

Press release: APPOINTMENTS TO THE EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

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Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt. Hon Karen Bradley MP, has today announced the appointment of Geraldine McGahey to be the new Deputy Chief Commissioner and Neil Anderson, June Best, Theresa Donaldson, Hazel Francey, Stephen Mathews, Joe McVey, Dawn Purvis and Katy Radford as Commissioners. The appointments will be for a period of three years ending on 31 May 2022.

These appointees will replace Lesley Carroll (Deputy Chief Commissioner) and William Gamble, Judith Gillespie, Tom Hartley, David Rose who have completed their terms of office, and William McKee (Commissioner) who sadly passed away in December last year.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

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

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

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

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

Terms of appointment

The positions are part-time appointments.

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

Biography of Appointees

Geraldine McGahey: Former Chief Executive of Larne Borough Council, and SOLACE gender champion. She is currently an Equality Commissioner and a Parades Commissioner.

Neil Anderson: Currently head of NSPCC in Northern Ireland, with a career based in HR across a variety of organisations and sectors.

June Best: Retired head teacher with extensive experience in disability rights. Advocate for Guide Dogs for the Blind and ambassador for Disability NI. She was awarded an MBE in 2018 for services to people with a disability.

Theresa Donaldson: Former Chief Executive of Craigavon Borough Council and Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council. She is currently Vice Chair of Eirgrid and a member of the Probation Board.

Hazel Francey: Retired former Good Relations Manager for Belfast City Council. She holds roles on the National Museums Board, and is chair of its Finance Committee and has served as an Equality Commissioner for Northern Ireland.

Stephen Mathews: Chief Executive of Cedar Foundation, a charity supporting children, young people and adults with disabilities.

Joe McVey: Chief Executive of Brain Injury Matters, having been previously managing partner in a Consultancy business and has served as Equality Commissioner for Northern Ireland.

Dawn Purvis: Chief Executive of a Victoria Housing Estates (VHE). She is a former Northern Ireland Programme Director for Marie Stopes and previously served as an MLA and leader of the PUP.

Katy Radford: Social anthropologist currently employed at the Institute for Conflict Research. Vice Chair of Arts Council of Northern Ireland, member of the Commission for Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition and member of the Executive Council of the Northern Ireland Jewish Community.

Political Activity

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

As noted in the biographies, only one of the appointees, Dawn Purvis, has declared political activity in the past ten years.

Regulatory Requirements

The appointments process has been regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointment (OCPA) and all stages of the process were overseen by

an independent panel member.

Statutory Requirements

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