



Northern  
Ireland  
Office



# Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

## Candidate Information Booklet: Commissioner Appointment

November 2025

## **FOREWORD FROM SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

Thank you for your interest in a position of Commissioner on the board of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

I am seeking an outstanding individual who can make a real contribution to the Commission's ongoing work to promote equality and challenge discrimination and bring expertise and fresh thinking to some of the challenges in the coming months and years. These include, in particular, the operationalisation of the dedicated mechanism to oversee the commitment to no diminution of relevant rights in Northern Ireland, set out in Article 2 of the Windsor Framework.

The enclosed information will, I hope, answer many of the questions you may have about the role and work of the Commission. I will be looking to appoint an individual to this statutory appointment who can bring vision, influence and innovation to the role; someone who will work collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders for the benefit of all the people of Northern Ireland.

I welcome applications from all suitably experienced individuals regardless of ethnicity, religion or belief, political opinion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability. I particularly welcome applications from those with a disability, those from a black or ethnic minority background, those from the LGBT+ community, and those who have not previously held public appointments as these groups are currently under-represented. I want to encourage the widest possible pool of talent for this important appointment.

I hope that you will feel able to submit an application and, once again, thank you for your interest in this position.

**THE RT HON HILARY BENN MP  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

## **Introduction**

You may already have some knowledge about the important work of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the following pages will tell you more about its purpose and the nature of a commissioner's role.

If you believe you have the experience and qualities we are seeking, we look forward to hearing from you.

## **The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland**

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland 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 Commission is mandated in accordance with Article 2(1) of the Windsor Framework to oversee the UK Government's commitment to rights and equality in Northern Ireland (NI) after UK Withdrawal from the EU.

## **Remit and responsibilities**

In general terms, the Equality Commission's statutory remit is to:

- promote equality of opportunity and affirmative action;
- work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination and harassment;
- keep relevant legislation under review;
- promote good relations between persons of different racial groups and good disability practice; and
- oversee the effectiveness of statutory equality duties on public authorities.

This statutory framework enables the Equality Commission to:

- promote equality through a range of mechanisms (e.g. by providing direct advice and support to individuals and organisations);
- produce publications and run conferences and seminars;
- undertake research and educational activities;
- influence policy makers;
- assist individuals with complaints of discrimination under the law;
- undertake investigations; and
- use a combination of its powers to encourage and to enforce changes to policy, practices and procedures in favour of greater equality.

## **Structure**

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is governed by a Board of Commissioners consisting of a Chief Commissioner, a Deputy Chief Commissioner and up to eighteen other Commissioners all appointed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The current Chief Commissioner is Geraldine McGahey OBE.

In making appointments to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland shall as far as practicable ensure that the Commissioners, as a group, are representative of the community in Northern Ireland.

The Commissioners establish the overall strategic direction for the organisation, set the policy framework and oversee the delivery of the planned work. With the exception of the Chief Commissioner, all Commissioners are part time and are appointed for a term of up to three years.

Although appointments to the Board of Commissioners are made by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is sponsored by The Executive Office, which carries responsibilities for equality policy and legislation in the Northern Ireland Executive.

The Commission's budget for 2024/25 was approximately £6.5m with around 75-80 staff delivering its annual work plan. The current Chief Executive is Louise Conlon. If you would like more information on the ECNI you can access its website [here](#).

## **The Role**

The role of Commissioner is due to become vacant from 1 March 2026.

Membership of the Equality Commission is a challenging and rewarding opportunity. It calls for people who can work effectively with a wide range of individuals and who have good judgement, resilience, sensitivity and vision of a high order.

## **Key Responsibilities**

All Commissioners will be expected to:

- ensure the Commission fulfils its functions in accordance with its statutory remit;
- provide effective leadership for the staff of the Commission, define and develop the strategic direction and set challenging objectives;
- support and assist the Chief Commissioner in developing policy and in providing strategic direction and in ensuring effective and efficient performance of the Commission's statutory duties;
- monitor the Commission's performance to ensure that it fully meets its aims, objectives and performance targets;
- accept corporate responsibility for ensuring that the Commission complies with any statutory or administrative requirements for the use of public resources including acting in a way that promotes high standards of public finance, including the promotion of regularity, propriety and value for money;
- assist the Chief Commissioner in ensuring that high standards of corporate governance are adhered to;
- represent the Commission as required in public functions;
- apply personal expertise in contributing to the work of the Commission as a whole;
- ensure compliance with the Code of Practice for Board Members of Public Bodies;
- appoint the Chief Executive and to ensure that his/her performance is regularly assessed against clear objectives and targets; and
- attend Commission meetings regularly.

## **Person Specification**

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland requires a blend of expertise relevant to its work. An outstanding individual is sought to become a member of the board of the Commission, people who understand the considerations that influence the environment in which it works and can command the confidence of all sides of the community in Northern Ireland, work constructively with others, think strategically and make clear and well-informed judgements.

## **Essential Skills**

Candidates for this role will need to demonstrate:

- that they understand the needs and interests of those affected by the Commission's work on equality and good relations;
- that they could make a personal contribution to the strategic direction of the Commission and assist it in carrying out its functions;
- that they can build productive and respectful relationships with fellow Commissioners, colleagues and the communities which are impacted by the Commission's work and decisions; and
- a practical understanding of the Nolan Principles including accountability and personal integrity.

The Advisory Assessment Panel will assess your suitability for appointment by comparing the information you give in your personal statement and CV against the essential skills and person specification. You should therefore review the skill requirements as detailed above before preparing your CV and personal statement.

## **Terms of Appointment**

The position will be based in Equality House, Belfast. Candidates may wish to note the following:

- The position is part-time with an expected time commitment of approximately 2-3 days per month. Occasional evening and weekend meetings may occur.
- The position of members attracts an annual remuneration of £5,000 which will be paid in equal monthly instalments;
- Travel and incidental expenses will be reimbursed in line with the Equality

- Commission's travel and subsistence policy;
- This appointment is not pensionable; and
  - The term of appointment is three years.

This competition may be used to fill any further vacancies that may arise within the Equality Commission over the next 24 months.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

In the interests of transparency and openness, applicants are asked to consider whether their appointment may give rise to a conflict of interest and state this clearly as part of your application. You should provide information regarding interests that you, or your immediate family, have that might be construed as being in conflict with the role of board member of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

An appointee to a public body could find that matters or incidents which did not previously attract attention could become matters of legitimate public interest once the person concerned holds a public appointment. Actual or perceived conflicts might include, for example, a situation where a candidate has interests in an organisation that might benefit from a contract with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland or there may be issues in your personal or professional history (including any convictions or bankruptcy) that could, if you were appointed, be misconstrued, cause embarrassment to Ministers or the Commission or cause public confidence in the appointment to be jeopardised. It is important that you bring them to the attention of the Advisory Assessment Panel and provide details of the issue/s in your application.

In considering whether you wish to declare any issues, you should also reflect on any public statements you have made, including through social media and blogs. Due diligence may be carried out on any publicly available information and shared with the Advisory Assessment Panel and Ministers. The panel may explore any issues you declare with you or that have been identified from our due diligence checks before they make a recommendation on the appointment.

A potential conflict will not necessarily preclude an individual from appointment, but candidates must be prepared to have this explored during the recruitment process and before an appointment is confirmed.

## **The Seven Principles of Public Life**

It is important that all public appointees uphold the standards of conduct set out in the Committee on Standards on Public Life's Seven Principles of Public Life. A copy of the principles is appended at **Annex A**.

## **How to Apply**

The appointment process will be conducted in accordance with the Governance Code for Public Appointments and is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA). The Northern Ireland Office is committed to the principle of public appointments on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process and to providing equal opportunities for all, irrespective of race, age, disability, gender, marital status, religion, sexual orientation, transgender and working patterns.

We encourage all applicants to apply online via the Cabinet Office's Public Appointments website at: <https://apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk/roles>

Further information on how to do this is set out below. However, should you be unable to submit an online application, or have any issues then you should contact us at the earliest opportunity by email at [ecni2025@nio.gov.uk](mailto:ecni2025@nio.gov.uk).

**In order to apply, you will need to [create an account](#) or [sign in](#). Once you are logged into your account, click on 'apply for this role' and follow the on-screen instructions by the closing date of 28 November 2025 at 12 noon. The selection panel reserves the right to only consider applications that contain all the elements listed below, and that arrive before the published deadline for applications.**

For your application to be properly considered by the Selection Panel, you must upload:

- A supporting statement of **no more than 1000 words** summarising your proven ability related to the essential criteria and person specification. Your statement should provide specific and detailed examples to demonstrate how you meet the essential criteria (including what you did to achieve a specific result);
- A full CV (including education and professional qualifications, career history, and relevant achievements and responsibilities).
- Diversity / Equality Information; and
- Information relating to any outside interests of reputational issues.

You will be asked to check and confirm your personal details to ensure that your application is accurate and will also have the opportunity to make a reasonable adjustment or apply under the disability confident scheme before you submit your application.

Completed applications should be submitted by the closing date of **Friday 28 November 2025 at 12 noon**. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

## **Process**

All applications received by the closing date will be acknowledged and put before a duly constituted Advisory Assessment Panel including an independent member. It is expected that candidates selected at shortlisting stage will be interviewed by the panel in January 2026, but this timescale may change at short notice. Interviews may be held remotely by video conferencing.

If you require any further information about the process, you should contact the competition coordinator by email at **[ecni2025@nio.gov.uk](mailto:ecni2025@nio.gov.uk)**.

## **DISABILITY CONFIDENT - OFFERING AN INTERVIEW TO PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY**

As a Whitehall department the Northern Ireland Office has adopted the Department for Work and Pensions sponsored Disability Confident scheme, which has replaced the Guaranteed Interview Scheme or Two Ticks scheme that was widely used in Great Britain. Disability Confident is a voluntary scheme which supports the Government's commitment to halve the employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people by encouraging employers to think differently about disability and to take positive action to improve how they attract, recruit and retain disabled workers.

We will make reasonable adjustments to help you attend the interview. You may wish to contact the competition coordinator (see contact details above) about your individual requirements should your application proceed to this stage in the process.

We will also offer an interview to a fair and proportionate number of disabled applicants that meet the minimum criteria for the job - you must be able to provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate relevant skills and experience for each of the selection criteria set out in the essential skills section. This does not mean that all disabled people are entitled to an interview.

The aim of this commitment is to encourage positive action for disabled people, encouraging them to apply for positions in public life by offering them the assurance that, should they meet the minimum criteria as advertised for the position, they will be given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills, talent and abilities at the interview stage.

It is important to note that in certain recruitment situations such as an urgent appointment or if we receive a higher volume of applications that far exceeds the number of those expected then we may need to limit the overall numbers of interviews offered. This will include the number of interviews offered to disabled people that meet the minimum criteria for the job.

If you have a disability and require reasonable adjustments then you may wish to contact the competition coordinator about your requirements at the interview stage, should you proceed in the process.

## **Complaints**

If you feel that you have any complaint about any aspect of the way your application has been handled, we would like to hear from you. In the first instance please e-mail the competition coordinator at **ecni2025@nio.gov.uk**.

Complaints must be received by the competition coordinator within 1 calendar month from the issue or after the campaign has closed, whichever is the later. Your complaint will be acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt and answered as quickly and clearly as possible; at the most within 20 working days of receipt. If this deadline cannot be met we will inform you why this is the case and when you can expect a reply.

If, after receiving our response you are still not satisfied, you may contact the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The Commissioner for Public Appointments regulates and monitors appointments to public bodies to ensure procedures are fair. Information about the Commissioner's policy and manner in which complaints are investigated are set out in the Commissioner's leaflet *Your Guide to Making a Complaint about a Public Appointments Process*. More information about the role of the Commissioner and their Code of Practice is available from website address: <http://publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk/>

## **Use of your Personal Information**

Your personal information will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. You will not receive unsolicited paper or electronic mail as a result of sending us any personal information. No personal information will be passed on to third parties for commercial purposes.

When we ask you for personal information, we promise we will:

- only ask for what we need, and not collect too much or irrelevant information;
- ensure you know why we need it;

- protect it and insofar as is possible, make sure nobody has access to it who shouldn't;
- ensure you know what choice you have about giving us information;
- make sure we don't keep it longer than necessary; and
- only use your information for the purposes you have authorised

We ask that you:

- give us accurate information;
- tell us as soon as possible of any changes; and
- tell us as soon as possible if you notice mistakes in the information we hold about you.

The Commissioner for Public Appointments regulates and monitors appointments to public bodies to ensure procedures are fair. We are required by the Commissioner for Public Appointments to retain information about the people who apply for public appointments within his remit, and make this information available to him for audit purposes, if requested to do so. Information you provide in your application may therefore be made available to the Commissioner for Public Appointments and the Commissioner's auditors on a confidential basis in order to help fulfil the Commissioner's formal complaints investigation role and for audit purposes.

Our data protection policy is in line with the requirements of GDPR and data protection legislation and the requirements of the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

The Commissioner's requirements relating to the information we collect about applicants are set out below:

- your initial contact details, including your name and address may be held by the Northern Ireland Office for a period of at least 2 years.
- if you submit an application, then for audit purposes, the application and any supporting documentation will be retained for at least 2 years.
- monitoring information which you provide will also be held for at least 2 years but may be held for statistical purposes for up to 5 years.

If you would like these details to be removed from our records as soon as this recruitment exercise is complete, please inform the competition coordinator via the email address provided above.

### **Equality and Diversity Monitoring Information**

This information is not used in the selection process. It will be removed on receipt and is not seen by the Panel assessing your application. We use this information to monitor the diversity of candidates we attract and those we appoint.

**THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE**

The principles of public life apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder. This includes all those who are elected for appointment to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in the civil service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, NDPBs and in the health, education, social and care services. All public office-holders are both servants of the public and stewards of public services. The principles also have application to all those in other sectors delivering public services.

**Selflessness** Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

**Integrity** Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

**Objectivity** Holders of Public Office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

**Accountability** Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is necessary to ensure this.

**Openness** Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

**Honesty** Holders of public office should be truthful.

**Leadership** Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.