



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Audit of Inequalities: 2019 Review

1 Background

This paper presents the 2019 review of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's Audit of Inequalities. The purpose of an Audit of Inequalities is to provide a strategic picture of inequalities relevant to the role and functions of an organisation.

This review was collated by the Assembly's Research and Information Service (RaISe) with input from Directorates from across the organisation. It provides an update to the last review carried out in 2016.

The 2019 review will inform the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's equality and good relations documents and action plans.

A wide range of sources were considered as part of this review, namely the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's:

- Draft Corporate Strategy 2018-2023;
- Draft Public Engagement Strategy 2018-2023;
- Equality Scheme;
- Good Relations Strategy and action plan;

- Disability Action Plan;
- 2016-2018 Gender Action Plan;
- Minutes from Gender Action Plan Implementation Group;
- 2019-203 Gender Action Plan;
- Annual Reports to the Equality Commission; and
- Section 75 and Fair Employment monitoring data.

Other sources included:

- Data and information held by Directorates;
- Internal research such as internal equality and good relations surveys and gender quality research;
- Minutes of meetings (e.g. Assembly Commission and Secretariat Management Group); and
- Assembly Questions to the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission.

2 Role and Functions of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (the Assembly Commission) finds its statutory basis in Section 40 and Schedule 5 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. As the body corporate, it is responsible for providing the property, services and staff required for the Assembly's purposes. It consists of an MLA from each of the five main parties, plus the Speaker of the House who acts as Chairperson. It has four principal roles. These are:

- The allocation of resources;
- The provision of property to support the Members, support staff and secretariat staff for a fully functioning Assembly;
- The provision of services; and
- The provision of a fully staffed Secretariat to support the administration of the Assembly.

In exercising the above roles, the Assembly Commission carries out the following functions:

- The acquisition and maintenance of premises and equipment to provide suitable accommodation, facilities and support services in which a fully functioning Assembly can operate; and,
- The recruitment and ongoing development of suitably qualified and experienced staff to support the Assembly.

3 About the Audit of Inequalities

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires all public authorities designated for the purposes of the Act, including the Assembly Commission, to comply with two statutory duties.

The first duty is the *Equality of Opportunity* duty, which requires public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between the nine ‘equality categories’ of persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependents and persons without.

The second duty, the *Good Relations* duty, requires that public authorities in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group.

Following an Effectiveness Review¹, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) published a revised guide to the two statutory duties.² This guide outlines what public authorities are required to do to comply with the statutory duties and makes a number of recommendations to:

“Shift the focus within public authorities from concentrating primarily on the process of implementing Section 75, towards achieving outcomes within the Section 75 framework.”

Public authorities must submit an equality scheme to the Equality Commission detailing their arrangements for fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties and a plan for their performance. In the revised guide, the Equality Commission recommends that public authorities develop action measures to effectively demonstrate that they have paid due

¹ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (November 2008). Keeping it Effective: Reviewing the Effectiveness of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – Final Report.

² Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (April 2010). Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: A guide for Public Authorities.

regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations through the implementation of their equality scheme. In preparing action measures/action plans, the Equality Commission further recommends that public authorities:

“Undertake an audit of inequalities to identify the range of key inequalities which the discharge of the public authority’s functions is intended to or is likely to address.”

4 Corporate Strategy

The Secretariat Management Group (SMG) has developed a draft Corporate Strategy for 2018-2023 through a process of extensive staff consultation. It is based on the Assembly’s eventual return to normal business and the current Assembly Commission is content for the draft Corporate Strategy to be used for corporate and business planning for the next period. The Assembly Commission’s overall draft Corporate Strategy 2018-23 is about providing *“excellence, expertise and innovation in support of the Northern Ireland Assembly as a legislature which is accessible to the public it represents”*. The Strategy has four central strands, one of which is *“Building excellence and innovation in our services”* which includes:

- Ensuring high standards in equality, governance and regulatory compliance through effective and efficient processes.

This demonstrates that equality is at the heart of the Assembly Commission’s draft Corporate Strategy. The Assembly Commission’s commitment to equality and the discharge of its section 75 obligations in all parts of the organisation is also stated at 1.3 of its Equality Scheme.

Another central strand is ***“Strengthening engagement with the public”*** which relates to:

- Embedding the value of public engagement, openness and transparency across every area of the Secretariat’s work;
- Developing new approaches to engagement that enable the public to interact with the work of the Assembly;
- Building connections with target groups including, for example, support for greater female participation and the delivery of a Youth Assembly;
- Modernising the communication of Assembly business and proceedings through investment in high-quality broadcasting, digital technology and social media; and
- Improving the visitor experience in Parliament Buildings with a focus on customer service, public facilities and accessibility to Assembly business.

A draft Public Engagement Strategy 2018-2023 has been developed to help make all of that happen by seeking to increase awareness and understanding of the Assembly, and inclusion and participation in its work. , **Inclusion, awareness, understanding** and **participation** are the four central strands of the draft Public Engagement Strategy.

5 Developments since the last review of the Audit of Inequalities - Function 1

This section highlights developments in a number of key areas regarding the acquisition and maintenance of premises and equipment to provide suitable accommodation, facilities and support services in which a fully functioning Assembly can operate since the last review of the Audit of Inequalities in 2016. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all activities undertaken by the Assembly Commission in fulfilling the statutory requirements of Section 75(1&2) of the Northern Ireland Act and section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Function 1: The acquisition and maintenance of premises and equipment to provide suitable accommodation, facilities and support services in which a fully functioning Assembly can operate.

5.1 Access to Parliament Buildings

Disability

The Disability Action Plan (DAP) confirms the Commission's commitment to fulfilling the statutory obligations in compliance with Section 49A and 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006) (DDA). This Act places duties on public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities; and encourage participation by people with disabilities in public life.

Following a full public consultation, the DAP was approved by the Commission in September 2016). It spans a five-year period and can be added to during its lifetime. The full plan is available at this link:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/equality-and-good-relations/disability-action-plan-2016-21/>

A Five Year Review of Disability Action Plans was submitted to the SMG on 16 March 2018. This review report was considered and approved by the Assembly Commission at its meeting on 30 May 2018 and was submitted to ECNI. The purpose of this review was to report on whether the Commission, through two DAPs covering the reporting period 1 April 2013 - 31 March 2018, met its statutory requirements i.e. to encourage

persons with a disability to participate in public life and to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities.

The most recent 5-year review covered the period 1 April 2013 - 31 March 2018. This timeframe takes account of the actions contained within two DAPs that cover the periods 1 July 2012 - 30 June 2016 and 1 July 2016 – 30 June 2021 respectively. In the 2012 - 2016 DAP, the relevant time period was 1 April 2013 – 30 June 2016. There were 13 action measures (and 42 associated performance indicators) relevant to the review period. Of these 13 action measures, 12 were achieved. Of the 42 performance indicators, 35 were achieved, 3 were partially achieved and 4 were not achieved. One action measure – ‘Provide briefing guides for staff on the practical day to day implementation of the DDA’ – was carried over to the 2016-21 DAP and expanded to take account of different business needs. Within the 2016 - 2021 DAP, the relevant time period for review was 1 July 2016 - 31 March 2018. There were 37 action measures and 86 associated performance indicators relevant to the review period. Of these, 33 action measures and 76 performance indicators were achieved, 3 action measures were partially achieved and had 9 related performance indicators and 1 unachieved action measure had 1 related performance indicator. The 5-year review report has been published on the Assembly website at:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/corporate/disability-action-plan/disability-action-plan-2016-2021/5-year-review-of-disability-action-plan-2013-18.pdf>

Access to and within Parliament Buildings for people with disabilities has been raised as a potential issue and improvements in this area have continued.

The Northern Ireland Assembly Members Survey 2016-17 sought the views of Assembly Members on the services provided in order to help monitor achievements and identify areas for improvement. The fieldwork was undertaken by researchers from the Assembly’s RaISe between October 2016 and January 2107. Interviews were conducted with 18 MLAs. It was found that, whilst improvements to access to and around Parliament Buildings were welcomed, it was felt there was still more to be done in terms of access for those with disabilities.

A visitors’ survey conducted in Autumn 2016 with members of the public found that, of those who rated access to and within Parliament Buildings, all but one participant rated physical access to Parliament Buildings as excellent (9 participants) or good (6 participants). One participant rated access to Parliament Buildings as average. Eleven out of 13 participants rated access within Parliament Buildings as excellent (5 participants) or good (6 participants). Two participants rated access within Parliament Buildings as poor.

An Assembly Question was asked in relation to access for people with disabilities since the last update as and is follows:

Ref no.	Member	Question
AQW 70/17-22	Mr Andy Allen	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the disability accessibility works within Parliament Buildings.

For answer, see Annex 6

It was reported in annual equality reports to the Equality Commission that work has continued to progress to improve access for people with disabilities in Parliament Buildings, in particular for the floors that are open to the public. This work involved relocating the existing shop and café, constructing an access ramp from the entrance lobby to the ground floor and the automation of corridor doors in the basement, ground and first floors. In addition, the south lift was upgraded to fire evacuation standard to facilitate the evacuation of persons with a disability in the event of a fire.

The Assembly Commission is currently working with the Fire Officer on arrangements to safely evacuate disabled persons from the building, in the event of an emergency.

The Assembly Commission continues to maintain the quality of access items/facilities used by the public. This includes maintenance of the Assembly quiet room, a changing places facility, a tactile 'tour map' of Parliament Buildings, an iPad with subtitled version of the Assembly tour, Braille signage and other signage in Parliament Buildings including pictorial signage images.

The Assembly Commission has continued to maintain accreditation awards for the 'Louder than Words' (RNIB) and the Access Award (National Autistic Society) Standards. Accreditation standards can be accessed at the following link:
<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/accessing-parliament-buildings/louder-than-words.pdf>

Staff received a range of training including autism awareness, and "Autism Champions" are in place.

An accessibility webpage has been developed containing information for visitors with a visual impairment, visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing, visitors with autism, wheelchair access arrangements, the Assembly's Inclusive Customer Service Policy and other sources of additional help.

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/visit-and-learning/accessing-parliament-buildings/>.

The web page entitled 'Autism and the Assembly' continues to be maintained to provide information to the public on access arrangements when visiting the Assembly.
<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/visit-and-learning/autism-and-the-assembly/>.

In addition, a further web-based video is available showing how to access Parliament Buildings. This details what is involved in the security check process and what to

expect whilst visiting Parliament Buildings. This video was created for visitors on the autism spectrum, but others have also found this useful with planning their visit. A subtitled version of the video is also available as is a printable version to download.

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/visit-and-learning/accessing-parliament-buildings/>.

During the reporting period an 'Inclusive and Accessible Events: Guide and Checklist' was developed and implemented for secretariat staff. The guide and checklist have been developed for staff involved in the planning, organising and delivery of events at Parliament Buildings and at external venues. They are designed to help staff to organise events that are accessible and in which all attendees can fully participate, and to help staff to take account of the different needs of attendees and to identify potential barriers to participation, particularly for those with disabilities.

5.2 Access to services

Education Service

The Education Service provides programmes and resources for young people to inform and educate them about the Northern Ireland Assembly, and to encourage them to participate in the democratic process. While schools account for the majority of groups availing of the Education Service, youth groups, further education colleges, universities and young people being educated outside of schools also participate. The Education Service also works with other organisations on special activities and events.

Access to services/raising awareness

The Education Service has continued to provide its service in the absence of an operating Assembly. For a summary of activity from 2016-2018, see **Annex 1**; for a breakdown of figures by school type, see **Annex 2**.

Education Service programmes are available to all young people, through primary and secondary schools; youth and community groups; and universities. While the vast majority of school groups fall between the P5 and A-Level age range, the Education Service also delivers programmes to a high number of third-level education groups and some Key Stage 1 groups. In addition to groups from Northern Ireland, the Education Service has delivered programmes to schools and universities from the Republic of Ireland, the rest of the UK, Europe and the USA.

Education Service programmes are advertised widely through mailshots; by post and email, using Mailchimp; and by Twitter. Education officers undertook extensive social media training in 2018. "Latest News" articles are posted on the Education Service's website to raise awareness of laws passed by the Assembly and new Education Service initiatives. The Education Service also makes use of the C2K Noticeboard for

schools and E-Pipe for youth organisations. The Education Service highlights issues by marking events such as Anti-Bullying Week, Road Safety Week and International Day for People with Disabilities, with programmes that feature relevant information about Assembly legislation/inquiries, e.g. Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (2016) and Road Traffic Amendment Act (2016). The Education Service is occasionally asked to attend school open evenings and careers events.

Gender

The Education Service worked with the Department of Communities and Politics Plus on a special programme for a cross-community school group to mark the Centenary of the Representation of the People Act 1918, which granted female suffrage for the first time. This included a 1918-style mock election. The programme was held across 2 days in February 2018 and involved 120 young people. In partnership with the Education Authority, a second, similar event was held in November 2018 and was attended by approximately 200 young people.

In March 2018, the South West Regional College took part in an Education Service programme as part of a “Miss STEM Europe” project. It involved students presenting an action plan to MLAs to address gender imbalance in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) careers.

In the academic year 2017-18, the Education Service facilitated three visits by a cross-community group called ‘Politics in Action’. The project culminated in the young people presenting their views on gender equality to a group of MLAs.

See Annex 3 for a table with numbers of school groups by gender 2016-2018.

Special schools

In its 2018-19 business plan, the Education Service set a target to increase the number of special schools participating in its programmes. In addition to the annual mailshot sent out to all schools in early September, a second mailshot was sent out to all special schools in December 2018. The Education Service offers a bespoke service to special schools to ensure that the programme meets the different needs of different groups in this sector.

Since the last review, Education officers have received Deaf Awareness, Basic Sign Language and Makaton training. One Education officer is an autism “champion”. Visitor information for people with autism is available on the Education Service website.

The Education Service [website](#) continues to adhere to WC3 usability standards. All new video material posted on the website is subtitled and work is almost complete on subtitling all videos on the site. Our website partner, the Council for Curriculum,

Examination and Assessment (CCEA), continues to convert to HTML to make it accessible on all platforms.

Irish medium schools

The Education Service also has an Irish language “champion” who can deliver the education programme in Irish.

The Assembly renewed its partnership with CCEA in March 2017, for a further 5 years, with a view to ensuring that Education Service online resources remain up to date in terms of technology and curriculum support.

Outreach Service

In addition to its inward visits programme, the Education Service provides an outreach service, which is becoming increasingly popular, as the tables below show:

2016 Education Service Outreach Programme data

No. of outreach groups	No. of outreach participants	% of groups overall	% of participants overall	% change in outreach groups over 2015	% change in outreach participants over 2015
46	3388	11	22	+5	-3

2017 Education Service Outreach Programme data

No. of outreach groups	No. of outreach participants	% of groups overall	% of participants overall	% change in outreach groups over 2016	% change in outreach participants over 2016
48	4020	12	26	+4	+16

2018 Education Service Outreach Programme data

No. of outreach groups	No. of outreach participants	% of groups overall	% of participants overall	% change in outreach groups over 2016	% change in outreach participants over 2016
73	5737	19	36	+34	+30

Religious belief or political opinion/special interest and cross-community groups

Schools from all sectors have participated in Education Service programmes (see Annex 2 for a breakdown of figures relating to school type from 2016-2018).

Cross-community groups

The Education Service continues to welcome groups made up of young people from different backgrounds through its general schools programme (including integrated schools) and with young people involved in special cross-community programmes, including shared education partnerships, school learning communities and youth programmes, including National Citizen Service and Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) summer camps, and the Politics in Action cross-community programme (see above). In 2018, the Education Service had 10 shared education groups with 463 participants (three were KS2; four KS3; and two were AS Level).

The Education Service's programmes cover the Belfast Agreement/Good Friday Agreement, the power-sharing nature of devolution in Northern Ireland and the role of government in promoting equality and good relations. They also give young people the opportunity to meet with MLAs from different parties for questions and answer (Q & A) sessions, and MLAs continue to be involved in programmes, even though the Assembly is not meeting.

The Education Service is used by a wide range of customers. Its programmes support many subjects and cross-curricular activities. At primary level, these include Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU); the work of school councils and eco-councils; and rights respecting schools. At secondary level, the Education Service supports teaching and learning in the subjects of Citizenship and Learning for Life and Work (Key Stages 3 and 4); Government and Politics (Key Stages 4 and 5); and History (Key Stages 3 and 4). In relation to further and higher education, the range of students who participate in the programmes is very wide and, in 2018, included students of journalism, law, social policy, nursing and midwifery, conflict resolution, political science, planning and youth work. Outside the formal education system, the Education Service works with a wide range of youth organisations.

Examples of youth groups and specialist groups that participated in the programme in 2018 were:

- Northern Ireland Youth Forum;
- Rotary International Youth Leadership Programme;
- Geological Survey of Northern Ireland;
- YMCA;
- Miss STEM Europe;

- Newry and Mourne Youth Council and Armagh and Banbridge Youth Council;
- T:BUC Summer Camp Programme;
- Pathways;
- National Citizen Service;
- Sea Cadets;
- Belfast Metropolitan Futures Project;
- Ulster University Transitional Justice Institute;
- Stepping Stones Youth Service;
- Clanrye Group;
- Sunlea Education Guidance Centre;
- St Colmcille's Youth Group (Belfast);
- National Union of Students & Union of Students Ireland (NUSUSI); and,
- Northern Ireland Regional Colleges – students of Social Policy/Health/Journalism.

Collaboration with others

The Education Service works with others to deliver special events/activities for young people. For example, it facilitated the second sitting of the Northern Ireland Youth Forum's Youth Congress in the Assembly Chamber on 22 February 2018, chaired by the Speaker. Approximately 180 young people were involved, drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, including young people with special needs. The agenda for debate included mental health and age discrimination.

The Education Service worked with the Department for Communities and Politics Plus on a special event for schools to mark the centenary of women's suffrage. It organised a second, similar event with the Education Authority (see under gender section above).

The Education Service worked with the Speaker's Office and the Assembly Women's Caucus to organise a special debate in the Assembly Chamber, chaired by the Speaker, to mark International Women's Day on 8 March 2019. The theme was gender equality and 74 young women from 29 schools/youth organisations, including a special school, participated in the event. One of the main aims of the event was to maximise the diversity of young women attending. In addition, to help remove barriers to attendance, the Assembly offered some assistance towards the cost of travel and also provided support in the form of research material posted on the website. On the morning of the event, the young people met with MLAs from the Women's Caucus to discuss the motions for the debate. MLAs and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) also participated in the debate.

An education officer represents the Assembly Commission at the NICCY Participation Forum which meets twice yearly to encourage cooperation between government bodies and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to increase the participation of young people in democratic decision-making.

In March 2018, the Education Service organised the annual debate for 25 young people from different backgrounds involved in the YMCA 'Youth in Government programme'.

An annual Science Festival takes place in Parliament Buildings every March as a joint project between the Education Service and Geological Service NI. It involves 135 pupils from 8 schools.

In September 2017, in conjunction with Northern Ireland Environment Link, 50 young people from different schools participated in a special education programme in Parliament Buildings.

The Education Service and Building Services are working with the Eco-Schools Programme, run by 'Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful'. The Assembly is now a delivery partner and an education programmes tailored to eco-schools is promoted on the 'Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful' website. An Education officer attended the annual Eco-School Conference in 2018 and the Education Service will have a stand at the conference in March 2019.

Let's Talk

The Education Service works with schools throughout Northern Ireland to run a series of Let's Talk events, which gives young people from all constituencies the opportunity to meet with MLAs and other young people from different backgrounds. The events take the form of panel Q & A sessions, with interactive polling of views on the topics being discussed. Approximately 80 young people attend each event. Seven Let's Talk events were held in 2016-17 in Belfast, Bangor, Antrim, Derry/Londonderry, Enniskillen and Craigavon. Five more events, including one for Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) young people, were planned for the 2016-17 academic year, but these were cancelled due to the dissolution of the Assembly for the March 2017 election and the subsequent political situation. However, Let's Talk events will be reinstated once the Assembly resumes normal business.

An education officer participated in a National Children's Bureau course on "Mechanisms for Effective Engagement with Children and Young People" and two education officers completed a five-day "Building Change" training course on deliberative engagement strategies, run by Involve (a public participation charity).

Engaging with teachers and those working with young people

The Education Service holds three teacher training events annually for primary and secondary teachers.

Every year, in January, the Education Service hosts two teachers from Stranmillis University College for a two-week work experience programme.

A group of 25 trainee teachers from Stranmillis University College participated in a tailored education programme in April 2018.

New educational materials

The Education Service has recently developed five video animations on the topics of representation; how laws are made; Assembly scrutiny of the Executive; voting in the Chamber; and consociationalism. It is currently working on new "Introduction to the Assembly" animations for primary (Key Stage 2) and post-primary (Key Stages 3 and 4) students.

The Education Service has worked with CCEA to provide factsheets on political parties, with supporting glossary, for teachers and students of the new GCSE in Government and Politics.

Youth Assembly

During 2018-19, the Education Service has been involved in developing a paper for the Assembly Commission on options for the establishment and support of a Northern Ireland Youth Assembly. Assembly Questions regarding the Youth Assembly included:

Ref no.	Member	Question
AQW 113/17-22	Mr Steven Agnew	To ask the Assembly Commission what role it envisages for young people in the establishment and coordination of a Youth Assembly.
AQW 112/17-22	Mr Steven Agnew	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail the consideration given to the role of voluntary sector youth organisations in the establishment of a Youth Assembly.
AQW 111/17-22	Mr Steven Agnew	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail how it plans to expedite the establishment of a Youth Parliament locally to ensure that Northern Ireland is in compliance with General Comment No. 12 on the right of the child to be heard, published in 2009 by the United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child.
AQW 110/17-22	Mr Steven Agnew	To ask the Assembly Commission to outline what plans there are for establishing a statutory role within the structures of the Assembly to encourage youth participation in politics locally.
AQW 109/17-22	Mr Steven Agnew	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the proposed Youth Assembly for Northern Ireland, as approved by the Assembly Commission in 2011.
AQW 108/17-22	Mr Steven Agnew	To ask the Assembly Commission to outline (i) what consideration has been given to supporting a Youth Assembly for Northern Ireland; and (ii) what is required for the establishment of such a body.
AQW 107/17-22	Mr Steven Agnew	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the status of the Youth Panel since the presentation of its proposals in 2011.

For answers, see Annex 6

In June 2019, SMG approved an options paper on the development of a Youth Assembly for presentation at a subsequent meeting of the Assembly Commission.

5.3 Good Relations

The Assembly's RaISe carried out periodic visitors' surveys to assess visitor's views on good relations at Parliament Buildings, based on their experience during their visit. This information informed the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's Good Relations Action Plan 2016-2021. Whilst the sample size of these surveys were small and it is thus difficult to draw conclusions about the experience of the large number of guests in the Assembly each year, feedback from visitors to Parliament Buildings regarding good relations was generally very positive and comments regarding Secretariat staff were generally complimentary. The majority of the respondents stated that they generally felt welcome in Parliament Buildings. The majority of visitors to Parliament Buildings felt that it is welcoming to people of different ethnic origin, religion or political opinion or neutral. Most visitors felt that the flags, symbols or emblems in Parliament Buildings contribute positively to good relations, followed by that they make neither a positive or negative contribution. The majority of respondents felt that the artwork on display in Parliament Buildings makes a positive contribution to good

relations. All of the respondents stated that they felt as though they were treated with respect by staff working in Parliament Buildings irrespective of their ethnic origin, religion or political opinion.

Good Relations monitoring reports are tabled at SMG where updates are provided on progress made towards meeting action measures. The 2016-2021 Good Relations Action Plan and progress updates can be found here:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/good-relations-action-plan/>

Language

At its meeting on 30 March 2017, the SMG approved the draft Language Policy subject to some minor amendments. During the period of this review, two Assembly Questions were asked in relation to language.

Ref no.	Member	Question
AQW 69/17-22	Mr Andy Allen	To ask the Assembly Commission for a breakdown of the cost of all translation services, broken down by language, over each of the last five years.
AQW 68/17-22	Mr Andy Allen	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail the cost implications for the Assembly to comply with each of the provisions contained in Part 3 of the 2015 Public Consultation document on proposals for an Irish Language Bill.

For answers, see Annex 6

Flag flying

Following the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's agreement to review its policy on the flying of the Union flag at Parliament Buildings and to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) to consider the potential equality of opportunity and good relations impacts of any changes to the policy, a full public consultation was held from 27 October 2014 to 2 February 2015.

Policy Arc, an independent consultancy company facilitated the consultation and produced a report to assist the Assembly Commission in making its decision on the review of the policy. This EQIA Final Decision Report was presented to the Commission on 17 June 2015.

At this meeting, the Commission agreed by majority that the Union flag will now be flown from Parliament Buildings on designated days as defined by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, which at that time was an increase of 3 days on the then policy.

For more information including the EQIA Final Decision Report, please see:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/review-of-the-policy-on-the-flying-of-the-union-flag-at-parliament-buildings/>

The outcome of the EQIA was monitored for a period of three years through consideration of any complaints received, related research and EQIAs and through responses to questions on flags contained within the visitor survey. This monitoring was provided to SMG/Commission in the annual reports to the Equality Commission and in the six-monthly progress reports on the Good Relations Action Plan.

An Assembly Question was asked of the Assembly Commission in relation to flag flying during the period of this review of the Audit of Inequalities.

Ref no.	Member	Question
AQW 8/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on its review of the policy affecting the flying of the Union flag from Parliament Buildings.

For answer, see Annex 6

Artefacts

The Good Relations Action Plan contains an action to “Maintain an inventory and monitor the condition of all artefacts belonging to the Assembly.” Discussions at Assembly Commission regarding the display of artefacts have continued. During the period of this review, Assembly Questions to the Assembly Commission on artefacts included:

Ref no.	Member	Question
AQW145/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission, in relation to the recent exhibition of artefacts in Parliament Buildings, to detail the number and nature of any complaints or objections to (i) the holding of the exhibition or (ii) its contents.
AQW106/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on arrangements to inspect and organise a display of Assembly artefacts held in storage.
AQW63/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission pursuant to AQW 35/17-22, for how many years has money been expended on keeping Assembly artefacts in storage; and what is the total spend to date.
AQW54/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission what facility exists for a Member to view the Assembly artefacts currently held in storage.
AQW40/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission the current whereabouts of the Act of Union table, as referred to in previous inventories of artefacts held by the Assembly.
AQW35/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission what is the annual cost of storing Assembly artefacts and artwork off-site.
AQW29/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission in relation to Assembly artefacts, to list how many have been disposed of in the last 12 months, including (i) why they were disposed of; and (ii) how they were disposed.
AQW24/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission to publish a full inventory and valuation of Assembly artefacts, including those (i) on display; and (ii) in storage.
AQW9/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on plans to permit an exhibition of historic artefacts presently in storage.

For answers, see Annex 6

Assembly Commission approach to Centenaries

The “Perspectives On” series of events was established as part of the approach and principles agreed by the Assembly Commission in 2012 to govern how centenaries would be marked within Parliament Buildings. Events marked since this time have included the Ulster Covenant, Female Suffrage, the Dublin Lockout, the Outbreak of World War 1, the Easter Rising and the Battle of the Somme.

The Assembly Commission agreed in November 2018 to initiate its approach on Historic Anniversaries for the current Assembly mandate despite the current political situation. As part of this approach, an event was held in January 2019 to mark the 100th anniversary of Dail Eireann. The Speaker hosted a lecture by Dr Eamon Phoenix which was attended by the Ceann Comhairle, MLAs, members of the public, school and church representatives.

External lighting Policy

Under the external lighting policy, the façade of Parliament Buildings is “colour washed” to recognise a set number of days agreed by the Commission. The policy is currently being reviewed and is available on the Assembly website at the link below:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/northern-ireland-assembly-use-of-external-lighting-policy-at-parliament-buildings-2014/>

Between April 2017 and March 2019, the building was lit on the following days:

Date	Occasion	Colour Parliament Building was lit
6 April 2017	Cedar Foundation (Charity of the Year)	Blue
12 July 2017	Public Holiday	Orange
8 September 2017	Cedar	Blue
10 October 2017	World Mental Health Day	Purple
11 November 2017	Remembrance Day	Red
6 February 2018	Centenary Representation of the People Act 1918	Green/White/Purple
08 March 2018	International Women's Day	Purple
17 March 2018	St Patrick's Day	Green
27 May 2018	Cancer Research UK - Race for Life	Pink
05 July 2018	National Health Service – 70th anniversary	Blue
12 July 2018	Public Holiday	Orange
20 July 2018	Special Olympics Ulster	Red
11 November 2018	Remembrance Day	Red
08 March 2019	International Women's Day	Purple
11 March 2019	European Day for Remembrance of Victims of Terrorism	Red
17 March 2019	St Patrick's Day	Green
12 July 2019	Public Holiday	Orange
2 September 2019	Organ Donation Week	Pink

Assembly Questions to the Assembly Commission regarding the lighting of Parliament Buildings included:

Ref no.	Member	Question
AQW153/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission pursuant to AQW 148/17-22, (i) whether it has any plans to extend the highlighting illumination to include the crest; and (ii) if not, to provide a rationale for this decision.
AQW148/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission pursuant to AQW 144/17-22, why is the crest, which sits prominently above the front door, the only feature of significance omitted from highlighting by the new lighting system: and who took this decision.
AQW146/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail (i) the cost of the recent contract to upgrade the external lighting at Parliament Buildings; and (ii) to whom the contract was awarded.
AQW144/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail (i) why the crest above the front door of Parliament Buildings is no longer lit up at night by a spotlight; (ii) who took that decision; and (iii) the reasons why that decision was taken.

For answers, see Annex 6

5.4 Engagement, events and tours

Engagement Office

The Engagement Office is responsible for advancing and encouraging the public's understanding of the Assembly and the political process in Northern Ireland. It provides the business community, voluntary sector and delegations from across the world with the opportunity to engage and learn more about the legislature.

Assembly Community Connect (ACC) Programme

The ACC programme works to enhance connections between the Assembly and the community through education and outreach, and it provides free training, information

and support for local community groups. Due to the political situation during the reporting period, the demand for activity was relatively low with eight ACC events being held.

In 2017-2018 period ACC activities included training events, a Speaker's event for International Women's Day and the Northern Ireland Assembly's first family friendly educational event. Some examples are set out below:

- RAPID (the Rural Area Partnership in Derry) established the Healthy Ageing Network in Derry in partnership with 6 rural community groups: - Claudy, Learmount, Lettershandoney, Eglinton, Newbuildings and Strathfoyle. This Lottery funded project aims to reduce the isolation and loneliness experienced by older people in rural areas and help them feel more connected to their community. This event brought 60 older people to Parliament Buildings where they learned about the background and structures of the Assembly and met with local MLAs.
- In March 2016, a successful collaboration between the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Belfast School of Art produced 16 pieces of artwork exploring aspects of Northern Ireland's history and future. Artists were asked to create an illustration in response to an aspect of a shared history and future through a visual exploration of Parliament Buildings and Stormont Estate. The pictures were displayed in Parliament Buildings during the summer of 2016 and from October 2016 to July 2017 were displayed in various locations throughout Northern Ireland. The artwork has been extremely well received. The first venue for the touring exhibition was EastSide Visitor Centre in east Belfast, where the exhibition was launched by the Speaker of the Assembly, Robin Newton MLA. A total of 1,125 people viewed the exhibition at EastSide before it moved to Down Arts Centre in Downpatrick. The exhibition attracted greater attention in this second venue with 3,899 people visiting during December. In January 2017 the exhibition moved to Fermanagh House in Enniskillen where approximately 500 people saw the exhibition. The final three exhibition venues were the Tower Museum in Derry/Londonderry, the Braid Arts Centre in Ballymena and the Museum and Civic Centre in Carrickfergus. Visitor numbers at those venues totalled 4,596 with the Tower Museum being particularly popular with 2,474 visitors. The total number of people who viewed the exhibition over the year was approximately 10,100. The exhibition was a unique and extremely effective way of promoting the Assembly to people throughout the province who may not have engaged with it previously and proved to be a successful new engagement platform that should be used again in the future
- On 8 March 2018, the Assembly hosted 150 women from across Northern Ireland at an event to celebrate International Women's Day. The theme centred on the history of female suffrage as well as modern day issues around equality. A networking reception was held in the Members' Dining Room where the invited guests discussed the issues around women's equality. The event ended

with a lively panel debate, hosted by the radio and television presenter Marie-Louise Muir, which included contributions from Paula Bradley MLA, Chair of the Northern Ireland Assembly Women's Caucus; the playwright and actress Maggie Cronin; leading feminist historians' Dr Margaret Ward and Dr Myrtle Hill; and Young Women's Development Worker Emma Johnston.

- On 14 March 2018, as part of the International Women's Day festival, the Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA) worked with the Assembly's Engagement Service to bring local women and children to Parliament Buildings for the day. Women from the WRDA had noted that they felt disconnected from the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution. Most had never visited the building, did not know how to get to Parliament Buildings and had expressed concerns that they thought it was somewhere children would not be welcome. Recent research had also noted that childcare responsibilities are often a key barrier to women's participation not only in formal politics but also in leadership roles within their communities. To try to alleviate some of these barriers the Engagement Service, in partnership with the WRDA, devised this event for women, including those with children who would not normally be able to attend traditional education programmes due to child care responsibilities. Almost 80 participants attended including groups from the Shankill Road, Falls Road and Windsor Women's Centres.
- On 3 December 2018, the Assembly hosted a number of tours for people with a range of disabilities. These included tours for those with a learning difficulty; those with a physical and sensory disability; and those with autism. Over 43 members of the public attended, with representatives of Mencap, the Cedar Foundation, the MS Society and the National Autistic Society also present.
- On 21 March 2019, the Assembly hosted 120 women from across the North West during a visit by the Foyle Women's Information Network. The event included a presentation explaining the relationship between the Assembly and the Executive, as well as the work of the Assembly and how it feeds into everyday life. The group also took part in an extensive Q&A session with the former Minister of Justice in the last Executive.

Events and tours

Events and public tours play an important part in ensuring that Parliament Buildings is a welcoming space and that the Assembly and its work is accessible to all. Tours and events are fully accessible. Examples of events held include:

In March 2018, the Assembly hosted a performance of *Shrieking Sisters*, to make International Women's Day. 151 people attended the performance, followed by a Q&A with Maggie Cronin, a lead actor in the play. There were 123 women in attendance that evening.

Other events included:

- Jan 2018 – WRDR (Women’s Resource and Development Agency – 12 participants (all female)
- Feb 2018 – Health Ageing Network (Derry) – 62 participants (51 Female, 9 Male)
- March 2018 – International Women’s’ Day (as above)
- May 2018 – Faith forum – 20 participants (11 male, 9 female)
- Oct 2018 – NICVA – 22 participants
- Oct 2018 – Unison - 24 participants
- Dec 2018 – International Day of Persons with Disabilities – 44 participants (12 male, 32 Female)

Data on functions and tours in 2018-2019 is as follows:

- Functions held (circa): 300
- Function guests (circa): 22900
- Tours held - sponsored and public (circa): 700
- Tour guests (circa): 1700

Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series

The Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS) was the first of its kind in the UK, formally partnering a legislative arm of government – the Assembly – with academia. Since 2012 the series has been delivered by the Assembly’s RaISe, in partnership with all three universities located in Northern Ireland: Queen’s University Belfast, Ulster University and the Open University. KESS aims to promote evidence-led policy and law-making within Northern Ireland and to encourage debate and improve understanding, providing a forum to present and disseminate academic research findings in a straightforward format on issues that are relevant to governance in Northern Ireland.

A link to the Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series can be found here:

<https://kess.org.uk/>

Seminars held during this reporting period covered issues such as, Women in the Workplace, Mental Health and Parents/Mothers and Children.

6 Developments since the last review of the Audit of Inequalities - Function 2

This section considers progress in addressing equality and good relations issues in relation to the recruitment and ongoing development of suitably qualified and experienced staff to support the Assembly.

Function 2: The recruitment and ongoing development of suitably qualified and experienced staff to support the Assembly.

6.1 Recruitment and selection

Provided that they have demonstrated in their application form that they meet the essential criteria for the post, an applicant with a disability will be offered a guaranteed interview.

As has been the case in the past, consideration will be given to seeking advice from the Equality Commission and action will be taken if necessary. Consideration is also given to the use of welcome statements in job advertisements for under-represented groups where necessary, for example a statement welcoming applications from females for senior posts.

Data on age, gender, community background and disability is gathered for Assembly Secretariat staff. Data on the other Section 75 categories is not collected at present. The following tables show the breakdown of Secretariat staff by these groupings and by grade as at 31 March 2019.

Age breakdown of Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat staff as at 31 March 2019

Age group	No.	%
Under 25	0	0
25 – 29	0	0
30 – 34	17	5.2
35 – 39	51	15.7
40 – 44	61	18.8
45 – 49	66	20.4
50 – 54	49	15.1
55 – 59	44	13.6
60 – 64	28	8.6
65+	8	2.5

Gender breakdown of Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat staff as at 31 March 2019

Male	% of staff	Female	% of staff
180	55.6	144	44.4

Religious breakdown of Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat staff as at 31 March 2019

Protestant	% of staff	Roman Catholic	% of staff	Non-determined	% of staff
184	57	126	39	14	4

Twenty-eight of the 324 members of staff are recorded as having a disability as at 31 March 2019.

Gender equality in recruitment

Best practice is observed by the Commission regarding the gender and community background balance of recruitment panels.

In terms of gender, there continues to be an under-representation of females at the most senior grades of the NIA Secretariat, However the imbalance has improved since the last Audit. Following a recruitment exercise, a female Chief Executive and a female Director has been appointed to SMG and one male Director resigned. There is also a gender and religious imbalance amongst the Usher/Control Room Operative group, the majority of whom are protestant males. A 2016 recruitment exercise for this role resulted in the recruitment of a further four females; a welcome statement for females was included in the advertisement/recruitment pack for the competition.

As of 1 January 2019, the majority of staff working in the NIA Secretariat at grades 1-3 were male (69%) whilst a minority (31%) were female. The imbalance has improved at these grades from the December 2015 report, when 86 % were male and 14% were female. There was a higher proportion of males than females at grades 7 (59% compared to 41%) and grade 8 (67% compared to 33%). There was a higher proportion of females than males at grades 4 (55% compared to 45%), grades 5 (55% compared to 45%) and grades 6 (57% compared to 43%); although the gender gaps are smaller than at the more senior grades.

In comparison with the Northern Ireland workforce, there is a higher proportion of males employed in the NIA Secretariat as Managers, Directors and Senior officials (Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)1), in Associate Professional and Technical occupations (SOC3), and in Elementary occupations (SOC9). In contrast, there is a higher proportion of females in Professional occupations (SOC2), and

Administrative and Secretarial occupations (SOC4) in the NIA Secretariat when compared with the Northern Ireland workforce.

6.2 Existing staff

A number of projects are currently underway to address equality issues for existing staff. Examples include an annual disability audit amongst Secretariat staff, the Unacceptable Behaviours Working Group which has established following the results of the 2017 Staff Survey and the implementation of the Assembly Commission's Gender Action Plan.

Unacceptable Behaviours Working Group

The increase in unacceptable behaviours experienced by staff since the last survey in 2014 was a cause for concern and a dedicated working group was therefore set up to review the findings of the 2017 Staff Survey in relation to unacceptable behaviour and consider what could be done to address the issue. The Unacceptable Behaviour Working Group ("the Working Group") commissioned Inspire as an external facilitator to carry out a review of behaviours at work and provide a report with recommendations on steps to be taken to address unacceptable behaviour in the workplace. Inspire held focus groups and one to one meetings with staff and provided a report to the Working Group in December 2018 which includes a number of recommendations. The Working Group is considering the implementation of the recommendations.

Gender Action Plan

The Gender Action Steering Group was established in June 2013 to discuss how the secretariat might examine the existence of any barriers in relation to gender in the Northern Ireland Assembly, and to consider necessary actions.

Following initial research into gender action plan models used by other legislatures and organisations, and research into potential gender issues within the Assembly Secretariat, the Assembly Commission's Gender Action Plan 2016-18 was established. It is a cross directorate action plan which covers the entire organisation for a two-year period, 2016-2018, and supports the Assembly in complying with its Section 75 duties. Prior to approval by the Commission, the Gender Action Plan was subject to consultation with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and staff. The aims of the Plan are:

- To develop and implement policies/strategies/actions to remove barriers, actual and perceived, to gender equality within the organisation;

- To increase participation at decision-making level in the organisation, particularly at a senior level;
- To foster a culture of awareness and understanding of gender issues and gender equality within the organisation; and,
- To have in place a suite of policies which:
 - Are gender-sensitive
 - Promote gender equality
 - Reflect good practice
 - Comply with legislation.

Progress against the actions in the Plan is overseen by the Gender Action Plan Implementation Group, which reports on progress to SMG and the Assembly Commission every six months. For reporting purposes, the Plan was extended to March 2019, with 92% of individual actions completed within the period. A Closure Report on the first plan was agreed by SMG and the Assembly Commission, together with proposals for a continuing Gender Action Plan for 2019-2023.

The Gender Action Plan 2016-18 and Closure Report can be found at the link below, together with the Plan for 2019-23.:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/equality-policies/gender-action-plan/>

As part of this work, the Assembly participated in the Business in the Community's (BITC) Gender Project which ended in October 2018. This included participation in the Gender Project Survey (See Annex 4 for the results). All of the actions arising from the BITC audit were completed (audit actions were detailed in the 2017-2018 annual progress equality report). The Gender Project also provided the opportunity to learn from the experience of other participants, supporting areas such as policy review and development, and learning and development. It is hoped that the networks and contacts that have been established will be maintained, to allow the Assembly Commission to continue to benefit from the knowledge and experience of other organisations.

Other activities and achievements include: Participation in the NICS and CO3 (Chief Executive Third Generation) mentoring schemes; focusing on the gender balance of Assembly Secretariat staff presenting at SMG and Commission meetings (see data on the gender balance of Secretariat staff presenting at SMG meetings overleaf); ensuring opportunities to attend learning and development events are provided to accommodate all work patterns; the development of policies and guidance to support the life balance, health and well-being of staff (e.g. the Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy); and measures to encourage applications for employment from under-represented groups.

Two actions, which relate to the development of a Transgender Policy, were not completed within the period. These will be carried forward to the Continuing GAP 2019-23, as will the programme of work on membership of the Stonewall Diversity Champion's programme. The 2019-23 GAP also includes a new action by which the Assembly Commission secretariat will participate in a Queen's University Belfast project on gender equality in the UK and Germany.

An action of the Gender Action Plan was to collect and analyse data with respect to the gender balance of opportunities to present to management and of working groups within the organisation. The following tables show the gender balance of Secretariat staff presenting to SMG.

Gender balance of Secretariat staff presenting at SMG meetings, 2016-17

Assembly grade	Female		Male	
	No.	% within females	No.	% within males
3	10	31	15	52
4	8	25	6	21
5	14	44	2	7
6	0	0	4	14
7	0	0	2	7
All grades	32	100	29	100*

**Figures may not sum due to rounding*

Caution - percentages based on small numbers

Gender balance of Secretariat staff presenting at SMG meetings, 2017-18

Assembly grade	Female		Male	
	No.	% within female presenters	No.	% within male presenters
3	9	25.7	16	43.2
4	18	51.4	10	27.0
5	8	22.9	4	10.8
6	-		6	16.2
7	-		1	2.7
All grades	35	100	37	100

**Figures may not sum due to rounding*

Caution - percentages based on small numbers

Gender balance of Secretariat staff presenting at SMG meetings, 2018-19

Assembly grade	Female		Male	
	No.	% within female presenters	No.	% within male presenters
3	6	11.8	14	51.9
4	22	43.1	8	29.6
5	18	35.3	1	3.7
6	5	9.8	3	11.1
7	-	-	1	3.7
All grades	51	100	27	100

**Figures may not sum due to rounding*

Caution - percentages based on small numbers

Staff Survey Gender Report

The Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat carries out a survey of its staff approximately every two years to give staff an opportunity to express their views on their role within the Secretariat and the support available to them and to assess the attitudes of staff in relation to a range of work issues. The research was overseen by the Internal Communications Group. Analysis of the findings was carried out by the Assembly's RaiSe.

The Internal Communications Group developed the questionnaire. The survey was launched on 14 June 2017 and closed on 7 July 2017. The survey was extensively promoted by the Internal Communications Group, with support from the Communications Office. A dedicated page was set up on the Assembly's intranet, AsslSt. Promotional activities took place prior to commencement and during the survey. Incentives were offered to encourage participation in the survey.

The Assembly's RaiSe prepared a report on the findings of the 2017 Staff Survey disaggregated by gender. These findings informed the work of the Gender Action Implementation Group.

A response rate of 90% was achieved. Of those participants who indicated their gender, half were male and half were female. At the time the survey was carried out, 44% of Secretariat staff were female and 56% were male, suggesting that a higher proportion of females than males participated in the survey.

Feedback from both males and females regarding working in the Assembly was generally very positive. Overall, females tended to have more positive views than males about the terms and conditions, the physical working environment and the approach to health and safety, whilst the majority of both males and females agreed that they have a good work/life balance.

Males were more likely than females to say that they have been subjected to unacceptable behaviour since the last staff survey.

Males were more likely than females to agree that they have sufficient opportunities to provide feedback to their manager and to agree that their manager recognises when they have done their job well.

Females were more likely than males to agree that they understand the roles and responsibilities of SMG whereas males were more likely than females to say they 'don't know' or have 'no opinion'. Males were more likely than females to agree that change is well managed by SMG or to say they 'don't know' or have 'no opinion'. Males were also more likely than females to agree that SMG members are sufficiently visible.

Whilst females were more likely than males to say that they are aware of the roles and responsibilities of the Assembly Commission, males were more likely to say that they know what the strategic aims and goals of the Assembly Commission's current strategy are.

Whilst females were much more likely than males to agree that they are satisfied with how their performance is reviewed, males were more likely to agree that they have meaningful discussions with their line manager about their performance and development throughout the year.

Overall, females were more positive about access to and the impact of learning opportunities on performance than males. Females were more likely than males to disagree that they are satisfied with the opportunities that they have for career development whilst males were more likely to say they 'don't know' or have 'no opinion'.

Generally speaking, males were more positive about internal communications than females. However, females were more positive about the effectiveness of meetings than males. Females were more likely than males to agree that team meetings are an effective way of raising issues and obtaining information. Females were also more likely than males to agree that Directorate meetings are an effective way of raising issues and obtaining information.

Equality and Good Relations Survey

In October and November 2018, an Equality and Good Relations Survey was carried out with Assembly Secretariat Staff. The purpose of this survey was to gather the views of Secretariat staff on how the Assembly Commission is performing in fulfilling its statutory equality of opportunity and good relations obligations and to give staff an opportunity to raise any issues. The findings of this survey are currently being considered. For more information on this survey including details of the results, please see Annex 5.

People with dependent children

Assembly Commission staff can claim Childcare Vouchers or apply for a Tax Free Scheme if using registered childcare. Two further mechanisms are in place to support those with dependent children. The first of these relates to staff who incur additional childcare costs as a direct result of the need to attend or remain in their place of employment outside of their normal working pattern to facilitate Assembly business. The second relates to staff whose children have a disability that is unlikely to be accommodated within usual childcare arrangements.

A screening exercise on the Mandatory Temporary Redeployment policy completed in September 2017 identified that a number of staff have flexible working patterns and therefore do not work a standard 9-5 pattern. Staff being temporarily relocated due to the ongoing political situation may have extended travel time which will impact disproportionately on them due to caring responsibilities. The potential adverse impact on staff with flexible working pattern has been addressed in the policy in that HR Office will liaise with the host organisation to establish whether the flexible working pattern can be accommodated in the post that staff member has been matched to. HR Office will continually liaise with host organisations to identify posts which could accommodate flexible working arrangements. The issue of travel time has been considered and it is proposed that the issue is resolved at local level with the line manager in the host organisation. If an agreement cannot be agreed with the host organisation, then the staff member should raise the issue with the Assembly's Human Resources Office. Posts outside of Belfast will only be considered at the individual's request.

Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme

At its meeting of 19 December 2018, the Assembly Commission agreed to become a member of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme. The application process commenced in December 2018 and the Assembly Commission became a member in January 2019. Work has commenced on a review of a number of HR policies and completion of the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.

Disability

The screening exercise on the Mandatory Temporary Redeployment policy completed in September 2017 identified the potential adverse impact on staff with reasonable adjustments in place due to disability. This has been addressed in the policy in that HR Office will liaise with the host organisation to establish whether the reasonable adjustments can be accommodated in the post that staff member has been matched to. HR Office will continually liaise with host organisations to identify posts which could accommodate reasonable adjustments.

The screening document for the Mandatory Temporary Redeployment policy can be found here:

http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/corporate/equality-screening/july2017-september2017/mandatory_temporary_redeployment_policy.pdf

6.3 Training 2017-2019

2018-2019 Training

The Learning & Development (L&D) team facilitated a range of learning activities, which met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme during 2018-19. For example, four staff who were supported in obtaining British Sign Language Level 2 during 17-18 progressed to BSL Level 3 in September 2018 and will finalise in June 2019. Twenty-nine staff members also enhanced their communication skills by undertaking a workshop on Makaton.

In addition to formal training courses, a range of relevant Masterclasses/short courses for staff were delivered in 2018-19:

Masterclass/ Course Title	Date	Number in attendance
Stroke Awareness Masterclass	18 May 2018	16
British Sign Language Level 2	Completed 18 May 2018	6
Introduction to Makaton training course	21 May 2018	29
Dementia Awareness Masterclass	25 May 2018	16
Senac Information Session	30 May 2018	13
Mental Health First Aiders Information session	9 May 2018	17
The Mindful Manager training course	4 July 2018	9
Family Mediation Masterclass	26 July 2018	12
Masterclass on Menopause Awareness	13 Sept 18	19
Harassment Contact Officers refresher training	15 Oct 2018	4
Take 10 Stress Awareness Masterclass	21 Nov 2018	22
Positive Mental Health Masterclass	28 Nov 2018	8
Masterclass on Domestic Violence	10 Dec 2018	6
Section 75 Awareness Workshop	13 Dec 2018	13
Equality Screening Workshop	24 Jan 2019	16
Mood Matters for men	1 Feb 2019	14
Trans inclusion Awareness Masterclass	7 Feb 2019	12
Masterclass on Racial Equality	6 Mar 2019	12
Living Life to the Full (CBT) training course	28 Mar 2019	20

Staff attended the following relevant conferences:

Conference Title	Event Start Date	Number of Staff Attending
Women in Leadership in a Changing World	22 May 18	1
Making Parenting work	22 Oct 18	1

An e-learning platform created by the Centre for Applied Learning (CAL) is used to deliver a range of short e-learning packages to staff. It is intended to release the following e-learning course to all staff members in 2019-20:

- Disability Awareness for Frontline Staff

2017-2018 Training

The L&D team facilitated a range of learning activities which met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme during 2017-18. For example, eight staff who were supported in obtaining British Sign Language Level 1 progressed to BSL Level 2 beginning on 9 June 2017 and running for 35 weeks. Two staff also completed their BSL Level 2 qualification with Queen's University during this year. In addition, eighteen staff completed Mental Health First Aid training with Action Mental Health in October 2017 to become the Assembly's Mental Health First Aiders. The L&D team also supported a senior HR manager to participate in a course in 'Mediation Theory and Practice' with Mediation NI. The L&D team also organised a range of learning activities including an information fair, the release of daily factsheets and Masterclasses, which were held during the week of World Mental Health Day in October 2017.

In addition to formal training courses, a range of relevant Masterclasses/short courses for staff were delivered in 2017-18:

Masterclass/ Course Title	Date	Number in attendance
Mental Health Awareness Masterclass	Sept 2017	11
Building Confidence	Sept 2017	8
Parenting NI	Sept 2017	17
Carer Awareness	Sept 2017	11
Addiction NI: Interactive Sessions on Drugs and Alcohol	Throughout 2017-18	309
Yoga	Oct 2017	15
Mental Health Awareness	Oct 2017	8
Mindfulness	Oct 2017	18
Suicide Awareness	Oct 2017	22
Meditation	March 2018	24

Staff attended the following relevant conferences:

Conference Title	Event Start Date	Number of Staff Attending
CIPD Wellbeing & Resilience Conference 2017	Nov 2017	1
Building Resilience for improved performance	Nov 2017	1
Improving Workplace Wellbeing	Nov 2017	1
Annual Review of Employment Law	Nov 2017	6
Delivering on Diversity: NICS People Strategy	March 2018	1

An e-learning platform created by the Centre for Applied Learning (CAL) was used to deliver a range of short e-learning packages to staff. During this reporting period, the following relevant courses were released:

Course Title	Mandatory	Release date
Autism Awareness	No	Sept 2017
Line Managers role in Managing Stress	No	Feb 2018
Managing Personal Stress & Resilience	No	Feb 2018
Positive Mental Health Toolkit for all staff	No	Feb 2018
Positive Mental Health Toolkit for Line-managers	No	Feb 2018
Unconscious Bias	Yes	March 18

7 Summary of inequalities

Since the last review, a number of areas have progressed such as further work to improve access to and within Parliament Buildings for people with disabilities, the development and implementation of the Gender Action Plan and agreement regarding flying the Union flag from Parliament Buildings. A number of issues remain as summarised in the below table.

	Issues identified in the review
Religious Belief	<p>Continue to ensure Parliament Buildings is welcoming to all persons regardless of their religious belief including those with no religion through various actions, for example, continued implementation of Good Relations Action Plan.</p> <p>http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/good-relations-action-plan/</p> <p>Consideration will be given to seeking advice from the Equality Commission, where necessary, and relevant actions will be considered as appropriate e.g. affirmative action when advertising future vacancies.</p>
Political opinion	<p>Continue to ensure Parliament Buildings is welcoming to all persons regardless of their political opinion. through various actions, for example, continued implementation of Good Relations Action Plan.</p> <p>http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/good-relations-action-plan/</p> <p>Development of a Language Policy is ongoing.</p>
Racial Group	<p>Continue to ensure Parliament Buildings is welcoming to all persons regardless of their racial group through various actions, for example, continued implementation of Good Relations Action Plan.</p> <p>http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/good-relations-action-plan/</p>

	Issues identified in the review
Age	Continue to engage with young people through the Education Service, engagement services and Committees and continue to take relevant action e.g. development of a youth assembly
Marital status	No issues identified.
Sexual orientation	Membership of the Stonewall Diversity Champion's programme. Continue completion and organisational implementation of Stonewall's Diversity Champions Programme. https://www.stonewall.org.uk/node/126336
Men and women generally	Continue with implementation of the 2019-2023 Gender Action Plan for Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat. http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/equality-policies/gender-action-plan/
Disability	Continue to improve access in Parliament Buildings for Members, visitors and staff with disabilities through various action, for example, continued implementation of the NIA Disability Action Plan. http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/equality-and-good-relations/disability-action-plan-2016-21/
Dependants	Assembly Commission staff can claim Childcare Vouchers or apply for a Tax free scheme if using registered childcare. Support for staff who incur additional childcare costs as a direct result of the need to attend or remain in their place of employment outside of their normal working pattern to facilitate Assembly business. Support for staff is in place whose children have a disability that is unlikely to be accommodated within usual childcare arrangements.

8 Conclusion

The Northern Ireland Assembly has demonstrated its commitment to promoting equality and good relations through its draft Corporate Strategy for 2018-2023 and draft Public Engagement Strategy 2018-2023. Progress has been made in a number of areas including work to improve access to and within Parliament Buildings for people with disabilities, the development and implementation of the Gender Action Plan and agreement regarding flying the Union flag from Parliament Buildings. A number of issues remain and work is underway to progress these such as the establishment of a youth assembly.

Annex 1

Education programme participants by Group, 2016

Group Type	Total groups	Percentage of total	Participants	Percentage of participants
Adult	9	2.1%	224	1.5%
Exchange	36	8.2%	1,161	7.6%
FHE	12	2.7%	253	1.7%
FHE (External Outreach)	1	0.2%	30	0.2%
School	257	58.5%	7,939	51.8%
School (External Outreach)	35	8.0%	3,037	19.8%
University	38	8.7%	1,269	8.3%
Youth Group	41	9.3%	10,84	7.1%
Youth Group (External Outreach)	10	2.3%	321	2.1%
Total	439		15,318	

Education programme participants by Group, 2017

Group Type	Total groups	Percentage of total	Participants	Percentage of participants
Adult	9	2.2%	227	1.5%
Adult (External Outreach)	1	0.3%	20	0.1%
Exchange	25	6.2%	892	5.8%
FHE	12	3.0%	275	1.8%
School	231	57.5%	7,384	47.9%
School (External Outreach)	45	11.2%	3,900	25.3%
University	39	9.7%	1,335	8.7%
University (External Outreach)	2	0.5%	100	0.7%
Youth Group	38	9.5%	1,294	8.4%
Total	402		15,427	

Education programme participants by Group, 2018

Group Type	Total groups	Percentage of total	Participants	Percentage of participants
Adult	7	1.9%	146	0.9%
Exchange	29	7.7%	1,008	6.3%
FHE	7	1.6%	114	0.7%
School	185	48.9%	6,791	42.2%
School (External Outreach)	70	18.5%	5,627	34.9%
University	30	7.9%	999	6.2%
University (External Outreach)	1	0.3%	50	0.3%
Youth Group	47	12.4%	1,318	8.2%
Youth Group (External Outreach)	2	0.5%	60	0.4%
Total	378		16,113	

Annex 2

School visits (inward and outreach) by school type, 2016

School Type	Total groups	Participants
Controlled Grammar	23	802
Controlled Primary	68	2,112
Controlled Primary (External Outreach)	10	465
Controlled Secondary	34	1,108
Controlled Secondary (External Outreach)	4	610
Further & Higher Education	2	26
Integrated Primary	8	245
Integrated Secondary	10	316
Maintained Primary	30	843
Maintained Primary (External Outreach)	6	460
Maintained Secondary	30	1,013
Maintained Secondary (External Outreach)	8	747
Special Secondary	5	59
University	1	48
Voluntary Grammar	46	1,375
Voluntary Grammar (External Outreach)	7	755
Voluntary Primary	4	106

School visits (inward and outreach) by school type, 2017

School Type	Total groups	Participants
Controlled Grammar	21	701
Controlled Grammar (External Outreach)	1	17
Controlled Primary	69	2,197
Controlled Primary (External Outreach)	13	693
Controlled Secondary	28	1,087
Controlled Secondary (External Outreach)	4	666
Integrated Primary (External Outreach)	1	79
Integrated Secondary	8	316
Maintained Primary	34	1,116
Maintained Primary (External Outreach)	7	432
Maintained Secondary	16	388
Maintained Secondary (External Outreach)	9	741
Special Primary	1	8
Special Primary (External Outreach)	1	22
Special Secondary	7	139
University	4	98
University (External Outreach)	1	50
Voluntary Grammar	44	1,365
Voluntary Grammar (External Outreach)	10	1,270
Voluntary Primary	5	131

School visits (inward and outreach) by school type, 2018

School Type	Total groups	Participants
Controlled Grammar	13	512
Controlled Grammar (External Outreach)	3	176
Controlled Primary	62	2,394
Controlled Primary (External Outreach)	18	1,272
Controlled Secondary	23	886
Controlled Secondary (External Outreach)	8	813
Further & Higher Education	3	50
Integrated Primary	2	61
Integrated Secondary	8	304
Integrated Secondary (External Outreach)	2	275
Maintained Primary	26	987
Maintained Primary (External Outreach)	20	1,287
Maintained Secondary	14	416
Maintained Secondary (External Outreach)	10	765
Special Secondary	7	103
Special Secondary (External Outreach)	1	13
University	1	14
University (External Outreach)	1	50
Voluntary Grammar	29	1,118
Voluntary Grammar (External Outreach)	8	1,026
Voluntary Primary	4	111

Education service figures 1 April 2018-31 March 2019

School Type	No. of groups	No. of participants
Controlled Grammar	14	557
Controlled Grammar (External Outreach)	2	158
Controlled Primary	53	2,322
Controlled Primary (External Outreach)	20	1,396
Controlled Secondary	27	1,010
Controlled Secondary (External Outreach)	5	536
Further & Higher Education	3	50
Integrated Primary	3	119
Integrated Primary (External Outreach)	1	42
Integrated Secondary	9	375
Integrated Secondary (External Outreach)	3	325
Maintained Primary	26	924
Maintained Primary (External Outreach)	17	1,173
Maintained Secondary	12	333
Maintained Secondary (External Outreach)	9	665
Special Secondary	11	165
Special Secondary (External Outreach)	3	42
University	1	14
Voluntary Grammar	27	1,084
Voluntary Grammar (External Outreach)	6	995
Voluntary Primary	4	111
Total	256	12,396

Education service figures 1 April 2018-31 March 2019

Group Type	No. of groups	Percentage of groups	Participants	Percentage of participants
Adult	7	1.9%	141	0.9%
Exchange	29	7.9%	1,034	6.6%
FHE	7	1.9%	113	0.7%
School	182	49.6%	6,869	43.6%
School (External Outreach)	66	18.0%	5,332	33.9%
University	28	7.6%	872	5.5%
Youth Group	46	12.5%	1,332	8.5%
Youth Group (External Outreach)	2	0.5%	60	0.4%
Total	367		15,753	

Annex 3**School visits by gender, 2016**

	Group No.	% of groups	Participants	% participants
Female	19	4.3%	621	4.1%
Male	8	1.8%	278	1.8%
Mixed	412	93.8%	14,419	94.1%

School visits by gender, 2017

	Group No.	% of groups	Participants	% participants
Female	21	5.2%	1,024	6.6%
Male	10	2.5%	504	3.3%
Mixed	371	92.3%	13,899	90.1%

School visits by gender, 2018

	Group No.	% of groups	Participants	% participants
Female	14	3.7%	690	4.3%
Male	13	3.4%	504	3.1%
Mixed	351	92.9%	14,919	92.6%

Annex 4**Northern Ireland Assembly Gender Project Survey December 2016**

The Assembly Secretariat's Gender Action Plan set out actions and measures to promote gender equality within the Secretariat. One of the actions within the Gender Action Plan was to participate in Business in the Community's Gender Project, which commenced in 2015. The key outcome of the Project is "to increase gender diversity to create enabling workplaces for men and women. To supplement information collated through the Baseline Audit Tool, Business in the Community sought the views of staff in relation to gender issues via a short survey.

The survey was issued electronically to Assembly Secretariat staff on 18 November 2016 with an initial closing date of Friday 2 December 2016. A reminder was issued to staff on 30 November 2016. The deadline was then extended to 9 December 2016 to encourage responses. Staff were informed that the survey was confidential and that the results would be collated by RaISe and provided to Business in the Community.

In total, 137 members of staff participated in the survey, a response rate of 38.2%.

A total of 69 males and 67 females completed the survey.

Responses to 'As an employer, the Northern Ireland Assembly values diversity'

	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Strongly agree	15	21.7	5	7.5	20	14.7
Agree	29	42.0	27	40.3	56	41.2
Neither agree nor disagree	12	17.4	28	41.8	40	29.4
Disagree	7	10.1	6	9.0	13	9.6
Strongly disagree	6	8.7	1	1.5	7	5.1
Total	69	100.0	67	100.0	136	100.0

Just over a third of respondents (36.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that there is a good gender balance throughout all areas of NI Assembly Secretariat. Males were more likely than females to agree or strongly agree that there is a good gender balance throughout all areas of NI Assembly Secretariat.

Responses to 'There is a good gender balance throughout all areas of NI Assembly Secretariat'

	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%*
Strongly agree	9	13.0	2	3.0	11	8.1
Agree	19	27.5	19	28.4	38	27.9
Neither agree nor disagree	14	20.3	14	20.9	28	20.6
Disagree	16	23.2	25	37.3	41	30.1
Strongly disagree	11	15.9	7	10.4	18	13.2
Total	69	100.0	67	100.0	136	100.0

Figures may not sum due to rounding

More than two thirds of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (68.9%) that the Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat has policies in place that promote equality and diversity. Females were more likely than males to agree or strongly agree that the Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat has policies in place that promote equality and diversity.

Responses to 'The Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat has policies in place that promote equality and diversity'

	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%*
Strongly agree	14	20.9	11	16.9	25	18.9
Agree	30	44.8	36	55.4	66	50.0
Neither agree nor disagree	13	19.4	11	16.9	24	18.2
Disagree	6	9.0	5	7.7	11	8.3
Strongly disagree	4	6.0	2	3.1	6	4.5
Total	67	100.0	65	100.0	132	100.0

Figures may not sum due to rounding

Just under two thirds of respondents (65.2%) said that they had participated in a diversity training session during their time at the Northern Ireland Assembly. A higher proportion of

males than females said that they had participated in a diversity training session (see Table 4).

Responses to ‘Have you ever participated in a diversity training session during your time at the Northern Ireland Assembly?’

	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	46	68.7	40	61.5	86	65.2
No	21	31.3	25	38.5	46	34.8
Total	67	100.0	65	100.0	132	100.0

Just over two thirds of respondents (67.7%) said that they think that training and development opportunities are accessible to all employees within the Northern Ireland Assembly. A slightly higher proportion of males than females said that they think that training and development opportunities are accessible to all employees within the Northern Ireland Assembly (see Table 5).

Responses to ‘Do you think training and development opportunities are accessible to all employees within the Northern Ireland Assembly?’

	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	45	68.2	43	67.2	88	67.7
No	21	31.8	21	32.8	42	32.3
Total	66	100.0	64	100.0	130	100.0

One in three respondents (29.2%) said that they have availed of flexible working conditions during their time at the Northern Ireland Assembly. A higher proportion of females than males said that they have availed of flexible working conditions (see Table 6).

Table 6: Responses to ‘Have you ever availed of flexible working conditions during your time at the Northern Ireland Assembly, eg working part-time, condensed hours, partial retirement etc?’

	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	17	25.8	21	32.8	38	29.2
No	49	74.2	43	67.2	92	70.8
Total	66	100.0	64	100.0	130	100.0

Annex 5**Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Secretariat Equality and Good Relations Survey 2018**

In October and November 2018, a survey was carried out with Assembly Secretariat Staff. The purpose of this survey was to gather the views of Secretariat staff on how the Assembly Commission is performing in fulfilling its statutory equality of opportunity and good relations obligations and to give staff an opportunity to raise any issues. The findings will help to inform the development and monitoring of a number of key equality documents, such as the Assembly Commission's Audit of Inequalities and the Annual Report to the Equality Commission.

A questionnaire was developed by the Assembly's Equality Unit. The anonymous online survey was launched on 30 October 2018 with a closing date of 20 November 2018. Incentives were offered to encourage participation. The data was analysed by the Assembly's RaiSe and a report was prepared in January 2019.

A total of 102 responses were received, a response rate of 31%.

Whilst the majority of respondents did not raise any equality and good relations issues, the research identifies a number of potential issues and barriers for consideration. Respondents put forward a number of suggestions as to how these could potentially be addressed.

Of the key findings:

- 64.4% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the Assembly Commission is committed to promoting equality of opportunity.
- 37.6% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that more could be done to promote equality of opportunity.
- 71.4% strongly agreed or agreed that the Assembly Commission is committed to promoting good relations.
- 40.5% strongly agreed or agreed that more could be done to promote good relations.
- 64.3% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the Assembly Commission offers appropriate support to staff with disabilities.
- 62.3% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that access for people with disabilities in Parliament Buildings is good.
- 32.9% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that more could be done to encourage people with disabilities to participate/engage with the Assembly.
- More than half of those who responded (54.4%) felt they would benefit from refresher equality and good relations training.

Annex 6

Assembly Question relating to disability access

Ref no.	Member	Question
AQW 70/17-22	Mr Andy Allen	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the disability accessibility works within Parliament Buildings.
<p>Answer</p> <p>All of the improvement works that the Commission approved at its meeting on 3 March 2016 have now been completed.</p> <p>These include the automation of corridor doors on the Basement, Ground and First Floors, the refurbishment and upgrade of the South Lift to fire evacuation standard, alterations to the counter in the Members' Bar and the creation of new internal ramped access / egress from the foyer to Ground Floor level.</p> <p>In addition, a new Café / Gift Shop facility for visitors has been created at Ground Floor Level.</p> <p>Following completion of the above works, work is underway to address a small number of minor defects.</p>		

Assembly Questions regarding a Youth Assembly

Ref no.	Member	Question
AQW 113/17-22	Mr Steven Agnew	To ask the Assembly Commission what role it envisages for young people in the establishment and co-ordination of a Youth Assembly.
<p>Answer</p> <p>As detailed in AQW 112/17-22 (see above), from the outset the Assembly Commission has fully engaged young people in the development of proposals for the establishment of a youth assembly. Those proposals included the recommendation that the delivery of a youth assembly should be contracted out to a youth organisation.</p> <p>Decisions on the model and implementation of a youth assembly will be for the Assembly Commission to take in due course but it is anticipated that this will include consideration of how young people should be involved in its operation. The Speaker has asked officials to include an item on the agenda for the Commission's next scheduled meeting in early March to provide it with the opportunity to consider the potential for addressing the issue of a youth assembly at the present time.</p>		
AQW 112/17-22	Mr Steven Agnew	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail the consideration given to the role of voluntary sector youth organisations in the establishment of a Youth Assembly.
<p>Answer</p> <p>The Assembly Commission carried out considerable work between 2009 and 2011 regarding the establishment of a youth assembly. During that period the Commission involved and consulted a number of representative youth organisations and accepted their advice that young people should drive the project.</p> <p>In addition to consulting representative youth organisations, the Commission recruited a panel of 30 young people between the ages of 16 and 18 to develop proposals for a youth assembly. The resulting Youth Panel consulted a range of organisations to find out their views on a youth assembly and many youth organisations helped organise consultation events. In addition, the Spirit of Enniskillen Trust, Youth Action and the Northern Ireland Youth Forum worked in partnership with the Commission to deliver residential weekend workshops to train the Youth Panel in research and consultation skills. In addition Youth Action and the Northern Ireland Youth Forum assisted Assembly Commission staff and the Youth Panel to develop its proposals for a youth assembly.</p>		

The Youth Panel presented its proposals to the Assembly Commission in March 2011. A public consultation exercise was then held which provided a further opportunity for youth organisations to put forward their views and help shape the final proposals, which included the recommendation that the delivery of a youth assembly should be contracted out to a youth organisation.

AQW 111/17-22

Mr
Steven
Agnew

To ask the Assembly Commission to detail how it plans to expedite the establishment of a Youth Parliament locally to ensure that Northern Ireland is in compliance with General Comment No. 12 on the right of the child to be heard, published in 2009 by the United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Answer

Further to the detail set out in AQWs 107-110/17-22, the Assembly Commission carried out considerable work between 2009 and 2011 regarding the establishment of a youth assembly. Since then, a number of challenges, including budget constraints and a lack of political agreement on a model to take forward, have resulted in the project being put on hold.

Notwithstanding those constraints and lack of agreement, the Commission has actively pursued a range of other activities to engage young people, not least through its Education Service. The Commission has also undertaken a variety of events and projects in order to promote engagement of young people with the business of the Assembly, including its committees. Indeed, you will be aware that Northern Ireland Youth Forum was granted the rare privilege of using the Assembly Chamber to hold two youth assemblies, the first in November 2016 and the second only last week.

I understand that the Speaker has asked officials to include an item on the agenda for the Commission's next scheduled meeting in early March to provide it with the opportunity to consider the potential for addressing the issue of a youth assembly at the present time.

Ref no.	Member	Question
AQW 110/17-22	Mr Steven Agnew	To ask the Assembly Commission to outline what plans there are for establishing a statutory role within the structures of the Assembly to encourage youth participation in politics locally.
<p>Answer</p> <p>When a new Assembly Commission is appointed, officials intend to engage with it at an early stage, with the aim of agreeing options and pursuing funding to establish a youth assembly.</p> <p>There are currently no plans for establishing a statutory role within the structures of the Assembly to encourage youth participation. However, the Assembly Commission remains committed to engaging young people in the work of the Assembly. The Education Service continues to work with schools and the youth sector to increase young people's understanding of the work of the Assembly and to encourage their engagement with the democratic process. The Education Service has also worked with Assembly Committees to consult young people on legislation and inquiry issues, including:</p> <p>School Councils (2011-12);</p> <p>Marine Bill (2012-13);</p> <p>Shared and Integrated Education (2014-15);</p> <p>School Inspections (2013-14);</p> <p>Building a United Community Strategy (2014-15);</p> <p>Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill (2015-16); and</p> <p>Road Traffic Bill (2015-16).</p> <p>In addition, the Assembly Commission's Education and Outreach services work with schools and youth organisations to raise awareness of how the Assembly works, how to influence its decisions and the wider democratic process.</p> <p>The Education Service engages with approximately 14,000 young people per year, through inward visits, outreach programmes and special projects. The Education Service also developed a 'Let's Talk' programme, to bring young people and MLAs together to discuss issues concerning young people, with an average of five events per year held across Northern Ireland.</p> <p>European Union funding (Erasmus+) was secured by the Education Service to run a year-long programme involving over 30 young people. They consulted other young people</p>		

across Northern Ireland about their chosen issue of young people's mental health and the services available to support them. The young people reported their findings to two Assembly Committees.

AQW 109/17-22

Mr
Steven
Agnew

To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the proposed Youth Assembly for Northern Ireland, as approved by the Assembly Commission in 2011.

Answer

The answer to Assembly question AQW 108/17-22 also refers.

Since the Assembly Commission considered proposals from the Youth Panel for a Northern Ireland Youth Assembly in 2011, it is my understanding that a number of obstacles were encountered including constraints on the Commission's budget, and being unable to obtain agreement from OFMdFM on a model which could be taken forward with Executive funding.

In recognition of the difficulties, the Commission pursued a range of other activities where progress could be made to engage with young people. It also minimised reductions to the Education Service budget relative to other areas of the Secretariat in order to prioritise that work. To underline the importance of youth engagement, Speaker McLaughlin granted the Northern Ireland Youth Forum the rare privilege of using the Assembly Chamber for its Youth Congress debate for the first time in November 2015 and presided over the event.

Following that event, and ahead of the 2016 elections, Speaker McLaughlin raised correspondence at the Commission between himself and the Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Youth Forum. While agreeing that a youth assembly was an issue to be returned to in the future, the Commission concurred with Speaker McLaughlin's view of the need to take an approach which reached as many young people as possible, including by mainstreaming youth engagement into the main business of the Assembly and its committees on issues such as mental health which the Northern Ireland Youth Forum had chosen as its priority issue.

The Commission appreciates the frustration which exists over the fact that there is currently no Youth Assembly. In the event of the Assembly returning to normal business, a newly elected Speaker and successor Commission, could expect to be approached at an early stage to consider a range of options in order to advance the development of a youth assembly. In the interim, it is not as easy to assess what progress can be made at the present time.

Since the Assembly dissolved for early elections in January 2017, the outgoing Assembly Commission has not given consideration to the introduction of a youth assembly as it has been prioritising issues arising from the political situation, including staff redeployment.

The Commission has been cautious in relation to starting new initiatives, and proposals for new expenditure, amidst the current political uncertainty.

Speaker Newton agreed last June to permit the Youth Congress to use the Assembly Chamber for the second time and presided over the event on 22 February 2018. In anticipation that this issue will be raised, I understand that the Speaker has asked officials to add the youth assembly to the agenda for the Commission's next scheduled meeting in early March so that there is an opportunity for the current Commission to consider the potential for addressing this issue at the present time.

AQW 108/17-22	Mr Steven Agnew	To ask the Assembly Commission to outline (i) what consideration has been given to supporting a Youth Assembly for Northern Ireland; and (ii) what is required for the establishment of such a body.
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Answer

In 2011 the Assembly Commission considered proposals from the Youth Panel for a Northern Ireland Youth Assembly. Based on those proposals, the Commission undertook a public consultation between May and September 2011. That consultation demonstrated widespread support for a youth assembly and for the Youth Panel's proposed model, which included proposals that the delivery of such an assembly should be contracted out to an external youth organisation. Due to constraints on the Assembly Commission's budget at that time, and with no additional funding being available for the project from the Executive, proposals for a youth assembly were put on hold and the Commission focused on other engagement initiatives with young people through its education and outreach programmes, including securing funding through Erasmus+ for a youth project on mental health, and the work of Committees.

Since the Assembly elections in 2017 the Assembly Commission has given priority to issues arising from the current political difficulties and has not considered proposals relating to a youth assembly. Speaker Newton agreed last June to permit the Youth Congress to use the Assembly Chamber for the second time and presided over the event on 22 February 2018. In anticipation that this issue will be raised, I understand that the Speaker has asked officials to add the youth assembly to the agenda for the Commission's next scheduled meeting in early March so that there is an opportunity for the current Commission to consider the potential for addressing this issue at the present time.

Ref no.	Member	Question
AQW 107/17-22	Mr Steven Agnew	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the status of the Youth Panel since the presentation of its proposals in 2011.
<p>Answer</p> <p>The Youth Panel was established to undertake a time-bounded project to develop proposals for a Northern Ireland youth assembly and it duly carried out that work between March 2010 and September 2011. Following presentation of its proposals to the Assembly Commission in March 2011, and the Commission's subsequent public consultation on a youth assembly, the Panel's final role was to assist with the review of responses to that consultation and approving minor changes to its original proposals. The Youth Panel is now no longer in place.</p> <p>Since the Assembly elections in 2017 the Assembly Commission has given priority to issues arising from the current political difficulties and has not considered proposals relating to a youth assembly. When a new Commission is appointed, officials intend to engage with it at an early stage, with the aim of agreeing options and pursuing funding to establish a youth assembly.</p> <p>In the interim, I understand that the Speaker has asked officials to add the youth assembly to the agenda for the Commission's next scheduled meeting in early March so that there is an opportunity for the current Commission to consider the potential for addressing this issue at the present time.</p>		

Assembly Questions regarding language

Ref no.	Member	Question
AQW 69/17-22	Mr Andy Allen	To ask the Assembly Commission for a breakdown of the cost of all translation services, broken down by language, over each of the last five years.
<p>The breakdown of translation services over the last five years from Hansard (Official Report) are as follows;</p> <p>2012/13~£18,000</p> <p>2013/14 ~£18,400</p> <p>2014/15 ~£18,400</p> <p>2015/16 £17,205</p> <p>2016/17 £9,329</p> <p>All of the above expenditure was in relation to/from Irish/English translations.</p> <p>In addition, £1,387.67 was spent on translating a leaflet relating to tours of the Assembly in 2014/15. The cost covered translation from English into 11 languages, namely: Polish, Lithuanian, Irish, Portuguese, Slovak, Mandarin, German, Italian, French, Spanish and Ulster Scots.</p>		
AQW 68/17-22	Mr Andy Allen	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail the cost implications for the Assembly to comply with each of the provisions contained in Part 3 of the 2015 Public Consultation document on proposals for an Irish Language Bill.
<p>The Assembly Commission did not respond to the 2015 Public Consultation document on proposals for an Irish Language Bill.</p> <p>The Commission did not consider the cost implications, in relation to its statutory functions, of complying with the provisions contained in Part 3 of the 2015 Public Consultation document.</p>		

Assembly Questions regarding artefacts

Ref no.	Member	Question
AQW145/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission, in relation to the recent exhibition of artefacts in Parliament Buildings, to detail the number and nature of any complaints or objections to (i) the holding of the exhibition or (ii) its contents.
<p>Answer</p> <p>While the Assembly Commission agreed that an exhibition of artefacts should be permitted for a period of 4 weeks, this decision was not unanimous. Other than this, the Assembly Commission has not received any formal complaints or objections to the holding of the exhibition of artefacts or its contents.</p>		
AQW106/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on arrangements to inspect and organise a display of Assembly artefacts held in storage.
<p>Answer</p> <p>At its meeting on 31 January 2018, the Assembly Commission agreed to provide an opportunity for MLAs and journalists to view the artefacts, artwork and furniture that is currently held in off-site storage.</p> <p>Accordingly, an invitation to view these items will be extended shortly to MLAs and journalists.</p>		
AQW63/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission pursuant to AQW 35/17-22, for how many years has money been expended on keeping Assembly artefacts in storage; and what is the total spend to date.
<p>Answer</p> <p>Artefacts belonging to the Assembly were placed in off-site storage to facilitate the restoration of Parliament Buildings in 1995. From that date until 2011, the artefacts have been retained in storage facilities belonging to the Public Records Office Northern Ireland (PRONI), the then Department of the Environment (DoE) and the then Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). The Commission does not retain a record of the costs relating to that period.</p>		

Since 2011, all of the artefacts that are not on display in Parliament Buildings or on long-term loan elsewhere, have been kept in an off-site storage facility at Dunmurry. The artefacts are stored along with a large quantity of furniture.

The cost relating to that storage (for both artefacts and furniture) from 2011 to present is £76,715.81.

AQW54/17-22

Mr Jim
Allister

To ask the Assembly Commission what facility exists for a Member to view the Assembly artefacts currently held in storage.

Answer

The Assembly Commission can make suitable arrangements for a Member to view any item that is currently held in off-site storage in line with the offer that was made to the Member to view artefacts in a letter from the Clerk/Chief Executive on 8 December 2016.

The Assembly Secretariat's Head of Building Services can make the necessary arrangements.

AQW40/17-22

Mr Jim
Allister

To ask the Assembly Commission the current whereabouts of the Act of Union table, as referred to in previous inventories of artefacts held by the Assembly.

Answer

The table referred to in previous inventories of Artefacts as the "Act of the Union Table" is currently held in off-site storage.

Based on the table's style and age, the Assembly Commission has been unable to confirm that the table in question has any such link and, as such, it is no longer considered as an Artefact.

The table will remain in storage. Should any additional information about the provenance of the table be provided, the Commission will investigate this matter further.

Ref no.	Member	Question															
AQW35/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission what is the annual cost of storing Assembly artefacts and artwork off-site.															
<p>Answer</p> <p>The cost to the Assembly Commission for storage of artefacts, artwork and furniture off-site was £10,716 in 2016/17. The cost from 1 April 2017 to 30 September 2017 has been £5,462.</p> <p>Due to the area required, a significant portion of these costs relates to the storage of furniture.</p>																	
AQW29/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission in relation to Assembly artefacts, to list how many have been disposed of in the last 12 months, including (i) why they were disposed of; and (ii) how they were disposed.															
<p>Answer</p> <p>The Assembly Commission has not disposed of any Assembly artefacts in the last 12 months.</p>																	
AQW24/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission to publish a full inventory and valuation of Assembly artefacts, including those (i) on display; and (ii) in storage.															
<p>Answer</p> <p>Please find attached a full and comprehensive list of all the artefacts and artwork belonging to the Assembly.</p> <p>The list includes a description of each item, along with current valuations for each (where applicable). The list also identifies the current location of each item.</p> <p>Inventory of Assembly Artefacts and Artwork</p> <p>Artefacts</p> <p>This section contains a list of items which are deemed to be of historical significance. The current location of each item is noted and, where appropriate, a current valuation is included.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Item Description</th> <th>Item Location</th> <th>Item Valuation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Part model of Parliament Buildings</td> <td>Off-site storage</td> <td>£8,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Table with Map of six counties</td> <td>Off-site storage</td> <td>£10,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Roll of Honour Table</td> <td>Off-site storage</td> <td>£2,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Books containing the names of the civilian war dead</td> <td>Speaker's Office</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Item Description	Item Location	Item Valuation	Part model of Parliament Buildings	Off-site storage	£8,000.00	Table with Map of six counties	Off-site storage	£10,000.00	Roll of Honour Table	Off-site storage	£2,000.00	Books containing the names of the civilian war dead	Speaker's Office	N/A
Item Description	Item Location	Item Valuation															
Part model of Parliament Buildings	Off-site storage	£8,000.00															
Table with Map of six counties	Off-site storage	£10,000.00															
Roll of Honour Table	Off-site storage	£2,000.00															
Books containing the names of the civilian war dead	Speaker's Office	N/A															

Assorted items from the Speaker's Office	Off-site storage	N/A
Ceremonial Sword	Off-site storage	N/A
William IV two-handled Vase	First Minister's Office	£6,000.00
Ornamental Stand for the Bell from "HMS Ulster"	Off-site storage	£1,500.00
A Carved and Gilded Throne Chair	Off-site storage	£7,000.00
2 x Silver Maces	Speaker's Office	£20,000.00
2 x Jardinières made from the timbers of the "Mountjoy"	1nr. Speaker's Office 1nr. Apprentice Boys Hall Londonderry	£1,000.00
A Japanese Officer's Sword presented to the people of Northern Ireland by Lord Mountbatten of Burma.	First Minister's Office	£1,000.00
Black Rod's Wand of Office	First Minister's Office	£5,000.00
Two Red Leather Dispatch Boxes with the Royal Arms of Ulster	Senate Chamber	£4,000.00
Bell from "HMS Ulster"	First Minister's Office	N/A
Collection of Clerks' Uniforms	Off-site storage	N/A
Model of Thiepval Tower	Off-site storage	N/A
The Uniform of the Sergeant at Arms	Offsite storage	£1,000.00
French Mantle Clock	Off-site storage	N/A
Items of Crockery	Off-site storage	N/A
The Parliament Golf Handicap Challenge Cup 1927	First Minister's Office	£1,000.00
Silver Lighter	First Minister's Office	N/A
Bust of Frederick Temple	Off-site storage	£3,000.00
Mantle Clock	Off-site storage	£1,000.00
Egg Timer	Off-site storage	N/A
Coins	Off-site storage	N/A
Various Military Items	Off-site storage	N/A
Framed Letter from HRH Duke of Edinburgh	Off-site storage	N/A
Speaker's Robes and Wig	Parliament Buildings	£1,500.00
Dispatch box	Speaker's Office	£1,500.00
Victorian Tea Service	Speaker's Office	£2,000.00
Major Daniel Dixon's Lingfield Hurdle Cup 1928	First Minister's Office	£2,000.00
Royal Irish Rifles Silver Cup 1903	First Minister's Office	£2,000.00

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Letter	Off-site storage	N/A
Brass Lamp Parts	Off-site storage	N/A
Oak Long Case Clock	Parliament Buildings	N/A
3 x Trolleys filled with Books	Off-site storage	N/A
3 x Chandeliers (boxed)	Off-site storage	N/A
Elizabeth II Coronation Vase	First Minister's Office	£10,000.00

Artwork

This section contains a list of all paintings and pictures owned by the Assembly. The current location of each item is noted and, where appropriate, a current valuation is included.

Item Description	Item Location	Item Valuation
Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference Pictures	Off-site storage	N/A
Portrait of Sir Basil Brooke	At the family home	£3,000.00
Portrait of Sir Henry Wilson MP	Off-site storage	£1,500.00
State Opening of Parliament, small	Speaker's Office	£25,000.00
State Opening of Parliament, large	Senate Chamber	£50,000.00
Portrait of Lord Armaghdale by Riviere	Off-site storage	£2,000.00
Portrait of HM Queen Elizabeth II by Lydia de Burgh	On Loan, Hillsborough Castle	£1,500.00
Portrait of Frederick Temple, 3rd Marquess of Dufferin and Ava by C Williams	Off-site storage	£3,000.00
Portrait of Rt Hon JM Andrews by F McKelvey	Off-site storage	£2,000.00
The Obelisk on the Boyne by J Tudor	On Loan, Hillsborough Castle	£300,000.00
The House Will Divide by Noel Murphy	Senate Chamber	£15,000.00
Portrait of Seamus Mallon by Rita Duffy	Parliament Buildings Great Hall	£5,000.00
Rowel Friars Drawings	Members' Bar	£14,250.00
The Assembly in Session by Noel Murphy	Speaker's Office	£3,000.00
La Baie	Speaker's Office	N/A
Portrait of Lord Bannside by Nolan	Parliament Buildings Great Hall	£8,000.00
Portrait of Eileen Bell by Conor Walton	Members' Dining Room	£5,000.00

	Portrait of Lord Alderdice by Carol Graham	Members' Dining Room	£7,000.00
	Portrait of Lord Trimble by Nolan	Parliament Buildings Great Hall	£5,000.00
	Portrait of Mark Durkan by Conor Walton	Parliament Buildings Great Hall	£5,000.00
	Oil painting by P Van Meulen	Speaker's Office	£50,000.00
	Portrait of Lord Craigavon by N Becker	Off-site storage	£3,000.00
	Queen Victoria's Jubilee	Off-site storage	N/A
	Picture of the Irish House of Commons	Speaker's Office	N/A
	Portrait of Seamus Heaney by Ross Wilson	Parliament Buildings, Senate Rotunda	£8,000.00
	Artwork cont'd		
	Item Description	Item Location	Item Valuation
	Portrait of CS Lewis by Ross Wilson	Parliament Buildings, Senate Rotunda	£8,000.00
	View of Belmont & Glenmachan	Offsite storage	N/A
	Miscellaneous photographs	Offsite storage	N/A
	Parliament Historic Occasions Photographs 1945	Offsite storage	N/A
AQW9/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on plans to permit an exhibition of historic artefacts presently in storage.	
<p>The Assembly Commission previously considered a request to permit an exhibition of artefacts in the building. It concluded that it was not appropriate at that time. The matter was to be reviewed following receipt of a full inventory and associated valuations of the artefacts.</p> <p>However, the present Commission is currently focused on dealing with matters arising from the delay in the Assembly returning to full business. It is unlikely, therefore, that this issue will be revisited before the Assembly appoints Members to a successor Commission and considers its own priorities.</p>			

Assembly Questions relating to the lighting of Parliament Buildings

Ref no.	Member	Question
AQW153/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission pursuant to AQW 148/17-22, (i) whether it has any plans to extend the highlighting illumination to include the crest; and (ii) if not, to provide a rationale for this decision.
<p>Answer</p> <p>As noted previously, the new LED lighting installation seeks to provide an even spread of lighting across the front and side façades of the building.</p> <p>The front centre part of the building is now illuminated using ground and wall- mounted uplighters that have been chosen to be in keeping with the listed status of the building.</p> <p>While the use of spotlights to highlight the crest would not be in keeping with the design of the new lighting system, the Commission will ask the designers to consider whether the lighting can be adjusted or supplemented to help ensure that the crest and the balcony (which project forward a little from the façade) are better captured by the new lighting scheme.</p>		
AQW148/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission pursuant to AQW 144/17-22, why is the crest, which sits prominently above the front door, the only feature of significance omitted from highlighting by the new lighting system: and who took this decision.
<p>Answer</p> <p>As noted in the response to AQW 144/17-22, the Commission approved the installation of an external LED floodlighting system which seeks to provide an even spread of lighting across the front and side façades of Parliament Buildings.</p> <p>The Commission's outline schedule of requirements led to a scheme design by CPD. The supplier who won the tender then produced a final design and specification. No decision was taken at any stage to include or omit any specific architectural features on these façades from the highlighting provided by the new lighting system.</p>		
AQW146/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail (i) the cost of the recent contract to upgrade the external lighting at Parliament Buildings; and (ii) to whom the contract was awarded.
<p>Answer</p> <p>The final account for the new external floodlighting scheme at Parliament Buildings is presently being finalised and is estimated at £202,783 excluding VAT.</p> <p>The works were undertaken using the Department of Finance's framework agreement for maintenance and minor works. The main contractor was H&J Martin Ltd. who appointed Philips Lighting as the specialist supplier.</p>		

Ref no.	Member	Question
AQW144/17-22	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail (i) why the crest above the front door of Parliament Buildings is no longer lit up at night by a spotlight; (ii) who took that decision; and (iii) the reasons why that decision was taken.
<p>Answer</p> <p>The Assembly Commission approved the installation, in 2016, of an external LED floodlighting system for Parliament Buildings, capable of colour washing the building in support of approved charities and on special occasions.</p> <p>This new system replaced an antiquated system of lights that had been installed on an iterative basis over a number of years, primarily for amenity / security lighting. This lighting was unreliable as well as being costly to run and maintain.</p> <p>The old system incorporated some spot lighting to pick out one or two of the individual features on the building against a darker background. By contrast, the new system seeks to wash the front of the building with an even spread of lighting to display all of the architectural features of the façade. This is particularly important when the coloured lighting is being used.</p>		