Secretary of State announces appointment to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

6.3.2026 - Hilary Benn | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has announced appointments to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Right Honourable Hilary Benn MP, has announced the reappointment of two Commissioners (Lisa Caldwell and Stephen Mathews) and a short-term extension to the appointment of Deputy Chief Commissioner (Neil Anderson) to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland with effect from 1 March 2026.

In addition, he has announced the appointment of a new Deputy Chief Commissioner (Colin Kennedy) and two Commissioners (Kevin Doherty and Kristel Miller) to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Background

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

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

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

Terms of Appointment - Commissioner

- All Commissioner positions are part-time for a period of three years.
- Two Commissioners (Lisa Caldwell and Stephen Mathews) were reappointed with effect from 1 March 2026 for a period of three years.
- One Commissioner (Kevin Doherty) with effect from 5 March 2026 for a period of three years.
- One Commissioner (Kristel Miller) with effect from 1 September 2026 for a period of three years.
- The Commissioner position receives a fixed annual remuneration of £5,000.
- The positions are not pensionable.

Terms of Appointment - Deputy Chief Commissioner

- The current Deputy Chief Commissioner (Neil Anderson) has been extended for a six month period ending on 31 August 2026.
- A new appointment to the position of Deputy Chief Commissioner (Colin Kennedy) with effect from 1 September 2026 for a period of three years.

- The position receives a fixed annual remuneration of £10,000.
- The position is not pensionable.

Biography of Appointees for the extension and the two reappointments can be found on the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland Website.

https://www.equalityni.org/HeaderLinks/About-Us/Our-structure#gsc.tab=0

Further biographies are outlined below:

Colin Kennedy is currently Chief Executive of Maplewood Estates Limited and Chairman of Jordan's Gift. He is currently a member of the Review Tribunal for Northern Ireland, the Appeals Tribunal, the Solicitors Complaints Committee and the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal. He currently chairs the Audit and Risk Committee for the Police Ombudsman for NI. Former roles include Chief Executive of Lenken Healthcare Limited, The Mary Peters Trust and Chairman of the Northern Ireland Football League.

Kevin Doherty held the position as CEO of Rural Support and is a part-time senior lecturer in Management and Leadership at North West Regional College. He formerly held the position of Director of Services and Chief Executive Officer of Disability Action NI and has experience as a Board Member of the Participation, Practice and Rights Project and former Chair of the DfC Active Living Disability Strategy.

Kristel Miller currently holds the position of Professor of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development at Ulster University and is a Director of Innovation Ulster Limited. She is the Principal Investigator and Director of EPIC Futures NI which is a UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funded Policy Innovation Partnership exploring how to enhance fair and inclusive employment. She currently serves as a member of the NI Skills Council Skills Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (SEDI) subgroup, and as an expert reviewer for the European Commission and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

Political Activity

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

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

Regulation

These appointments are regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointment (OCPA).

Statutory Requirements

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

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/secretary-of-state-announces-appointment-to-the-equality-commission-for-northern-ireland