



EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

**ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS
2021 – 2022**

HC 540

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Annual Report and Accounts
for the year ended 31 March 2022

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by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
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Chief Commissioner's Foreword

Last year, we saw the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in highlighting inequalities in our society and also in the way the Commission itself continued to work. As we emerge from the pandemic, its legacy is now being compounded by a cost-of-living crisis that, like COVID-19, impacts on everyone but has very much worse consequences for the most vulnerable.

Added to that, our own political administration is once again uncertain. With the impacts of international conflict and the resultant global challenges and the UK withdrawal from the European Union, the wider business environment, still recovering from the pandemic, is fraught with political and financial uncertainties. It is a very difficult context for our work to tackle the inequalities which persist in our society, work which is as vital as ever.

As you will see from this annual report, we have continued delivering on our remit throughout the year, mainly working remotely, but still reaching out and engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, still forming and working in partnerships and still getting results.

Our new post-Brexit responsibilities have involved a good deal of parliamentary activity and work on understanding and commenting on bills going through Westminster with potential implications for equality under Article 2 of the Ireland/NI Protocol. We have consistently raised issues of concern with Government, on a range of matters such as availability of kosher/halal foods, travel arrangements for assistance dogs and racial profiling at the border. We have been promoting awareness of the commitment made by the UK Government in Article 2, both with key stakeholders and with the general public, and we commissioned a number of research reports. We also intervened in judicial review proceedings, in relation to aspects of a case which concerned Article 2. This work will be further developed over the coming period as we work to ensure that equality rights are not diminished in this new context.

We initiated considerable work on equality law reform, a key element of our new corporate plan. People here are unable to challenge some types of discrimination because the laws are not there to protect them. We began a campaign to inform politicians and the public about some of the gaps in equality laws. We saw some progress with the adoption by the Assembly of a Private Members Bill to remove the teachers' exception from the fair employment legislation. We will be working with Government and the education sector now on how this will be done.

A key focus for us this year was educational inequality, always important, but with added impetus because of the disruption the pandemic caused to the lives of our children and young people. This work will be so important in the coming year as we continue to deal with this legacy.

As I write, we are starting to see the census results, which will be important for our work in coming years. Early results on the increasing age of the population should support the need for additional protection from age discrimination, to cover goods, facilities and services. We will know more about racial diversity too. We have worked this year on race issues such as hate crime legislation and spoken out about the two reprehensible attacks on the Belfast Multi Cultural Centre. We need to see this legislation progressed.

I want to pay tribute to the commitment and work of Commissioners June Best, Theresa Donaldson, Hazel Francey, Stephen Mathews, Dawn Purvis, Katy Radford and Joseph McVey. Their terms of office as Commissioners come to an end in May 2022. I am very grateful to them and to all the other Commissioners for their unfailing support, wisdom and guidance throughout the year under review

Finally, I also thank Chief Executive Evelyn Collins and all the staff for their enduring commitment to the work of the Commission.



Geraldine McGahey OBE
Chief Commissioner

Performance Report

The purpose of this Performance Report is to provide the reader of the Annual Report with an outline of the Commission's purpose and remit; a summary of its performance against its objectives and key results in 2021-22, 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.

During 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 has committed, in Article 2 of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol, 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 under Article 2 of the Protocol, it created a 'dedicated mechanism' comprising of the Equality Commission and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC). On 1 January 2021, the Commission assumed the powers and responsibilities granted to it under Schedule 3 of the EU (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020.

Since 1 January 2021, the Equality Commission, together with the NIHRC, has been given additional powers and responsibilities to ensure that the UK Government's commitment under Article 2 of the Protocol is met. Schedule 3 of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 amended the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to confer these additional powers on the Commission – to monitor, advise, report on and enforce the UK's adherence to its commitment.

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.

During this year, the Commission prepared a new Corporate Plan covering the period 2022-25, which was forwarded to TEO for approval on 4 May 2022. During the course of preparing the new plan, the Commission reviewed its Vision and Mission and updated its core Values.

The Commission's new Statement of Commitment sets out our vision and mission statement as:

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 inequalities and promote equality, we care about delivering high standards of public service, we are courageous, dedicated and passionate about our work.

- **Open** – we are honest, trustworthy, inclusive, accountable, approachable and responsive.
- **Respectful** – we treat people as equals and respect diversity, act fairly, appreciate and support our colleagues' efforts, care for ourselves, colleagues and others and 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 2021-22

The background against which the Commission works continues to be a challenging one. This year has seen the continuance of the COVID-19 pandemic and the period of working from home extended far beyond what could have been anticipated, even at the end of last year. The wider business environment is fraught with political and financial uncertainties, from the level of our own political administration to the global impacts of international conflict and global challenges.

It is a tribute to the resilience of the Commission and its staff that service delivery is maintained, new services provided and business practices continue to be adapted and in some cases transformed, to respond to new ways of working.

This was the third and final year of delivery of the Commission's Corporate Plan 2019-22. In addition to the full delivery of the Commission's services, across the breadth of its remit, this year a major focus was on the development, consultation on and completion of a new Corporate Plan for the period 2022-25.

The five strategic outcome areas under which the Commission's work was structured in 2021-22 were: Mainstreaming and Championing Equality; Employment; Education; Access and participation; and Resourcing and Supporting the Plan.

As was the case last year, COVID-19 was a cross-cutting theme across much of our work and was centre stage in areas of our public policy and engagement activities.

Although, in overall terms, the business plan structure continued to reflect the priority areas set out in the Corporate Plan, within these overall areas, efforts were made to further prioritise our efforts on those areas where change was most likely to be progressed.

The new ways of working introduced in response to working from home were more strongly established and are more certain to have lasting impacts on how the Commission will organise its operations, after the threat of the pandemic has receded.

The new responsibilities, in the form of the Dedicated Mechanism, even in the early stages of their existence are already becoming a significant and core part of the Commission's work programme. This year saw increasing political interest across the islands and the development of research and legal interventions, where Article 2 is interacting with the already existing equality and human rights framework. Work is already underway to ensure adequate funding for this role, following the end of the initial three-year funding period ending on 31 March 2023.

This review of performance, and the further detail contained in this Annual Report, should provide assurance to stakeholders and customers of the resilience of the Commission and the robustness of its governance structures and arrangements for financial control and risk management.

The Commission continued to remain fully operational throughout the extended period of pandemic restrictions and fully committed to the continued delivery of its statutory responsibilities, working to advance equality and to make a difference across the whole community, particularly to the lives of the most vulnerable.

Successful delivery of the Commission's business objectives reflects the continued hard work of our staff and their passion for, and commitment to, delivering high standards of public service. I would also acknowledge the support and cooperation of partners, across the public, private and the voluntary and community sector, in what continues to be a difficult period for us all.

Even a brief scan of the horizon suggests that the coming year will be no less difficult.

The period of political uncertainty we are going through as a community, the wider international tensions that have also emerged, as well as the global challenges that we have been facing for some time, continue to increase uncertainty. So, too, do difficulties around energy shortages, fuel and other prices rises, large scale population movements and the increasing risk of community tensions and impacts on public finances from political instability and the disruption to our political institutions.

The performance analysis below sets out where progress continues to be made and where additional work is necessary to demonstrate that progress. Although the coming year will pose a different and possibly even more difficult set of challenges, this annual report gives some grounds for confidence that the Commission remains well placed and able to respond to them.

The year in review

The overall business environment that public bodies in Northern Ireland operated continued to be impacted by the need to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout 2021-22 the majority of the Commission's staff continued to undertake most of their work from home. Last year, the Commission adapted its Business Plan to address the impact of the pandemic on exacerbating existing inequalities and new issues and areas of concern raised by the public health response – mask-wearing, the vaccination process, the voucher scheme.

Although the pandemic overshadowed the overall policy environment, consultation on a new Programme for Government Draft Outcomes Framework and Executive discussions around the preparation of draft budget promised to establish some key parameters for the Commission's work in future years. Building on New Decade, New Approach, Government Departments made progress on marking out the longer-term legislative and policy framework that could impact on the Commission's business objectives and improve equality outcomes over the next few years – for example, strategies on disability, gender, racial equality, sexual orientation, active ageing, childcare and anti-poverty, as well as key outcome areas such as educational underachievement, special educational needs, employability and housing.

Against the backdrop of the out workings of the UK's withdrawal from the EU and the political tension over aspects of the Ireland/NI Protocol, during 2021-22, the Commission embedded the Dedicated Mechanism Unit and developed and implemented the Commission's powers and responsibilities in this area. Next year, is the final year of the initial funding that was provided by HM Treasury to resource this work and the Commission will be preparing a bid for longer-term funding of the staffing and work programme of the Dedicated Mechanism.

Performance against key actions is reviewed on at least a quarterly basis by the Commission and a summary report of performance is provided on a quarterly basis to the TEO sponsor team. This year's Business Plan contained 14 key objectives. These were further broken down into 46 key actions. Of these key actions 32 were achieved, 12 partly achieved and 2 not achieved. A table outlining each of the objectives and key actions is included as Appendix 1.

This year, for the first time in more than a decade, there has been an increase in staff numbers to 76 permanently employed staff. Fourteen vacancies were filled this year – six in the DMU and eight in other areas. Only two posts remain to be filled in the DMU. In addition to 13 vacancies filled, two staff were been temporarily promoted. It is anticipated that there will be a further increase in the number of permanently employed staff in 2022-23.

It is also anticipated that there will be a return to increased office-based working in 2022-23. This will be based on hybrid working arrangements and the extension of the more agile approach to working and service delivery than was the case pre pandemic. Steps have already been taken over the past two years to facilitate this. However, further investment will be required to deliver the benefits of a more agile approach to work.

Work has restarted on planning for the future relocation of the ALBs sharing Equality House, as part of the Executive's overall Reform of Property Management (RPM) project. Until this is completed the full financial benefits from more agile and hybrid working arrangements will not be realised.

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. Each of the risks can be related to delivery of the Commission's key objectives.

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 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.

Throughout the year, the Commission and its Committees continued to meet remotely, and effective governance was maintained. Further detail on these 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 2022 and other results for this year are set out in detail in our Financial Statements at page 87. The Accounting Officer authorised these financial statements for issue on 23 June 2022.

The Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) requires the Commission to treat grant-in-aid as financing rather than income. This year, £5,877k (2020-21, £5,391k) was received from TEO. This included £793k for work on the dedicated mechanism arrangements. The equivalent figure last year, for the dedicated mechanism work was £300k.

The Commission shows a small increase in income from its activities. Income from activities was £438k this year, which compares with £426k last year. This increase was the result of an increase in the reimbursement from the other organisations sharing Equality House of the higher cost of fuel and other premises related costs.

Net expenditure for the year was £6,169k (2020-21, £5,271k). The increase mainly resulted from increased staff costs and additional programme expenditure, mainly due to the increased size and scale of operations of the DMU this year.

There has been a decrease in Taxpayers' Equity of £288k - from a surplus of £155k at 31 March 2021, to a deficit of £133k at 31 March 2022. The increase is largely the result of the decrease of cash-in-bank at the year-end.

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, this target was met in terms of the resource allocations. There was a small underspend in the Capital allocation of £8k (7%).

Going concern

The Equality Commission operates as a going concern. It is financed by funding from The Executive Office. Confirmation of its Indicative Opening budget allocation and grant-in-aid for the financial year 2022-23 was received on 6 May 2022. 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

The performance analysis below provides a more detailed view of the Commission's performance. It contains a review of the Commission's overall performance in the areas set out in its Business Plan 2021-22; 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. The outline of the Commission's performance against key objectives is also supported by the Table in Appendix 1.

Staff have continued worked outside of the office and the vast bulk of Commission operations and services have been delivered virtually. Both in its impact on the way the Commission works and its shaping of the environment in which the work takes place, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the response to it, continues to impact on the equality agenda and the delivery of services across the Commission.

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

The concerns, about the exacerbation of existing inequalities and of new emerging inequalities, raised by the pandemic, continued to be at the centre of public and media debate throughout most of the year. As was the case last year, the Commission amended its business plan to include additional actions focused on COVID-19 impacts and COVID-19 as a cross-cutting theme running through all the business plan actions.

During the year, the Commission commented on a number of key COVID-19 related policies, and provided guidance on Section 75, including the TEO Draft Consolidated COVID-19 Recovery Plan– ‘Building Forward’ , the Vaccine Certification Process and disability accessibility, amendment to the Health Protection Regulations and face coverings, Rebuilding Health related policies, the COVID-19 Restrictions Business Support Scheme, the High Street Voucher Scheme and the Tourism Voucher Scheme.

A number of policy papers explicitly addressed COVID-19 impacts on education - *Family and Community Engagement in Education - Learning from the Pandemic* and *Educational underachievement, and Exacerbating Impacts of COVID-19*.

Growth in social media usage and website traffic was also driven to a considerable extent by COVID-19 related issues this year.

Embracing new responsibilities

We also embraced our new role to oversee, in partnership with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC), the commitment made by the UK Government under the EU/UK Withdrawal Agreement, in Article 2 of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol to ensure that certain equality and human rights in Northern Ireland will continue to be protected after the UK’s exit from the European Union. Work carried out this year included raising awareness of our new role, developing strong working relationships with NIHRC, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) and a range of key stakeholders, initiating research, monitoring legislative proposals and raising concerns where we considered a potential breach of Article 2 may occur. We also intervened in a Judicial Review case where Article 2 issues were engaged.

Disability and employability

We continued to partner with the Department for Communities, the Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment (NIUSE), Disability Action and the wider disability sector to develop our work on pre-employment and employment support for people with disabilities. This year this included participation on the Disability Employment Strategy Co-Design group, the Disability Stakeholder Forum and the Disability Employment Strategy Review chaired by DfC.

Three further public authorities committed to the Mental Health Charter initiative. A total of 205 organisations have now signed up to the Charter.

Increased access for women in employment

Work in this area focused on STEM this year and included participation on the NI STEM Steering group. The Women in STEM Action Plan was approved by DfE Minister during this year. STEM work also included webinars, events and guidance to employers.

Other work areas included training and guidance focusing on sexual harassment, flexible working, pregnancy and maternity and dealing with the menopause. Much of this work was undertaken in partnership with the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NIC-ICTU) and the Labour Relations Agency.

We worked with NIC ICTU and the Labour Relations Agency on new *Menopause in the Workplace* guidance and associated training webinars. This was very well received and resulted in the Commission participating in a number of media activities over the period on menopause.

Workplaces that are welcoming and inclusive

A report on our survey on Welcoming and Inclusive Workplaces was published in July 2019. We gathered information from employees and employers about their perceptions, behaviours, policies and procedures and this gave us some useful insights to inform our work with employers. Since then we have used this as the basis for developing guidance and training on bullying and harassment, much of this in partnership with the Labour Relations Agency (LRA) and NIC-ICTU.

This year, Commission guidance on harassment and bullying was updated in partnership with LRA and a suite of supplementary policies also revised to support the guidance. A programme of training, with LRA, began in May 2022.

Inequalities in attainment

We continued our work on promoting equality in education. This included promoting the *Family Engagement: Learning from the Pandemic* publication. This was supplemented by an engagement event and a series of podcasts over the period. We provided evidence to the DE Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement setting out the key equality issues, including the impacts of COVID-19. The final report of the expert panel references the Commission's work on family engagement in particular.

Freedom from prejudice and bullying

We secured a commitment in the final Children and Young People's Strategy 2019-2029 to 'continue to work to fully implement the Addressing Bullying in School (NI) Act 2016'. Over the period of the Corporate Plan we have worked with the NI Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF) and the Department of Education (DE) to promote our recommendations on tackling bullying widely in the sector.

This year, we continued to advocate for Commission recommendations through our participation on the research development group of the NIABF. The group is currently working to develop to a research proposal to submit to the DE with regards to gathering data on bullying in schools. DE have committed to commission bullying research, subject to 2022/23 funding being available. Although the commitment has been made, it will not be known until later in 2022 whether the funding can be secured.

The Commission also engaged with the Education Training Inspectorate and the Education Authority on the need for monitoring compliance with the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act.

Participation in public and political life

Partnering with the Commissioner for Public Appointments NI, we have worked to promote the need for more people with disabilities and women to apply for public appointments.

The Department for Communities' (DfC) Equality Action Plan 2019-2022, published in June 2021, contains a commitment, aligned to Commission recommendations, to implement a five-year cross-departmental diversity strategy for public appointments.

Key stakeholder awareness of Commission recommendations, on the participation of women and those with disabilities and the need for childcare and stakeholder involvement, was maintained via the publication and dissemination of policy briefings and events. This included the joint CPANI / women's sector event and *Take the Next Step* social media campaign.

This year, twenty public authorities implemented strategic initiatives to promote participation of disabled people in public life and/or targets for disability employment.

Accessible services for disabled people

The Commission continues to use its *Every Customer Counts* initiative, Disability Action Plans and Section 75 to help larger service providers improve access and participation for disabled people. Work this year included training sessions for service providers held in conjunction with disability sector.

Over recent years we have started to see positive impacts from this area of our work. This year has seen efforts by public authorities to improve accessibility in the provision of digital access, better physical access and improving support for service users; influencing developers to improve disability access; developing an accessibility scheme; and accessibility planning for schools; S75 screening of building regulations and improving disability access in toilets.

Addressing housing and accommodation needs

Through engagement with the Housing Executive (NIHE) and DfC, progress continues to be made in increasing awareness and advocacy for Commission recommendations. This year, the DfC Private Rented Sector review outcome includes advocacy of Commission recommendations around incentivising shared housing and the regulation of letting agents.

There was also evidence of advocacy of Commission recommendations - addressing data gaps and disaggregation - in the DfC Housing Supply Strategy and Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA), in the NIHE Traveller Accommodation Strategy 2020-2026 and by NIHE during its Homelessness Strategy pre-engagement.

Improved Communications and Engagement

Since the updating of the Commission's Communications and Political Engagement strategies, in 2020 and 2021, each year has seen improved integration of our press and social media engagement, event management, key partnership initiatives and increased use of our social media platforms and increased website traffic.

Compared to the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were more opportunities to promote the Commission and its work this year. Our media monitoring reported an increase in the volume and reach of media articles mentioning the Commission and its work when compared to the previous year. This activity was comparable to the pre COVID-19 period. Eighty per cent of this media coverage was deemed positive in tone. Social media reach continues to increase.

Traffic to the website has increased year on year with an increase in users (+22%); visits (+22%) and page views (+16%) last year. The COVID-19 pandemic period has potentially been the driver for these large increases.

Making Equality a Priority, a digital led campaign to promote the need for reform of equality law reform in Northern Ireland, was undertaken to highlight key areas of law reform ahead of NI Assembly elections in May 2022. There was excellent engagement and by the year-end there had been 250,000 video views on social media and 13,000 visits to the webpage.

The promotion of our 2021 menopause guidance was also a highlight, generating large viewing and listening figures and social media engagement. It was the top news item on the Commission’s website with over 1,500 views.

This year the Commission undertook further MLA panel research to compare findings against the benchmark survey undertaken last year. Some of the main findings are set out below.

MLA Panel Survey results 2020 and 2022

Key statements	2020	2022
I trust the Commission	56%	62%
The Equality Commission is independent	62%	66%
The Equality Commission is an expert organisation	62%	72%

This year also saw an increase in engagement with political representatives and parliamentary and assembly committees.

Key highlights and achievements

Amongst the key highlights from this year’s work were:

- ❖ Consolidating the new DMU and the progress made on its overall work programme, including the effective intervention on Article 2 related points in the judicial review case brought by SPUC Pro Life Ltd in relation to the NI Abortion Regulations;
- ❖ The continuing progress being made through our Communications work and Political Engagement Strategy;
- ❖ The *Making Equality a Priority* Campaign;
- ❖ The passing into law of the removal of the Teachers exemption in FETO and the Commission’s work in support of this;
- ❖ Effectiveness of partnership working in our work on the employability of disabled people and increasing access for women in employment;

- ❖ Commission recommendations were increasingly reflected in a number of Departmental strategy documents, expert reports and stakeholder advocacy;
- ❖ Success in challenging anonymity orders in sexual harassment cases;
- ❖ Public consultation on the Commission's *Measuring Equality in Northern Ireland Framework*.

Meeting statutory responsibilities

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

Last year, the most significant COVID-19 impact on the Commission's work was in the area of legal assistance. Across all areas of legal advice and assistance work, lower levels of activity was recorded. This year has seen an increase in activity, though not yet a return to pre pandemic levels.

During 2021-22 advice was provided in relation to 2,839 enquiries. Although this was an increase on last year's figure of 2,702, the number of enquiries received has not returned yet to pre-pandemic levels. Of these enquiries, 2,034 covered a single area of discrimination, 241 (8.5%) were hybrid enquires, covering more than one ground, 369 (13.0%) related to areas outside of the Commission's remit and 195 (6.9%) were Other/not assigned. When the multiple ground hybrid enquiries are allocated to each area of discrimination, 2,507 enquiries could be assigned to an area.

The results are set out in the Table below.

Enquiries by Discrimination Area 2021-22

Discrimination Area	No.	(%)
Disability	1351	(53.9)
Gender	503	(20.1)
Religion/Political Opinion	207	(8.3)
Race	196	(7.8)
Age	158	(6.3)
SEND	54	(2.2)
Sexual Orientation	38	(1.5)

During the year, 264 applications for assistance were considered by the Commission's Legal Funding Committees; again, an increase on last year's 191. However, this was not as high as pre pandemic numbers. Of the 264, 51 (19.3%) were granted assistance. This compares to last year's figure of 46 (24.1%). There is still a reduction in the number of applications for assistance received and delays in receiving respondent responses.

Three decisions were handed down this year, two in the Tribunal and one in the County Court. An award of £71,860 was made in a sexual harassment case which is currently anonymised by the Tribunal. The claimant asked to have the anonymity order lifted. However, the respondent has indicated his intention to appeal the matter to the Court of Appeal. The anonymised decision will remain as it is, pending the outcome of the Court of Appeal. The case is listed for hearing in the Court of Appeal in September 2022.

In another sexual harassment case, following a finding of sex discrimination, the Tribunal had placed an anonymity order on the case. This was successfully challenged in the Court of Appeal. The Tribunal reconsidered its earlier decision and lifted the anonymity order. The decision was published and covered substantially in the media.

A race discrimination, Goods, Facilities and Services case was dismissed by the county court.

This year settlements were reached in 35 cases settled this year. Compensation of £369,000 was recovered for claimants along with settlement terms including remedial action. This compares with last year when there were 25 settlements of cases resulting in a total of £210,000 in compensation for claimants.

Following public consultation earlier in the year, in March 2022 the Commission approved an updated policy for the provision of legal advice and assistance. The Commission also approved updated Terms of Reference for the functioning of its Legal Funding Committee.

Section 75 statutory equality and good relations duties

Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a number of duties on the Commission with respect to the enforcement of Section 75. The Commission is required to:

- keep under review the effectiveness of the duties on public authorities;
- offer advice to public authorities and others in connection with Section 75;

- approve equality schemes and request any public authority to make a revised scheme; and
- consider complaints received regarding a potential failure by a public authority to comply with its approved equality scheme, and to investigate where appropriate.

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 under review

Of the 161 public authorities, now designated under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, 142 were required to submit an annual progress report covering the year 2020/21, 14 are exempt and five were not requested. Of the 142 required, by the year-end 121 (85.2%) have submitted their annual progress report with further engagement ongoing with the remaining 21.

Of the 144 public authorities required to submit an annual progress covering 2019/20, 125 (86.8%) submitted a report. Further efforts continue to be made to obtain these reports.

Forty-six annual progress reports, relating to 2019/20 and 2020/21, were followed up during the current year.

Advice to Public Authorities

S75 advice was provided on the draft Executive COVID-19 Recovery Plan, on the subsequent review of the screening and on a number of key COVID-19 policies, including:

- Dept. for the Economy (High Street Voucher Scheme; COVID-19 Restrictions Business Support Scheme; Tourism Voucher Scheme);
- Dept. of Health (Vaccine Certification Process and disability accessibility; Amendment to the Health Protection Regulations and face coverings; Rebuilding Health related policies);

- the development of hybrid working policies to a number of other large public authorities.

Section 75 advice was also provided to all government departments to raise awareness of and advocate adherence to ECNI guidance on S75 responsibilities and budgets, in relation to the Executive's budget in Autumn 2021.

Twenty six public authorities were also provided with guidance to assist them improve their S75 practices. This guidance included meetings with the Minister of Finance and senior Department of Finance officials, the NI Audit Office. Guidance was also provided to improve public authority screenings, with more than 150 policies reviewed. Outcomes include improved disability access policies, positive action measures for women and updated equality plans.

Training on the Section 75 duties was focused on senior officers in government departments and included training for senior managers in the Department for Infrastructure and DAERA. In addition, three webinars were delivered to 285 attendees representing 95 public authorities. As a result of the training 98% of attendees stated that their awareness of the training theme had increased substantively, 65% of rated the training as very good and 35% as good.

Equality Schemes

Two equality schemes for the Independent Monitoring Authority and the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board were approved by the Commission in this year. One newly designated public authority, the Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse, was advised on the requirement to develop an equality scheme.

Seventy one public authorities due to review their equality scheme in this year were provided with relevant advice. Of these, 28 public authorities, including five health trusts and six further education colleges, were provided with more detailed advice.

Complaints and Investigations

Under Schedule 9, Paragraph 10 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Commission considers complaints against public authorities alleging they have failed to comply with their approved scheme and it may investigate such complaints. Under paragraph 11, it can investigate public authority compliance on its own initiative.

This year the Commission advised 59 individuals on complaints, potential complaints or about the Paragraph 10 complaints process, an increase on the 2020-21 figure, when 35 individuals were advised.

Eleven new written complaints, under Paragraph 10 of Schedule 9, were received by 31 March 2022 and the Statutory Duty Investigations Committee (SDIC) considered six and decided whether to investigate, or give reasons not to investigate. In 2020-21 two complaints were received.

Three investigations, one into Ulster University and two into the Department for the Economy were commenced this year and will be completed in 2022-23.

One investigation of a complaint against the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) was published in September 2021. This was an investigation into a complaint that the NIO had not provided an equality screening of its proposals on Legacy matters when it was asked. The Commission found that the NIO had failed to comply with its Equality Scheme and made a number of recommendations to the NIO to improve its practices.

The Commission concluded three investigations. It decided that the public authorities concerned - the Department for Infrastructure, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and the Department of Finance - had taken appropriate action on the recommendations made in the respective Investigation Reports, in order to improve practices.

Public Sector Disability Duty

Of the 145 public authorities required to have a Disability Action Plan (DAP), 140 (97%) have submitted a DAP or are updating their DAP.

Of the four public authorities that do not have a DAP in place, three have provided a draft DAP to the Commission. The remaining public authority is recently designated and advice has been provided to assist it meet the requirements of the Duty.

Advice was provided to 22 public authorities to update their DAP measures. Outcomes include improved measures, including committing to the Commission's Every Customer Counts initiative and signing the Mental Health Charter.

Fair Employment and Treatment Order (FETO)

During this year, employers continued to be slower submitting their annual monitoring returns to the Commission than in normal circumstances. In 2020-21 the Commission extended the timeline for the submission of monitoring return forms, given the difficulties that employers and public authorities were encountering as a consequence of the pandemic. The knock-on effects of this persisted into 2021-22.

In total, 4,229 monitoring return forms were received, covering the period from 2020-22. At the year-end, 850 of the 2021 forms and 165 of the 2020 forms remain overdue.

Of the 3,868 employers registered or specified for monitoring purposes, forms for 2021 from 3,018 were received and validated (78%).

In 2021-22 the Commission continued to review and revise the processes for the completion and submission of employer monitoring return forms and by year end, an online portal to submit monitoring data was operational.

In March 2022, a Private Member's Bill, ending an exemption to the fair employment legislation in the recruitment of teachers passed its final stage in the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill was introduced by Chris Lyttle (MLA) and attracted cross-party support.

The Commission continued to ensure that employers due to conduct their Article 55 Reviews in this year were provided with advice to do so.

In 2021-22, the Commission requested 73 Article 55 Reviews, of which 47 were submitted. In addition, four employers voluntarily submitted their A55 Reviews. These 51 reviews were audited and all were in compliance. Feedback to the organisations was provided. This compares with last year, when 80 were requested, 74 submitted and 45 audited.

Advice was also provided to 32 private sector employers and 11 public authorities, through follow-up on Article 55 Reviews and affirmative action measures.

Annual Summary of Monitoring Returns

The Fair Employment Monitoring Report No.31 was completed and was published on the Commission's website in May 2022. The report provides information on the community background of the monitored workforce based on those returns made during 2020.

This year's report shows that the total monitored workforce was 556,495, an increase of 1,669 (0.3%) over the previous year, despite the return rate for monitoring forms being somewhat affected by the pandemic.

- Overall, 246,544 (44.3%) were Protestant, 244,516 (43.9%) Roman Catholic, and 65,435 (11.8%) were Non-Determined. The Non-Determined share increased by 0.8 percentage points (pp) from 2019 (11.0%).
- When Non-Determined category is not included, in 2020, Protestants [50.2%] continued to comprise the majority of the workforce. The Roman Catholic share of the monitored workforce increased by [0.3 pp] to [49.8%].
- Roman Catholics comprised more than half of job applicants [53.5%]. In 2020, the Roman Catholic share of applicants to the monitored workforce had increased by [8.7%] from [44.8%] in 2001.
- Roman Catholics represented [53.3%] of appointees to the monitored workforce in 2020. This continues a broad trend of increasing Roman Catholic appointees to the monitored workforce during the period 2001-2020. Overall, their share has increased by [8.5%] from [44.8%] in 2001.

- For the sixth consecutive year, Roman Catholics [52.1%] comprised a greater share of leavers from the monitored workforce.
- In 2020, women accounted for more than half (53.0%) of all monitored employees in Northern Ireland.

In terms of high-level trends in the Monitored Workforce, the findings continue to show a gradual upward trend in the Roman Catholic share of the monitored workforce; this has been evident since 2001. This increase continued in 2020 [0.3 pp], although at a lesser degree to that observed in previous years.

The Annual Summary was supported by additional information on company data, analysis by sector and other background information available on the Commission's website.

Performance measurement

The Executive remains committed to developing a long-term, strategic Programme for Government (PfG); one that is based on a shared and strategic vision for the future which aims to improve wellbeing for all. It will build on the Outcomes-based approach that has defined strategic planning across the public sector since 2016, and reflect the messages contained in New Decade, New Approach. The Commission remains committed to ensuring that any new Programme for Government includes related equality indicators and a data development strategy to facilitate measuring equality impacts across the breadth of the programme.

Consultation on the draft Programme for Government Outcomes Framework took place in 2021 and when the Executive returns progress on completing the PfG should take place. The Commission will review the performance measures included in its Corporate Plan 2022-25, in light of further developments in the Executive's outcomes framework.

The Commission will also continue to develop an equality measurement framework through its *Measuring Equality in Northern Ireland* project and produce regular Statements covering specific equality areas.

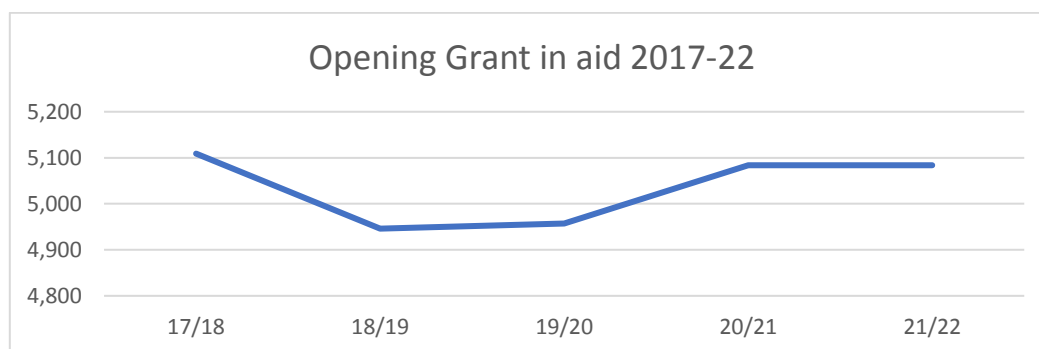
This year's business plan monitored 42 key actions across 14 service delivery objectives. This year, 32 of these were delivered and 12 partly delivered. In two areas delivery was substantially less than planned.

Performance against service delivery areas is reviewed on at least a quarterly basis by the Commission and a summary report of performance is provided on a quarterly basis to the TEO sponsor team.

Further analysis of performance delivery against this year's objectives is set out above and further summarised in Appendix 1.

Financial performance

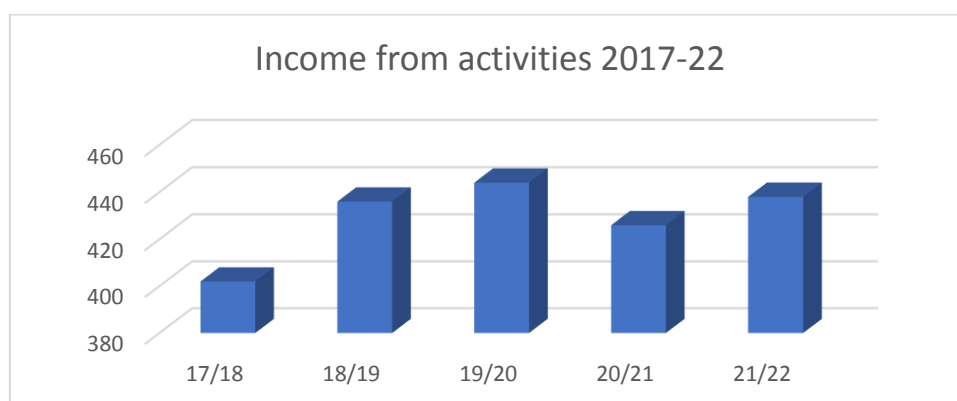
As has been reported in previous reports, since 2009-10, the Commission has seen a reduction in its opening grant in aid, the cash it receives from TEO, of more than £2 million. However, as can be seen from the graph below, the reduction over the past five years has not been so dramatic and, over recent years, the position has stabilised. The current year saw no change in its opening cash allocation of £5,084k.



This figure does not include the additional funding if 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 £793k for this work in 2021-22.

Income

The Commission has continued to mitigate the impact of budget reductions, through increasing its efficiency and through sharing its accommodation and sharing its services with other smaller public bodies. The Commission has also made use of in-year monitoring processes to increase its funding.



As can be seen from the chart above, over the past five years the financing derived from income has added between £400k - £450k. In the current year, the income from sharing premises and services was £438k, higher than last year's £426k. This increase was simply an increased reimbursement of the increase in fuel costs and other expenses from those bodies sharing Equality House with the Commission.

The Commission received an additional £161k as a result of in-year bids made during the year. This included an increase in its Capital allocation of £95k, £38k for increased depreciation and a £28k increase to its Resource allocation.

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. The past two years include expenditures on the staffing and work of the new Dedicated Mechanism arrangements.

Expenditure trends 2017 – 22 (£'000)

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Total operating expenditure	5,853	5,741	5,595	5,697	6,607
Salaries and other staff costs	4,023	3,930	3,793	3,899	4,467
Expenditure on Goods and Services	1,414	1,404	1,416	1,454	1,818

Although Commission expenditure has been on a downward trend for a decade, the past two years have seen an increase. This has mainly been a result of the funding made available for the work on the dedicated mechanism. Expenditure on the dedicated mechanism in 2021-22 was £788k (£212k, 20-21).

The table above demonstrates the high proportion of Commission expenditure accounted for by staffing. Given the structure of the Commission and the proportion of its budget that is committed to staffing, budget reductions have had a disproportionate impact on staffing levels.

This year, for the first time in more than a decade, there has been a small increase in staff numbers to 76 directly employed staff. From 2000/01, until last year, we staff levels had fallen from 134 to 69, a decrease of 48.5%. It is anticipated that, with the filling of all of the vacancies in the Dedicated Mechanism Unit, there will also be a small increase in 2022-23.

This year expenditure on Staff and Commissioners' costs was £4,467k. The substantial increase from last year was the result of a combination of factors, the continued recruitment of staff into the DMU, filling of a small number of other vacancies and a further increased use of agency staff this year. This increase in agency worker costs, from £241k last year to £455k this year, resulted from the utilisation of agency staff pending the completion of the filling of vacancies, both in the DMU and other areas, as well as addressing work pressures four resignations and three retirements, including one retirement on grounds of ill health.

DMU expenditure of £245k (£55k, 2020-21) also contributed to the substantial increase in other expenditure this year. Other contributory factors were increased fuel costs, the removal of the savings from the facilities management provider scheme that was introduced in response to COVID-19 last year and some work on repairs and maintenance to prepare the building for an increase in staff occupancy in 2022-23.

Considerable efforts were again made this year to maintain control over staff annual leave balances and any resultant accrual for untaken leave. By the year end, the efforts to ensure that staff were managing their annual leave were successful and the 2021-22 accrual was unchanged from last year.

This year's legal casework provision, at £142,761 is slightly lower than the figure for 2020-21, £143,700.

At the year-end there was a substantial decrease in the bank balance, from £313k in 2020-21 to £120k this year. This large decrease was due of increased expenditure, including as a result of the increase in the budget allocation during the year.

Although the cash allocation from grant in aid was increased in response to the budget allocation for the DMU, there was no concomitant increase in the cash allocation to match the in-year increase.

As a result of the substantial reduction in the cash in bank at the year end, there was a decrease in increase in taxpayers' equity. Compared to a surplus in taxpayers' equity last year of £155k, there was a deficit of £133k this year.

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, 96.9% of bills were paid within the thirty-day standard and 79.6% were paid within 10 days. The figures for 2020-21 were 95.3% and 76.6% respectively.

Corporate social responsibility and sustainability

The Commission continues to map social responsibility activity against the criteria laid out in Business in the Community's CORE programme; Values, People, Planet and Place.

As the leaseholder in Equality House, the Commission continued to lead in developing business continuity measures and creating a bio-secure environment in compliance with government advice about responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to strict building access protocols, instructional signage and the installation and maintenance of sanitising stations, a staff programme of information, training and wellbeing support, comprised a framework of measures designed to keep staff and visitors as safe as possible throughout the year. It is testament to the robustness of the compliance framework and the professionalism of staff and our FM partners, Aramark, that few health and safety incidents arose and, where incidents did arise, they were dealt with quickly and effectively.

Staff wellbeing continued to be supported throughout the year, with a range of initiatives including continued access to a dedicated intranet hub and an eLearning wellbeing toolkit, physical challenges to encourage activity and virtual clubs to promote good connections among staff.

Equality House managed to retain its independently assessed energy rating of 'Category B' with a score of 45. This despite a marked increase in the number of staff and visitors attending during 2021. In this rating system, 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.

The Commission's carbon footprint and impact on the environment has been reduced via a number of initiatives which have seen a 95% reduction in printed and copied paper, a reduction in energy consumption via a rolling programme of halogen light replacement with LED lights, a move to virtual training programmes reducing travel emissions and a new partnership with waste management providers to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill to zero. Waste receptacles are positioned throughout the building to guide staff to sort waste into recyclable, food and recoverable categories. Since the start of the pandemic, Equality House has been able to reduce its waste production down from an average of 22 to 5 metric tonnes per annum.

The Commission utilises the services of Construction and Procurement Delivery (CPD) for its larger contracts, such as Facilities Management 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 continues to support local small businesses such as local caterers and social enterprises, which, in more normal times, supply refreshments for Commission events and meetings.

The Commission operates a Bike to Work Scheme which over the last nine years has supported fourteen staff, almost 20% of the workforce, and space has been set aside in the basement car park for bikes. Commission staff have also advised other organisations in setting up their own schemes. Further opportunities are being explored to accommodate the expected uplift in demand as society emerges from lockdown. Public transport users can also avail of a scheme, which assists them to pay for their annual Translink Travel Cards.

Building on a successful Investors in People Silver accreditation in 2020, a new People Strategy commenced an ambitious three year programme focused on values, engagement and wellbeing, performance, reward and recognition and continuous improvement.

Staff had the opportunity to benefit from, and contribute to, this programme via focus groups, questionnaires, and by engaging directly with Senior Management via a series of Leadership Listening Rounds led by the Chief Executive.

Equality House is accessible to people with disabilities and has benefitted from an accessibility audit which has 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.

A member of the Senior Management Team was appointed as a Wellbeing Champion to provide strategic support to the Wellbeing Team. Throughout the year the Wellbeing Team arranged a number of charitable activities contributing to a total of over £5k for Special Olympics, in memory of the Commission's own Special Olympics volunteer, Aidan Fitzpatrick. Raffles, sales, walks, quizzes and even a polar plunge were also arranged for good causes including two new charities nominated by staff, Marie Curie and Brain Injury Matters.

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 2021-22. 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

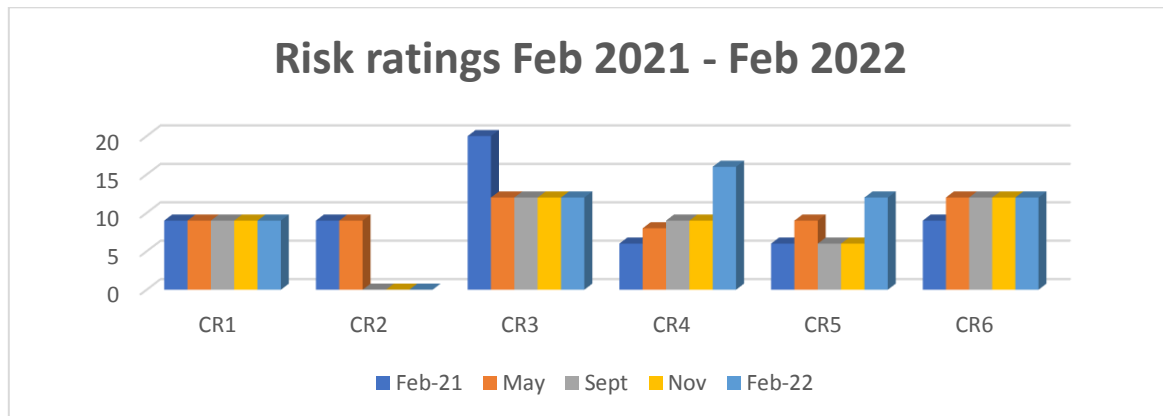
Set out below are the main risks and uncertainties impacting on the Commission's performance this year and anticipated as impacting performance over the coming year.

Further information on the Commission's performance is set out above and the management of risks impacting upon performance is also included in the Chief Executive's statement, which forms part of this performance report.

Throughout the course of the year the Commission’s risk register monitored and reported on six strategic risks

- CR1 Reputation and credibility
- CR2 Stakeholder confidence
- CR3 COVID-19 Impacts and expectations
- CR4 Budgetary control
- CR5 Statutory compliance and internal control
- CR6 Business continuity and asset management

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



Compared with 2020-21, the Commission’s risk profile was less volatile this year. During 2021-22, as the pandemic progressed, and confidence in the arrangements put in place increased, the risk ratings were able to be reduced.

CR1:Reputation and Credibility deals with the risk that the Commission is unable to demonstrate the impact of its work on maximising equality outcomes to key stakeholders. As this risk, and CR2, covering failure to maintain stakeholder confidence, became more connected with the Commission’s work on preparing a new Corporate Plan to cover the period 2022-25, a decision was taken to integrate these risks.

Now that a new Corporate Plan, and related Business Plan 2022-23, is in place this risk will be further reviewed.

CR3 covers risks arising from COVID-19 Impacts and expectations. During the year, the risk of budget reductions across the public sector, resulting from the impact on expenditures to mitigate COVID-19, has been added to the general risks arising from budgetary pressures and the weaknesses of longer-term public sector financial planning.

The scope was also widened to include the impact of prolonged home-working on staff expectations of a more flexible, hybrid working environment and other COVID-19 related impacts. Revising this risk has stimulated the introduction of a wider range of mitigating actions, covering areas such as workforce and succession planning, returning to Equality House, developing the new People Strategy and developing more agile working arrangements.

The risk rating for CR4 Budgetary control increased throughout the year in response to the risk of potential underspend being identified in increasing monthly and quarterly variances in some areas. Towards the end of the year this was compounded by a concern that the Commission's cash allocation had not been brought into line with its budget allocation, particularly in relation to the funding of the Dedicated Mechanism. By the year end, through remedial action by budget holders and engagement with TEO, both of these concerns were alleviated. It was not however possible to reduce the risk rating in the context of increasing uncertainty about the 2022-23 budget position caused by the political uncertainty around the Executive and its impact on wider public finances.

The rating for CR5, the risk of failure to meet statutory compliance standards and maintain effective financial control, decreased this year as the Commission continued to adopt new systems and new working practices. However, recurrent minor data protection incidents and near misses resulted in limited assurance following an internal audit of the Commission's arrangements for data protection and led to an increase during the year. Following action to address the recommendations contained in the audit report, confirmed by a follow-up review by the internal auditors before the year end, and satisfactory assurance in other areas audited, it was possible to reduce the risk rating by the year end.

CR6 covers the risk of a failure to ensure business continuity. The Commission's business continuity arrangements have been comprehensively stress tested throughout the pandemic and at key levels – e.g. governance, financial control, service delivery – business continuity was maintained. The new arrangements to respond to the need for remote working and staff and visitor safety, if required to come into the office, continue to work effectively.


Further work to ensure that the changes to new ways of working are adequately reflected in formal plans and procedures is required to reduce the rating in this area over the coming year.

Important Events Occurring After the Year-end

There have been no 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.



Evelyn Collins CBE
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
23 June 2022

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 14 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. Ms McGahey was appointed on 1 March 2020. The Deputy Chief Commissioner is Mr Neil Anderson, from 1 March 2020.

The Commission's Chief Executive, Dr Evelyn Collins CBE, 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 five men.

Commission composition

The following table provides the composition of the Commission at 31 March 2022.

Gender	M	F	Total
	5	9	14

Community background	P	RC	Neither/ ND	Total
	4	8	2	14

Senior Executive Team

Evelyn Collins	Chief Executive
Keith Brown	Head of Corporate Services

Directorate Heads

Louise Conlon	Director Communications
Craig Gartley	Director Finance and Corporate Services
Lisa King	Director Research and Investigations
Roisin Mallon	Director Dedicated Mechanism Unit
Jacqui McKee	Director Advice and Compliance
Anne McKernan	Director Legal Services
Darren McKinstry	Director Public Policy and Strategic Engagement

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 Committee; Statutory Duties Investigation Committee; and Legal Funding Committee. The following Commissioners served on the Commission's Committees during the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022. Information on the Audit and Risk 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 normally meets on at least five occasions during the year.

COMMISSIONER	NO. OF MEETINGS	NO. ATTENDED
Helen Ferguson (Chair)	5	5
Neil Anderson	5	5
Theresa Donaldson	3	1
Geraldine McGahey	5	5
Joseph McVey	1	1
Dawn Purvis	5	5
Katherine Radford	5	5

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 2021-22, the following Commissioners served on Legal Funding Committees: June Best, Helen Ferguson, Hazel Francey, Jarlath Kearney, Deepa Mann Kler, Stephen Mathews, Geraldine McGahey, Joseph McVey.

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.

Four data breaches occurred during this year and there were also a small number of near misses, where although information was sent in error, no personal data was disclosed. Further information on these can be found in the Governance Statement below. No data incidents required reporting to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

In all of the 38 Freedom of Information, and seven subject access requests responded to this year, the responses were within the statutory time limits.

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 2021-22.

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 The Executive Office. 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. A new Management Statement and Financial Memorandum were most recently agreed in October 2018. During 2021-22, TEO was working on the preparation of a draft Partnership Agreement to replace the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum. This remains the case.

The Commission is led by a Chief Commissioner, supported by a Deputy Chief Commissioner. Including the Chief Commissioner, there are currently 14 Commissioners.

The responsibilities of the Chief Commissioner and Commissioners are set out in the founding legislation and more fully in the Code of Practice.

A record of Commissioners' attendance is contained below.

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, 2013).

Commissioner attendance 2021-22

Commissioner		No. of meetings	No. Attended
Geraldine McGahey	Chief Commissioner	11	11
Neil Anderson	Deputy Chief Commissioner	11	10
June Best		11	8
Theresa Donaldson		11	9
Duane Farrell		11	9
Helen Ferguson		11	11
Hazel Francey		11	10
Jarlath Kearney		11	10
Deepa Mann-Kler		11	10
Stephen Mathews		11	10
Carmel McKinney		11	8
Joseph McVey		11	7
Dawn Purvis		11	9
Katherine Radford		11	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 Committee;
- Statutory Duties Investigation Committee; and
- Legal Funding Committee.

Audit and Risk 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 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 February 2022. 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 Committee meets at least four times per year. Minutes of Audit and Risk Committee meetings are provided to the full Commission and the Chair of the Committee reports to Commission meetings at regular intervals. On an annual basis, the Audit and Risk Committee undertakes a self-assessment of its operations and a formal written report of its work is presented to the Commission.

Audit and Risk Committee Attendance 2021-22

COMMISSIONER	Number of Meetings	Meetings Attended
Neil Anderson (Chair)	5	5
Duane Farrell	5	5
Stephen Mathews	5	5
Carmel McKinney	5	3
Katherine Radford	5	5

Accounting Officer

The Commission's Chief Executive 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 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. A programme of risk management training was undertaken in 2020-21. This training was provided to both staff and Commissioners. On Board training was made available to newly appointed Commissioners and those Commissioners wishing to refresh their knowledge, anti-fraud awareness training for all staff was initiated this year. By the year-end, the online programme had been completed by 56 staff. This will continue into 2022-23.

As Accounting Officer, I submit a quarterly stewardship statement to the Audit and Risk Committee and to the Commission's Sponsoring Department. A recurrent issue this year was the need to ensure the business case log was kept updated. A review of the Commission's approach to contract management has been included in the 2022-23 internal audit programme. This will help ensure that the Commission's contract register and business case log is kept up to date.

The risk and control framework

The Commission has ensured that procedures are in place for verifying that risk management and internal control 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 Management Board and at each Audit and Risk Committee meeting and the corporate risk and business continuity register is updated, as necessary. The Commission, its Audit and Risk Committee and the Management Board, 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 2021 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 Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). The service is provided currently by Deloitte.

In 2020, the Commission's risk management framework and risk policy was reviewed against the updated HM Treasury Orange book. The new Policy was audited by internal audit and satisfactory assurance was provided in December 2020. In February 2021, Commissioners met to undertake a horizon scanning exercise, assess the Commission's attitude to, and appetite for, risk and to review its risk appetite statement to ensure it adequately reflects this and consider improvements to the Commission's risk management arrangements.

This year the Commission approved an updated risk management framework and policy at its May 2021 meeting. Further horizon scanning and discussions impacting on Board effectiveness and governance took place at strategic discussion meetings of the Commission, in preparation for a new Corporate Plan, in September and November.

Potential Risk Issues

The areas of potential risk outlined under the headings 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 draft Corporate Plan 2019-22 was approved by the TEO Departmental Board on 5 June 2019 and Ministerial Approval was provided on 19 April 2021. On 28 January 2021, a draft Business Plan for 2021-22 was submitted to TEO.

Following confirmation of the budget position an updated plan was submitted on 27 May 2021 and approved by the Departmental Board on 30 June 2021. As required by para 4.2.3 of the MS/FM, the draft Business Plan was submitted to Ministers for approval. This approval was not in place when the First Minister resigned in February 2022. Consequently, in the absence of Ministers, this approval will now not be possible. The Commission was advised of this in February 2022 and that, in the prevailing circumstances, TEO was content that the Commission continued to operate under the Business Plan 2021-22, that had been approved by its Departmental Board.

The Commission's opening budget allocation for 2021-22 was formally confirmed on 26 April 2021. 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. In 2019-20, budgetary control was included within the scope of internal audit's review of core financial controls. Satisfactory assurance was provided.

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. The Commission is a member the National Cyber Security Centre's CiSP programme. In October 2020, the Commission's security arrangements were assessed and accredited against the National Cyber Security Centre's (NCSC) Cyber Essentials Plus standard.

A review of general IT controls formed part of the 2019-20 internal audit programme. Satisfactory assurance was provided. A further Cyber Essentials Plus review took place this year and the Commission was granted a Certificate of Assurance in February 2022.

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. During the working from home period, training and guidance on protecting data while working from home and cyber security were provided for all staff and Commissioners.

Four data breaches occurred during this year and there were also a number of near misses where, although information was sent in error, no personal data was disclosed. In none of the cases was it considered that the breach was serious enough to warrant referral to the Information Commissioner's Office. Remedial action was undertaken in each case. All data breaches and near misses were reported to the Commission's Audit and Risk Committee and to TEO.

At the February 2021 meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee, Commissioners requested that Data Protection would be included in the Internal audit Operational Plan for 2021-22. The audit report provided limited assurance and was considered at the November ARC meeting. In February 2022, internal audit undertook a follow up review and reported that all of the recommendations due to be completed this year had been addressed.

During this year, the Commission has received 38 requests for information under the Freedom of Information legislation. Eight subject access requests have been received under the Data Protection provisions. The Commission has procedures and reporting arrangements in place to ensure that any relevant information is provided within the time limits required. All of the Freedom of Information requests were responded to within the statutory time limits. Of the eight subject access, seven were responded to within the relevant time limits. In one case proof of identity is required before the request can be processed.

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. An updated Business Continuity Plan was prepared in January. At the year-end, the updated draft was being finalised. The updated plan will be reviewed by the senior management team during 2022-23. The ICT continuity and disaster recovery arrangements are regularly tested, most recently in November 2021.

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 was updated in May 2015, following a review against the guidance issued by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) and others at that time. It was further updated in November 2018 in light of dissemination of new TEO Departmental procedures. There were no incidences of whistle blowing during the year to date. A review of the Commission's whistle blowing procedures will be undertaken in 2022-23.

Fraud

The Commission has a Fraud Policy and Fraud Response Plan. An updated policy and response plan were reviewed by the ARC at its November 2018 meeting. This has been disseminated to staff. In September 2019, staff were reminded of the key reporting procedures contained in the Commission's whistleblowing and fraud procedures. Refresher training for all staff on fraud awareness is currently ongoing. In September 2020, the Commission undertook a fraud risk assessment using the COVID-19 Fraud Risks guidance produced by NIAO (August 2020). Based on the guidance, an action plan was prepared and implemented. 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 due to sickness per employee during 2021-22 was 6.8 days. This was slightly higher than last year's figure of 5.1 days (2019-20 – 8.9 days).

Commissioners and the TEO sponsor team are provided with this information on a quarterly basis.

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. Following an internal review of customer complaints and the complaints procedure, the procedure was updated. A review of the procedure and arrangements for handling complaints was undertaken by internal audit in October 2020. Satisfactory assurance was provided.

Seven customer service complaints were raised under our procedure this year. Two were resolved at an early stage, two were investigated and not upheld. Three are presently ongoing.

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 a number of property management, ICT, financial and HR 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 ASM. 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 draft Report to those Charged with Governance, following the 2020-21 audit, was considered at the June 2021 Audit and Risk Committee. No issues were raised by NIAO in the Report. The final Report was considered by the Audit and Risk Committee at its September meeting and by the full Commission at the following meeting.

An internal audit programme for 2021-22 was approved at the June 2021 meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee. The scope of this year's audit programme and the assurances provided to date are summarised in the table below.

Audit Area	Assurance Rating / Outcome
Core Financial Controls – income management arising from SLAs	Satisfactory
Data Protection	Limited
Functional review – Research and Investigations	Satisfactory

Prior to year end, Internal Audit reviewed progress with management actions to address its recommendations. In respect of the Data Protection review, it found that all agreed actions had been fully implemented.

In her Annual Report to the Audit and Risk Committee, the Head of Internal Audit's independent opinion provided a Satisfactory level of assurance for 2021-22.

Risk Management Status

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the public health and public policy response continues to be evident. All of the key risks identified in the Corporate Risk Register have been impacted and COVID-19 related impacts and mitigating actions are being taken. In accordance with Government guidance, all staff continue to work remotely on secure remote gateway connections.

The work of the Commission has continued on a largely business-as-usual basis, with a good deal of focus being directed towards addressing equality impacts of the pandemic and measures being taken to address it. A risk assessment was completed during the first year of the pandemic, covering the impact on staff working from home. Preparations for a return to more office-based work are in place.

Over the past few years, the annual budget position has been more stable and some recruitment of a small number of new staff has been possible. However, given the potential for the need for the whole community to respond to COVID-19 and the resultant increased pressure on public finances, it is anticipated that the risk rating relating to the Commission's longer-term financial position will remain high throughout 2022-23.

In addition to 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. An increase in minor data breaches was identified as an emerging risk. Work was undertaken to address this and the recommendations from the November 2021 internal audit report. Monitoring of this risk area will continue throughout 2022-23.

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 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 Committee are presented and regular reports from the Chair of the Audit and Risk 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 is 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 Committee.

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

In April 2020, the Board considered the final report of a self-assessment of their effectiveness against the good practice and checklists published by the Department of Finance and Northern Ireland Audit Office. The self-assessment was administered by the Commission's internal auditors against the framework they have developed. This, and other assessments undertaken over recent years, recorded a high level of adherence to good practice. In the survey the statement "The Board has a good understanding of the performance of the organisation and is provided with sufficient information to enable this" elicited the highest level of agreement.


Board effectiveness was reviewed by Commissioners at an 'awayday' in September 2021 and discussed at the November Audit and Risk Committee.

In May 2021, Commissioners confirmed the adequacy of its risk management arrangements and the information being provided to facilitate the delivery of their responsibilities.

Significant internal control issues

There are no significant internal control issues at present.

Signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Evelyn Collins", with a horizontal line underneath.

Evelyn Collins CBE
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
23 June 2022

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 (NI) public sector, including senior civil servants (SCS) in the NICS, is approved by the Minister of Finance. The Minister set the 2021-22 NI public sector pay policy (March 2021).

Annual NICS pay awards are made in the context of the wider public sector pay policy. The pay awards for NICS staff, including SCS, for 2020-21 were paid in June and July 2021. The pay awards for 2021-22 were paid in September and October 2021.

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 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
(Audited Information)**

Commissioners

	Salary		Bonus Payments		Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)		Pension Benefits (to nearest £1000)*		Total (£'000)	
	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21
Geraldine McGahey Chief Commissioner	55-60	55-60	0	0	0	0	23	22	80-85	80-85
Neil Anderson Deputy Chief Commissioner	5-10	5-10	0	0	0	0	0	0	5-10	5-10
Hazel Francey	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Joseph McVey	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Duane Farrell	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Helen Ferguson	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Jarlath Kearney	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Theresa Donaldson	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

	Salary		Bonus Payments		Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)		Pension Benefits (to nearest £1000)*		Total (£'000)	
	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21
Dawn Purvis	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Dr Katherine Radford	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
June Best	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Deepa Mann-Kler	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5
Carmel McKinney	0-5	0-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0-5	0-5

**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

Official	Salary (£'000)		Bonus Payments (£'000)		Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)		Pension Benefits (to nearest £1000)*		Total (£'000)	
	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21
Evelyn Collins Chief Executive	85-90	80-85	0	0	0	0	2	31	90-95	115-120
Keith Brown Head of Corporate Services	65-70	65-70	0	0	0	0	3	23	70-75	90-95
Louise Conlon Director Communications	50-55	50-55	0	0	0	0	22	22	75-80	75-80
Craig Gartley Director Finance and Corporate Services (from 1 st February 2022)	5-10 (FYE 50- 55)	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	5-10 (FYE 55- 60)	0
Lisa King Director Research and Investigations	40-45	35-40	0	0	0	0	10	15	50-55	50-55

	Salary		Bonus Payments		Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)		Pension Benefits (to nearest £'000)*		Total (£'000)	
	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21
Official										
Roisin Mallon Director Dedicated Mechanism Unit	50-55	45-50	0	0	0	0	45	37	95-100	85-90
Jacqueline McKee Director Advice & Compliance	55-60	50-55	0	0	0	0	18	10	75-80	60-65
Anne McKernan Director Legal Services	55-60	50-55	0	0	0	0	3	17	60-65	70-75
Darren McKinstry Director Public Policy and Strategic Engagement	55-60	50-55	0	0	0	0	14	24	70-75	75-80

** 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.*

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 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.

Fair Pay disclosure (Audited)

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest paid employee in the organisation and the median remuneration of the Commission's workforce.

The banded remuneration of the highest paid employee in the Commission in the financial year 2021-22 was £85,000 to £90,000 (2020-21 was £80,000 to £85,000). 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.

2021/22	25th percentile	Median	75th percentile
Total Remuneration (£)	29,307	33,459	40,711
Pay Ratio	3.0:1	2.6:1	2.1:1

2020/21	25th percentile	Median	75th percentile
Total Remuneration (£)	28,730	32,800	41,799
Pay Ratio	2.9:1	2.5:1	2:1

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 2021-22 and 2020-21, the 25th percentile, median and 75th percentile remuneration values consisted solely of salary payments.

In 2021-22 and 2020-21, no employees received remuneration in excess of the highest paid employee, the Chief Executive.

Remuneration ranged from £19,000 to £87,500 (2020-21 £19,000 to £82,500).

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.

Percentage change for:	2021/22 v 2020/21
Average employee salary and allowances	1.01%
Highest paid director's salary and allowances	6.06%

A pay settlement covering the periods 2020/21 and 2021/22 was agreed in January 2022. For 2020/21, all staff including the Chief Executive received a non-consolidated payment of 1% of their salary. For 2021/22 only Administrative Assistants received a non-consolidated payment. This was the equivalent of 3% of their salary and totalled £941. No bonus payments were paid to and staff in either year.

Pension Entitlements (Audited Information)

	Accrued pension at age 60 as at 31/03/22 and related lump sum £'000	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at age 60 £'000	CETV at 31/3/22	CETV at 31/3/21	Real increase in CETV
Geraldine McGahey Chief Commissioner	0-5 plus a lump sum of 0	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0	45	23	18
Evelyn Collins Chief Executive	40-45 plus a lump sum of 120-125	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5	909	896	2
Keith Brown Head of Corporate Services	25-30 plus a lump sum of 85-90	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0-2.5	608	597	2
Louise Conlon Director Communications	15-20 plus a lump sum of 0	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0	242	217	12
Craig Gartley Director Finance and Corporate Services (from 1 st February 2022)	5-10 plus a lump sum of 0	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0	68	65	0

	Accrued pension at age 60 as at 31/03/22 and related lump sum £'000	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at age 60 £'000	CETV at 31/3/22	CETV at 31/3/21	Real increase in CETV
Lisa King Director Research and Investigations	15-20 plus a lump sum of 0	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0	306	286	4
Roisin Mallon Director Dedicated Mechanism Unit	15-20 plus lump sum of 30-35	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 2.5-5	322	270	36
Jacqueline McKee Director Advice & Compliance	20-25 plus lump sum of 55-60	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0	480	442	10
Anne McKernan Director Legal Services	20-25 plus lump sum of 15-20	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0	465	458	2
Darren McKinstry Director Public Policy and Strategic Engagement	25-30 plus a lump sum of 0	0-2.5 plus a lump sum of 0	372	348	5

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. At that time, members who on 1 April 2012 were within 10 years of their normal pension age did not move to alpha (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).

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, the discrimination identified by the Courts in the way that the 2015 pension reforms were introduced must be removed by the Department of Finance. It is expected that, in due course, eligible members with relevant service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 may be entitled to different pension benefits in relation to that period. The different pension benefits relate to the alternative schemes e.g. legacy PCSPS(NI) 'Classic', 'Premium' or 'Nuvos' (legacy scheme) or alpha. Scheme regulations made in March 2022, closed the PCSPS(NI) to future accrual from 31 March 2022, and all remaining active PCSPS(NI) members (including partially retired members in active service) moved to 'alpha' from 1 April 2022. This completes Phase One to remedy the discrimination identified by the Courts. Any pension benefits built up in the legacy scheme prior to this date are unaffected and PCSPS(NI) benefits remain payable in accordance with the relevant scheme rules. Phase Two will see the implementation of the Deferred Choice Underpin. That is, giving eligible members a choice between legacy scheme and alpha scheme benefits for service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022. 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 are available at

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/dof-resource-accounts>.

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%. Currently new entrants joining can choose between membership of alpha or joining a 'money purchase' stakeholder arrangement with a significant employer contribution (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%.

Staff in post prior to 30 July 2007 may 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.

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.

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).

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 www.finance-ni.gov.uk/civilservicepensions-ni.

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 2021 was 3.1% and HM Treasury has announced that public service pensions will be increased accordingly from April 2022.

Employee contribution rates for all members from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 are as follows:

Scheme Year 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

Annualised rate of pensionable earnings (Salary bands)		Percentage Contribution Rate
From	To	From 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023
£0	£24,449.99	4.6%
£24,450.00	£56,399.99	5.45%
£56,400.00	£153,299.99	7.35%
£153,300.00 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 pensions 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) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 and do not take account of any actual or potential benefits resulting from Lifetime Allowance Tax which may be due when pension benefits are taken.

Real increase in CETV

This reflects the increase in CETV effectively funded by the employer. It does 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. However, the real increase calculation uses common actuarial factors at the start and end of the period so that it disregards the effect of any changes in factors and focuses only on the increase that is funded by the employer.

Compensation for loss of office (audited)

No employee received compensation for loss of office in 2021-22 or in 2020-21.

Payments to past Directors (audited)

There were no payments to past Directors in either 2021-22 or 2020-21.

2.2.2 Staff Report

Staff and Commissioner costs (audited):

				2021-22	2020-21
	Commissioners	Permanently employed staff	Others	Total	Total
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Wages and Salaries	130	2,748	455	3,333	2,867
Social security costs	7	278	0	285	258
Other pension costs	21	828	0	849	774
Total costs	158	3,854	455	4,467	3,899

There were no outward secondments during 2021-22 or 2020-21.

Off Payroll Engagements

There were no off payroll engagements during 2021-22 or 2020-21.

Expenditure on Consultancy

There was no expenditure on consultancy in 2021-22 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 2016 scheme valuation was completed by GAD in March 2019. The outcome of this valuation was used to set the level of contributions for employers from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2023.

The 2016 Scheme Valuation requires adjustment as a result of the 'McCloud remedy'. The Department of Finance have also commissioned a consultation in relation to the Cost Cap Valuation which will close on 25 June 2021. 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. By taking into account the increased value of public service pensions, as a result of the 'McCloud remedy', scheme cost control valuation outcomes will show greater costs than otherwise would have been expected. Following completion of the consultation the 2016 Valuation has been completed and the final cost cap determined. 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>.

A case for approval of a Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) was laid in the Assembly to extend the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill (PSP&JO) to Northern Ireland. Under the LCM agreed by the NI Assembly on 1 November 2021 provisions are included in the Act for devolved schemes in NI. A second LCM was laid in the Assembly to implement the CCM changes in the Westminster Bill for devolved schemes. The second LCM, as agreed by the Assembly on 31 January 2022, ensured the reformed only scheme design and the economic check will now be applied to the 2020 scheme valuations for the devolved public sector pension schemes, including the NICS pension scheme. The PSP&JO Act received Royal Assent on 10 March 2022. The UK Act legislates how the government will remove the discrimination identified in the McCloud judgment. The Act also includes provisions that employees will not experience any detriment if the adjusted valuation costs breach the set cost cap ceiling but any breaches of the cost cap floor (positive employee impacts) in the completed valuations will be honoured.

For 2021-22 employers' contributions of £849,108 were payable to the NICS pension arrangements (2020-21 £773,773) at one of three rates in the range 28.7% to 34.2% of pensionable pay, based on salary bands.

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.

One employee retired on the grounds of ill-health in 2021-22 (nil in 2020-21); the total additional accrued pension liabilities in the year amounted to £nil (2020-21: £nil) Ill-health retirement costs are met by the pension scheme.

Average number of persons employed (audited)

This year has seen an increase in Permanently employed staff resulting from the recruitment of staff to undertake work in a new Dedicated Mechanism Unit. There was also an increase in use of agency staff this year. The average number of whole-time persons employed during the year was as follows:

Number	Permanently employed staff	Others	2021-22	2020-21
			Total	Total
Directly Employed	76	0	76	69
Other	0	7	7	4
Total	76	7	83	73

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 (audited)

There were no payments in 2021-22 or 2020-21 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. Ill-health retirement costs are met by the pension scheme.

Managing Attendance and Sickness Absence

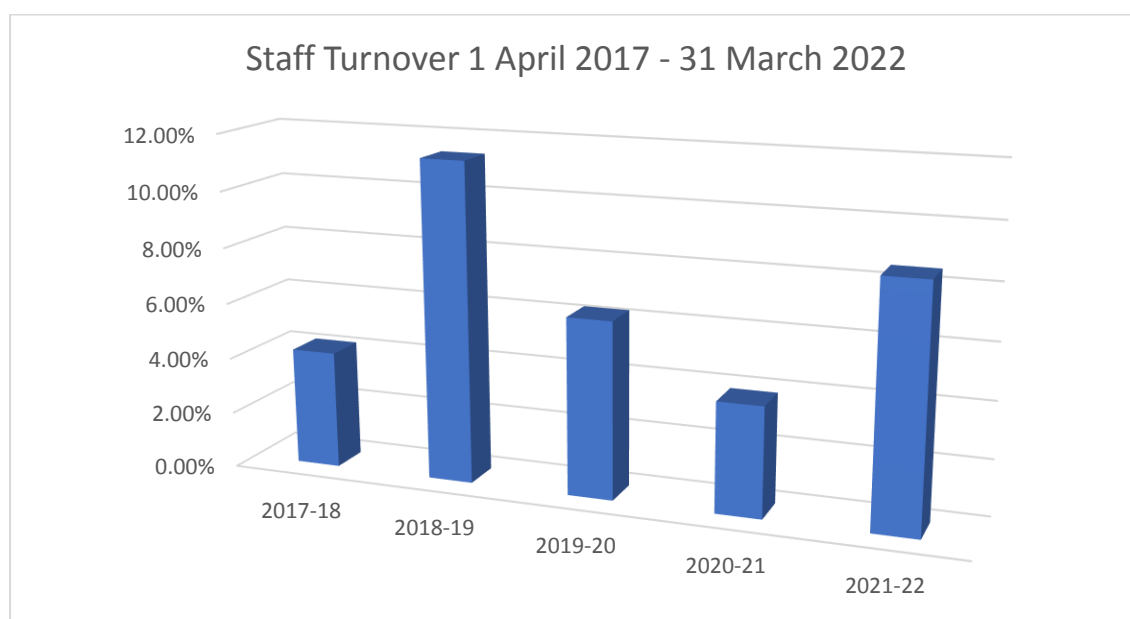
The Commission's arrangements for the payment of Statutory Sick Pay and the monitoring and management of attendance are based on those in operation in the Northern Ireland Civil Service. The Commission has a Managing Attendance Policy and provides training to Managers and other staff on its operation.

The Commission's number of average days lost in 2021-22 was 6.8 days, an increase on last year's 5.1 days. Of the 6.8 days lost, 5.1 related to long term absence (more than 20 days) and 1.7 to short term absence (20 days or less). This compares to an equivalent 3.0 days for long-term absence and 2.1 days for short-term absence last year.

Staff Turnover

This year the Commission's staff turnover percentage this was 8.5%. This compares with a figure of 3.9% in 2020-21. Fifteen staff joined the Commission in 2021-22 and seven left.

The graph below shows the trend in staff turnover over the most recent five years. The turnover from 2017-19 was mainly a result of voluntary exits.



Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

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

This year, 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 most recent Article 55 Review, covering the period 2018-21, was completed in 2021-22. 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 2022 is set out below.

Staff Composition (not wte)

The following table provides the gender composition of Equality Commission staff at 1 January 2022.

Grade	M	F	Total
Senior Civil Service	0	1	1
Other grades	28	58	86
Total	28 (32.2%)	59 (67.8%)	87

The following table provides a breakdown of Commission staff by community background as at 1 January 2022.

Grade	P	RC	ND	Total
Senior Civil Service	1	0	0	1
Other grades	34	48	4	86
All Staff	35	48	4	87
	(40.2%)	(55.2%)	(4.65)	
	[42.2%]	[57.8%]		

Disabled persons

Almost one fifth (18.8%) of the Commission's employees report as having a disability or long-term health condition. 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 profession development opportunities. The Commission also provides support for staff participation on Adult Further Education and staff membership of relevant professional bodies. A key focus this year was training and support to assist staff to use MS 365 and MS Teams. During the year, the Commission reviewed its Learning and Development Policy. At the year-end, the new policy was being finalised.

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. Staff are involved in key working groups dealing with business improvement and accreditation projects, corporate and business planning, equal opportunities, health and safety and corporate social responsibility and wellbeing.

The Commission was awarded a Silver Investor in People accreditation in May 2020 and this year developed a new People Plan covering 2021-24. In the 2020 IIP survey, 75.7% agreed that the Commission is a great place to work and 74.4% agreed that they had a say in decisions that affected their role.

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

	2021-22	2020-21
	£	£
Total number of losses	Nil	Nil
Total value of losses (£000)	Nil	Nil
Details of losses over £250,000	Nil	Nil
Cash losses	Nil	Nil
Claims abandoned	Nil	Nil
Administrative write-offs	Nil	Nil

Special Payments

	2021-22	2020-21
	£	£
Total number of special payments	Nil	Nil
Total value of special payments	Nil	Nil

There were no special payments over £250,000.

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 'Evelyn Collins', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Evelyn Collins CBE
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
23 June 2022

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 the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland for the year ended 31 March 2022 under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The financial statements comprise: the 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 the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's affairs as at 31 March 2022 and of the 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 of Public Sector Entities 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 this certificate.

My staff and I are independent of the 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 the 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 the 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.

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 report.

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 report, 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 guidance provided by the Department of Finance;
- 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 the 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;
- such internal controls as the Accounting Officer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; and
- assessing the 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 the 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 the 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 the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's compliance with laws and regulations;
- making enquiries of internal audit, management and those charged with governance as to 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 the 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 following areas: management override of controls relating to the posting of unusual journals and the use of estimates in the financial statements;
- 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. 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.



K J Donnelly
Comptroller and Auditor General
Northern Ireland Audit Office
1 Bradford Court
Galwally
BELFAST
BT8 6RB

28 June 2022

**Equality Commission
for
Northern Ireland**

Financial Statements

for the 12 months ended

31 March 2022

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2022

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.

	Note	2021/22 £000	2020/21 £000
Revenue from contracts with customers	4	83	83
Other operating income	4	355	343
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Operating Income		438	426
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Staff Costs	3	(4,467)	(3,899)
Purchase of goods and services	3	(1,818)	(1,454)
Depreciation and amortisation	5&6	(123)	(104)
Impairment	6	0	0
Provisions	11	(199)	(240)
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Total operating expenditure		(6,607)	(5,697)
Net Operating Expenditure		(6,169)	(5,271)
Other comprehensive net expenditure			
Items that will not be reclassified to net operating expenditure:			
Net gain/(loss) on revaluation of Plant and Equipment	5&6	4	(4)
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year		(6,165)	(5,275)

The notes on pages 91 to 104 form part of these accounts

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2022

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	2021/22 £000	2020/21 £000
Non-current assets:			
Plant and equipment	5	167	166
Intangible assets	6	59	72
Total non-current assets		226	238
Current assets:			
Inventories	9	3	3
Trade and other receivables	9	108	111
Cash and cash equivalents	8	120	313
Total current assets		231	427
Total assets		457	665
Current liabilities:			
Trade and other payables	10	(436)	(355)
Total current liabilities		(436)	(355)
Total assets less current liabilities		21	310
Non-current liabilities			
Provisions	11	(154)	(155)
Total non-current liabilities		(154)	(155)
Total assets less total liabilities		(133)	155
Taxpayers' equity and other reserves			
General Fund		(194)	98
Revaluation Reserve		61	57
Total equity		(133)	155

The financial statements on pages 87 to 104 were approved by the Board on 22/06/2022 and were signed on its behalf by:



Evelyn Collins CBE
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer.

The notes on pages 91 to 104 form part of these accounts

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31 March 2022

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.

	Note	2021-22 £000	2020-21 £000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net operating expenditure		(6,169)	(5,271)
Adjustments for non-cash transactions			
Depreciation		85	71
Amortisation		38	33
Impairment		0	0
Increase in provisions		199	240
Decrease /(increase) in trade and other receivables		3	(30)
Increase in trade and other payables		81	62
Use of provisions		(200)	(182)
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(5,963)	(5,077)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of plant and equipment	5	(82)	(92)
Purchase of intangible assets	6	(25)	(35)
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Net cash outflow from investing activities		(107)	(127)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Financing from TEO		5,877	5,391
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Net cash flow from financing activities		5,877	5,391
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents in the period		(193)	187
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period		313	126
		<hr/>	<hr/>
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	8	120	313

The notes on pages 91 to 104 form part of these accounts.

Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year ended 31 March 2022

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
Balance at 31 March 2020		(22)	61	39
Grant from TEO		5,391	Nil	5,391
Comprehensive net expenditure for year		(5,271)	(4)	(5,275)
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Balance at 31 March 2021		98	57	155
Grant from TEO		5,877	Nil	5,877
Comprehensive net expenditure for year		(6,169)	4	(6,165)
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Balance at 31 March 2022		(194)	61	(133)

The notes on pages 91 to 104 form part of these accounts.

Notes to the Accounts

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 2021-22 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 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%
Intangible Assets	25-33%

1.4 Inventories

The value of inventories of consumables is immaterial and the Commission does not 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 Assets

Leases are classified as operating leases whenever the terms of the lease do not transfer substantially all the risks and benefits to the lessee. Rentals under operating leases are expensed to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure as incurred.

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 Payables 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 March 2019 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

IFRS 16 Leases

IFRS 16 *Leases* was issued in January 2016. It supersedes IAS 17 *Leases* and, for NI Central Government entities applying the FReM, is effective from 1 April 2022. IFRS 16 provides a single lessee accounting model and requires a lessee to recognise a “right-of-use” asset (the right to use the leased item) and a financial liability for any leases where the term is greater than 12 months, excluding those where the associated right-of-use asset is of low value. Thus the standard has the effect of removing the distinction between operating and finance leases, largely eliminating the current ‘off-balance sheet’ treatment of operating leases under IAS 17.

Impact of the new standard

ECNI has assessed the impact that the application of IFRS 16 will have on the comprehensive net expenditure for the financial year ending 31 March 2023 and on the statement of financial position at that date. The figures below are for existing leases as at 31 March 2022. The standard is expected to increase total expenditure in 2022/23 by approximately £15k. The recognition of Right of Use assets associated with existing Operating Leases, is expected to increase the value of non-current assets by approximately £2,040k, while liabilities will increase by approximately £2,080k.

SoCNE Impacts IFRS 16	£,000
Depreciation expected – 2022/23	478
Interest expense expected – 2022/23	17
IAS 17 basis Rental payments expected – 2022/23	(480)
Increased Expenditure	15

SoFP Impacts IFRS 16	£,000
Existing IAS 17 Operating Leases – Right of Use Assets – 1 April 2022	2,039
Existing IAS 17 Operating Leases – Lease Liabilities – 1 April 2022	2,080

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 31/03/2022 Total £000	Salaries & Associated Costs £000	Programme Costs £000	*Other Costs £000	12 mths to 31/03/2021 Total £000
Integrated/ New Areas	1405	524	323	2,252	864	298	206	1,368
Disability	547	94	126	767	586	86	140	812
Religion & Politics	565	20	130	715	492	16	117	625
Gender	332	42	76	450	393	37	94	524
Race	175	32	40	247	176	21	42	239
Statutory Duty	397	0	91	488	336	13	80	428
Resources	595	0	137	732	640	0	164	804
Executive	293	0	67	360	257	0	62	319
Total Costs	4,309	712	990	6,011	3,744	471	905	5,120
Members Costs	158	0	0	158	155	0	0	155
Other Costs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	4,467	712	990	6,169	3,899	471	905	5,275

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

3. Expenditure

	2021/22	2020/21
	£000	£000
Staff costs		
Salaries and fees	2,878	2,626
Social Security Cost	285	258
Other pension costs	849	774
Agency	455	241
Severance	0	0
Rentals under operating leases		
Buildings	492	516
Annual contracts	43	42
Rates	204	202
Fuel	86	58
Facilities Management	183	151
Repairs and Maintenance	69	40
Legal – Non-database Costs	22	48
Education and Promotions	182	102
Other Programme	212	93
Miscellaneous	113	73
External Audit Costs	13	12
Consumables	46	84
Legal Costs	96	(4)
Staff Related Costs	57	37
Depreciation and Amortisation	123	104
Holiday Pay provision	0	11
Legal Provision charge	199	229
	<hr/> 6,607 <hr/>	<hr/> 5,697 <hr/>

4. Income

	2021-22	2020-21
	Total	Total
	£000	£000
Revenue from contracts with customers	83	83
Other operating income	355	343
	<hr/> 438 <hr/>	<hr/> 426 <hr/>

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. Plant and equipment

2021-22	Information Technology £000	Office Equipment £000	Furniture £000	Fixtures & Fittings £000	Total £000
Cost/Valuation					
At 1 April 2021	533	109	269	336	1,247
Additions	74	0	0	8	82
Disposals	0	0	0	0	0
Revaluations	0	12	22	20	54
At 31 March 2022	607	121	291	364	1,383
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2021	424	104	269	284	1,081
Charged in year	49	4	0	32	85
Disposals	0	0	0	0	0
Revaluations	1	11	22	16	50
At 31 March 2022	474	119	291	332	1,216
Carrying amount at 31 March 2022	133	2	0	32	167
Carrying amount at 31 March 2021	109	5	0	52	166
Asset Financing					
Owned	133	2	0	32	167
Finance lease	0	0	0	0	0
Carrying amount at 31 March 2022	133	2	0	32	167

Plant and equipment are revalued annually by reference to the indices issued by the Office for National Statistics for the different types of assets.

Note 5 Continued

2020-21	Information Technology £000	Office Equipment £000	Furniture £000	Fixtures & Fittings £000	Total £000
Cost/Valuation					
At 1 April 2020	442	109	267	350	1,168
Additions	92	0	0	0	92
Disposals	0	0	0	0	0
Revaluations	(1)	0	2	(14)	(13)
At 31 March 2021	533	109	269	336	1,247
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2020	394	99	267	258	1,018
Charged in year	31	4	0	36	71
Disposals	0	0	0	0	0
Revaluations	(1)	1	2	(10)	(8)
At 31 March 2021	424	104	269	284	1,081
Carrying amount at 31 March 2021	109	5	0	52	166
Carrying amount at 31 March 2020	48	10	0	92	150
Asset Financing					
Owned	109	5	0	52	166
Finance lease	0	0	0	0	0
Carrying amount at 31 March 2021	109	5	0	52	166

Plant and equipment are revalued annually by reference to the indices issued by the Office for National Statistics for the different types of assets.

6. Intangible assets

Intangible assets comprise software and licenses.

2021-22	Information Technology	Software Licences	Total
	£000	£000	£000
Cost or Valuation			
At 1 April 2021	29	274	303
Additions	0	25	25
Disposals	0	0	0
At 31 March 2022	29	299	328
Amortisation			
At 1 April 2021	29	202	231
Charged in year	0	38	38
Disposals	0	0	0
At 31 March 2022	29	240	269
Carrying amount at			
31 March 2022	0	59	59
Carrying amount at			
31 March 2021	0	72	72
Asset financing:			
Owned	0	59	59
Finance Leased	0	0	0
Carrying amount at	0	59	59
31 March 2022			

Note 6 Continued

2020-21	Information Technology £000	Software Licences £000	Total £000
Cost or Valuation			
At 1 April 2020	29	239	268
Additions	0	35	35
Impairment	0	0	0
At 31 March 2021	29	274	303
Amortisation			
At 1 April 2020	29	169	198
Charged in year	0	33	33
Disposals	0	0	0
At 31 March 2021	29	202	231
Carrying amount at 31 March 2021	0	72	72
Carrying amount at 31 March 2020	0	70	70
Asset financing:			
Owned	0	72	72
Finance Leased	0	0	0
Carrying amount at 31 March 2021	0	72	72

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

	2021-22	2020-21
	£000	£000
Balance at 1 April	313	126
Net change in cash and cash equivalents	(193)	187
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Balance at 31 March	120	313
The balance at 31 March was held at the Government Banking Service	120	313
Cash in Hand	0	0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Balance at 31 March	120	313

9. Trade receivables and other current assets

	2021-22	2020-21
	£000	£000
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Inventories	3	3
Prepayments	108	99
Accrued Income	0	12
Other Receivables	0	0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	111	114

10. Trade payables and other current liabilities

	2021-22 £000	2020-21 £000
Amounts falling due within one year		
Accruals and deferred Income	(436)	(355)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	(436)	(355)

11. Provisions for liabilities and charges

	Holiday Pay £000	2021-22 Legal Costs £000	Total £000	2020-21 Total £000
Balance at 1 April	11	144	155	97
Provided in the year	0	249	249	299
Provisions not required written back	0	(50)	(50)	(59)
Provisions utilised in the year	0	(200)	(200)	(182)
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Balance at 31 March	11	143	154	155

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 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 has appealed the CoA judgment to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court hearing was scheduled for the 23rd and 24th June 2021 but this has subsequently been adjourned. There are still some very significant elements of uncertainty around this estimate for a number of reasons:

1. The appeal to the Supreme Court (as detailed above);
2. ongoing negotiations between NICS and its Trade Unions; and
3. 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.

Based on a review of our overtime patterns, the 2021-22 Holiday Pay provision has been estimated by ECNI and covers the period from April 2014 to 31 March 2020. This will be reviewed, in light of any changes to the overall legal position.

Since 1 April 2020 holiday pay payable on overtime earned has been paid to those employees involved.

12. Capital commitments

	2021-22 £000	2020-21 £000
Contracted capital commitments at 31 March not otherwise included in these financial statements		
Plant and equipment	0	0
Intangible assets	0	0

13. Commitments under leases

13.1 Operating leases

Total future minimum lease payments under operating leases are given in the table below for each of the following periods.

	2021-22 £000	2020-21 £000
Obligations under operating leases comprises:		
Buildings		
Not later than one year	480	572
Later than one year and not later than five years	1,600	800
Later than five years	0	0
Other:		
Not later than one year	0	0
Later than one year and not later than five years	0	0
Later than five years	0	0

13.2 Finance Leases

The Commission had no commitments under finance leases.

14. Other financial commitments

The Commission had no other financial commitments at 31 March 2022 or 31 March 2021.

15. Contingent liabilities disclosed under IAS 37

As at 31 March 2022 ECNI has noted the potential contingent liability for costs to return the structure of the building to its state on acquisition, at the end of its current lease on 31 July 2026. It is unable at this time to quantify those costs but will start to consult with interested parties to estimate those costs. There are no other contingent liabilities to report.

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
(£5,877,000 of which £0 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Northern Ireland Commission for Children and Young People
(£161,335 of which £0 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Commission for Victims and Survivors
(£78,877 of which £0 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
(£27,240 of which £0 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Commissioner for Older People Northern Ireland
(£115,566 of which £0 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission
(£700 of which £0 was outstanding at the year-end),
- the Community Relations Council for Northern Ireland
(£120,597 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.

17. Third-party assets

The Commission had no third-party assets at 31 March 2022 or 31 March 2021.

18. 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 23 June 2022.

Performance Delivery against planned objectives 2021-22

Strategic Outcome Area 1 Mainstreaming and Championing equality

Business Plan objective		Performance Assessment of key actions ¹				Evidence for delivery / explanation for non-delivery
		Achieved	Partly achieved and close to targeted outcomes	Progress less than planned.	Not achieved	
1.1	Mainstreaming equality		✓			The TEO Draft Consolidated COVID-19 Recovery Plan– ‘Building Forward’ shows adoption of some ECNI recommendations following Commission engagement and response. S75 advice was provided on the draft, final Plan and subsequent review of screening. S75 advice was also provided on a number of key COVID-19 policies - Vaccine Certification Process and disability accessibility; amendment to the Health Protection Regulations and face coverings; Rebuilding Health related policies; COVID-19 Restrictions Business Support Scheme; High Street Voucher Scheme; Tourism Voucher Scheme. The Commission also contributed to a number of the Co-Design groups established by the Department of Communities (DfC) to assist in taking

		✓		✓	<p>forward their key equality and social inclusion strategies.</p> <p>Through this work, and other engagement with Departments, evidence is beginning to accumulate of action by public authorities to address key gaps in the collection of equality data, and deliver more comprehensive equality monitoring, review and reporting, in areas such as monitoring ethnic equality, disability and education.</p> <p>The external consultation and final strategy planned for this year, to further develop the Commission's strategic approach to use of investigation powers, will now be progressed in 2022-23.</p>
1.2	Deliver new responsibilities as the Dedicated Mechanism under EU Withdrawal Act	✓ ✓			<p>Promotional work, including a radio advertising and a social media campaign were delivered. Two guides and a promotional video were completed and disseminated. A range of engagement activities with key stakeholders were organised throughout the year.</p> <p>Effective arrangements for monitoring compliance with the Article 2 commitment by Government were put in place and by Government and evidence was provided to the House of Lords Sub-Committee on the Protocol, to the EO Committee, the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights; the Oireachtas Committee; and the HC European Scrutiny Committee. Advice was also provided in relation to voting rights, on the Elections Bill and on the Nationality and Borders Bill.</p>

		✓				<p>Research was completed in relation to the impact of Brexit on equality groups in the context of the potential impact of the loss of EU funding and on Assembly and Parliamentary scrutiny measures.</p> <p>At the year end, research was ongoing into the divergence of rights and EU best practice and on the impact of Brexit on minority ethnic and migrant people. A survey was commissioned to measure public awareness of Article 2 and the role of the Commissions.</p> <p>During the year, advice was provided to 12 individuals with new legal enquiries. The Commission intervened in the judicial review on the NI Abortion Regulations on Art 2 related points.</p> <p>Awareness raised of Brexit related recommendations via submissions on the Framework Convention on National Minorities, hate crime, Domestic abuse and Violence against women, The Human Rights Act review, the Refugee Integration Strategy, binding standards for Equality bodies; and on Zero hours contracts.</p> <p>Throughout the year there was effective engagement with NIHRC and IHREC on all island scrutiny work.</p>
1.3	Championing equality	✓				<p>Through participation in co-design groups and responding to consultations, policy staff were able to secure advocacy of our recommendations into DfC strategies on gender, disability, sexual orientation and anti-poverty.</p>

		✓				<p>Through ongoing engagement with TEO Officials, the Racial Equality Strategy sub-group, and working with key stakeholders, Junior Ministers and the TEO Permanent Secretary have verbally indicated an intention to adopt, following mid-term review of RES, racial equality law reform, ethnic equality monitoring and staff training as key delivery priorities for the remainder of the Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025.</p> <p>The Fair Employment (School Teachers) Bill passed by Assembly in March reflects longstanding calls for the removal of the FETO Teacher's exception. Both in statements made by the Bill's sponsor and throughout the debates references were made to the recommendations made by the Commission and to materials provided.</p> <p>Working in partnership with NIHRC and the IMNI Disability Stakeholder Forum, provided some evidence of actions by NI Departments to implement the UNCRPD. During 2022-23 the Commission will continue to develop its input into the CRPD Committee 'List of Issues' examination process.</p> <p>An expert research report on shortfalls in public policy and programme delivery in Northern Ireland relative to the Articles of the UNCRPD was commissioned. Evaluation of research usage will be undertaken following publication.</p>
		✓				
		✓				
			✓			
			✓			

		✓			<p>The measurement framework on Measuring Equality in NI was further developed this year and a consultation on the draft Framework undertaken.</p> <p>During this year Policy staff worked with stakeholders and officials to secure action to address key inequalities facing Travellers, including in response to COVID-19, in respect of housing and education.</p> <p>FETO and S75 compliance levels have not returned to pre pandemic levels. Advisory work continued to be delivered.</p> <p>Enquiry line, guidance and training targets were met.</p> <p>Closing of the Monitoring Report database was delayed this year due to the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on employers. The Report was completed and will be published early in 2022-23.</p> <p>Enquiry levels increased this year, though are not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. Three decisions were received and 35 cases settled.</p> <p>The Commission used its legal casework to highlight awareness of protection for pregnant women in employment, Harassment in the workplace and Disability and employment issues.</p> <p>This year the Commission advised 59 individuals on complaints, potential complaints or about the Paragraph 10 complaints process. Eleven new written complaints, under Paragraph 10 of Schedule</p>
		✓	✓		
		✓	✓		
		✓			
		✓			
		✓			

		✓				<p>9, were received and six considered by the Statutory Duty Investigations Committee (SDIC) considered six.</p> <p>Three investigations were commenced this year, one investigation was published and a further three investigations concluded.</p> <p>Four communications reports were presented to the Commission this year. Each contained a detailed summary of communications work across traditional and social media and increased website usage.</p> <p>The reports also demonstrated evidence of building the Commission's reputation through campaigning and political engagement, including the findings of an MLA Panel survey completed this year.</p>
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Strategic Priority Area 2 Employment

Business Plan objective		Performance Assessment				Evidence for delivery / explanation for non-delivery
		Achieved	Partly achieved and close to targeted outcomes	Progress less than planned.	Not achieved to be achieved	
2.1	Employment and disabled people	✓				<p>The Commission continued to work in partnership work with the Department for Communities and the disability sector to implement a range of initiatives to promote more and better jobs for disabled people. This included participation on the Disability Employment Strategy Co-Design group, the Disability Stakeholder Forum and the Disability Employment Strategy Review chaired by DfC, providing disability employability training to 200 employment advisors, training to employers and two disability employability podcasts - one with Stepping Stones NI and one with Primark and NIUSE.</p> <p>Three further public authorities committed to the Mental Health Charter. A total of 205 organisations have now signed up to the Charter.</p>

2.2	Women and employment	✓				<p>Work in this area focused on STEM this year and included participation on the NI STEM Steering group. The Women in STEM Action Plan was approved by DfE Minister during this year. STEM work also included webinars, events and guidance to employers.</p> <p>Other work areas included training and guidance focusing on sexual harassment, flexible working, pregnancy and maternity and dealing with the menopause. Much of this work was undertaken in partnership with NIC-ICTU and the Labour Relations Agency.</p>
2.3	Freedom from prejudice and harassment at work	✓				<p>Building on our work in partnership with the Labour Relations Agency and NIC-ICTU, Commission guidance on harassment and bullying was updated in partnership with LRA and a suite of supplementary policies also revised to support the guidance. A programme of training, with LRA is scheduled to commence 2022/23.</p> <p>Training sessions covering harassment, inclusion and race were delivered, as was work with three public authorities on Hate Crime guidance, Bullying and Harassment Policies and training for harassment advisors. Work with the Equality and Diversity Group in prisons, both prisoners and officers, included input and advice on their development of online training for managers.</p>

						A Race at Work Roundtable was held with BITC to discuss race issues at work. The range of views provided by employers at the roundtable will inform future employer training.
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Strategic Priority Area 3 Education

Business Plan objective		Performance Assessment				Performance Assessment
		Achieved	Partly achieved and close to targeted outcomes	Progress less than planned.	Not achieved to be achieved	
3.1	Freedom from prejudice-based bullying at school		✓			<p>The Commission continued to advocate for Commission recommendations through our participation on the research development group of the NI Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF).</p> <p>The group is currently working to develop to a research proposal to submit to the Department for Education (DE) with regards to gathering data on bullying in schools.</p> <p>DENI have committed to commission bullying research, subject to 2022/23 funding being available.</p>

						The Commission also engaged with the Education Training Inspectorate and the Education Authority on the need for monitoring compliance with the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act.
3.2	Address inequalities in attainment and access	✓				<p>A range of Commission positions on tackling educational underachievement were included in the Final Report of the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement.</p> <p>Work to secure advocacy of Commission positions on educational underachievement, and exacerbating impacts of COVID-19, experiences of education among Minority Ethnic Groups in NI, Early education and childcare, Traveller children and greater family and community engagement was undertaken through engagement with officials of key public bodies, educational researchers, political representatives and other key stakeholders.</p> <p>Stakeholder advocacy and awareness of the Commission's positions on Family Engagement were raised in the 'Family and Community Engagement in Education - Learning from the Pandemic' publication, produced by the Commission.</p> <p>DE officials have advised that family engagement will be a key strand of the draft 'Supporting Newcomer Policy'.</p> <p>QUB research commissioned by DfC to inform the Disability Strategy references the Commission's Family Engagement / Learning from the Pandemic publication.</p>

Strategic Priority Area 4

Access and Participation

Business Plan objective		Performance Assessment				Evidence for delivery / explanation for non-delivery
		Achieved	Partly achieved and close to targeted outcomes	Progress less than planned.	Not achieved to be achieved	
4.1	Participation in public and political life	✓				<p>DfC's Equality Action Plan 2019-2022 contains a commitment, aligned to ECNI recommendations, to implement a five-year cross-departmental diversity strategy for public appointments.</p> <p>Key stakeholder awareness of Commission recommendations, on the participation of women and those with disabilities and the need for childcare and stakeholder involvement, was maintained via the publication and dissemination of policy briefings and events, including the joint CPANI / women's sector event and 'Take the Next Step' social media campaign, participation on the Public Appointments Forum and engagement with DfE officials via meetings and response to DfE Skills Strategy consultation.</p> <p>Twenty public authorities implemented strategic initiatives to promote participation of disabled people in public life and targets for disability employment.</p>
		✓				

			✓		<p>Examples of actions include the production of a promotional video on participation and disability accessibility, surveying the culture and impacts on diversity with a focus on disability; establishing a Peer Professional Network and a Disability Champion; creating an Empty Space at the Boardroom - 12 staff have availed of placement opportunities.</p> <p>The Commission secured membership of a working group to inform the strategic direction of the Women's Caucus, with the aim of increasing women's representation in political life. The Caucus subsequently decided to defer this work for the present.</p>
4.2	Accessible facilities and services for disabled people	✓			<p>Work this year included training sessions for service providers held in conjunction with disability sector.</p> <p>Following our guidance, Derry City and Strabane DC will promote the Commission's accessibility guidance (Every Customer Counts) as part of its digital Access Inclusion Model, which is being delivered to over 9,000 local service providers. A further two public authorities rolling out activities to implement Every Customer Counts programmes.</p> <p>Advice to nine public authorities to improve access for service users included - improving support for service users; influencing developers to improve disability access; developing an accessibility scheme; and accessibility planning for schools; S75 screening of building regulations; improving disability access in toilets.</p>

4.3	Addressing housing and accommodation needs, including in the context of responding to COVID-19	✓				<p>The DfC Private Rented Sector review outcome includes advocacy of Commission recommendations around incentivising shared housing and regulation of letting agents. There is also evidence of advocacy of Commission recommendations - addressing data gaps and disaggregation - in the DfC Housing Supply Strategy and EQIA, in the NIHE Traveller Accommodation Strategy 2020-2026 and by NIHE during Homelessness Strategy pre-engagement.</p>
4.4	Access to information and digital services			✓		<p>During this year, the Commission has advised the Central Digital Data Office (CDDO) that we received two complaints of web inaccessibility. In one complaint, proceedings of disability discrimination have been lodged in a county court in Northern Ireland; in the other complaint the matter has been referred to the Equality and Human Rights Commission for consideration.</p> <p>CDDO have referred monitoring reports of 13 Northern Ireland based websites to the Equality Commission. At the year end, enforcement protocols were still to be developed. A resource is being identified to consider such referrals in 2022/23.</p>

Strategic Priority Area 5

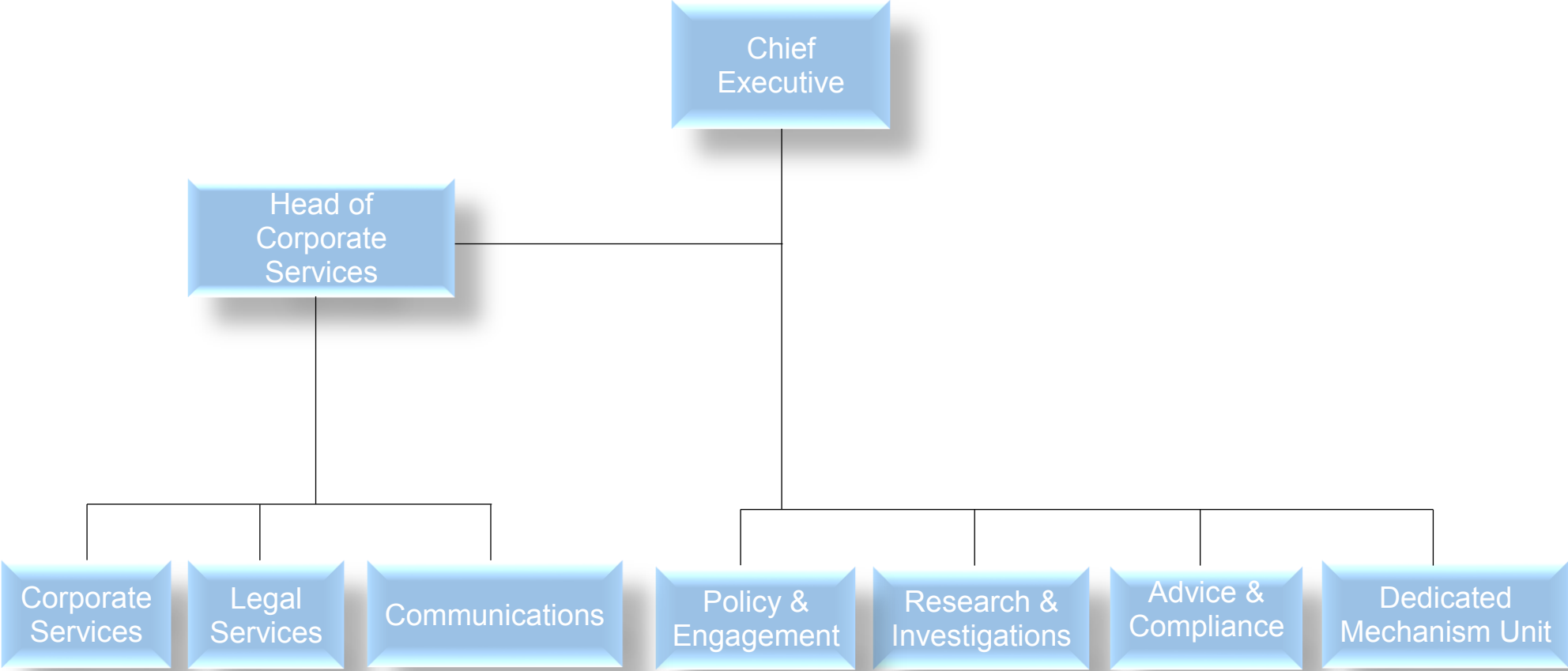
Resourcing and Supporting the Plan

Business Plan objective		Performance Assessment				Evidence for delivery / explanation for non-delivery
		Achieved	Partly achieved and close to targeted outcomes	Progress less than planned.	Not achieved to be achieved	
5.1	Effectively resourcing and supporting the Commission's business plans and objectives	✓				<p>At 31 March, the key budget variances were:</p> <p>Net Resource £ 9k (0.2%) Capital £ 8k (7.0%) DMU £ 5k (0.6%)</p> <p>Further information is included in the body of the Annual Report.</p> <p>Fourteen vacancies were filled this year – six in the DMU and eight in other areas. Only two posts remain to be filled in the DMU. In addition to 13 vacancies filled, two staff have been temporarily promoted. During the year expenditure on salaries increased from £3.9m to £4.5m.</p> <p>MS 365 staff training has been delivered to all staff. A new 'direct routing' telephony system, which will allow staff to make and receive voice and video calls via MS Teams without the need to divert calls via desktop extensions or to use their own mobile phone contracts, has been procured.</p>
		✓				

			✓			<p>Work has commenced on migrating all of the organisations sharing Equality House to the new system, A Remote working policy, based on the NICS model, has been drafted. Piloting of new hybrid working arrangements will take place 2022-23.</p> <p>The current website was audited by the Disability Accessibility Centre in March 2021 and complies with the web accessibility Regulations and the recognised AA standard. Staff were trained on accessibility including use of accessibility tools and on writing accessibly for the web. The Commission's Accessibility Statement reviewed and updated on 1 December 2021. Work is still to commence on preparations for new website and new Access for All Policy.</p>
5.2	Ensuring effective governance and internal control	✓				<p>Annual Report and Accounts 2020-21 were certified by the C&AG on 30 June and a very positive RTTCWG was received. The Annual Report was laid before Parliament and the Assembly on 15 July. An unqualified audit opinion was obtained from the C&AG and the Report to those Charged with Governance was very positive and contained no recommendations.</p> <p>The Strategic Audit Plan was delivered and the internal auditor provided an overall assurance rating of Satisfactory. Further information on the Commission's governance arrangements can be found in the Governance Statement earlier in this report.</p>

		✓				<p>Building on the Investor in People Silver accreditation achieved last year a new People Strategy was prepared. Performance measures were developed and a considerable programme of work was completed during the year and a work programme is in place for 22/23.</p> <p>Work on aligning the performance management framework to new Corporate and Business Plan objectives and further development of Outcome Based Accountability (OBA) processes was undertaken during the year.</p> <p>Further training and support in OBA was delivered during the year. By the year end work on drafting a number of OBA report cards, and collating information for input, was ongoing.</p> <p>Consultation on a draft Corporate Plan 2022-25 was completed and an assessment of the responses presented at the March meeting. At the year-end, the Plan is being finalised for presentation at the April meeting. A draft Business Plan and budget for 22-23 was also being completed. Public consultation on the Measuring Equality in Northern Ireland took place this year. The consultation period ended in April and the updated Framework will be reviewed in 2022-23.</p>
			✓			
			✓			
			✓			

Organisation Structure Chart



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