UK-EU relations.

The Commission submitted Article 2-related matters to Assembly Committees and Executive Departments.

Article 2 issues were raised and discussed with House of Lords Representatives at Westminster and with EU Representatives and NIO Officials in Brussels. The Commission also reviewed and advised on Article 2 compliance for various Private Members' Bills.

The Commission intervened in the Court of Appeal judicial review application to challenge, under Article 2 grounds, various provisions of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act (the “Legacy Act”). The court’s decision aligned with the Commission’s intervention in many of the key areas. The Secretary of State has since been granted leave to appeal the Court’s decision, with a hearing scheduled for June 2025.

Advice was provided to seven individuals with legal enquiries in relation to Article 2.

Research and policy development are central to the Commission’s role in the Dedicated Mechanism.

Ongoing research this year included publication of a further public awareness survey. The survey results showed a further increase in levels of public awareness compared to results obtained in the previous two years across a number of key areas. This included awareness of rights, and the roles of the Commissions with regard to Article 2. A majority of respondents felt that equality and human rights after Brexit and the role of the Commissions were important to them. In addition, a substantial proportion of respondents felt that social attitudes towards certain equality groups, including minority ethnic people, migrant people and refugees and asylum seekers had become worse since Brexit. While there were no significant differences in responses in terms of respondents’ age, gender, or disability, significant differences in terms of respondent’s community background and political opinion were observed for certain questions, including those on the importance of equality and human rights protections and social attitudes after Brexit.

A divergence of rights research update paper was published in November. The report, written by academics from the School of Law in Ulster University, raises the risk of further divergences between Ireland and Northern Ireland, particularly in areas of EU law, relating to equality and human rights, in which reform proposals are already in progress at the EU level. Work on three further update papers in this area commenced this year: an EU Law monitoring report, a CJEU Case Law expert paper and an expert legal report on EU law developments in the field of employment.

An update report into the impact of loss of EU funding on equality groups has been completed and will be launched early in 2025-26.

This research is used to inform policy makers, political representatives and sectoral bodies, as well as the Commission's own recommendations and representations on Article 2 compliance. The Dedicated Mechanism Unit's research also inputs into other aspects of the Commission's policy and advisory work.

To increase awareness of the importance of Article 2 and the Commission's role and remit in protecting rights after Brexit, the Commission has an Article 2 Communications Strategy in place for 2023 – 26. This includes KPI's covering key areas.

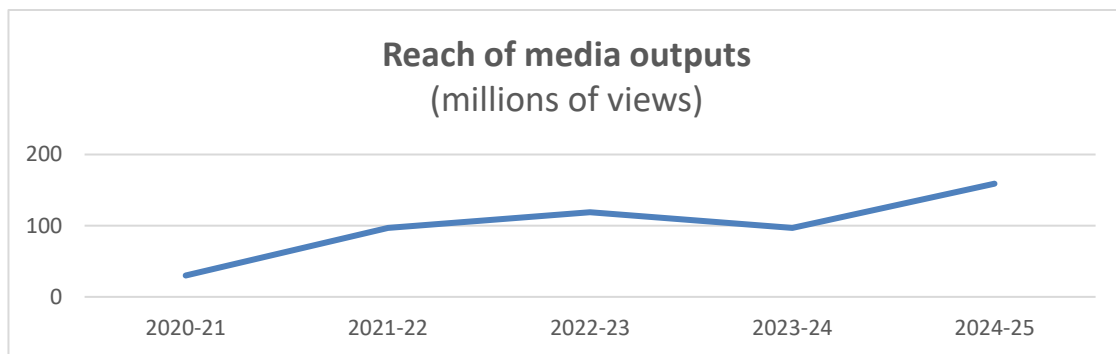
Awareness KPIs	Target	Achieved
New rights under the Windsor Framework	55%	78%
The role of ECNI and NIHRC in protecting equality and human rights post Brexit	55%	64%
The ECNI and the NIHRC can provide legal advice and assistance to bring legal action before our courts	60%	66%
ECNI, NIHRC and IHREC role in all-island dimension on equality commitments under the Windsor Framework	45%	42%

## Improved Communications and Engagement

Again, this year the Commission continued to build on the good progress made over recent years, including in embracing new technologies and ways of working.

### Media

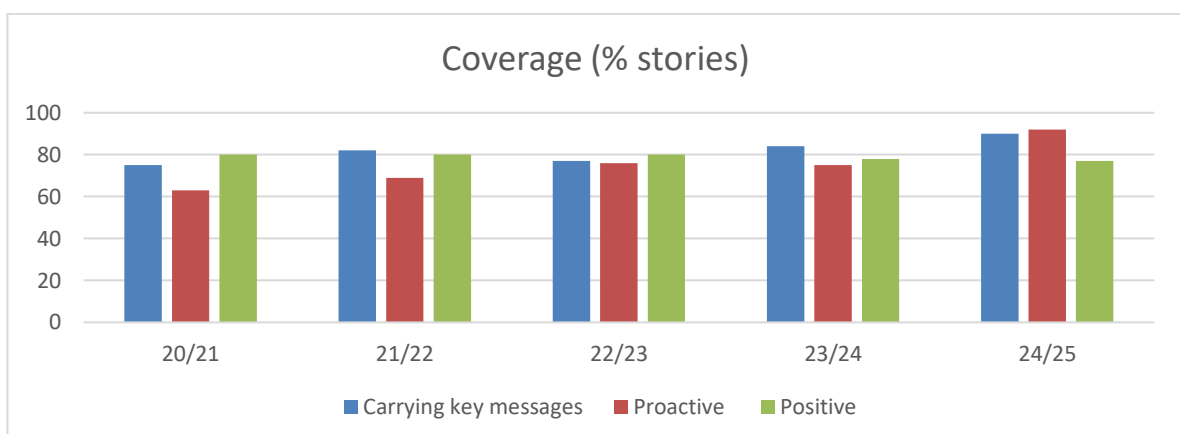
In 2024-25, the Commission released press releases, blogs or other media on 35 stories. This compares with 37 last year.



Media reach, a measure of the estimated number of people who could have seen our coverage, based on articles published on media sites, was the highest it has been over the past five years. Some of this increase is attributed to a change in the method of calculation.

Over the year, we published ten legal case outcomes and achieved strong media engagement across a range of equality issues. One high-profile disability discrimination case attracted widespread national coverage and became the most-read article on RTÉ’s website on the day of publication. We also issued press releases on key areas of our work, including Article 2 of the Windsor Framework, the Fair Employment Monitoring Report, and our statement condemning racially motivated violence and protests.

Media attention around sex discrimination cases helped reinforce important messages on pregnancy and maternity rights at work, as well as appropriate conduct at workplace events, particularly timely in the lead-up to the festive season. We also published 10 blogs over the last year on a range of topics including: need for equality strategies, protections for older people, hate crime and prejudice-based bullying in schools.

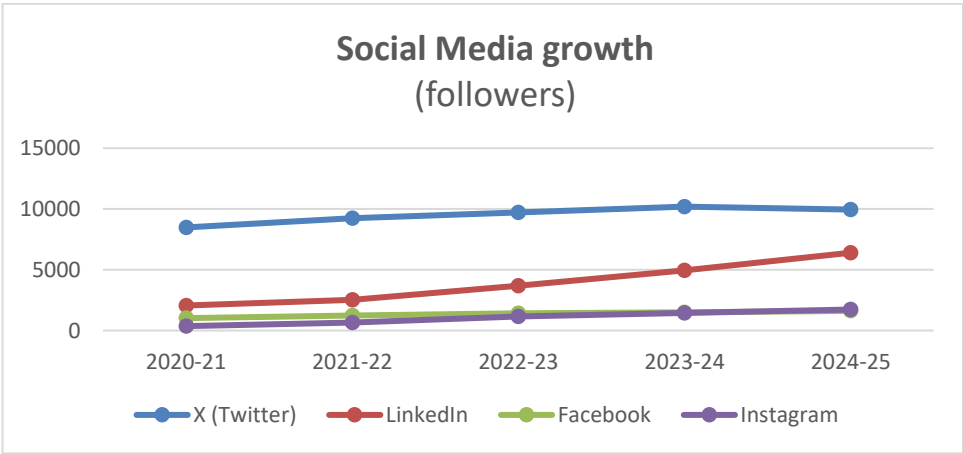


The percentage of articles carrying key messages and the amount of proactive coverage, showed an increase this year. The amount of positive coverage showed a slight decline.

Media metric	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Reach (views)	30 million	97 million	119 million	97 million	159 million
% articles carrying key messages	75%	82%	77%	84%	90%
Proactive coverage	63%	69%	76%	75%	92%
Positive Coverage	80%	80%	80%	78%	77%

Social Media

Our social media channels saw strong growth and improved engagement over 2024-25, reflecting a more strategic and audience-focused approach to content. LinkedIn emerged as a key platform for professional engagement, while Instagram continued to grow among visually driven audiences. Facebook performance significantly improved, with increased interaction and community reach. Although Twitter engagement remained steady, a slight decline in followers reflected broader trends in platform usage.

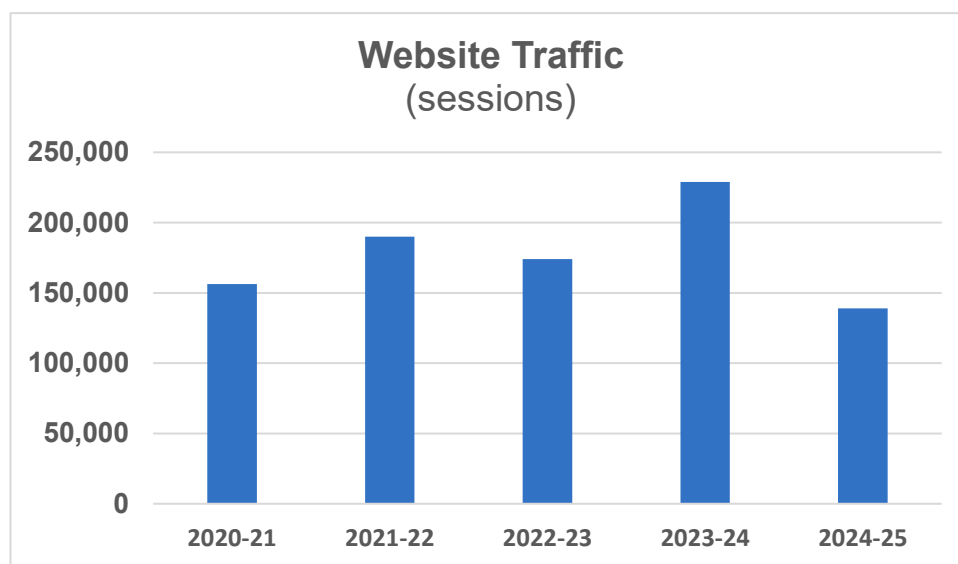


## Website and Content Development

While the launch of our new website was delayed due to resourcing challenges, the project has been prioritised and is now targeted for early 2025-26.

This work marks a broader shift in our approach to content, with ongoing collaboration across teams to improve clarity and accessibility, not just online, but across all public-facing materials, in line with our 2025-26 business plan objectives.

We did not meet our target for website sessions. However, changes made to Google Analytics Four (GA4), around how it collates website sessions, may have had an impact on this.



## Partnerships

Throughout the year, we delivered a wide range of impactful engagement activities, strengthening relationships with stakeholders, communities, and political representatives. Highlights included the *Breaking Barriers, Building Futures* disability conference, joint initiatives marking International Men's and Women's Days, and events amplifying Traveller women's voices. We responded proactively to rising community tensions, using communications and outreach to build new connections and promote racial equality.

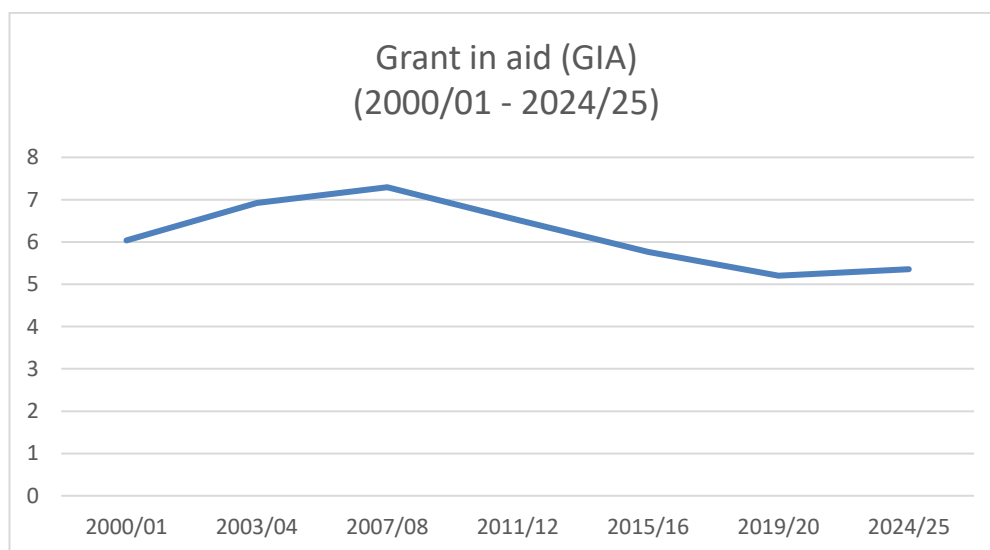


We deepened partnerships with organisations across the equality sector, co-hosting events with the NIHRC, NICCY, Disability Action and others, and maintained strong political engagement through Westminster visits and joint briefings on rights under the Windsor Framework. Our presence at public events like Belfast Pride and Mela helped raise awareness of our post-Brexit rights protection role amongst those who might need our assistance.

## Financial performance

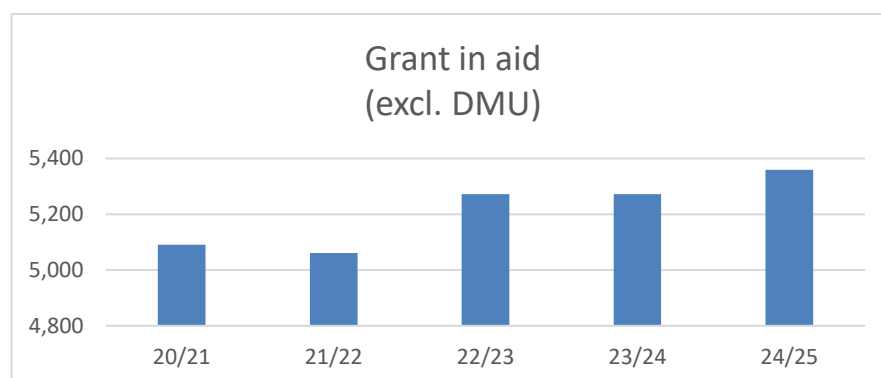
As can be seen below, the Commission has seen a long-term reduction in its opening grant in aid (GIA), the cash it receives from TEO, in the years since it was established. Measured against 2007-08, the decrease is almost £2 million.

The graph below has not been adjusted to account for inflation and the decrease in real terms has been much more substantial. It is this decline in financing, which underpins the substantial, and continuing, reduction in staffing levels that is the main organisational risk that the Commission deals with.



The graph also demonstrates that over more recent years the fall has been arrested, although, again, not if measured against inflation.

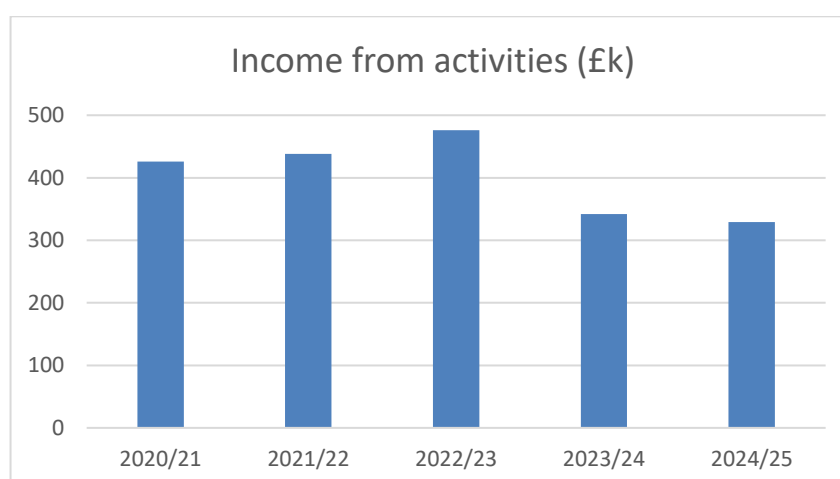
The current year saw an increase in its total GIA allocation, from £6,373k to £6,500k. The chart below also shows an increase in grant in aid (excl. DMU) over the past five years.



The GIA figures above do not include the ring-fenced funding the Commission has received via TEO, from HM Treasury since October 2020, to undertake responsibilities as part of the Dedicated Mechanism, established under the NI Protocol. The Commission received £1,141k for this work this year, an increase from £1,101k in 2023-24.

## Income

The Commission has continued to mitigate the impact of budget reductions, through increasing its efficiency and through sharing its accommodation and services with other smaller public bodies.



This year the Commission generated £329k, mainly from sharing its accommodation with other bodies. This compares with £342k last year. There has been a reduction over the past two years, as a result of the Commission no longer providing IT services. The Commission no longer has an IT team and support is now provided from a contract with a third-party supplier.

## Commission expenditure

The table below gives a breakdown of key areas of Commission expenditure over the past five years. Further detail on expenditure this year can be found in Note 3 to the Accounts. In the tables below, this year we have reported separately on core expenditure and on expenditures on the staffing and work of the new Dedicated Mechanism arrangements.

**ECNI Core Expenditure trends 2020 – 2025 (£'000)**

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total operating expenditure	5,485	5,819	5,771	6,390	4,815
Salaries and other staff costs	3,742	3,947	3,736	3,930	3,785
Expenditure on Goods and Services	1,399	1,550	1,231	956	1,080

Although Commission expenditure had been on a downward trend for a decade, the past few years have seen an increase. The increase in total operating expenditure in 2023-24 and the decrease this year are largely due to a provision of £750k for potential future dilapidations costs last year. This year these are considered to be a contingent liability.

The table above demonstrates the high proportion of Commission expenditure accounted for by staffing. With such a large proportion of its budget that is committed to staffing, budget reductions has a disproportionate impact on staffing levels. Commission staff are employed on pay scales and terms and conditions of employment, equivalent to civil servants. Increases in staff pay, across the civil service, constitute the main financial pressure on the Commission. The impact of this will continue into future years.

The increase in Dedicated Mechanism expenditure is due to the recruitment of staff in the early years, as the new Unit was created and additional funding provided by NIO, following the preparation of a business case.

**Dedicated Mechanism  
Expenditure trends 2020 – 2025 (£'000)**

	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2024-25</b>
Total operating expenditure	212	788	789	1,074	1,107
Salaries and other staff costs	157	520	561	621	672
Expenditure on Capital, Goods and Services	55	268	228	453	435

Last year saw a substantial increase in the Commission's year end cash position, from £82k in 2022-23 to £468k on 31 March 2024. At 31 March 2025, there was a much smaller increase in cash at the year end to £481k.

There was also a significant decrease in deficit in Taxpayers' Equity this year, from £1,044k at 31 March 2024 to £150k at 31 March 2025. Again, this is largely due to the change in treatment of potential dilapidations costs in future years.

### **Payment to suppliers**

The Commission is committed to the prompt payment of bills for goods and services received in accordance with the Government's Better Payment Practice Code. Unless otherwise stated in the contract, payment is due within 30 days of receipt of the goods or services, or presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand, whichever is later.

The Northern Ireland Executive's target is for 90% of valid bills to be paid within 30 days. During the period, 84.4% of bills were paid within the thirty-day standard and 36.2% were paid within 10 days. The figures for 2023-24 were 86.7% and 50.9% respectively.

There has been a drop in the Commission's performance in meeting the prompt payment target over recent years, particularly that for within 10 days. Improvement in this area will be a focus for the new financial year.

### **Corporate social responsibility and sustainability**

As the leaseholder in Equality House, the Commission has worked closely with our Facilities Management partners and IT services, to create an environment in Equality House which meets the wide-ranging needs of staff and visitors. A framework of measures continues to be in place to keep staff and visitors as safe as possible, with meeting rooms upgraded to enable staff and visitors to fully engage with our services no matter their physical location.

A continuing effort to move to a digital first method of operation has reduced the need for physical document storage which has opened up space to develop workspaces which are more conducive to communication and collaboration. Reduced dependency on physical server hardware and the further roll out of energy efficient lighting have contributed to a 20% reduction in electricity consumption. Such efficiencies contributed to an improvement in the Commission's Display Energy Certificate rating for 2024-25. Although retaining a Certification category of C, the rating within that band further improved from 64 to 56. The rating system used, based on CO2 emissions, has a scale from zero to 150. A lower score indicates a more efficient building. A typical rating for a building of the size and occupancy of Equality House would be 100; the current score is indicative of efficient operation.

Continuing partnership through the facilities management contract ensures that none of the waste produced at Equality House is sent to landfill. Of the 13 metric tonnes of waste produced, (down from 22 tonnes pre- pandemic), 72% was recycled and 28% was recovered.

The Commission utilises the services of Construction and Procurement Delivery (CPD) for its larger contracts, such as Facilities Management, IT and Reprographics. CPD contracts require contractors to focus on economic, environmental and social factors pertaining to their services. The Commission has, via its Facilities Management Contract, supported the Living Wage policy and in 2023-24 adopted the Real Living Wage policy, ensuring that subcontracted staff benefit from this initiative. The Commission continues to support small local businesses such as repair services, local caterers and social enterprises which supply refreshments for Commission events and meetings.

The Commission continues to offer a Bike to Work Scheme which over the last twelve years has supported almost 12% of the workforce with space being set aside in the basement car park for bikes.

Following engagement in a pilot scheme relating to the Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, the Commission has now embedded free provision which has been welcomed by staff and visitors alike.

The Commission's People Strategy continues to deliver a range of initiatives to adapt, modernise and improve to make the Commission a good place to work. During the year, the Commission continued to work to Investors in People (IIP) standards and achieved renewed Silver accreditation. A new People Strategy for 2025-2028 is in progress in alignment with the IIP results and feedback. Ongoing policy development including a draft Hybrid Policy and the Learning and Development programme delivered 75 training courses to support capability in subject expertise, risk and personal development.

Social and wellbeing approaches saw staff raise £2,300 for our charity for 2024, Women's Aid; staff had opportunities to participate in physical challenges, fundraising events, support with flu vaccinations and health checks.

Equality House is accessible to people with disabilities and has benefitted from audits which have enhanced its facilities. In delivering its services, the Commission is committed to the provision of equality of opportunity to all service users. The Commission has effective policies in place and will make reasonable adjustments for disabled people to reduce barriers and increase accessibility.

The Commission is committed to complying with its human rights obligations in delivering its statutory responsibilities and duties. Further information on staffing policies, including the Commission's approach to the promotion of equality of opportunity can be found in the Staff Report.

### **Fraud Prevention and Anti-Bribery**

The Commission has in place a Fraud Prevention Policy and Response Plan, which includes fraud, bribery and anti-corruption guidance for staff. There were no instances of fraud or bribery in 2024-25. Further information on the Commission's fraud policy and response plan can be found in the Governance Statement.

A gifts and hospitality policy is in place and a register is maintained.

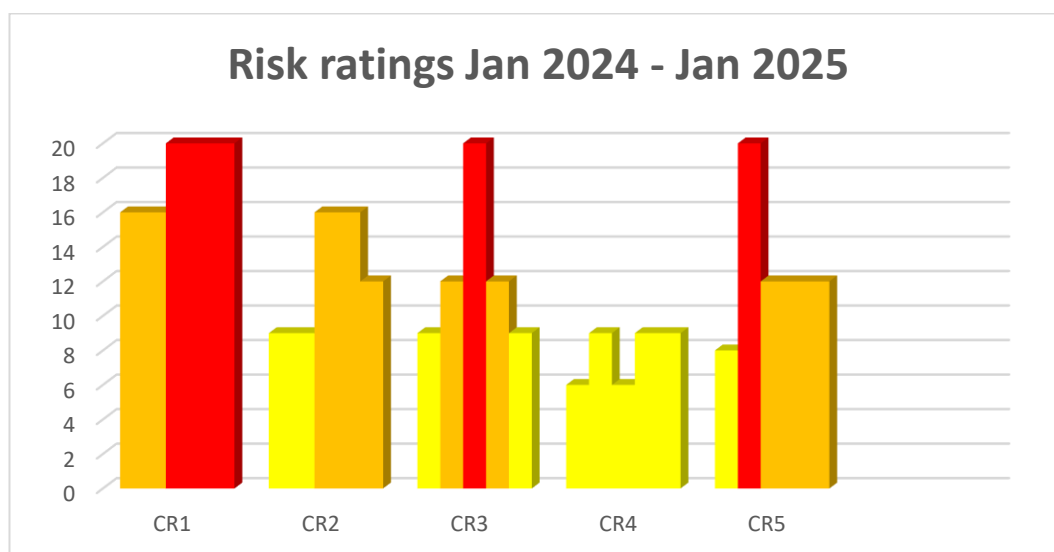
### **Likely Future Developments, risks and uncertainty**

Set out below are the main risks and uncertainties impacting on the Commission's performance this year and anticipated as impacting performance over the coming year.

Throughout the course of the year the Commission's risk register monitored and reported on five strategic risks

CR1 Corporate Strategy and Statutory Responsibilities;  
CR2 Reputation and Credibility;  
CR3 Budgetary control and resourcing;  
CR4 Statutory compliance and internal control; and  
CR5 Business continuity and asset management.

A chart of the residual risk rating for each objective, as reported at the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, is set out below.



Due to the impact of continuing staff reductions and the longer-term uncertainty about the financial position, CR1 remained high throughout the year. This year's risk profile for CR3 Budgetary control and resourcing during the year, saw an initial increase with the announcement of the opening budget allocation. However, this reduced during the year, following successful in-year bidding and effective budget monitoring and control.

CR2, Reputation and credibility, was also impacted due to the impact of budgetary constraints on delivery. However, with increased in-year funding this was mitigated to some extent in the second half of the year.

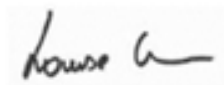
CR5 Business continuity, increased at the start of the year, due to the resignation of the Chief Executive and other key staff. Although this was addressed it remained high pending the completion of a number of IT related projects. CR4, statutory compliance and internal control remained relatively low throughout the year.

### **Important Events Occurring After the Year-end**

There have been no other significant events since the year-end that would affect this report and the accounts.

### **Annual Report and Accounts**

The Equality Commission's Annual Report and Accounts are prepared in accordance with Schedule 8 of the Northern Act 1998 and in a form directed by The Executive Office with the approval of the Department of Finance.



**Louise Conlon**  
**Chief Executive and Accounting Officer**  
25 June 2025



## 2. Accountability Report

### 2.1 Corporate Governance Report

This report describes the organisation and composition of the Commission's governance structures and how they support the achievement of the Commission's objectives.

#### 2.1.1 Directors' Report

The Directors' Report provides details of those with the key responsibilities for directing the Commission in the delivery of its objectives, their attendance and any significant external interests held by them. It also provides information on any personal data incidents reported to the Information Commissioner's Office.

The Commission is led by a Chief Commissioner, who is supported by a Deputy Chief Commissioner. The overall number of Commissioners should be not less than 14 and not more than 20. Including the Chief Commissioner and the Deputy Chief Commissioner, there are currently 15 Commissioners. Commissioners are appointed by open competition and are accountable to the Secretary of State, under the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The Chief Commissioner is Ms Geraldine McGahey OBE and the Deputy Chief Commissioner is Mr Neil Anderson. Ms McGahey was appointed on 1 March 2025 for a further five-year period.

The Commission's Chief Executive, Ms Louise Conlon, has been designated as the Accounting Officer by the Accounting Officer of The Executive Office.

The individuals who served as members of the Commission during the reporting period, and their attendance at Commission meetings is detailed in the Governance Statement below, as is the composition of key Committees. The current membership of the Commission comprises nine women and six men.

## Commission composition

The following table provides the composition of the Commission at 31 March 2025.

Gender	M	F	Total
	6	9	15

## Senior Executive Team

Louise Conlon	Chief Executive
Keith Brown	Head of Corporate Services

## Directorate Heads

Frances Fleming	Director Communications (Temporary)
Craig Gartley	Director Finance
Alden Henderson	Director Advice and Compliance
Lisa King	Director Research and Investigations
Roisin Mallon	Director Dedicated Mechanism Unit
Jacqui McKee	Director Equality Projects
Darren McKinstry	Director Public Policy and Strategic Engagement
Eoin O'Neill	Director Legal Services

The composition of the Executive Team by sex and community background, as well as the composition of all employees, is included in the Remuneration and Staff Report.

## Committees

Schedule 8 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 allows the Commission to make provision for the discharge of its functions by Committees and the Commission has operated with a number of different Committee structures since it was established. At present, there are three Committees of the Commission: Audit and Risk Assurance Committee; Statutory Duty Investigation Committee; and Legal Funding Committee. Information on the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is contained in the Governance Statement.

## **Statutory Duty Investigations Committee (SDIC)**

The SDIC has the responsibilities in relation to complaints and investigations under Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The frequency of its meetings may depend upon the numbers of complaints and investigations. It met on six occasions during this year.

<b>COMMISSIONER</b>	<b>NO. OF MEETINGS</b>	<b>NO. ATTENDED</b>
Siobhan Cullen (Chair)	6	6
Neil Anderson	6	6
Nazia Latif (from 1 September 2024)	2	1
Geraldine McGahey	6	6
John McCallister	6	5
Sheena McKinney	6	1
Preeti Yellamaty	6	6

## **Legal Funding Committee**

The Legal Funding Committee is responsible for taking decisions about the funding of the cases for which the Commission provides legal assistance. It normally meets fortnightly. Committee members are rotated to ensure that each meeting has three committee members present. The Chair of this Committee rotates between all members. In addition to the set meetings, Commissioners may be called upon to consider emergency applications as they arise.

During 2024-25, the following Commissioners served on a Legal Funding Committee: Maureen Brunt, Lisa Caldwell, Siobhan Cullen, Ellen Finlay, Monica Fitzpatrick, Colin Kennedy, Stephen Mathews, John McCallister, Jim McCooe, Geraldine McGahey and Preeti Yellamaty.

## **Commissioners' Interests**

An up-to-date register of interests is maintained by the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer and is available on the Commission's website.

## **Data Protection and Freedom of Information**

The Commission is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office and has in place policies, guidelines and arrangements for compliance with Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation. Data incident reports are prepared and remedial action identified, when data breaches occur. All data breaches and near misses are reported to the Commission's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and to TEO. No data breaches occurred during this year.

During 2024-25 the Commission received 16 requests for information under the Freedom of Information legislation. The Commission has procedures and reporting arrangements in place to ensure that any relevant information is provided within the time limits required. Three subject access requests were received and responded to under the Data Protection provisions.

### **2.1.2 Statement of the Accounting Officer's responsibilities**

Under Paragraph 7(2) (a) of Schedule 8 of the Northern Ireland Act 1988, The Executive Office with the consent of the Department of Finance has directed the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland to prepare for each financial year a statement of accounts in the form and on the basis set out in the Accounts Direction. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Commission and of its income and expenditure, Statement of Financial Position and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual and in particular to:

- observe the Accounts Direction issued by The Executive Office, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the accounts;
- prepare the accounts on a going concern basis; and
- confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Accounting Officer of The Executive Office has appointed the Chief Executive as the Accounting Officer of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding the Commission's assets, are set out in 'Managing Public Money Northern Ireland', published by the Department of Finance.

As the Accounting Officer, I have taken all of the steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the Equality Commission's auditors are aware of that information. So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware.

### **2.1.3 Governance Statement**

This statement outlines the Commission's governance framework for directing and controlling its functions and demonstrates how risk is managed. It also describes the assurance provided to support me, in my role as Accounting Officer for the Commission, during the period 2024-25.

#### **The Governance Framework**

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for maintaining a sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of the Commission's policies, aims and objectives, whilst safeguarding the public funds and Commission assets for which I am personally responsible, in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to me in 'Managing Public Money Northern Ireland'.

#### **The Commission**

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is an executive non-departmental public body (NDPB) established as a body corporate by Section 73 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Commission's primary source of financing is grant-in-aid provided by The Executive Office. Statutory authority for the payment of grant-in-aid is contained in Schedule 8 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Relationships between the Commission and the Ministers and their Department are governed by the "arm's length" principle, wherein the primary role of Ministers is to set the Commission's legal and financial framework including the structure of its funding and governance. These responsibilities are discharged on a day-to-day basis on the Ministers' behalf by the Sponsoring Department, The Executive Office (TEO). Within this framework, it is the role of the Commission to determine its equality policies and activities in keeping with its statutory responsibilities and the objectives of Government policy.

The Commission has agreed a Management Statement with TEO. This sets out the relationship between the two organisations and defines the financial and administrative framework within which the Commission operates. It also sets out the conditions under which grant-in-aid is paid to the Commission and the delegations within which the Commission operates.

It is supplemented by a Financial Memorandum agreed with the Commission and approved by The Executive Office and the Department of Finance. Work on a draft Partnership Agreement with TEO to replace the existing Management Statement is ongoing.

The Commission is led by a Chief Commissioner, who is supported by a Deputy Chief Commissioner. Including the Chief Commissioner, there are currently 15 Commissioners. During this year one Commissioner died in office. A new Commissioner was appointed with effect from 1 September 2024.

A record of Commissioners and their attendance is contained on page 48.

The responsibilities of the Chief Commissioner and Commissioners are set out in the founding legislation and more fully in the Commission's Commissioner Handbook and Code of Practice for Commissioners. Commissioners identify and update their interests and the Register of Interests is available on the Commission's [website](#).

The identification of potential conflicts is addressed at the beginning of each Commission and Committee meeting. Guidance on declaring and handling conflicts of interests is contained in the Commissioner Handbook, which is provided to all Commissioners on appointment.

Although it is primarily directed at central Government Departments, the Commission complies in all material respects with the guidance set out in Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good Practice NI (DFP, 2025).



## Commissioner attendance 2024-25

Commissioner		No. of meetings	No. Attended
Geraldine McGahey	Chief Commissioner	10	10
Neil Anderson	Deputy Chief Commissioner	10	9
Maureen Brunt		10	10
Lisa Caldwell		10	9
Siobhan Cullen		10	10
Duane Farrell		10	9
Ellen Finlay		10	10
Monica Fitzpatrick		10	10
Colin Kennedy		10	10
Nazia Latif (from 1 September 2024)		6	6
Stephen Mathews		10	9
John McCallister		10	10
Jim McCooe (from 1 May 2024)		9	9
Carmel McKinney (to 30 June 2024)		2	1
Sheena McKinney		10	9
Preeti Yellamaty		10	10

## Committees

Schedule 8 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 allows the Commission to make provision for the discharge of its functions by Committees and the Commission has operated with a number of different Committee structures since it was established.

At present, there are three Committees of the Commission:

- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee;
- Statutory Duty Investigation Committee; and
- Legal Funding Committee.

### **Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

The Commission seeks to ensure high standards of corporate governance and high levels of compliance with the values of public service.

It has an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, which oversees internal audit arrangements and ensures that they are conducted in accordance with the objectives and standards of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. The Committee also oversees the Commission's arrangements for risk management.

The Committee's full responsibilities are set out in its Terms of Reference, which were last reviewed in January 2025. Its core work for the year is set in a work programme structured around the guidance in the Department of Finance's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook (NI) (April 2018).

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meets at least four times per year. Minutes of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings are provided to the full Commission and the Chair of the Committee reports to Commission meetings at regular intervals.

On a regular basis, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee undertakes a self-assessment of its operations, and a formal written report of its work is presented to the Commission on an annual basis.

## **Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Attendance 2024-25**

<b>COMMISSIONER</b>	<b>Number of Meetings</b>	<b>Meetings Attended</b>
Neil Anderson (Chair)	5	5
Maureen Brunt	5	4
Duane Farrell	5	5
Ellen Finlay	5	5
Colin Kennedy	5	5
Jim McCooe (from 1 July 2024)	3	3
Carmel McKinney (to 30 June 2024)	1	0

### **Accounting Officer**

The Commission's Chief Executive, Louise Conlon, has been designated as the Accounting Officer.

The Accounting Officer's role and responsibilities are set out in the Management Statement and in more detail in 'Managing Public Money Northern Ireland' (MPMNI). The Equality Commission's Annual Report and Accounts are prepared in accordance with Schedule 8 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and in a form directed by The Executive Office with the approval of the Department of Finance.

### **Risk Management and Assurance**

As the Accounting Officer, I have overall responsibility for the Commission's corporate business and decisions and ensuring the effective management of the key associated risks.

The Commission has appropriate procedures in place to ensure that it has identified its objectives and risks and determined a control strategy for its strategic risks.

A corporate approach to risk, involving Commissioners, the Executive Team and other staff, is taken. Ownership of risks has been allocated to the relevant staff at appropriate levels and they have received the necessary training to assist them in handling these risks.

Risk management is cascaded down the organisation and Risk Registers are produced for each Division. Stewardship statements are completed by corporate risk owners and forwarded to me as Accounting Officer. These provide me with assurance that risk management processes are effective and operating in line with the Commission's risk management framework.

Staff receive regular training in Governance, Risk Management and Fraud Awareness. This training is provided to both staff and Commissioners. On Board training is made available to newly appointed Commissioners and new senior staff, as well as those Commissioners wishing to refresh their knowledge. This, most recently, took place in March 2025.

As Accounting Officer, I submit a quarterly stewardship statement to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and to the Commission's Sponsoring Department.

### **The risk and control framework**

The Commission has ensured that procedures are in place for verifying that risk management and internal controls are regularly reviewed and reported on. Risk appetite is assessed by the Commission and targets approved by the Commission are included on the risk register.

Corporate and business continuity risk is routinely reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team and at each Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting. The corporate risk and business continuity register is updated, as necessary.

The Commission, its Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Senior Leadership Team, receive regular reports on internal control and monitor progress on addressing internal audit recommendations.

The system of internal control has been in place in the Commission from 1 April 2024 to date and it accords with Department of Finance guidance.

Consideration of risk forms the basis of the Commission's Strategic Internal Audit Programme, which is mapped against the Corporate Risk Register.

The Commission has an internal audit service, which operates to Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS). The service is provided currently by Deloitte.

The Commission's risk management framework and risk policy has been reviewed against the updated HM Treasury Orange book. The new Policy was audited by internal audit and satisfactory assurance was provided in December 2020. A further review is scheduled to take place in 2026/27.

Commissioners periodically undertake a horizon scanning exercise, to assess the Commission's attitude to, and appetite for, risk. They also review its risk appetite statement to ensure it adequately reflects this and to consider improvements to the Commission's risk management arrangements. The Commission reviewed its updated risk management framework and policy and risk appetite at its November 2024 meeting. The Commission also reviewed its Corporate Risk Register and assurance map at the November 2024 meeting. The ARAC reviews an updated Corporate Risk Register at every meeting.

## **Potential Risk Issues**

The areas of potential risk outlined below are those on which the Commission reports to its Sponsoring Department on a monthly basis or any other significant issue referred to in the Commission's corporate and business continuity risk or other risk register.

## **Business Planning and budgeting**

The Commission's Corporate Plan 2022-25 was approved by the TEO Departmental Board on 29 June 2022. Following the return of the Executive, the Plan received ministerial approval on 23 August 2024.

A draft Business Plan 2024-25 was forwarded to the Department in February 2024. Following the receipt of its opening budget for 2024-25, a costed Business Plan was submitted to TEO for approval on 30 August. In January this was approved by the TEO Departmental Board.

A draft Corporate Plan 2025-28 and Business Plan for 2025-26, were submitted to TEO for its approval in March 2025.

Commissioners receive quarterly reports of progress against business plan and budgetary targets throughout the year. Commissioners are also provided with regular reports of staff's work and outcomes of key policy and operational actions. Quarterly reports of communications work are presented at Commission meetings.

### **Information Assurance**

The Commission is proactive in developing and implementing policies and procedural guidance to manage Information risk. Information risk management is a key element of information governance and is an integral part of good management.

The Commission undertakes regular reviews of its ICT infrastructure and security arrangements and information security risks and controls are included on the Commission's Corporate Services risk register. A review of general IT controls formed part of the 2019-20 internal audit programme. Satisfactory assurance was provided. A further review will take place in 2025-26.

To prepare for the tendering of a contract for third-party support of the Commission's IT services, IT specialists from the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) were contracted to map the current infrastructure, recommend improvements and provide options for future development and support. Procurement is scheduled to take place in July.

The Commission is a member the National Cyber Security Centre's Information Security Partnership (CiSP) programme. In November 2024, the Commission's security arrangements were assessed and re-accredited against the National Cyber Security Centre's (NCSC) Cyber Essentials Plus standard.

The Commission has a Freedom of Information Policy and satisfactory arrangements in place to ensure compliance. The Commission's Data Protection and Freedom of Information Officer receives regular training.

The Commission operates hybrid working. Training and guidance on protecting data while working from home and cyber security has been provided for all staff and Commissioners.

Three data incidents occurred this year. No personal or other data was lost. Data incident reports were prepared and remedial action identified following each incident. All data incidents and near misses are treated as incidents and reported to the Commission's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. Data breaches are reported to TEO.

During 2024-25, the Commission received 16 requests for information under the Freedom of Information legislation. The Commission has procedures and reporting arrangements in place to ensure that any relevant information is provided within the time limits required. Fifteen have been responded to, one is ongoing. Nine of the requests were responded to within the statutory time limits. Three subject access requests were received and responded to.

### **Business Continuity Plans**

The Commission has undertaken a business continuity risk assessment and up to date business continuity and other contingency arrangements are in place. The Commission's arrangements for Business Continuity were audited in 2023-24 and Satisfactory assurance was provided. An updated Business Continuity Plan was prepared in December 2024.

The ICT continuity and disaster recovery arrangements are tested twice per annum, most recently in May 2025. The next test is scheduled for November 2025. At the end of November, as a result of a server failure, disaster recovery protocols were implemented and the migration of data and services to the back-up site was successful. There was minimal disruption to core services and zero loss of data. Following an incident review further cloud storage in secure, UK-based, MS data Centres was procured.

### **Gifts and Hospitality**

Appropriate arrangements for the management of Gifts and Hospitality are in place and all offers, both to Commissioners and Staff, are included on a Gifts and Hospitality Register.

### **Whistle blowing**

The Commission's Whistle blowing procedure, now renamed Raising Concerns, was updated in February 2024. There were no incidences of whistle blowing during this year.

## **Fraud**

The Commission has a Fraud Policy and Fraud Response Plan in place. A fraud risk assessment was completed in September 2020, using the NIAO's Covid-19 Fraud Risks guidance. A further assessment is being undertaken, using NIAO's 2022 Internal Fraud Risks guide. Refresher training for all staff on fraud awareness was provided during 2024-25. There have been no incidences of fraud or suspected fraud reported during the year.

## **Managing Attendance**

A Managing Attendance Policy is in place and quarterly indicators of staff absence are provided to the Commission and to the TEO Sponsoring Team. The figure for average days absent due to sickness per employee this year was 16.6 days, of which 13.3 days were long-term sickness absence. The equivalent figures 2023- 24 were 5.5 days and 4.1 days. The large increase in long-term absence is the result of a small number of staff with serious health conditions and/or having undergone surgical procedures this year. A review of sickness absence across the Commission is underway.

## **Complaints**

The Commission has in place a three-stage formal procedure for dealing with service complaints. Should they not be resolved through the internal procedure, they may be referred to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO). Information on complaints dealt with under the procedure is reported in the Annual Report. A review of the procedure and arrangements for handling complaints was undertaken by internal audit in October 2020. Satisfactory assurance was provided.

Three customer service complaints were raised this year. One complaint was upheld and one not upheld. The other was considered out of time. A further complaint from the previous year was still ongoing at the year end.



## Third Party Organisations

Although it has the vires to award grants under some of the legislation from which it derives its powers and duties, the Commission has not utilised its discretion in relation to the provision of such grants. The Commission provides property management and payroll support services to a number of other arm's-length bodies.

An assurance review of the processes in place for controlling the income received from service level agreements was completed in October 2021 and satisfactory assurance was provided. Related party transactions are reported in Note 16 of the Annual Accounts.

## Internal & External Audit Reports

The Commission's external auditor is the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG). Work on behalf of the C&AG is contracted to CavanaghKelly. Following completion of the audit of the Commission's Annual Report and Accounts, a Report to those Charged with Governance containing the audit findings and associated recommendations is issued.

The Report to those Charged with Governance, following the 2023-24 audit, was considered at the by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and by the Commission, at its August meeting. One Priority 2 and one Priority 3 issue were raised by NIAO in the Report.

The Commission's internal auditor, Deloitte, was re-appointed in June 2024. An audit strategy and internal audit programme for 2024-25 was agreed at the August ARAC meeting. The scope of the 2024-25 audit programme and the assurances provided are summarised in the table below.

<b>Audit Area</b>	<b>Assurance Rating / Outcome</b>
Business Performance Management	Satisfactory
Core Financial Controls – Procurement	Satisfactory
Functional review – Human Resources	Limited

An action plan has been prepared to address the findings in the Human Resources review. Progress on delivery will be reported at each ARAC meeting.

In its Annual Report to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Internal Audit's independent opinion provided a Satisfactory level of assurance for 2024-25.

## **Risk Management Status**

Recent years have been marked by political and financial uncertainty and this is reflected in the Commission's risk profile. Although the Commission's opening budget allocation was unchanged from last year's, no additional funding was provided for the 5% 2023 pay settlement in 2024-25. However, this funding gap for 2024-25 was addressed during the October monitoring round. Without baselining the additional funding required, this will remain a major risk for 2025-26 and future years.

The return of a new Executive and the potential for addressing the backlog of legislative and policy change, has brought a new set of challenges, particularly in the context of the Commission's chronic understaffing and budget reductions.

The Commission has seen both an increase in demands in the form of the removal of the teachers' exception, private members' bills and consultations, and uncertainty and delays in other areas of its work plan.

In addition to reporting on progress in mitigating its corporate risks, Commissioners are provided with regular information on emerging risks and opportunities and information on incidents or 'near misses' which have occurred during the course of its operations.

I am satisfied that the controls in place to manage risks for which I am responsible are appropriate. They provide reasonable assurance that the risk will not occur, or if it does occur, that it will be detected and corrected in sufficient time to reduce the impact of the risk to tolerable or negligible levels.

## **Review of Effectiveness and the quality of data provided to the Board**

As Accounting Officer, I have responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control.

My review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal auditors and the executive managers within the Commission who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, and comments made by the Northern Ireland Audit Office in its Report to those charged with Governance.

I have been advised on the implications of the result of my review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control by the Commission and its Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

The Commission's internal audit service submits reports on its work, which include the Head of Internal Audit's independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Commission's system of internal control together with recommendations for improvement.

The Commission receives quarterly reports on finance, staffing and progress against business plan targets. Minutes of each Audit and Risk Assurance Committee are presented and regular reports from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Chief Executive are provided.

The Committee provides a formal review of its work to the Board each year. The Commission formally approves the Corporate Risk Register at six monthly intervals and is advised on emerging risks, incidents and near misses.

Each of the Commission's corporate risks are included on an assurance map, which highlights the key sources of information and assurances that are provided to Commissioners to facilitate their oversight of the arrangements for effective governance, risk management and internal control. Commissioners have expressed their satisfaction with the assurance arrangements in place and the information provided to allow them to undertake their challenge role.

A Quarterly Stewardship report provided by the Accounting Officer to TEO is considered at each Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

The Commission considers that the information provided is sufficient to enable it to effectively discharge its strategic planning and governance responsibilities.

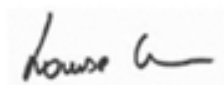
An independent review of Board Effectiveness was completed this year. The outcome was a very positive one.

In November 2024, Commissioners confirmed the adequacy of its risk management arrangements and the information being provided to facilitate the delivery of their responsibilities. This will be considered again in November 2025.

### **Significant internal control issues**

There are no significant internal control issues at present.

**Signed by:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louise Conlon', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

**Louise Conlon**  
**Chief Executive and Accounting Officer**  
25 June 2025

## **2.2 Remuneration and Staff Report**

This report sets out the policy for remunerating Commissioners and key staff with responsibilities in relation to directing and controlling the activities of the Commission, as well as statutory disclosures in relation to pensions and compensation for early retirement or loss of office. Fair pay disclosures are also included. The report also includes additional information on staff numbers and costs, staff composition, sickness absence data and exit packages. The remuneration and staff report are fundamental to demonstrating transparency and accountability.

### **2.2.1 Remuneration Report**

#### **Remuneration Policy**

The pay remit for the Northern Ireland Civil Service, including senior civil servants (SCS), is normally approved by the Minister of Finance. Following approval of the 2024-25 Budget in the Assembly, on 28 May 2024, in which the Finance Minister outlined the overarching approach to the public sector pay, the NI public sector pay policy guidance was published on 31 May 2024 in FD (DoF) 07/24.

Annual NICS pay awards are made in the context of the wider public sector pay policy. The pay award for NICS non-industrial staff, including SCS, for 2024/26 has been finalised and is due to be paid in 2025-26.

The pay of NICS staff is based on a system of pay scales for each grade, including SCS, containing a number of pay points from minimum to maximum, allowing progression towards the maximum based on performance.

#### **Service Contracts**

Commission staff appointments are made in accordance with the Commission's Recruitment Policy which requires appointment to be made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition but also includes the circumstances when appointments may otherwise be made.

Unless otherwise stated below, the staff covered by this report hold appointments which are open-ended. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in the individual receiving compensation as set out in the Civil Service Compensation Scheme.

Commission members are appointed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland following open competition.

### **Remuneration and pension entitlements**

The following sections provide details of the remuneration and pension interests of the Commissioners and the most senior management of the Commission.

**Remuneration (including salary) and pension entitlements  
Commissioners**

	Salary		Bonus Payments		Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)		Pension Benefits (to nearest £1000)*		Total (£'000)	
	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24
Geraldine McGahey Chief Commissioner	60-65	55-60	0	0	0	0	26	23	90-95	80-85
Neil Anderson Deputy Chief Commissioner	5-10	5-10	0	0	0	0	0	0	5-10	5-10
Duane Farrell	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Jarlath Kearney (to 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2023)	0	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5
Carmel McKinney (to 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2024)	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Maureen Brunt	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Siobhan Cullen	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Ellen Finlay	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Monica Fitzpatrick	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Colin Kennedy	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5

	Salary		Bonus Payments		Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)		Pension Benefits (to nearest £1000)*		Total (£'000)	
	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24
John McCallister	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Sheena McKinney	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Preeti Yellamaty	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Lisa Caldwell	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Stephen Mathews	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
James McCooe (from 1 <sup>st</sup> May 2024)	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0
Nazia Latif (from 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2024)	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0

*\*The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) plus (the real increase in any lump sum) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increases exclude increases due to inflation and any increase or decrease due to a transfer of pension rights.*



## Senior Management

	Salary (£'000)		Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)		Pension Benefits (to nearest £1000)*		Total (£'000)	
	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24**	2024-25	2023-24
<b>Official</b>								
Amanda Logan Chief Executive (from 1 <sup>st</sup> August 2023-1 <sup>st</sup> April 2024)	0	50-55 (FYE 75-80)	0	0	(44)	(4)	(40)-(45)	130-135 (FYE 155-160)
Louise Conlon Chief Executive (from 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2024)	70-75 (FYE 75-80)	55-60	0	0	96	21	170-175 (FYE 175-180)	80-81
Keith Brown*** Head Corporate Services	75-80	65-70	0	0	65	8	145-150	75-80
Craig Gartley Director Finance and Corporate Services	55-60	50-55	0	0	42	22	100-105	70-75
Lisa King Director Research and Investigations	45-50	40-45	0	0	(1)	16	45-50	60-65
Roisin Mallon Director Dedicated Mechanism Unit	60-65	55-60	0	0	46	3	110-115	60-65

	Salary		Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)		Pension Benefits (to nearest £1000)*		Total (£'000)	
Official	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24**	2024-25	2023-24
Jacqueline McKee Director Equality Projects	35-40	55-60	0	0	(535)	(7)	(495)-(500)	50-55
Darren McKinstry Director Public Policy and Strategic Engagement	60-65	55-60	0	0	18	39	80-83	95-100
Eoin O'Neill Director Legal Services (from 16 May 2022)	55-60	50-55	0	0	65	22	125-130	75-80
Alden Henderson Director Advice & Compliance (from 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2024)	50-55 (FYE 55-60)	0	0	0	16	0	70-75 (FYE 75-80)	0
Frances Fleming Director Communications (from 16 <sup>th</sup> December 2024)	45-50 (FYE 55-60)	0	0	0	(1)	0	45-50 (55-60)	0

\* The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as (the real increase in pension multiplied by 20) plus (the real increase in any lump sum) less (the contributions made by the individual). The real increases exclude increases due to inflation and any increase or decreases due to a transfer of pension rights.

\*\* Accrued pension benefits included in this table for any individual affected by the Public Service Pensions Remedy have been calculated based on their inclusion in the legacy scheme for the period between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022, following the McCloud judgment. The Public Service Pensions Remedy applies to individuals that were members, or eligible to be members, of a public service pension scheme on

*31 March 2012 and were members of a public service pension scheme between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022. The basis for the calculation reflects the legal position that impacted members have been rolled back into the relevant legacy scheme for the Remedy Period and that this will apply unless the member actively exercises their entitlement on retirement to decide instead to receive benefits calculated under the terms of the alpha scheme for the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2022.*

*\*\*\* Temporary Promotion to CE from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024.*

## **Salary**

‘Salary’ includes gross salary; overtime; reserved rights to London weighting or London allowances; recruitment and retention allowances; private office allowances and any other allowance to the extent that it is subject to UK taxation and any ex gratia payments. This report is based on accrued payments made by the Commission and thus recorded in these accounts.

## **Benefits in kind**

The monetary value of benefits in kind covers any benefits provided by the employer and treated by HM Revenue and Customs as a taxable emolument. No benefits in kind were paid to Commissioners or staff during this period.

## **Bonuses**

No bonus payments were paid to Commissioners or senior managers in these years. There is no performance related pay across the Commission.

## **Fair Pay disclosure**

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest-paid director in their organisation and the lower quartile, median and upper quartile remuneration of the organisation’s workforce.

The banded remuneration of the highest paid employee in the Commission in the financial year 2024-25 was £75,000 to £80,000 (2023-24 was £75,000 to £80,000). The relationship between the mid-point of this band and the remuneration of the organisation’s workforce is disclosed below. There was no significant change between the years.

<b>2024/25</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>75<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>
<b>Total Remuneration (£)</b>	<b>31,352</b>	<b>35,712</b>	<b>44,338</b>
<b>Pay Ratio</b>	<b>2.5:1</b>	<b>2.2:1</b>	<b>1.7:1</b>

<b>2023/24</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>75<sup>th</sup> percentile</b>
<b>Total Remuneration (£)</b>	<b>29,859</b>	<b>34,011</b>	<b>42,227</b>
<b>Pay Ratio</b>	<b>2.6:1</b>	<b>2.3:1</b>	<b>1.8:1</b>

Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance related pay, benefits-in-kind as well as severance payments. It does not include employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

For 2024-25 and 2023-24, the 25th percentile, median and 75th percentile remuneration values consisted solely of salary payments.

In 2024-25 and 2023-24, no employees received remuneration in excess of the highest paid employee, the Chief Executive.

Remuneration ranged from £23,000 to £80,000 (2023-24 £21,000 to £80,000).

### **Percentage Change in Remuneration**

The percentage changes in respect of the Commission are shown in the following table. It should be noted that the calculation for the highest paid director is based on the mid-point of the band within which their remuneration fell in each year.

<b>Percentage change for:</b>	<b>2024/25 v 2023/24</b>
Average employee salary and allowances	1.21%
Highest paid director's salary and allowances	0%

<b>Percentage change for:</b>	<b>2023/24 v 2022/23</b>
Average employee salary and allowances	4.67%
Highest paid director's salary and allowances	-6.06%

## Pension Entitlements

	<b>Accrued pension at age 60 as at 31/03/25 and related lump sum £'000</b>	<b>Real increase in pension and related lump sum at age 60 £'000</b>	<b>CETV at 31/3/25</b>	<b>CETV at 31/3/24</b>	<b>Real increase in CETV</b>
Geraldine McGahey Chief Commissioner	5-10	0-2.5	147	110	23
Amanda Logan Chief Executive (from 1 August 2023 to 4 <sup>th</sup> April 2025)	20-25	0	313	364	(62)
Louise Conlon Chief Executive (from 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2024)	20-25	5-7.5	471	360	92
Keith Brown Head of Corporate Services	35-40 plus a lump sum of 95-100	2.5-5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5	749	691	59
Craig Gartley Director Finance and Corporate Services	10-15	0-2.5	153	118	23

	<b>Accrued pension at age 60 as at 31/03/25 and related lump sum £'000</b>	<b>Real increase in pension and related lump sum at age 60 £'000</b>	<b>CETV at 31/3/25</b>	<b>CETV at 31/3/24</b>	<b>Real increase in CETV</b>
Lisa King Director Research and Investigations	15-20	0-2.5	373	360	(3)
Roisin Mallon Director Dedicated Mechanism Unit	20-25 plus a lump sum of 50-55	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 2.5-5	489	424	45
Jacqueline McKee Director Advice & Compliance	0-5	0	6	545	(539)
Darren McKinstry Director Public Policy and Strategic Engagement	25-30	0-2.5	471	442	10
Eoin O'Neill Director Legal Services	25-30 plus a lump sum of 65-70	2.5-5 plus a lump sum of 2.5-5	542	486	58
Alden Henderson Director Advice & Compliance	15-20 plus a lump sum of 35-40	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5	323	303	16



	<b>Accrued pension at age 60 as at 31/03/25 and related lump sum £'000</b>	<b>Real increase in pension and related lump sum at age 60 £'000</b>	<b>CETV at 31/3/25</b>	<b>CETV at 31/3/24</b>	<b>Real increase in CETV</b>
Frances Fleming Director Communications	0-5	0	24	23	(1)

*\*The pension benefits of any members affected by the Public Service Pensions Remedy which were reported in 2022-23 based on alpha membership for the period between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2022 have been reported since 2023-24 based on PCSPS(NI) Membership for the same period. The Equality Commission made no employer contributions to a Partnership Pension Account for any of the above individuals.*

## **Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Pension Schemes**

Pension benefits are provided through the Northern Ireland Civil Service pension schemes which are administered by Civil Service Pensions (CSP).

The alpha pension scheme was initially introduced for new entrants from 1 April 2015. The alpha scheme and all previous scheme arrangements are unfunded with the cost of benefits met by monies voted each year. The majority of members of the Classic, Premium, Classic Plus and Nuvos pension arrangements (collectively known as the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland) [PCSPS(NI)]) also moved to alpha from that date. Transitional protection measures introduced alongside these reforms meant any members who on 1 April 2012 were within 10 years of their normal pension age remained in their previous scheme arrangement (full protection) and those who were within 13.5 years and 10 years of their normal pension age were given a choice between moving to alpha on 1 April 2015 or at a later date determined by their age (tapered protection).

### McCloud Judgment and 2015 Remedy

In 2018, the Court of Appeal found that the protections put in place back in 2015 that allowed older workers to remain in their original scheme, were discriminatory on the basis of age. As a result, steps have been taken by the Department of Finance to remedy this discrimination.

The Department has now made regulations which remedy the discrimination by:

- ensuring all active members are treated equally for future service as members of the reformed alpha scheme only from 1 April 2022, and
- providing each eligible member with options to have their pension entitlements for the period when the discrimination existed between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 (the Remedy Period) retrospectively calculated under either the current (reformed) scheme rules, or the older (pre-reform) legacy rules which existed before 2015.

This means that all active NICS Pension Scheme members are in the same pension scheme, alpha, from 1 April 2022 onwards, regardless of age. This removes the discrimination going forwards in providing equal pension provision for all scheme members.

The Department is now implementing the second part of the remedy, which addresses the discrimination which was incurred by affected members between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022.

Eligible members with relevant service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 (the Remedy Period) will now be entitled to a choice of alternative pension benefits in relation to that period, i.e. calculated under the pre-reformed PCSPS(NI) 'Classic', 'Premium' or 'Nuvos' rules or alternatively calculated under the reformed alpha rules. As part of this 'retrospective' remedy most active members will now receive a choice about their Remedy Period benefits at the point of retirement. This is known as the Deferred Choice Underpin (DCU).

For those members who already have pension benefits in payment in relation to the Remedy Period, they will receive an Immediate Choice. There are a significant number of Immediate Choice Remediable Service Statement (RSS) packs to issue. This process involves complex calculations to provide members with individually tailored statements. Due to the complexity of the calculations and some prolonged work to finalise policy elements of the remedy, not all Immediate Choice packs will issue by 31 March 2025 as originally planned. The legislation for the 2015 Remedy provides discretion which allows the Scheme Manager to extend beyond this date so it has become necessary to engage this discretion.

At this stage, allowance has not yet been made within CETVs for this remedy. Further information on the remedy will be included in the NICS pension scheme accounts which, once published, are available at [DoF Annual Report and Accounts | Department of Finance](#).

As part of the remedy involved rolling back all remediable service into the relevant legacy PCSPS(NI) arrangement for the 7-Year Remedy Period, the value of pension benefits for the 2024-25 pension disclosures for affected members continue to be based on the rolled back position.

### Alpha

Alpha is a 'Career Average Revalued Earnings' (CARE) arrangement in which members accrue pension benefits at a percentage rate of annual pensionable earnings throughout the period of scheme membership. The current accrual rate is 2.32%.

From 1 April 2015, all new entrants joining the NICS can choose between membership of alpha or joining a 'money purchase' stakeholder arrangement with a significant employer contribution (Partnership Pension Account).

### Information on the PCSPS(NI) – Closed Scheme

Staff in post prior to 30 July 2007 were eligible to be in one of three statutory based 'final salary' legacy defined benefit arrangements (Classic, Premium and Classic Plus). From April 2011, pensions payable under these arrangements have been reviewed annually in line with changes in the cost of living. New entrants who joined on or after 1 October 2002 and before 30 July 2007 will have chosen between membership of Premium or joining the Partnership Pension Account.

New entrants who joined on or after 30 July 2007 were eligible for membership of the legacy PCSPS(NI) Nuvos arrangement or they could have opted for a Partnership Pension Account. Nuvos was also a CARE arrangement in which members accrued pension benefits at a percentage rate of annual pensionable earnings throughout the period of scheme membership. The rate of accrual was 2.3%.

Benefits in Classic accrue at the rate of 1/80th of pensionable salary for each year of service. In addition, a lump sum equivalent to three years' pension is payable on retirement. For Premium, benefits accrue at the rate of 1/60th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. Unlike Classic, there is no automatic lump sum (but members may give up (commute) some of their pension to provide a lump sum). Classic Plus is essentially a variation of Premium, but with benefits in respect of service before 1 October 2002 calculated broadly as per Classic.

### Partnership Pension Account

The Partnership Pension Account is a stakeholder pension arrangement. The employer makes a basic contribution of between 8% and 14.75% (depending on the age of the member) into a stakeholder pension product chosen by the employee.

The employee does not have to contribute but where they do make contributions, the employer will match these up to a limit of 3% of pensionable salary (in addition to the employer's basic contribution). Employers also contribute a further 0.5% of pensionable salary to cover the cost of centrally provided risk benefit cover (death in service and ill health retirement).

### Annual Benefit Statements

Active members of the pension scheme will receive an Annual Benefit Statement. The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach their scheme pension age, or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the scheme if they are at or over pension age. The normal scheme pension age in alpha is linked to the member's State Pension Age but cannot be before age 65. The Scheme Pension age is 60 for any pension accrued in the legacy **Classic**, **Premium**, and **Classic Plus** arrangements and 65 for any benefits accrued in **Nuvos**. Further details about the NICS pension schemes can be found at the website [Civil Service Pensions \(NI\)](#)

### Pension Increases

All pension benefits are reviewed annually in line with changes in the cost of living. Any applicable increases are applied from April and are determined by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) figure for the preceding September. The CPI in September 2024 was 1.7% and HM Treasury has announced that public service pensions will be increased accordingly from April 2025.

### Employee Contribution Rates

Employee contribution rates for all members for the period covering 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025 and 1 April 2025 – 30 Jun 2025 are as follows<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> Rates are expected to change mid-year as a result of the outcome of the [consultation on Scheme Yield and Member Contributions](#)

## Scheme Year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

Annualised Rate of Pensionable Earnings (Salary Bands) 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025		Annualised Rate of Pensionable Earnings (Salary Bands) 1 April 2025 to 31 June 2025		Contribution rates – All members
From	To	From	To	
£0	£26,302.49	0	£27,091.99	4.6%
£26,302.50	£59,849.99	£27,092.00	£61,645.99	5.45%
£59,850.00	£160,964.99	£61,646.00	£165,793.99	7.45%
£160,965.00 and above		£165,794.00 and above		8.05%

## Cash Equivalent Transfer Values

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies.

The CETV figures, and from 2003-04 the other pension details, include the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement which the individual has transferred to the NICS pension arrangements. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their purchasing additional years of pension service in the scheme at their own cost.

CETVs are calculated in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) Regulations 1996 (as amended)

HM Treasury provides the assumptions for discount rates for calculating CETVs payable from the public service pension schemes. On 27 April 2023, HM Treasury published guidance on the basis for setting the discount rates for calculating cash equivalent transfer values payable by public service pension schemes. In their guidance of 27 April 2023, HM Treasury advised that, with immediate effect, the discount rate adopted for calculating CETVs should be in line with the new SCAPE discount rate of 1.7% above CPI inflation, superseding the previous SCAPE discount rate of 2.4% above CPI inflation. All else being the same, a lower SCAPE discount rate leads to higher CETVs. The HM Treasury Guidance of 27 April 2023 can be found at [Basis for setting the discount rates for calculating cash equivalent transfer values payable by public service pension schemes - GOV.UK](#). **As at the year-end there** have been no further changes to the SCAPE discount rate of 1.7% above CPI inflation since the HM Treasury guidance was published.

### **Real increase in CETV**

This reflects the increase in CETV effectively funded by the employer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period (which therefore disregards the effect of any changes in factors).

### **Compensation for loss of office**

No employee received compensation for loss of office in 2024-25 or in 2023-24.

### **Payments to past Directors**

There were no payments to past Directors in either 2024-25 or 2023-24.

## 2.2 Staff Report

### Staff and Commissioner costs

				2024-25	2023-24
	Commissioners	Permanently employed staff	Others	Total	Total
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Wages and Salaries	145	2,724	341	3,210	3,359
Social security costs	9	282	0	291	308
Other pension costs	24	932	0	956	884
<b>Total costs</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>3,938</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>4,457</b>	<b>4,551</b>

There were no outward secondments during 2024-25 or 2023-24.

### Off Payroll Engagements

There were no off payroll engagements during 2024-25 or 2023-24.

### Expenditure on Consultancy

There was no expenditure on consultancy in 2024-25 or in the previous year.



## Pension Disclosure

The Northern Ireland Civil Service main pension schemes are unfunded multi-employer defined benefit schemes but the Equality Commission is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities.

The Public Service Pensions Act (NI) 2014 provides the legal framework for regular actuarial valuations of the public service pension schemes to measure the costs of the benefits being provided. These valuations inform the future contribution rates to be paid into the schemes by employers every four years following the scheme valuation. The Act also provides for the establishment of an employer cost cap mechanism to ensure that the costs of the pension schemes remain sustainable in future.

Government Actuary's Department (GAD) is responsible for carrying out scheme valuations. The Actuary reviews employer contributions every four years following the scheme valuation. The 2020 scheme valuation was completed by GAD in October 2023. The outcome of this valuation was used to set the level of contributions for employers from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2027.

The Cost Cap Mechanism (CCM) is a measure of scheme costs and determines whether member costs or scheme benefits require adjustment to maintain costs within a set corridor. Reforms were made to the CCM which was applied to the 2020 scheme valuations and included the introduction of a reformed-scheme-only cost control mechanism which assesses just the costs relating to reformed schemes (alpha for the NICS) and introduced an economic check. Prior to the cost control mechanism reforms, legacy scheme (PCSPS(NI)) costs associated with active members were also captured in the mechanism. The reformed-scheme-only design and the economic check were applied to the 2020 scheme valuations for the devolved public sector pension schemes, including the NICS pension scheme. The 2020 scheme valuation outcome was that the core cost cap cost of the scheme lies within the 3% cost cap corridor. As there is no breach of the cost control mechanism, there is no requirement for the Department of Finance to consult on changes to the scheme. Further information can be found on the Department of Finance website <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-civil-service-pension-scheme-valuations>

For 2024-25 employers' contributions of £956,204 were payable to the NICS pension arrangements at the flat rate of 34.25% of pensionable pay, for all salaries (2023-24 £883,405 at one of the three rates in the range of 28.7% to 34.2%).

Employees can opt to open a partnership pension account, a stakeholder pension with an employer contribution. No such employer contributions were made in this year.

No employees retired on the grounds of ill-health in 2024-25 or 2023-24. Ill-health retirement costs are met by the pension scheme.

### **Average number of persons employed**

This year has seen a substantial reduction in the number of Permanently employed staff across the Commission. The average number of whole-time persons employed during the year was as follows:

	<b>2024-25</b>		<b>2023-24</b>	
<b>Number</b>	<b>Permanently employed staff</b>	<b>Others</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>
Directly Employed	69	1	<b>70</b>	<b>76</b>
Other	0	6	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>81</b>

Other employees are individuals employed under agency contracts.

The Commission's Chief Executive is the only employee on a Senior Civil Servant pay scale (Grade 5).

### **Reporting of Civil Service and other compensation schemes – exit packages**

There were no payments in 2023-24 or 2024-25 for redundancies or other early exits. Where the Commission has agreed early retirements, the additional costs are met by the Commission and not by the Civil Service pension scheme.

## Managing Attendance and Sickness Absence

The Commission's arrangements for the payment of Statutory Sick Pay and the monitoring and management of attendance are based on those in operation in the Northern Ireland Civil Service. The Commission has a Managing Attendance Policy and provides training to Managers and other staff on its operation.

The Commission's number of average days lost in 2024-25 was 16.6 days, a substantial increase on last year's 5.5 days. Of the 16.6 days lost, 13.3 related to long term absence (more than 20 days) and 3.3 to short term absence (20 days or less). This compares to an equivalent 4.1 days for long-term absence and 1.4 days for short-term absence last year.

## Staff Turnover

This year the Commission's staff turnover percentage was 6.5%. This compares with a figure of 7.5% in 2023-24. Two new members of staff joined the Commission in 2024-25 and five left. Four staff resigned and one retired.

The graph below shows the trend in staff turnover over the most recent five years.



## **Equality, Diversity and Human Rights**

The Commission is committed to the provision of equality of opportunity and fair participation to all persons regardless of age, disability, ethnic or racial background, nationality, family status, sex, marital status, religious belief, political affiliation/opinion, sexual orientation, or trade union membership and to adhering to recognised human rights standards and obligations.

In addition to complying with its legal obligations, the Commission will provide a good and harmonious working environment, accommodate flexible working arrangements, provide training, development and progression on a fair and non-discriminatory basis and provide equal treatment in respect of pay and other contractual terms.

As an employer, we recognise that ensuring equality in employment and eliminating workplace discrimination and harassment are essential for developing a diverse workforce, attracting high calibre employees and maximising performance. In line with this commitment, the Commission has developed its employment equality policies and practices in accordance with the requirements of each of the equality and anti-discrimination laws in Northern Ireland and with the good practice recommendations of the Equality Codes of Practice.

The Commission continues to meet its statutory obligations under the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998, which includes submission of an annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return and a tri-annual Article 55 Review to the Equality Commission for NI (ECNI), both of which assess the composition of its workforce and the composition of applicants and appointees.

The Commission has completed an Article 55 Review, covering the period 2021-24. In addition, the Commission conducts reviews of the composition of its workforces on other equality grounds and uses the findings of its equality monitoring and analysis to inform a programme of targeted outreach activity to address any areas of under-representation.

Information on its staff composition at 1 January 2025 is set out below.

## Staff Composition (not WTE)

The following table provides the gender composition of Equality Commission staff at 1 January 2025.

Grade	Male	Female	Total
Senior Civil Service	0	1	1
Other grades	27	50	77
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b> (34.6%)	<b>51</b> (65.4%)	<b>78</b>

The following table provides a breakdown of Commission staff by community background as at 1 January 2025.

[Square brackets exclude non-determined]

Grade	Protestant	Roman Catholic	Non-determined	Total
Senior Civil Service	0	1	0	1
Other grades	31	42	4	77
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b> (39.8%) [41.9%]	<b>43</b> (55.1%) [58.1%]	<b>4</b> (5.1%)	<b>78</b>

## Disabled persons

Almost one third, 29.5% of the Commission's employees report as having a disability or long-term health condition. Last year's figure was 27.4%. In recruitment and selection applicants with a disability who meet the essential requirements will be shortlisted. To retain disabled employees and facilitate their training and progression, the Commission will provide a range of reasonable adjustments to facilitate employees, including amending job criteria and duties, providing flexible working arrangements, access to training and workstation assessments and adaptations. The Commission also provides adjustments for disabled clients and customers.

## **Learning & Development**

To ensure it retains and develops its employees the Commission provides a range of training – from generic, centralised training programmes to self-identified training and continuous professional development opportunities. The Commission also provides support for staff participation on Adult Further Education, when financially possible and staff membership of relevant professional bodies.

## **Employee Engagement and Consultation**

The Commission encourages widespread consultation and exchange of information at all levels within the Commission. This is implemented through frequent staff briefings and meetings at Directorate and Team levels.

The Commission was awarded a Silver Investor in People accreditation in November 2024, although its overall score was lower. In the IIP survey, 61% agreed that the Commission is a great place to work. This was a fall from 75.7% agreeing this in 2020.

The Commission consults and engages with representatives of the recognised trade union, NIPSA, through a Joint Consultative and Negotiating Committee (JCNC). The Commission has a Health and Safety Officer, who provides updates to the JCNC.

## **2.3 Assembly accountability and audit report**

This section contains the key Assembly Accountability notes and disclosures required to be audited under Section 6.7 of the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM).

## **Assembly Accountability Disclosure Notes**

### **i.Losses and special payments (Audited)**

#### **Losses Statement**

There were no losses during 2023-24 or 2024-25.

#### **Special Payments**

There were no special payments over £250,000 during 2023-24 or 2024-25.

#### **Other notes**

### **ii Fees and Charges (Audited)**

There were no fees and charges for the reuse of any information the Commission holds.

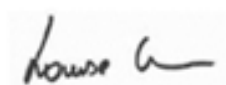
### **iii Remote Contingent Liabilities (Audited)**

The Commission has no known liabilities for which the likelihood of a transfer of economic benefit in settlement is too remote to meet the definition of contingent liability.

#### iv     **Gifts**

There were no gifts received with a value greater than £50.

**Signed by:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louise Conlon', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

**Louise Conlon**  
**Chief Executive and Accounting Officer**  
25 June 2025



## **EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

### **THE CERTIFICATE AND REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY**

#### **Opinion on financial statements**

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of Equality Commission for Northern Ireland for the year ended 31 March 2025 under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The financial statements comprise: Statements of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Financial Position, Cash Flows, Changes in Taxpayers' Equity; and the related notes, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards as interpreted and adapted by the Government Financial Reporting Manual.

I have also audited the information in the Accountability Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In my opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's affairs as at 31 March 2025 and of Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's net expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and The Executive Office directions issued thereunder.

#### **Opinion on regularity**

In my opinion, in all material respects the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

#### **Basis for opinions**

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements and Regularity of Public Sector Bodies in the United Kingdom. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my certificate.

My staff and I are independent of Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinions.

## **Conclusions relating to going concern**

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

The going concern basis of accounting for Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual, which require entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Commission and the Accounting Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

## **Other Information**

The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report other than the financial statements, the parts of the Accountability Report described in that report as having been audited, and my audit certificate and report. The Commission and the Accounting Officer are responsible for the other information included in the Annual Report. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my certificate I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

My responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

## **Opinion on other matters**

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with The Executive Office directions made under the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
- the information given in the Performance Report and Accountability Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

### **Matters on which I report by exception**

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the Performance Report and Accountability Report.

I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by the Government Financial Reporting Manual are not made; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with the Department of Finance's guidance.

### **Responsibilities of the Commission and Accounting Officer for the financial statements**

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities, the Commission and the Accounting Officer are responsible for:

- the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view;
- ensuring such internal controls are in place as deemed necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error;
- ensuring the Annual Report, which includes the Remuneration and Staff Report is prepared in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework; and
- assessing Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by Equality Commission for Northern Ireland will not continue to be provided in the future.

### **Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements**

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but

is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulation, including fraud.

My procedures included:

- obtaining an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to Equality Commission for Northern Ireland through discussion with management and application of extensive public sector accountability knowledge. The key laws and regulations I considered included the Northern Ireland Act 1998;
- making enquires of management and those charged with governance on Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's compliance with laws and regulations;
- making enquiries of internal audit, management and those charged with governance as to Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's susceptibility to irregularity and fraud, their assessment of the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and irregularity, and their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud and irregularity;
- completing risk assessment procedures to assess the susceptibility of Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur. This included, but was not limited to, an engagement director led engagement team discussion on fraud to identify particular areas, transaction streams and business practices that may be susceptible to material misstatement due to fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the posting of unusual journals;
- engagement director oversight to ensure the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework throughout the audit;
- documenting and evaluating the design and implementation of internal controls in place to mitigate risk of material misstatement due to fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- designing audit procedures to address specific laws and regulations which the engagement team considered to have a direct material effect on the financial statements in terms of misstatement and irregularity, including fraud. These audit procedures included, but were not limited to, reading Commission and committee minutes, and agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation and approvals as appropriate;
- addressing the risk of fraud as a result of management override of controls by:
  - performing analytical procedures to identify unusual or unexpected relationships or movements;

- testing journal entries to identify potential anomalies, and inappropriate or unauthorised adjustments;
- assessing whether judgements and other assumptions made in determining accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias; and
- investigating significant or unusual transactions made outside of the normal course of business.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website [www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities](http://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities). This description forms part of my certificate.

In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the expenditure and income recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

### **Report**

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.



**Dorinnia Carville**  
**Comptroller and Auditor General**  
**Northern Ireland Audit Office**  
**106 University Street**  
**BELFAST**  
**BT7 1EU**

**1 July 2025**

**Equality Commission  
for**

**Northern Ireland**

**Financial Statements**

**for the 12 months ended**

**31 March 2025**

## Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2025

This account summarises the expenditure and income generated and consumed on an accruals basis. It also includes other comprehensive income and expenditure, which include changes to the values of non-current assets and other financial instruments that cannot yet be recognised as income or expenditure.

		2024/25 £000	2023/24 £000
	Note		
Revenue from contracts with customers	4	4	80
Other operating income	4	325	262
		<hr/>	
<b>Total Operating Income</b>		<b>329</b>	<b>342</b>
Staff Costs	3	(4,457)	(4,551)
Purchase of goods and services	3	(1,515)	(1,409)
Depreciation and amortisation	5	(408)	(415)
Impairment	11	750	(750)
Provisions	11	(292)	(339)
<b>Total operating expenditure</b>		<b>(5,922)</b>	<b>(7,464)</b>
<b>Net Operating Expenditure</b>		<b>(5,593)</b>	<b>(7,122)</b>
<b>Other comprehensive net expenditure</b>			
Items that will not be reclassified to net operating expenditure:			
Net gain on revaluation of Plant and Equipment			
	5	(13)	4
<b>Comprehensive net expenditure for the year</b>		<b>(5,606)</b>	<b>(7,118)</b>

The notes on pages 98 to 112 form part of these accounts

## Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2025

This statement presents the financial position of the Equality Commission. It comprises three main components: assets owned or controlled; liabilities owed to other bodies; and equity, the remaining value of the entity.

	Note	2024/25 £000	2023/24 £000
<b>Non-current assets:</b>			
Property plant and equipment	5	534	877
Intangible assets	6	53	88
<b>Total non-current assets</b>		<b>587</b>	<b>965</b>
<b>Current assets:</b>			
Trade and other receivables	9	401	515
Cash and cash equivalents	8	481	468
<b>Total current assets</b>		<b>882</b>	<b>983</b>
<b>Total assets</b>		<b>1,469</b>	<b>1,948</b>
<b>Current liabilities:</b>			
Trade and other payables	10	(703)	(851)
Finance lease	13.1.2	(480)	(480)
<b>Total current liabilities</b>		<b>(1,183)</b>	<b>(1,331)</b>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>		<b>286</b>	<b>617</b>
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>			
Provisions	11	(276)	(1,021)
Finance Leases	13.1.2	(160)	(640)
<b>Total non-current liabilities</b>		<b>(436)</b>	<b>(1,661)</b>
<b>Total assets less total liabilities</b>		<b>(150)</b>	<b>(1,044)</b>
<b>Taxpayers' equity and other reserves</b>			
General Fund		(212)	(1,119)
Revaluation Reserve		62	75
<b>Total equity</b>		<b>(150)</b>	<b>(1,044)</b>

The financial statements on pages 94 to 97 were approved by the Board on 25 June 2025 and were signed on its behalf by:

**Louise Conlon**   
**Chief Executive and Accounting Officer.**

The notes on pages 98 to 112 form part of these accounts



## Statement of Cash Flows

### for the year ended 31 March 2025

The Statement of Cash Flows shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Commission during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Commission generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of service costs and the extent to which these operations are funded by way of income from the recipients of services provided by the Commission. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash inflows and outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Commission's future public service delivery.

	<b>Note</b>	<b>2024-25 £000</b>	<b>2023-24 £000</b>
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>			
Net operating expenditure		(5,593)	(7,122)
Adjustments for non-cash transactions			
Depreciation		370	387
Amortisation		38	28
Impairment		(750)	750
Increase in provisions		292	339
Decrease in trade and other receivables		114	190
(Decrease)/increase in trade and other payables		(149)	401
Use of provisions		(287)	(319)
<b>Net cash outflow from operating activities</b>		<b>(5,965)</b>	<b>(5,346)</b>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>			
Purchase of plant and equipment	5	(39)	(92)
Purchase of intangible assets	6	(3)	(69)
Payment of loan for property		(480)	(480)
<b>Net cash outflow from investing activities</b>		<b>(522)</b>	<b>(641)</b>
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>			
Financing from TEO		6,500	6,373
<b>Net cash flow from financing activities</b>		<b>6,500</b>	<b>6,373</b>
<b>Net increase in cash and cash equivalents in the period</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>386</b>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period</b>		<b>468</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period</b>	8	<b>481</b>	<b>468</b>

The notes on pages 98 to 112 form part of these accounts.

## Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year ended 31 March 2025

This statement shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Commission. The Revaluation Reserve reflects the change in asset values that have not been recognised as income or expenditure. The General Fund represents the total assets less liabilities of the Commission, to the extent that the total is not represented by other reserves and financing items.

	Note	General Fund £000	Revaluation Reserve £000	Taxpayers' Equity £000
<b>Balance at 31 March 2023 (Restated)</b>		<b>(370)</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>(300)</b>
Grant from TEO		6,373	0	6,373
Comprehensive net expenditure for year		(7,096)	5	(7,101)
Auditors Remunerations	3	(26)	0	(26)
<b>Balance at 31 March 2024</b>		<b>(1,119)</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>(1,044)</b>
Grant from TEO		6,500	0	6,500
Comprehensive net expenditure for year		(5,566)	(13)	(5,579)
Auditors Remuneration	3	(27)	0	(27)
<b>Balance at 31 March 2025</b>		<b>(212)</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>(150)</b>

The notes on pages 98 to 112 form part of these accounts.

# Notes to the Account

## 1. Statement of accounting policies

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with paragraph 7(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the 2024-25 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by the Department of Finance. The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be the most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Equality Commission for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by the Equality Commission are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts.

### 1.1 Accounting convention

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention modified to account for the revaluation of property, plant and equipment.

### 1.2 Non-Current assets

Non-current assets are fully funded by The Executive Office (formerly Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister). Plant and equipment have been valued at historic cost revalued by indices published by the National Statistics Office. A capitalisation threshold of £500 has been applied. Intangible assets (computer software and licences) are valued at historic cost.

### 1.3 Depreciation and Amortisation Rates

Depreciation and amortisation are provided on all non-current assets at rates calculated to write off the cost of each asset over its expected life with rates as follows:

IT Equipment	25-33%
Office Equipment	10-33%
Furniture	10%
Fixtures & Fittings	10-33%
Building	period of lease to July 2026
Intangible Assets	25-33%

### 1.4 Inventories

The value of inventories of consumables is immaterial and the Commission does attribute value for consumable inventories in the accounts as required.

### 1.5 Income

All income from operations is credited to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure. Income is based on full cost recovery of services provided.

## **1.6 Grant in Aid**

Grant in Aid received, used to finance activities and expenditure which support the statutory and other objectives of the Commission, are treated as financing. They are credited to the General Fund because they are regarded as contributions from a controlling party.

## **1.7 Leased Asset**

The Commission adopted IFRS 16 'Leases' with effect from 1 April 2022.

IFRS 16 represents a significant change in lessee accounting by removing the distinction between operating leases and finance leases and introducing a single lessee accounting model. IFRS 16 requires recognition of assets and liabilities for all leases in the Statement of Financial Position (SoFP), with exemption given to low value leases and short-term leases. The adoption of the standard results in the recognition of a right-of-use asset, representing a right to use the underlying leased asset and a lease liability, representing an obligation to make lease payments. The obligation is based on the present value of the annual rental agreements. The Commission sub leases a portion of the building and recognises a receivable as an amount equal to the gross investment in the lease discounted at the interest rate implicit in the lease. The sub lease portion of the right of use asset is de-recognised and any difference is immediately recognised as a gain or loss on de-recognition.

## **1.8 Financial Instruments**

Financial assets and liabilities are recognised on the Statement of Financial Position when the Commission becomes a party to a contractual provision of the instrument.

The Commission's financial assets and liabilities are classified as Loans and Receivables and are held at cost which approximates to their fair value because of their short maturities.

## **1.9 Provisions**

The Commission makes provision for liabilities and charges where, at the Statement of Financial Position date, a legal or constructive liability exists (that is a present obligation from past events exists), where the transfer of economic benefits is probable and a reasonable estimate can be made. IAS 37 requires that where the effect of the time value of money is material the amount of a provision should be the present value of the expenditures expected to be required to settle the obligation. Where cash flows have been adjusted for risk, the standard requires the use of a risk-free discount rate.

## **1.10 Legal Fee Provisions**

The Commission makes provision for expenditure authorised for legal assistance with letters of commitment to individuals before legal assistance is commissioned to an external provider.

### **1.11 Pensions**

Past and present employees are covered by the provisions of Civil Service Pensions (NI). The CSP (NI) is a non-funded defined benefit scheme which produces its own resource accounts, but the Commission is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities.

The most up to date actuarial valuation was completed by Government Actuary's Department (GAD) in October 2023 and these details are available in the CSP (NI) resource accounts.

### **1.12 VAT**

The Commission is not registered for VAT.

### **1.13 Staff Costs**

Under IAS19, Employee Benefits legislation, all staff costs must be recorded as an expense as soon as an organisation is obligated to pay them. This includes the cost of any holiday pay and flexible time owed at the year end.

### **1.14 Impending application of newly issued accounting standards not yet Effective**

There are no newly issued accounting standards which are to be reported in these accounts. The most recently adopted accounting standard relates to IFRS 16 which has been applied from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022. There is no other impact from IFRS 17 Insurance Contracts as the Commission does not hold such contracts.

## 2.Statement of operating costs by function

The Commission can be treated as a single operating segment, however under Schedule 8 para 5(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 it is required to give details of how resources have been divided between the functions previously exercised by the bodies dissolved at the time of its formation.

	Salaries & Associated Costs £000	Programme Costs £000	*Other Costs £000	12 mths to 31/03/2025 Total £000	Salaries & Associated Costs £000	Programme Costs £000	*Other Costs £000	12 mths to 31/03/2024 Total £000
Integrated/ New Areas	1,616	391	493	2,500	1,483	414	389	2,286
Disability	537	88	164	789	462	133	122	717
Religion & Politics	616	31	188	835	584	6	153	743
Gender	358	55	109	522	318	48	83	449
Race	224	17	68	309	196	69	52	317
Statutory Duty	398	0	121	519	397	0	104	501
Resources	309	0	94	403	759	0	199	958
Executive	221	0	67	288	186	0	49	235
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>4,279</b>	<b>582</b>	<b>1,304</b>	<b>6,165</b>	<b>4,385</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>1,151</b>	<b>6,206</b>
Members Costs	178	0	0	178	166	0	0	166
Other Costs	0	0	-750	-750	0	0	750	750
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,457</b>	<b>582</b>	<b>1,304</b>	<b>5,593</b>	<b>4,551</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>1,901</b>	<b>7,122</b>

\* Other costs include general overheads, premises and non-cash costs less income from activities.

### 3. Expenditure

	2024/25 £000	2023/24 £000
<b>Staff costs</b>		
Salaries and fees	2,870	3,060
Social Security Cost	290	308
Other pension costs	956	884
Agency	341	299
 Rentals under operating leases		
Annual contracts	39	49
Rates	277	265
Fuel	81	91
Facilities Management	202	193
Repairs and Maintenance	128	115
Legal – Non-database Costs	32	7
Education and Promotions	135	153
Other Programme	132	114
Miscellaneous	362	228
Interest on leases	5	12
External Audit Costs*	27	26
Consumables	22	22
Legal Costs	21	88
Staff Related Costs	52	46
Depreciation and Amortisation	408	415
Legal Provision charge	292	339
 Impairment	(750)	750
	<b>5,922</b>	<b>7,464</b>

\* External audit remuneration in 2024-25 includes a fee of £1,382 for the National Fraud Initiative carried out in 2024.

### 4. Income

	2024-25 Total £000	2023-24 Total £000
Revenue from contracts with customers	4	80
Other operating income	325	262
	<b>329</b>	<b>342</b>

All income is based on full cost recovery. Revenue from contracts with customers relates to Service Level Agreements with other ALBs. Other operating income relates to offset of premises costs by co-tenants.

## 5. Property plant and equipment

<b>2024-25</b>	<b>Buildings</b>	<b>Information Technology</b>	<b>Office Equipment</b>	<b>Furniture</b>	<b>Fixtures &amp; Fittings</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
<b>Cost/Valuation</b>						
At 1 April 2024	<b>1,312</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>2,989</b>
Additions	0	38	0	1	0	39
Disposals						
Revaluations	-32	16	1	3	11	-1
<b>At 31 March 2025</b>	<b>1,280</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>3,027</b>
<b>Depreciation</b>						
At 1 April 2024	<b>606</b>	<b>668</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>2,112</b>
Charged in year	295	68	0	1	6	370
Disposals						
Revaluations	-15	13	1	2	10	11
<b>At 31 March 2025</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>749</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>2,493</b>
<b>Carrying amount at 31 March 2025</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>534</b>
<b>Carrying amount at 31 March 2024</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>877</b>
<b>Asset Financing</b>						
<b>Owned</b>	0	92	0	10	38	140
<b>Finance lease</b>	394	0	0	0	0	394
<b>Carrying amount at 31 March 2025</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>534</b>



## Note 5 Continued

<b>2023-24</b>	<b>Buildings</b>	<b>Information Technology</b>	<b>Office Equipment</b>	<b>Furniture</b>	<b>Fixtures &amp; Fittings</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
<b>Cost/Valuation</b>						
At 1 April 2023	<b>1,312</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>2,868</b>
Additions	0	51	0	2	39	92
Disposals	0	0	0	0	0	0
Revaluations	0	16	3	8	2	29
<b>At 31 March 2024</b>	<b>1,312</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>2,989</b>
<b>Depreciation</b>						
At 1 April 2023	<b>303</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>1,699</b>
Charged in year	303	82	0	1	1	387
Disposals	0	0	0	0	0	0
Revaluations	0	13	3	7	3	26
<b>At 31 March 2024</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>668</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>2,112</b>
<b>Carrying amount at 31 March 2024</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>877</b>
<b>Carrying amount at 31 March 2023</b>	<b>1,009</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1,169</b>
<b>Asset Financing</b>						
<b>Owned</b>	0	119	0	9	43	171
<b>Finance lease</b>	706	0	0	0	0	706
<b>Carrying amount at 31 March 2024</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>877</b>

## 6.Intangible assets

Intangible assets comprise software and licenses.

<b>2024-25</b>	<b>Information Technology</b>	<b>Software Licences</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
<b>Cost or Valuation</b>			
At 1 April 2024	<b>29</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>419</b>
Additions	0	3	3
Disposals			
<b>At 31 March 2025</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>422</b>
<b>Amortisation</b>			
At 1 April 2024	<b>29</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>331</b>
Charged in year	0	38	38
Disposals			
<b>At 31 March 2025</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>369</b>
<b>Carrying amount at 31 March 2025</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Carrying amount at 31 March 2024</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Asset financing:</b>			
Owned	0	53	53
Finance Leased	0	0	0
<b>Carrying amount at 31 March 2025</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>53</b>

**Note 6 Continued**

<b>2023-24</b>	<b>Information Technology</b>	<b>Software Licences</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
<b>Cost or Valuation</b>			
At 1 April 2023	<b>29</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>350</b>
Additions	0	69	69
Disposals	0	0	0
<b>At 31 March 2024</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>419</b>
<b>Amortisation</b>			
At 1 April 2023	<b>29</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>303</b>
Charged in year	0	28	28
Disposals	0	0	0
<b>At 31 March 2024</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>331</b>
<b>Carrying amount at 31 March 2024</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Carrying amount at 31 March 2023</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Asset financing:</b>			
Owned	0	88	88
Finance Leased	0	0	0
<b>Carrying amount at 31 March 2024</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>88</b>

## 7. Financial Instruments

As the cash requirements of the Equality Commission are met through Grant-in-Aid provided by The Executive Office, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non-public sector body. The majority of financial instruments relate to contracts to buy non-financial items in line with the Commission's expected purchase and usage requirements and the Commission is therefore exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

## 8. Cash and cash equivalents

	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
<b>Balance at 1 April</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>82</b>
Net change in cash and cash equivalents	13	386
Balance at 31 March	481	468
The balance at 31 March was held at the Government Banking Service	481	468
Cash in Hand	0	0
<b>Balance at 31 March</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>468</b>

## Reconciliation of liabilities arising from financing activities

	<b>2024</b>	<b>Cash Flows</b>	<b>Change in</b>	<b>2025</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>Valuation</b>	<b>£000</b>
			<b>£000</b>	
Lease Liabilities	1,109	(480)	7	636
<b>Total Liabilities from financing activities</b>	<b>1,109</b>	<b>(480)</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>636</b>

## 9. Trade receivables and other current assets

	2024-25 £000	2023-24 £000
<b>Amounts falling due within one year:</b>		
Debtors	248	397
Prepayments	120	112
Other Receivables	33	6
	<b>401</b>	<b>515</b>

## 10. Trade payables and other current liabilities

	2024-25 £000	2023-24 £000
<b>Amounts falling due within one year</b>		
Accruals and deferred Income	(703)	(851)
	(703)	(851)

## 11. Provisions for liabilities and charges

	Holiday Pay £000	2024-25 Legal Costs £000	Impairment	Total £000	2023-24 Total £000
<b>Balance at 1 April</b>	11	260	750	1,021	251
Provided in the year	0	418	0	418	1,170
Provisions not required written back	0	(126)	(750)	(876)	(81)
Provisions utilised in the year	0	(287)	0	(287)	(319)
<b>Balance at 31 March</b>	11	265	0	276	1,021

The Commission makes provision for expenditure authorised for legal assistance before it is committed to an external provider. It is not possible to determine the time period for each case.

A provision has been included in the accounts relating to the potential impact of a number of legal cases involving public bodies in Northern Ireland.

The provision is based on a review of our overtime patterns, for the period from April 2014 to 31 March 2020. This will be reviewed, in light of any changes to the overall legal position. From 1 April 2020, holiday pay for overtime is paid as it is incurred.

The Court of Appeal (CoA) judgment from 17 June 2019 (PSNI v Agnew) determined that claims for Holiday Pay shortfall can be taken back to 1998. However, the PSNI appealed the CoA judgment to the Supreme Court. The case was heard in December 2022. The appeal was dismissed.

There are still some significant elements of uncertainty around this estimate for a number of reasons:

1. the outcome of negotiations between NICS and its Trade Unions; and
2. the provision includes a pension element which is based on the current rate per staff member provided by the Government Actuary's Department (GAD). This will require subsequent confirmation.

## **12. Capital commitments**

There were no capital commitments at 31 March 2025 or 31 March 2024.

## **13. Commitments under leases**

### **13.1 Finance Leases**

The Commission from 1 April 2022 in line with the accounting treatment IFRS16 has reported a finance lease for the property at Equality House. The following commitments are reported over the period of the lease.

### 13.1.1 Quantitative disclosures around right-of-use assets.

	<b>2024/25 Total £000</b>	<b>2023/24 Total £000</b>
<b>Buildings</b>		
<b>As at 1 April</b>	706	1,009
Impact of IFRS 16	(17)	0
Depreciation Expense	(295)	(303)
<b>As at 31 March</b>	394	706

### 13.1.2 Quantitative disclosures around lease liabilities

	<b>2024/25 £000</b>	<b>2023/24 £000</b>
<b>Buildings</b>		
Not later than one year	480	480
Later than one year and not later than five years	160	640
Less Interest Value	(4)	(11)
<b>Present Value of Obligations</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>1,109</b>

### 13.1.3 Quantitative disclosures around cash flow for leases

	<b>2024-25 £000</b>	<b>2023-24 £000</b>
<b>Total cash outflow for lease</b>	480	480

## 14. Other financial commitments

The Commission had no other financial commitments at 31 March 2025 or 31 March 2024.

## **15. Contingent liabilities disclosed under IAS 37**

The Commission has provided for a contingent liability in accordance with IAS 37 for the dilapidations attributed to its current premises at Equality House that could arise at the end of its current lease which expires on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2026. In prior year this £750k had been recognised as a provision however given the likelihood of remaining in its current premises beyond July 2026 the Commission now recognises these potential costs as a contingent liability.

## **16. Related-party transactions**

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is a non-departmental public body sponsored by The Executive Office (TEO). TEO is regarded as a related party with which the Commission has had various material transactions during the year.

In addition, the Commission has had various material transactions with other central government bodies:

- TEO  
(£6,500,000 of which £0 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Northern Ireland Commission for Children and Young People  
(£205,341 of which £0 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Commission for Victims and Survivors  
(£80,681 of which £3,509 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission  
(£47,191 of which £0 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Commissioner for Older People Northern Ireland  
(£144,268 of which £0 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission  
(£1,691 of which £0 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Community Relations Council for Northern Ireland  
(£128,762 of which £7,725 was outstanding at the year-end).
- the Truth Recovery Independent Panel  
(£45,998 of which £0 was outstanding at the year-end)

No Commissioner or key management executive has undertaken any material transactions with the Equality Commission during the year.

There were no other related party transactions.



**18. Third-party assets**

The Commission had no third-party assets at 31 March 2025 or 31 March 2024.

**19.Events after the Reporting Period**

There were no events after the reporting period impacting on these statements.

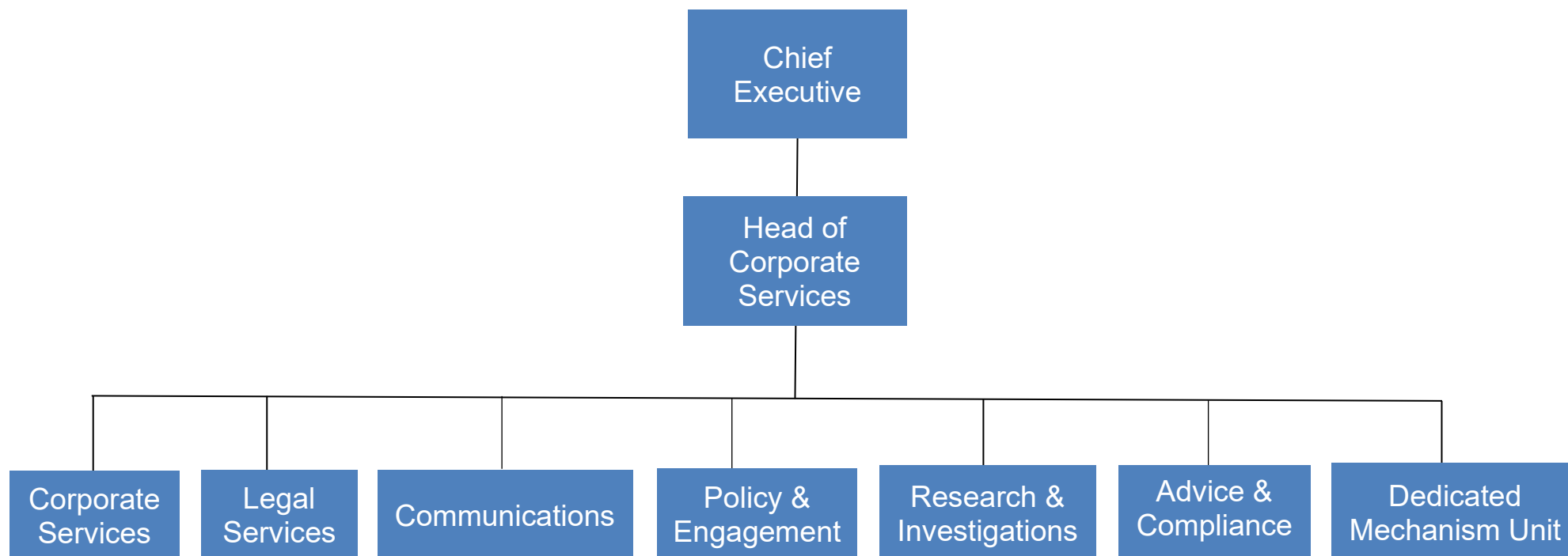
**Date of authorisation for issue**

The Accounting Officer authorised the issue of these financial statements on 1 July 2025.

## Appendix 1 Performance Delivery against planned objectives 2024-25

Strategic priorities	RAG status against Key actions				
	Green	Green Amber	Amber	Red	Total
Working for a stronger legal and policy framework for Equality	2	3	1	0	6
Using our powers to combat discrimination and promote equality of opportunity	2	5	2	0	9
Safeguarding our rights protections in a changing Europe	4	1	0	0	5
Promoting equal access to and equal opportunities for all at work	0	1	1	0	2
Addressing inequalities in educational attainment and tackling bullying	2	0	0	0	2
Resourcing the Plan	3	2	0	1	5
Totals	13	12	4	0	29

## Organisation Structure Chart



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