

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties

Annual Progress Report 2022-23

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Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:

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

Signature:

Maria Bannon.

This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission. It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties, and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans. This report reflects progress made between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023

PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme

Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice

1

In 2022-23, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved. *Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.*

1 (a) Corporate Strategy

During this reporting period, the Corporate Strategy 2018-23 and the Corporate Plan 2019-23 were in place.

The Corporate Strategy contains two aims of specific relevance to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations, which are:

Under the aim of “Building excellence and innovation in our services.”

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

Under the aim of “Strengthening engagement with the public.”

“Building connections with target groups including for example, support for greater female participation and the delivery of a Youth Assembly.”

The Corporate Plan 2019-23 provides the detail of key projects and priorities the Assembly Commission intends to deliver over

the four years of the plan to underpin the Corporate Strategy 2018-23. The Corporate Strategy can be accessed [here](#).

In order to command confidence and facilitate compliance with the statutory duties, a number of measures are also in place:

- All equality plans and monitoring reports are tabled at Senior Management Team (SMT) meetings;
- The Equality Scheme, the Audit of Inequalities, the Disability Action Plan and the Good Relations Action Plan are published on the Assembly website (and can be accessed [here](#));
- Policy screening arrangements are in place, including a protocol for the sign-off of screening forms;
- The screening template is kept under regular review and screening guidance is updated as appropriate;
- Applicable policies (new and revised) submitted to SMT and the Assembly Commission must include a screening form (this is a requirement of the SMT/Assembly Commission cover paper template);
- Policy screening forms, which are published on the Assembly website quarterly and stakeholders are sent a notification email;
- Public consultations are held on action plans, equality impact assessments (EQIAs), etc., in order to engage with the public and seek their views;
- Training on equality issues is incorporated into the staff training schedule; and
- The Clerk/Chief Executive and Directors meet with the Equality Manager on a regular basis to discuss equality issues.

**1 (b) Disability
Action Plan
2022-25**

Disability Action Plan 2022-2025

The Disability Action Plan (DAP) 2022-2025 sets out how the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (“the Assembly

Commission”) is fulfilling its statutory obligations under Section 49 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Section 49A of the Act says that the Assembly Commission must:

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

In accordance with ECNI Guidance (para 3.41-3.44)¹, the Assembly Commission must carry out a review of its DAP every five years and forward a copy to the ECNI. A Draft Report on the Five-Year Review of the Disability Action Plans 2018 – 2023 was approved by SMT on 28 February 2023 for presentation to the next meeting of the Assembly Commission. The review period covered two Assembly Commission Disability Action Plans: the Disability Action Plan 2016-2021; and the current Disability Action Plan 2022-2025.

Implementation of the DAP is monitored formally every six-months with progress reported to and discussed with SMT. There are 39 actions within the DAP 2022-25, of which 29 are complete. Three actions are recorded as ongoing, four are not complete and three are not yet due to commence.

The four overdue or not complete actions were:

- **Arrangement of ‘mystery visitors’ to Parliament Buildings to give feedback on the services and facilities we provide for people with disabilities**

A ‘Mystery Shoppers Questionnaire’ was issued to members of the External Disability Advisory Group

¹[http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/DisabilitydutiesGuideforPAs2007.p](http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/DisabilitydutiesGuideforPAs2007.pdf)

(EDAG) in November 2022, for distribution to their user groups. To date, one user group has returned their questionnaire, and the Equality Unit is liaising with EDAG members to encourage the return of completed questionnaires.

- **Development of an accessible meeting guide and checklist for Committee meetings**

Implementation of this action has commenced. The guidance and checklist for Committee meetings has been revised by Parliamentary Services (Committee) staff with input from the Equality Manager. The documents will be considered by SMT in the near future and provided to EDAG for review and comment. On final approval, the guidance and checklist will be circulated to all Committee staff. Extensive preparation work has also been completed for delivery of accessible meetings at external locations, on return of full Assembly business.

- **Offer autism-friendly tours of Parliament Buildings**
- **Offer dementia-friendly tours of Parliament Buildings**

Completion of these actions by 31 December 2022 was impacted by staffing changes. However, the Assembly Commission's Events and Engagement Teams have now commenced work to progress these actions. It is intended to deliver pilot autism-friendly and dementia-friendly tours by March 2024.

The DAP and the status of individual actions are provided in Part B of this Report. A summary of current progress is at Table 1 below:

Table 1 – DAP 2022-2025 Status of Actions

	Status Key	No of actions	% of actions
	Complete	29	74.3%
	Ongoing	3	7.7%
	Not complete/overdue	4	10.3%
	Not yet due	3	7.7%
	Total actions	39	100.0%

Disability training delivered to Assembly Commission staff during the reporting period included:

- ‘Deaf Awareness’ virtual training delivered on 6 April 2022, 16 staff attended.
- ‘Start to Sign’ virtual training delivered on 27 April 2022, attended by 10 staff.
- A classroom based ‘Deafblind Awareness’ workshop delivered to Front of House staff on 27 September 2022, attended by 17 staff.
- ‘British Sign Language Level 1’ course commenced in September 2022, with 14 staff participating.

The Assembly Commission signed up as a JAM (Just A Minute) Card Partner in June 2022. A JAM Card helps people with a learning difficulty, autism or a communication barrier to tell others that they need additional time and patience when they are in busy environments such as shops, restaurants and on public transport. Awareness sessions were delivered to existing staff and will also be provided to new staff in the future.

In December 2022, the Speaker hosted an event at Parliament Buildings to mark the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The event involved a Question and

Answer session with MLAs. Topics discussed included the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, independent living and standards of living.

The Assembly Commission has continued to build and engage with the External Disability Advisory Group (EDAG), which is comprised of representatives from various disability organisations and was first established in November 2009. The group provides advice and input on the development and implementation of the Assembly Commission's Disability Action Plan and relevant disability issues. Membership of the Group was reviewed in May 2022, including a review of the group's Terms of Reference. Four representatives from the Disabled People's Parliament joined the EDAG in June 2022. EDAG meetings were held on 9 June and 7 December 2022.

A refresh of broadcasting facilities in Parliament Buildings commenced in 2022 and will upgrade the audio and video equipment in Committee rooms and the Assembly chamber. This will include enhanced facilities such as microphones and better screens for virtual and audio-visual presentations. The use of sign language was piloted during Assembly Question Time in 2022 and a "green screen" studio will be built as part of the refresh, which will enable future sign language interpretation.

In 2022, the Clerking and Member Support Office, with support from the Public Engagement Office, developed a paper on improving witness diversity, (including those with learning disability and people with a physical disability and carers). This paper was provided to all Statutory and Standing Committees so they can draw on its advice to promote diversity amongst witnesses giving evidence.

Citizen Space (online survey software) has become the primary tool used by Committees to call for evidence. Work started in

2022 on looking at all the different ways that we communicate our 'calls for evidence' including how we ensure that the needs of those with disabilities are met. Video conferencing will continue to be used by Committees, enabling a wider range of people, including those with disabilities or accessibility needs, to give evidence to Committees.

There is ongoing work with RNIB to ensure the Assembly Commission's Public Engagement team can effectively outreach with blind and partially-sighted people. This has included a World Sight Day event held on 13 October 2022 during which feedback on issues was provided, such as the accessibility of Parliament Buildings, the set-up of meeting rooms and the format of effective presentations.

In accordance with the provisions of the Assembly Commission's Apprenticeship and Placement Framework, the Human Resources Office facilitated the first special work placement in January 2023. The aim of this placement was to provide disabled persons with access to a working environment and ultimately encourage participation by disabled people in the work of the Assembly.

**1(c) Good
Relations Action
Plan 2022-2025**

Under section 75(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Assembly Commission is required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. The Good Relations Action Plan (GRAP) sets out how the Assembly Commission proposes to fulfil this duty in relation to the functions for which it is responsible.

The GRAP 2022-2025 is the fourth Good Relations Action Plan that the Assembly Commission has submitted to the ECNI to show how it plans to fulfil the Good Relations duty. Previous

GRAPs and six-monthly monitoring reports can be accessed on the Assembly website [here](#).

The GRAP 2022-25 was approved by the Assembly Commission's SMT in December 2022 and by the Assembly Commission in February 2023 and may be accessed [here](#). The GRAP 2022-2025 is focused on four key themes:

- Training and Development
- Representation
- Promotion of Good Relations and Dialogue
- Participation and Engagement

Six-monthly progress reports on implementation of the GRAP 2022-2025 will be provided to SMT. As the GRAP 2022-2025 is a "living" document, there is an opportunity to amend the Plan, should this be necessary, during each six-monthly monitoring cycle.

This Annual Report to the Equality Commission represents the first progress review of the GRAP 2022-2025. The GRAP contains 11 actions. Eight of these are complete or ongoing and three are not yet scheduled to commence (Table 2 refers).



Table 2 – GRAP 2022-2025 Status of Actions

	Status Key	No of actions	% of actions
	Complete	4	36.4%
	Ongoing	4	36.4%
	Not yet due	3	27.2%
	Total actions	11	100%

**1 (d) Gender
Action Plan
2019-2023**

The Gender Action Plan (GAP) 2019-23 was a continuation of the 2016-18 Gender Action Plan, setting out actions and measures to promote gender equality within the Assembly Commission. The GAP 2019-2023 may be found [here](#). Progress against targets in the action plan was overseen by the Gender Action Plan Implementation Group, which met regularly and reported on progress to SMT every six months and to the Assembly Commission annually. Further information on progress reports can be found [here](#).

The GAP 2019-23 ended in March 2023. At that time, 13 of the 14 actions within the GAP were fully completed and 1 action was not achieved (Table 3 refers).

Status Key		No of actions	% of actions
	Complete	13	93%
	Not Completed	1	7%
Total actions		14	100.0%

The action not complete at 31 March 2023 related to providing training to staff on transgender issues once a Transgender Policy had been developed. This was to ensure staff were trained and equipped with knowledge to manage transgender issues in the workplace in accordance with the Assembly Commission Policy. Work is underway by the Human Resources Office to identify and provide appropriate training.

Actions of particular note in the GAP 2019-2023 included Action 1, which focused on examining the gender balance of people presenting papers to SMT and the Assembly Commission. As a result, it is now practice for Heads of Business to invite team

members involved in working on specific projects/papers to appear with them when presenting at SMT meetings.

Action 7 concerned the development, in consultation with staff and Trade Union Side, of a Menopause Policy. The Policy was published in March 2023, and will be supported by training for staff and managers.

Action 9 was the development of a Transgender Policy and separate draft Guidance on Assisting and Supporting Transgender Visitors to Parliament Buildings. The Transgender Policy was developed in consultation with staff and Trade Union Side. The initial consultation was completed in October 2021. As there were no known transgender staff within the organisation, views on the draft Policy, from a staff perspective, were sought from a small number of relevant external groups. Following changes to the proposed scope of the Policy, further internal consultation took place at the end of 2022. The Transgender Policy was approved in February 2023 and was issued to staff. In compliance with the Assembly Commission's Equality Scheme, the draft Guidance on Assisting and Supporting Transgender Visitors to Parliament Buildings is being consulted on with relevant external groups.

It was noted that work on the preparation of the Audit of Inequalities 2022-2026 had not identified concerns relating to gender issues. The Assembly Commission's SMT therefore agreed that, as sufficient progress had been achieved through the GAP 2019-2023 and the preceding GAP 2016-2018, a further specific GAP was not required at this time, but that gender issues should continue to be monitored and addressed through the Assembly Commission's equality plans. SMT approved a GAP 2019-2023 Closure Report on 23 March 2023, for presentation to the Assembly Commission. Following consideration by the

Assembly Commission, the Closure Report will be published on the website.


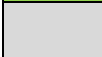
1 (e)
Audit of
Inequalities
2022-2026

The purpose of an audit of inequalities (Aol) is to provide a strategic picture of inequalities relevant to the role and functions of an organisation. This audit informs the development of an Aol Action Plan, which aims to address inequalities and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

The Aol 2022-2026 and Action Plan were approved by SMT in December 2022 and by the Assembly Commission in February 2023. The Action Plan contains 8 actions intended to increase representation of Section 75 groups. These actions will be implemented by the Human Resources Office over the lifetime of the Plan.

The Aol Action Plan 2022-26 is published on the Assembly website and can be accessed [here](#).

Six-monthly progress reports on implementation of the Aol Action Plan will be provided to SMT. This Annual Report to the Equality Commission represents the first progress review of the Action Plan and seven actions are complete for the reporting period and one is not yet due (Table 4 refers).

Status Key		No of actions	% of actions
	Complete for reporting period	7	87.5%
	Not yet due	1	12.5%
Total actions		8	100.0%

1(f) Speaker's Events

As well as the ongoing engagement with the Youth Assembly and the Assembly's Education Service, during this reporting period, the Speaker hosted and attended a range of events and initiatives, for example:

Thursday 9 June 2022 – The Speaker gave an opening address at a Disability Employment Showcase in Parliament Buildings. This showcase was coordinated by Disability Action and included the participation of a number of exhibitors.

Thursday 22 September 2022 – The Speaker gave an opening address at a virtual event held in partnership with Stronger Together during Good Relations Week. The event was an initial step to work on plans to develop the first Ethnic Minority Parliament.

Tuesday 11 October 2022 – The Speaker gave an opening address at an event to mark World Sight Day in Parliament Buildings. The event invited representatives from the blind and partially sighted community to work with Assembly staff to co-design an engagement presentation on the work of the Assembly to the wider community.

Friday 25 November 2022 – The Speaker gave an opening address at a Professional Learning Event in Parliament Buildings for teachers from Special Educational Needs schools in Parliament Buildings.

Friday 3 December 2021 – To mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the Speaker hosted a 'Meet the MLAs' panel, with participants raising issues of concern to those with disabilities in the Senate Chamber.

Monday 12 December 2022 – The Speaker gave an opening address at the launch of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission Annual statement in Parliament Buildings.

Wednesday 8 March 2023 – To mark International Women's Day, the Speaker hosted an event in Parliament Buildings in

which he invited all women MLAs elected to the Assembly since 1998.

Thursday 9 March 2023 – The Speaker hosted an event to mark Seachtain na Gaelige (Irish Language Week) at which officials from the interpretation team in the Official Report provided a presentation to MLAs and Assembly staff on local Irish phrases and place names.

Friday 16 March 2023 – The Speaker gave an opening address at a Professional Learning Event in Parliament Buildings for teachers from mainstream schools who provide support to students with Special Educational Needs.

Thursday 23 March 2023 - To mark the Marie Curie International Day of Reflection, Deputy Speaker McGlone led the Assembly in observing a minute's silence to remember loved ones who have died, support everyone grieving and allow people to connect with each other.

1 (g) Education Service

The role of the Assembly's Education Programme is broadly to support young people's understanding of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the democratic process. During the reporting period, the Education Service (ES) delivered a programme of visits in Parliament Buildings and online sessions. A range of groups participated, including schools from all sectors (primary, secondary, maintained and controlled, voluntary grammar, special, integrated and Irish medium); universities; general youth groups; and teachers. In total, the programme was delivered to 237 groups and almost 8,000 participants. The figures for schools, FE Colleges and universities are 193 groups with over 6,000 students. School groups account for 76% of groups and 79% of participants. (See **Annex 1** for figures by school type.)

All areas of delivery are designed to raise awareness and understanding of the work of the Assembly through relevant

educational curriculum streams and to encourage young people to participate in the democratic process. Attendees on the programme include mainstream schools, special schools, shared education groups, school councils and eco-councils. MLAs continue to participate in the education programme, both in the building and in the online programme. During the reporting period, MLAs participated in 174 Q & A sessions.

In addition to the standard education programme, other activities included:

- 2 events for teachers working with children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) – one for special schools (25 November 2022) and one for Learning Support Coordinators within primary schools (16 March 2023);
- The annual YMCA ‘Youth in Government’ debating event (with the Speaker taking the Chair for part of the debate) involved 31 young people from schools across Belfast, and from Cookstown and Portglenone;
- several ‘Politics in Action’ events, involving cross-community and cross-border schools meeting with MLAs for Q & A sessions;
- working with Assembly Building Services to run a competition for primary school pupils to design an eco-bag;
- hosting 4 final year students from Stranmillis University on a 2 week ‘Alternative Placement’ programme 16 -27 Jan 2023;
- collaborating with the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and Ulster University (UU) to provide a training and information day for History PGCE students on 6 February in Parliament Buildings;
- On 20 April 2023, 60 students from five post primary schools representing maintained, controlled and integrated

sectors, plus students from the College of Agriculture, Food & Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) participated in an event in the Long Gallery to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. Students viewed and discussed the 'Silent Testimony' exhibition with artist Colin Davidson and put questions about the Agreement to MLAs from 5 political parties.

The Education Service continues to offer its regular programme through the medium of Irish and to develop online educational support for Irish Medium schools. Two Irish medium groups availed of this service during the reporting period.

Promotion of the Programme

Schools are informed about the education programme via a postal mailshot at the start of every academic year. Schools also receive electronic information via C2K. The Education Service also uses Twitter to publicise participating in the programme.

Resources

The Education Service renewed its partnership with CCEA to maintain and develop our website for a further 5 years, until March 2027. Key objectives for this partnership include making the site more inclusive and accessible. The website was transferred to a new platform, which has improved its accessibility on all devices.

An Animation on 'Agreements after 1998' to mark the 25th anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement has been produced and a further on animation on "Brexit and Northern Ireland" will be published shortly. All new animations are subtitled and signed, with transcripts also available.

The Education Service has produced a new "post visit" workbook for Key Stage 2 (primary) pupils and is currently procuring a new

sensory toy, a model of Parliament Buildings, for use with children and young people from special schools.

Disability

Conferences were held in November 2022 and March 2023, for teachers from special schools and learning support coordinators from mainstream primary schools. The purpose of these was (i) to promote the education programme and (ii) to seek expert views on how to improve our service for children and young people with special needs. Following these conferences, there has been an increase in educational visits by special schools. The Education Service is also engaging with other the other legislators in order to further develop our service.

1 (h) Engagement & Outreach

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

The Engagement Office has provided free training programmes, information and support to a wide range of section 75 groups during this reporting period. These groups have included organisations that support people with disabilities, older people, women, and the Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community.

During the reporting period, 19 presentations and training programmes were delivered to 800 people and events, where appropriate, were co-designed with relevant third parties, including the Disabled People's event and the Women's Network event.

The Engagement Office is currently developing a plan to support and celebrate a range of cultural events, to increase engagement by Section 75 groups with the Assembly.

1(I)
Communications
Office

The Communications Office provides information about the work of the Assembly with the media, public, government departments, and other key stakeholders. It has a team of communications professionals who focus on the Northern Ireland Assembly website, digital communications, social media and broadcasting. The Communications Office has continued to review website content to ensure that it is as accessible to as many people as possible and has continued to monitor the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 making mitigations where possible and if this is not the case, advising users of alternative formats. All staff involved in web publishing have been provided with training on how to create more accessible content and extensive user guides have been published alongside training sessions for users.

The Communications Office provides additional personal screens for Members who require assistance with lip reading, to enable participation in Committee meetings where witnesses and other Members are participating remotely. The audio from all virtual meetings has been incorporated into our induction loops to allow Members and Witnesses attending in person to be able to better participate in meetings.

Work has commenced to upgrade audio and video equipment in Committee Rooms and the Assembly Chamber, including new microphones and better screens for virtual and audio-visual presentations. The use of sign language and subtitling for Questions to the Executive Office Ministers in Plenary meetings has also been introduced for broadcast. It is anticipated that these services will expand to other types of business and procedural output over the next period.

1 (j)**Northern Ireland
Youth Assembly**

The Education Service is responsible for the delivery of the Assembly Commission-supported Northern Ireland Youth Assembly. The Youth Assembly's primary function is to give young people a voice and allow and encourage them to participate directly in the work of the Northern Ireland Assembly and its Committees.

The Youth Assembly was established in June 2021, comprising 90 members aged between 13 and 17 years old, appointed for a two-year period. The recruitment process appointed a fully inclusive and representative cohort of members, including nine young people with disabilities.

The Education Service has continued to support Youth Assembly Members at formal meetings/events and by holding monthly online drop-in sessions that provide an opportunity for informal catch-up and interaction. Youth Assembly activities during the period of the Annual Progress Report are set out below.

Activity	Contributors
Marriage Law Consultation	Department for the Economy
Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy Consultation	Department for Communities
Irish Language Strategy Consultation	Department for Communities
Independent Review of Education Consultation	Department of Education
Chief Constable Meeting	Police Service of Northern Ireland
Chief Electoral Officer Meeting	Electoral Office Northern Ireland

Mental Health Session	Pure Mental Northern Ireland
Team Building Event	Belfast Activity Centre
Legal Rights Session	Children's Law Centre
Consul General Address	United States Consulate
Justice Minister Meeting	Department of Justice
Preparatory meetings for plenary	Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service
Statement of Children's Rights in Northern Ireland Launch	Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
Police Service Northern Ireland Youth Forum	Police Service Northern Ireland
MLA Q&A Session	Cara Hunter MLA, Danny Donnelly MLA
School Uniform Consultation	Department of Education
2 Plenary Sessions (Assembly Chamber)	Youth Assembly Members, Speaker
17 Committee Meetings	Youth Assembly Members

2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2022-23 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

- a) The Good Relations Action Plan 2022-2025 was approved by the Assembly Commission in February 2023 and an update is prepared every six months. Updates are available on the Assembly website at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/good-relations-action-plan/>.
- b) An update on the Disability Action Plan 2022-25 is available at Part B of this Annual Progress Report.
- c) The Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2022-2026 was approved by the Assembly Commission in February 2023 and an update is prepared every six months. Updates are available on the Assembly website at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/equality-policies/audit-of-inequalities/>.
- d) The Gender Action Plan (GAP) 2019-23 was a continuation of the 2016-18 Gender Action Plan, setting out actions and measures to promote gender equality within the Assembly Commission. The GAP ended on 31 March 2023 and the Closure Report may be found on the Assembly website or at this [link](#).

3 Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2022-23 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

Yes No (go to Q.4) Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples: see 3a below

3a With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

Not applicable.

3b What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(tick all that apply)*

- As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy *(please give details):*
- As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details):*
- As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details):*
- As a result of changes to access to information and services *(please specify and give details):*
- x Other *(please specify and give details):*

Not applicable.

Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures

Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

4 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done

Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Job descriptions within the Assembly Commission are generic in nature and may not make specific reference to Section 75. However, the list of duties reflects compliance with the Assembly Commission policies which inherently include Section 75 duties.

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2022-23 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

Yes, organisation wide

Yes, some departments/jobs

No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment

No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done

Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The approach to performance management assesses performance in relation to the work carried out by staff and also in relation to the Assembly Commission's Skills and Behaviours Framework. Within the context of the Framework, staff are required to promote a positive and productive working environment; foster an environment where staff feel respected and valued; and uphold the goals of professionalism, respect, impartiality and integrity as set out in the Corporate Strategy 2018-2023.

6 In the 2022-23 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? (*tick all that apply*)

Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan

Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning

Yes, in some departments/jobs

- No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation’s ongoing corporate plan
- No, the organisation’s planning cycle does not coincide with this report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Corporate Strategy for 2018-2023 commits staff to demonstrating: **professionalism** in everything we do; **respect** for each other, Members and the public; and **impartiality** and **integrity** in all our work. Within the ‘Building Excellence and Innovation in our Services’ element of the strategy, the Assembly Commission commits to ensuring high standards in equality, governance and regulatory compliance through effective and efficient processes.

The Assembly Commission also has a Behaviour Code in place which reminds those working in or visiting Parliament Buildings on how they should be treated and how they should treat others. Six behaviours are promoted:

1. Show respect to and value everyone. Bullying, harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct will not be tolerated;
2. Be aware of your power, influence and authority and don’t abuse them;
3. Think about how your behavior affects others and always strive to understand their perspective;
4. Act professionally towards others;
5. Speak up about any unacceptable behaviour that you experience; and
6. Display the highest ethical standards of integrity, courtesy and mutual respect.

Equality action plans/measures (Audit of Inequalities Action Plan and Gender Action Plan)

7 Within the 2022-23 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:	20 (complete for reporting period)	Actions Ongoing:	1	Actions to Commence:	1
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8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2022-23 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

Not applicable – the Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2022-2026 is a new action plan.

12 In the 2022-23 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: *(tick all that apply)*

- Face to face meetings
- Focus groups
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- Internet discussions
- Telephone consultations
- Other *(please specify)*:

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

Q11 above refers. The Assembly Commission's draft Equality Scheme, Audit of Inequalities Report and Action Plan and Good Relations Action Plan were subject to public consultation during the period of the Annual Progress Report. The public consultation used a range of methods including emails to consultees; press advertisements; a web-based survey using Citizen Space; postmaster emails to Assembly Commission staff; Twitter; and Facebook posts. This followed a pre-consultation exercise in 2021 that included NIPSA Trade Union; the Northern Ireland Civil Service; and specific Section 75 Groups including ethnic minority groups in Northern Ireland.

13 Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes No Not applicable

14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes No Not applicable – no commitment to review

Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

Please see relevant links below:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/publications/equality-screening-and-equality-impact-assessments-eqias/>

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

15

Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year (*as recorded in screening reports*):

6

16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2022-23:

6

Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented.

Policy consultations conducted **with an equality impact assessment** (EQIA) presented.

Consultations for an **EQIA** alone.

17 Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:

Consultation was noted as related to the six equality screening forms for the reporting period. No issues were raised as regards differential impact on the section 75 categories. The six policy consultations were as follows:

1. Assembly Commission Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Policy (Revised)
2. Special Leave Policy
3. Career Break Policy

4. Secondment Policy
5. Sign Language Interpretation of Plenary and Committee Business
6. Menopause Guidance for Staff and Managers

18 Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes No concerns were raised No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

19 Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

20 From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes No, already taken place
 No, scheduled to take place at a later date Not applicable

Please provide any details:

21 In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies?
(tick one box only)

Yes

No

Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

22 Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2022-23 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

Not applicable

23 Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

Monitoring arrangements are built into our equality action plans. For example, six-monthly progress updates on the Gender Action Plan, Disability Action Plan, Audit of Inequalities and the Good Relations Action Plan are provided to SMT. Monitoring is also carried out informally on an on-going basis. In addition, information arising from monitoring is considered when reviewing service delivery, existing action plans and when developing policies.

An example regarding service delivery planning is provided below:

The Education Service

The Education Service continues to work towards increasing the number of young people with disabilities participating in the Assembly's education programme. It hosted two events this year for teachers from special schools (November 2022) and Learning Support Coordinators from mainstream primary schools (March 2023). The purpose of these events was to inform teachers about the education programme and to ask for their expert advice on how to improve the service. The number of bookings by special schools for visits to Parliament Buildings increased following these events. An analysis of feedback was completed and the Education Service is working on the development of a new activity for special schools. The Education Service has asked its website partner, CCEA, to improve digital accessibility. The availability of accessibility tools will be highlighted and one of the new tools will be 'read aloud' software. The Education Service liaised

with education services in the other legislatures and shadowed delivery of a new, online SEND programme. The Education Service promotes its programmes by sending a letter to special schools at the start of every academic year, offering a bespoke service. Education Officers contact teachers prior to a visit to discuss the specific requirements for the class.

Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

- 24 Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2022-23, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

A list of relevant learning and development activities attended by staff during the reporting period is provided in the table below:

Title of Course	Staff Attendance	Date
Deaf Awareness (virtual)	16	6 Apr 22
Nutrition and Stress Management	20	16 Jun 22
Start to Sign (virtual)	10	27 Apr 22
Mental Health First Aid Training	8	Sep 22
RNIB Training for Tour Guides	9	Sep 22
British Sign Language Level 1	14	Sep 22 – Mar 23
Transgender Awareness (Genderspace)	22	Dec 22
Introduction to Mindfulness session	11	Feb 23
Understanding Inclusion	9	Feb 23
Hidden Disability Awareness	12	Mar 23
Celebrating Autism training	13	Mar 23
Transgender Awareness (Genderspace)	17	Mar 23

A list of relevant learning and development activities launched and completed on external platforms for the reporting period is provided below:

Title of Training	Number of Staff Completions
Unconscious Bias (eLearning)	217
Introduction to section 75 (NIA) (eLearning)	56
Positive Mental Health Toolkit for All Staff (eLearning)	10
Positive Mental Health Toolkit for Line Managers (eLearning)	5
Line Managers role in managing stress	8
Managing Personal Stress and Resilience - NI Assembly (eLearning)	10
Domestic Abuse (e-learning)	1
Dignity at Work (Cylix) (eLearning)	235

JAM Card Awareness Training (NOW) (eLearning)	310
Supporting Autistic people	4

The Learning and Development Team has liaised with the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales to host a range of shared inter-parliamentary virtual events as part of 'Learning at Work Week' and 'National Inclusion Week' which had an equality dimension, these included:

National 'Learning at Work' Week 2022 – Virtual Events (May)

Title of Event	Staff Attendance	Date
An Introduction to the Welsh Language	5	17 May 22
Live in the Moment – An Introduction to Mindfulness	8	17 May 22
Lunch and Learn with Business Disability Forum on Neurodiversity	2	18 May 22
Racial Equality: Working More Cohesively with Diverse Communities	2	18 May 22
Learn Polish	6	18 May 22
Interested in learning a New Language? Sprechen Sie Deutsch?	5	18 May 22
Live in the Moment – An Introduction to Mindfulness	4	19 May 22
Introduction to Trans Policy	2	20 May 22
Learn French	5	20 May 22

National Inclusion Week 2022

Title of Event	Staff Attendance	Date
LGBTQI+ Awareness Workshop with Cara-Friend	17	26 Sep 22
Caring Conversations at Work with VOCAL (A Carers Support Organisation)	4	27 Sep 22
Visual Awareness Lunch and Learn Workshop with RNIB	13	27 Sep 22
DeafBlind Awareness	17	27 Sep 22
General Dementia Awareness with Alzheimer's Society	4	27 Sep 22
Trans and Non-Binary Inclusion with Christian Owens from Genderspace	4	28 Sep 22
Understanding Autism with National Autistic Society	7	28 Sep 22
Dyslexia Awareness	11	28 Sep 22
Neurodiversity Awareness with Business Disability Forum	9	28 Sep 22
Prof Uzo Iwodi OBE	2	29 Sep 22
JAM Card Partner Programme – Introduction and Awareness Session	9	29 Sep 22
Allyship & Me	5	29 Sep 22
An Introduction to the Welsh Language	5	30 Sep 22
Gaelic Awareness/Speak a Little	3	30 Sep 22

- 25** Please provide any examples of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives.

The Learning and Development team have changed the evaluation model to utilise survey monkey and a star rating system (1-5) to gain further insight from staff in relation to achieved learning objectives. Evaluation feedback included very positive comments on learning events, including the Transgender Awareness Seminar in December 2022 and National Inclusion Week LGBTQ+ session in September 2022. Evaluation information on learning and development events is conveyed to senior management and can support the business case to re-run events which have been of particular benefit to staff.

- 26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2022-23, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

Examples regarding access to information and services are provided below:

- The Communications Office has continued to review website content to ensure that it is as accessible to as many people as possible and has continued to monitor the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 making mitigations where possible and if this is not the case, advising users of alternative formats. All staff involved in web publishing have been provided with training on how to create more accessible content and extensive user guides have been published alongside training sessions for users.
- During the reporting period, the Engagement and Outreach Team delivered 19 presentations and training programmes to 800 people and events, where appropriate, were co-designed with relevant third parties, including the Disabled People's event and the Women's Network event.

- The Education Service renewed its partnership with CCEA to maintain and develop our website for a further 5 years, until March 2027. Key objectives for this partnership include making the site more inclusive and accessible. The website was transferred to a new platform, which has improved its accessibility on all devices.

The Assembly Commission's Complaints Policy (addressing access to services)

The Assembly Commission's Complaints Policy has remained in place making it easy for members of the public to notify the Assembly regarding any complaint relating to the delivery of services by Assembly staff and/or perceived failures in complying with the Assembly's Equality Scheme. There is a Complaints Officer to deal with issues raised by the public and to log complaints on a Complaints Register.

SMT receives reports from the Complaints Officer including data on the nature and volume of complaints received. These reports are published on the Assembly website, in line with our Publication Scheme.

The Assembly Commission also receives an annual summary report detailing the numbers and categories of complaints received in the previous year. The report will include any improvements made to the policy or procedures.

The Complaints Policy and Procedure is published on the Assembly's website at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/complaints-procedure/>

As discussed at Section 1(b) above, examples are provided which aim to further improve public access to information and services, this also includes:

1. The provision of access information
2. An accessibility webpage
3. An 'Autism and the Assembly' webpage
4. Continuation of physical works to Parliament Buildings to improve access
5. Maintenance of signage and access items used by the public, for example, the changing places room, a braille tour map.

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

27 How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2022-23?

Insert number here:

0

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

Section 3: Looking Forward

28 Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

The Equality Scheme 2022-2026 has been approved and may be found [here](#).

29 Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

During the next reporting period we will continue to implement the actions in our Audit of Inequalities, Disability and Good Relations Action Plans. Areas on which we will focus over the next reporting period will include:

- consultation with the External Disability Advisory Group on the accessible meetings guidance and a checklist for committee staff;
- development and delivery of autism-friendly and dementia friendly tours of Parliament Buildings;
- identification and implementation of a good relations e-learning package for staff; and
- establishment of the external Ethnic minority Stakeholder group.

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Assembly Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next (2023-24) reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

- Employment
- Goods, facilities and services
- Legislative changes
- Organisational changes/ new functions

Nothing specific, more of the same

Other (please state):

PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

The Disability Action Plan 2022-2025 is provided at Annex B and may be found [here](#).

PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

1. Number of action measures for this reporting period that have been: (40 action measures in total)

29

Fully achieved

3

Partially achieved

4

Not achieved

3

Not due yet

2. Please outline below details on all actions that have been fully achieved, partly achieved, not achieved, not due yet in the reporting period.

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

	Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputsⁱ	Outcomes / Impactⁱⁱ (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
1	Regional ⁱⁱⁱ	<p>Engage with our External Disability Advisory Group, which is made up of a range of disability organisations from across Northern Ireland and which provides advice on disability issues.</p> <p>To involve disability organisations in the work of the Assembly Commission by keeping them informed about what we are doing around disability and by seeking their input and advice, where appropriate.</p>	<p>Full meeting of the Group is held once or twice a year (or as agreed by the Group) and separate meetings on particular initiatives/issues are held as required. Membership is reviewed every two years to ensure a full range of disability organisations are represented on the Group.</p>	<p>Complete for Reporting Period</p> <p>Membership of the Group was reviewed in May 2022, including the terms of reference. Four representatives from the Disabled People’s Parliament joined the External Disability Advisory Group in June 2022.</p> <p>Meetings of the External Disability Advisory Group took place in June and December 2022.</p>

	Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputsⁱ	Outcomes / Impactⁱⁱ (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
2		<p>Have young people with disabilities as members of the Youth Assembly.</p> <p>To ensure that young people with disabilities are represented in the Youth Assembly; and have an opportunity to share their views and directly influence decisions taken by the Assembly.</p>	<p>Young people with disabilities participate in the Youth Assembly. Initial pioneer phase is scheduled to last for two years (to June 2023).</p>	<p>Complete for Reporting Period</p> <p>The Youth Assembly recruitment process was designed to ensure that young people with disabilities are represented. Every event is accessible to all Youth Assembly Members, including those with disabilities, as standard.</p> <p>The following Youth Assembly Events have taken place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sep 22 – Policy and Research Day • Nov 22 – Plenary Four in the Assembly Chamber • Dec 22 – MLA Online Q&A session • Feb 23 – Plenary Five in the Assembly Chamber • Mar 23 – Committee Meetings

	Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputsⁱ	Outcomes / Impactⁱⁱ (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
				Mar 23 – School Uniform Consultation.
3		Review and build on the Parliament for People with Disabilities event held in December 2021. Provide an opportunity for people with disabilities to share their views.	Consideration will be given to holding a further Parliament for People with Disabilities in the 2022-27 Assembly mandate.	<p>Complete for Reporting Period</p> <p>An event for persons with disabilities was held in the Senate Chamber of Parliament Buildings on 2 December 2022.</p> <p>This was a round table Q&A session hosted by the Speaker and attended by MLAs from each of the five main political parties.</p> <p>During this session, disabled people were able to ask questions and discuss issues with the MLAs present. The event was reported on the NI Assembly social channels and a press release, with photographs, was circulated to the media.</p>

	Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputsⁱ	Outcomes / Impactⁱⁱ (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
				Consideration will be given to holding a further Disabled People's Parliament within this mandate, pending political developments.

2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
4	Provide mandatory disability training for all staff. To ensure that all staff are aware of disability legislation and how it relates to their work and the importance of being treated with dignity, fairness, equality, and respect.	<p>Monitoring records show training has been delivered to all staff.</p> <p>Evaluation of training shows increase in staff knowledge of disability legislation and related issues. (31 December 2022 and every 3 years thereafter).</p>	<p>Complete for Reporting Period</p> <p>Staff are provided with a range of learning activities to increase awareness of disability legislation.</p> <p>Staff complete mandatory training on Section 75; Dignity at Work; and Just A Minute (Jam) Card.</p> <p>Training has also been offered to staff on a range of disability related issues, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autism Awareness • Unconscious Bias • Positive Mental Health (staff and managers) • Dyslexia Awareness • Neurodiversity Awareness. <p>Evaluations are completed for all classroom learning events. Staff attendance at eLearning and classroom events is recorded and shared with SMT biannually.</p>
5	Provide auditory and visual awareness programmes to front-of-house staff. To raise awareness among front-of-house staff of auditory and visual disabilities and to help them to feel confident in	Evaluation of training shows increase in staff awareness. (31 December 2022 and as required, thereafter).	<p>Complete for Reporting Period</p> <p>Three auditory and visual awareness events were delivered between April and September 2022.</p> <p>The requirement for further events is kept under ongoing review.</p>

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
	helping visitors who have sight or hearing loss.		
6	Provide opportunities for staff to participate in introductory sign language courses. To help staff to communicate better with people with hearing loss and to feel confident in welcoming visitors to Parliament Buildings.	Sign language training is offered to all staff. (31 December 2022).	<p>Complete for Reporting Period</p> <p>In addition to previous events, the British Sign Language Level 1 course was delivered to 14 staff between September 2022 and March 2023.</p>
7	<p>Offer staff Masterclasses focusing on a range of conditions; for example, dementia, chronic fatigue, acquired brain injury, autism, depression, and mental health issues and hidden disabilities.</p> <p>Where possible, these Masterclasses will link in with National awareness days of campaigns.</p> <p>To raise awareness among staff of a range of conditions and how they impact on</p>	Evaluation of Masterclasses shows increase in staff awareness and knowledge. (Over the lifetime of the Action Plan).	<p>Complete for Reporting Period</p> <p>Masterclasses have been offered to staff on a range of issues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring Responsibilities • Visual Awareness • Dyslexia Awareness • Neurodiversity Awareness • Celebrating Autism • Hidden Disability Awareness • Understanding Inclusion • Mindfulness.

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
	people's lives and that some disabilities are not visible and that everyone should be treated equally.		In addition, the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission participated in a range of inter-parliamentary events as part of National Inclusion Week (26 – 29 September 22).
8	Sign up to become a JAM (Just a Minute) Card Friendly organisation in year 1 of the Disability Action Plan 2022-25. To make Parliament Buildings a welcoming place for people with a learning difficulty, autism or a communication barrier.	<p>Assembly Commission signs up to the JAM scheme. (Scheme signed up to by 31 March 2022).</p> <p>Awareness training on the JAM card is offered to staff. (Awareness training to be delivered to staff by 31 March 2023).</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission has been a JAM Card Partner since June 2022. A short eLearning course has been rolled out to all staff and this will continue to be provided to new staff joining the organisation. JAM Card training has also been offered to staff employed by our contracted catering provider. JAM Card signage is displayed in Parliament Buildings.</p>
9	Deliver web publishing training for staff on accessibility using the guidance issued by Gov.uk, "Understanding accessibility requirements for public sector bodies", the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and the requirements of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2)	<p>All staff involved in web publishing are provided with training.</p> <p>Video guides, advice, and guidance are made available on intranet for all staff and updated as required. (31 March 2022).</p>	<p>Complete for Reporting Period</p> <p>Website accessibility guidance section on the AssISt intranet is regularly reviewed and updated in line with requirements and new developments in best practice.</p> <p>Accessibility guidance on web content has been provided to business areas as required.</p> <p>A new accessibility 'blog' section has been added to the staff intranet to offer guidance and help staff</p>

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
	Accessibility Regulations 2018. To ensure that staff are aware of the latest accessibility guidance and know how to apply it in their work.		better understand the need and importance of online accessibility.

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications, Consultation and Engagement** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
10	Ensure staff are kept up to date on progress on new Disability Action Plan 2022-25. To raise staff awareness of the work the Assembly Commission is doing on disability and of wider disability issues.	<p>Once the Plan is approved by SMG, staff are kept informed on progress on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the results of the consultation; - where to find the final agreed Plan; - what the Plan contains. <p>Staff are notified annually by email of availability of six-monthly updates on the website.</p>	<p>Complete for Reporting Period</p> <p>The six-monthly review of the Disability Action Plan was completed in November 2022 and is published on the staff website.</p>
11	Organise for “mystery visitors” to visit Parliament Buildings to give us feedback on the services and facilities we provide for people with disabilities. To gather information on the real-life experience of visitors with a disability to ensure that the services and facilities on offer at Parliament Buildings are	<p>Mystery visitors visit Parliament Buildings and complete a questionnaire about their visit.</p> <p>Feedback from mystery visitors is reviewed and action is taken where appropriate. (Every two years beginning in December 2022.)</p>	<p>Overdue</p> <p>The “Mystery Shoppers Questionnaire” was issued to members of the External Disability Advisory Group (EDAG) in November 2022, for distribution to their user groups.</p> <p>One user group has returned their questionnaire and the Equality Unit is currently liaising with</p>

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
	accessible and fit for purpose.		EDAG Members to encourage return of other completed questionnaires.
12	Consider feedback on disability issues from visitor survey. To get a better picture of the visitor experience at Parliament Buildings from a disability perspective.	Visitor survey feedback considered and action taken as appropriate. (Distribution and analysis continues throughout the lifetime of the Action Plan).	Ongoing/In Progress In November 2022, the Senior Management Team approved procurement of new technology to support visitor feedback on the Assembly website and at Parliament Buildings. This will be progressed during 2023-24 and the Section 75 Visitors Survey will be distributed via the new solution, when available.
13	Offer an easy read version of 'Accessing Parliament Buildings' web page. We aim to provide visitor information in an easy to understand format for the benefit of people who have difficulty reading and understanding written information.	Easy read version of web page published on the website and included in social media promotion of visiting arrangements at Parliament Buildings. (31 December 2022).	Complete The easy read version of Accessing Parliament Buildings has been completed, published on the website and included in social media promotion of visiting arrangements.
14	Develop an accessible meetings guide and checklist for Committee meetings. To enable people with disabilities to fully participate	Relevant staff, including Committee staff, are consulted about the content of guide and checklist. Draft guidance and checklist are sent to the External Disability	Overdue Implementation of this action has commenced. The guidance and checklist for Committee meetings has been revised by Parliamentary Services (Committee) staff with input from the Equality

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
	in Committee meetings.	<p>Advisory Group for review.</p> <p>Draft guidance and checklist are presented to SMT and, once approved, are circulated to all Committee staff. (31 December 2022).</p>	<p>Manager. The documents will be considered by SMT in the near future and provided to the External Disability Advisory Group (EDAG) for review and comment. On final approval, the guidance and checklist will be circulated to all Committee staff.</p> <p>Extensive preparation work has also been completed for delivery of accessible meetings at external locations, on return of full Assembly business.</p>
15	<p>Ensure disability issues are considered in the review of the Committee staff guide.</p> <p>To make the work of Committees more accessible to people with disabilities.</p>	<p>The consideration of disability issues is documented in the review of Committee procedure and processes. (31 December 2022).</p>	<p>Complete for Reporting Period</p> <p>The Committee Staff Guide is an internal procedural guidance document for Committee staff. A template developed by the Communications Office is being used to ensure that the Guide is in an accessible format for staff.</p> <p>The Committee Staff Guide signposts staff to a range of guidance documents on subjects including Creating Accessible Word Documents Accessible Meetings Guidance and Checklist. It is intended that the Committee Staff Guide will be hosted on an online Portal and provided in other formats if required.</p> <p>Accessible templates for the production of routine Committee papers which are made publicly</p>

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
			<p>available (e.g. the Minutes of Proceedings) have been developed and will in future be available to staff on the online Portal.</p> <p>Documents that are issued to witnesses by Committees are also currently being reviewed to include new provisions such as the ability to provide evidence in formats other than written submissions including pictures, video clips or audio clips.</p>
16	<p>Ensure that the review of Committee consultation methods looks at consultation from a disability perspective and considers the most appropriate methods for consulting with people with disabilities.</p> <p>To ensure that the consultation methods employed by committees are as inclusive as possible and take account of the needs of people with disabilities.</p>	<p>More effective consultation takes place with people with disabilities. (31 May 2022).</p>	<p>Complete for Reporting Period</p> <p>Committees undertake consultations through ‘calls for evidence’ and they ‘take evidence’.</p> <p>Work has been completed to identify how best to facilitate the provision of evidence in alternative formats with the aim of increasing accessibility. Guidance on improving witness diversity, including those with learning disability and people with a physical disability and carers, has been provided to all Committees.</p> <p>Citizen Space is in place and will be the primary tool used by Committees to call for evidence. Work is currently ongoing to map the processes for issuing the call for evidence. It details how we can ensure that those with disabilities are considered, to ensure that their needs are met. Video conferencing will continue to be used by</p>

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
			Committees, enabling a wider range of people, including those with disabilities or accessibility needs, to give evidence to Committees.
17	<p>Ensure accessibility of our website, identify opportunities to improve the website and address potential barriers to accessing to Assembly proceedings and/or engagement with the Assembly by performing annual accessibility reviews within the scope of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and relevant legislation.</p> <p>To take opportunities to create a website that addresses potential accessibility barriers and that allows all users to perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with and contribute to the site.</p>	<p>Results of reviews will be checked against the relevant standards and legislation along with any feedback from users, for example the Disability Advisory Group.</p> <p>Plan will be put in place to prioritise any issues around what can be improved immediately such as frequently accessed content and content that is relevant to people with disabilities or tasks like search.</p> <p>Identified problems will be addressed and reported on through six-monthly updates on the Disability Action Plan 2022-25. (Ongoing over the lifetime of the Action Plan).</p>	<p>Complete for Reporting Period</p> <p>Accessibility audits were completed in July and August 2022 in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • niassembly.gov.uk; • aims.assembly.gov.uk; and • AssISt (intranet); <p>The Assembly Commission’s Web Team has where possible, addressed issues identified by the audits. Support from the IS Office has been requested to take forward some actions and work will be progressed in due course. Pending completion, issues will remain on the accessibility statements for each site.</p> <p>Website redesigns and accessibility audits of the Assembly’s WordPress microsites are currently being undertaken. Once complete, the accessibility statements for each site will be updated as appropriate.</p>

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
			The Web Team regularly checks the most popular content on sites for accessibility and amends as appropriate.
18	Identify opportunities to promote positive attitudes to disability through images on the Assembly website, on social media and in Assembly publications.	Review of images used in Assembly communications to ensure they are representative of people in the community, including those with a disability. (Ongoing over the lifetime of the Action Plan).	<p>Complete for Reporting Period</p> <p>As the Assembly has not been sitting, opportunities have been limited during the reporting period. However, this action is always considered when creating content. One area where this will feature even more highly in future will be recruitment with the use of the “Disability Confident” branding.</p>
19	<p>Raise awareness of facilities for disabled people at Parliament Buildings through social media: for example, by including links to accessibility information when tweeting about tours or restaurant opening hours.</p> <p>To make the Parliament Buildings visitor experience as inclusive as possible.</p>	Facilities are highlighted through social media communications. (Ongoing through the lifetime of the Action Plan).	<p>Complete for Reporting Period</p> <p>A new virtual tour for Parliament Buildings has been introduced. This has been split into “Chapters”, has been subtitled in both English and Irish, and ISL and BSL signed versions of the video are also available.</p> <p>The video covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Exterior of the Building • The Great Hall • The Senate Chamber • The Assembly Chamber • Visit and Find Out More

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
			The video may be accessed at http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/visit-and-learning/visit/online-tour/

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
20	<p>Create a short video promoting tour accessibility at Parliament Buildings.</p> <p>Ensure that those with access needs are made aware of and can participate in tours of Parliament Buildings.</p> <p>Continue to promote 'How to Get to Parliament Buildings' access video on website, and update video with new changes to the Building.</p> <p>Raise awareness of facilities at Parliament Buildings for people with a disability.</p>	<p>Video is created with content that explains how to book tours; highlights the availability of signed tours; Braille tour script; hearing helper radio system; Building facilities, for example, the Quiet Room and the Changing Places toilet.</p> <p>Video is updated with new footage and information.</p> <p>Subtitled and signed versions of the video made available, along with a transcript of the content.</p> <p>Video made available on website and promoted on social media and through disability networks. (31 March 2023).</p>	Not yet due
21	<p>Offer autism-friendly tours of Parliament Buildings.</p> <p>To encourage people with autism to visit Parliament Buildings.</p>	<p>Tours offered once a year. (By 31 December 2022 and once a year thereafter).</p>	<p>Overdue</p> <p>Completion by 31 December 2022 was impacted by staffing changes. However, the Assembly Commission's Events and Engagement Teams have now commenced work to progress this action. It is intended to deliver a pilot autism-friendly tour by March 2024. Consideration will</p>

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
			also be given to the frequency and timing of these tours in the future.
22	Offer dementia-friendly tours of Parliament Buildings. To encourage people with dementia to visit Parliament Buildings.	Tours offered once a year. (By 31 December 2022 and once a year thereafter).	Overdue Completion by 31 December 2022 was impacted by staffing changes. However, the Assembly Commission's Events and Engagement Teams have now commenced work to progress this action. It is intended to deliver a pilot dementia-friendly tour by March 2024. Consideration will also be given to the frequency and timing of these tours in the future.
23	Engage with special schools to ensure that young people's views are included. To ensure that the views of young people with disabilities are included in Committee consultations, inquiries, etc.	Hold focus groups as required and in line with Assembly's Research and Information Service (RaISe) framework for selecting a broad cross-section of young people, which ensures that special schools participate in every group. (As required throughout the lifetime of the Action Plan).	Complete for Reporting Period Preparatory work has been completed for implementation of this action, which will be progressed once full Assembly business resumes.
24	Engage with special schools to ensure that young people's views are included. Design and deliver where required bespoke resources	Discussions held with other legislatures and special schools to identify need and existing resource offering. Resources designed and delivered	Complete for reporting period The Education Service is currently working on production of a Parliament buildings shaped sensory toy. A sample has been ordered and the

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
	(e.g. textural or sensory models) for special schools.	as required. (By 30 June 2022 and thereafter throughout the lifetime of the Action Plan).	idea is that all SEN pupils would receive one of these when they visit Parliament Buildings. Education officers have been working closely with SEN school staff from both dedicated SEN schools and mainstream schools to develop the Educational offer, so that it meets the needs and requirements of their pupils.
25	Hold a conference for teachers from special schools every two years. To provide teachers with awareness and understanding of the Education Service's Assembly-related teaching resources, and to find out more about the needs of pupils in special schools.	Conference held every two years (with option for additional conferences as required). (First conference to be held by 30 June 2022 and every two years thereafter). <i>Revised first conference date November 2022.</i>	Complete for reporting period The Education service delivered two professional learning events within this reporting period; a conference for SEN schools; and a conference for SEN teachers in mainstream schools. The purpose of both events, was to enable teachers to learn more about the work of the Education Service and to co-design an education programme specifically for SEN schools. These events were well attended and very useful for both Assembly staff and the SEN staff. Plan for educational delivery to support SEN pupils is being implemented.
26	Provide subtitles and transcripts for all Education Service short films and animations.	All films subtitled, transcribed and made available on Education Service website. (Ongoing	Complete for Reporting Period The Education Service has continued to review their existing online resources to ensure accessibility.

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
	To make the work of the Education Service more accessible to young people with disabilities.	throughout the lifetime of the Action Plan).	<p>A number of existing short films and animations have been either subtitled, signed, or transcripts made available. This work is on-going and all new materials will have some (or all) of these as standard.</p> <p>In addition, the Education Service is currently working with CCEA to add text-to-speech functionality to the Education website.</p>
27	<p>Mark International Day of Persons with Disabilities.</p> <p>To raise awareness and promote understanding of disability issues.</p>	Hold an annual event to mark International Day of Persons with Disabilities.	<p>Complete for reporting period</p> <p>An event for persons with disabilities was held in the Senate Chamber of Parliament Buildings on 2 December 2022.</p> <p>This was a round table Q&A session hosted by the Speaker and attended by MLAs from each of the five main political parties.</p> <p>During this session, disabled people were able to ask questions and discuss issues with the MLAs present. The event was reported on the NI Assembly social channels and a press release, with photographs, was circulated to the media.</p> <p>Consideration will be given to holding a further Disabled People’s Parliament within this mandate, pending political developments.</p>

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
28	<p>Hold events to mark disability awareness days or weeks over the lifetime of the Action Plan.</p> <p>To raise awareness and promote understanding of disability issues.</p>	<p>Hold one to two events a year to mark awareness days/weeks for a range of disabilities e.g. Learning Disability Week, Deaf Awareness Week etc.</p>	<p>Complete for reporting period</p> <p>A World Sight Day event was held on 13 October 2022, during which we took feedback on issues such as the accessibility of the building, set up of the meeting room and format of the presentation.</p> <p>As a follow up to this event, an online meeting was held with RNIB representatives in January 2023 to discuss changes the Engagement team could make to improve accessibility of presentations to people who are blind or partially-sighted and to visitors generally.</p> <p>Going forward, a new suite of presentations will be developed taking into consideration feedback from the RNIB. Engagement activities will include the objective of raising awareness and promoting understanding of disability issues.</p>

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to ‘**encourage others**’ to promote the two duties (**Structural changes to increase participation and accessibility**)

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
29	<p>Provide short-term supported placements for people with a disability under the Apprenticeship and Placement Framework.</p> <p>To provide opportunities for people with a disability to develop their skills and confidence in the workplace and gain meaningful work experience.</p>	<p>Following a review of the placement we will consider future volume and frequency. (Initial placement agreed by 31 March 2022). <i>Completion date revised to 31 March 2023.</i></p>	<p>Complete for reporting period</p> <p>An initial short-term supported placement was provided for a person with a disability, within the Assembly Commission’s Human Resources Office. The feedback from the business area and the individual was very positive.</p> <p>A further placement opportunity will be explored during 2023/24.</p>

30	Consider disability issues relating to Committee rooms at Parliament Buildings. To make the work of Assembly Committees more accessible.	Consideration of disability issues relating to broadcast and audio in Committee rooms. (By 31 March 2024).	<p>Complete for Reporting Period</p> <p>Disability issues were considered as part of works planned relating to broadcast in Committee rooms and in the Chamber.</p> <p>Work has commenced on Committee rooms including upgrade to camera and audio systems, which will enhance sound and visual experience for all those participating in or attending the meeting. A new layout and furniture are being installed that provide greater access for wheelchair users.</p> <p>Within the Chamber, new microphones and speakers will be provided in all Member sitting areas, which will improve the quality of sound for Members and those seated in the public gallery. Larger screens to view proceedings will also be installed in the public gallery.</p>
31	Consider disability issues relating to Committee rooms at Parliament Buildings. To make the work of Assembly Committees more accessible.	Consideration of disability issues relating to access to, and layout of, Committee rooms. (By 31 March 2024).	<p>Complete for Reporting Period</p> <p>Disability issues were considered as part of works planned relating to broadcast in Committee rooms and in the Chamber.</p> <p>Work has commenced on Committee rooms including a new layout and furniture that provide greater access for wheelchair users.</p>

32	Review signage at Parliament Buildings reception and throughout parts of the building open to the public. To highlight the facilities and services available at Parliament Buildings for visitors with a disability.	Review is carried out and additional signage is added as required. (By 31 December 2022).	<p>Complete for reporting period</p> <p>Signage has been reviewed to reflect current available services and facilities for visitors with a disability, including provision of additional signage in some areas of the Building.</p> <p>Content and location of signage will continue to be monitored throughout the lifetime of the DAP.</p>
33	To provide an Assembly Chamber that is accessible to all.	Consider further improvements to accessibility in the Assembly Chamber. (By 31 March 2023).	<p>In Progress</p> <p>Accessibility was considered as part of planned works to the Chamber and this work will be taken forward in 2023/2024.</p> <p>The work will include new microphones and speakers in all Member sitting areas, which will improve the quality of sound for Members and those seated in the public gallery. Larger screens to view proceedings will also be installed in the public gallery.</p> <p>“Request to Speak” buttons will be provided to support Members who are unable to rise from their seats.</p> <p>Planned works also include a Green Screen Studio which will facilitate sign language interpretation.</p>

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to ‘encourage others’ to promote the two duties (**Awards and Accreditation**)

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
34	Maintain Autism Friendly Award. To show our commitment to ensuring that Parliament Buildings is a welcoming place for autistic people and their families.	Standards met as required. (Annually)	<p>Complete for reporting period</p> <p>The accreditation by the National Autistic Society was relaunched and work to maintain the Autism Friendly Award commenced during the reporting period. Accreditation was awarded in April 2023. Further training for our Autism Champions is planned for 2023/2024.</p>
35	Maintain Louder than Words Charter accreditation. To show commitment to improving access to Parliament Buildings for people with deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss.	Audits undertaken as required by RNID. (Annually)	<p>Complete for reporting period</p> <p>Louder Than Words Charter accreditation is no longer offered by RNID.</p> <p>Quarterly meetings have been established with RNID to ensure that the Assembly Commission is aware of and can take forward new information/services available, including training that can provided for staff.</p>

36	Sign up to the Disability Confident Scheme. To increase our understanding of disability issues and to ensure that, as an employer, we enable disabled people to have the opportunity to fulfil their potential.	Assembly Commission to sign up to the Scheme. (By 31 March 2022).	Complete The Assembly Commission has signed up to the Disability Confident Scheme and the logo is on our recruitment website to highlight that we are a member of the Scheme.
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2 (d) What action measures were achieved to ‘**encourage others**’ to promote the two duties **Monitoring and Reporting**

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact (fully achieved/partly achieved/not achieved)
37	Report on progress on the Disability Action Plan 2022-25 to SMT every six months and the Assembly Commission every year and publish these six-monthly update reports on the Assembly website. To ensure that we deliver on the targets in our plan and that we keep staff and the public informed of progress.	<p>Following consultation with business areas, six-monthly updates are prepared for SMT and annual updates for the Assembly Commission.</p> <p>Approved six-monthly updates are published on the Assembly website. Every six months (May and November each year).</p>	<p>Not yet due</p> <p>A progress report will be provided to the Senior Management Team in June 2023 as part of the Annual Report to the Equality Commission and will be published thereafter. Scheduling of updates has been revised from May and November, to June and December each year.</p>
38	Report on progress on the Disability Action Plan 2022-25 every year through the annual progress report to the Equality Commission. To ensure that we deliver on the targets in our plan and that we keep the Equality Commission informed of progress.	<p>Following consultation with business areas, annual progress reports are prepared and submitted to the Equality Commission.</p> <p>Approved annual reports are published on the Assembly website. Every year (to Equality Commission timetable).</p>	<p>Not yet due</p> <p>The next report on progress will be provided to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in August 2023.</p>

39	Carry out a five-year review of our Disability Action Plans. To review our plans to make sure that they are effective and achieve what they set out to do.	Review of Disability Action Plans for the period between 2019 and 2024 is carried out, in consultation with business areas, and presented to SMG. This will cover the Disability Action Plan 2016-21 and the Disability Action Plan 2022-25. (By 31 December 2024).	<p>In Progress</p> <p>A draft report on the five-year review of our Disability Action Plans was considered by the Senior Management Team in February 2023 and will be tabled at a forthcoming meeting of the Assembly Commission.</p> <p>Once approved, the report will be published online and an email will be sent to staff and stakeholders to let them know that the review is available.</p>
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5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

Use of questionnaires, interviews, action plan review and feedback systems.

(b) Quantitative

Screening and EQIA processes.

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

Minor revisions have been made to the Plan, as set out below:

	Revised/ Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1	Action 20 – this action is an amalgamation of two previous actions (actions 20 and 21).	Create a short video promoting tour accessibility at Parliament Buildings.	30 November 2023

	Revised/ Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
2	Timeline of action 25 revised – first conference for teachers from special schools held in November 2022.	Conference held every two years (with option for additional conferences as required). (First conference to be held by 30 June 2022 and every two years thereafter).	Revised date 30 November 2022
3	Timeline of action 29 revised. Completion date revised from 31 March 2022 to 31 March 2023.	Provision of short-term supported placements for people with a disability under the Apprenticeship and Placement Framework.	Revised date 31 March 2023
4	Timeline of action 37 revised - scheduling of updates has been revised from May and November, to June and December each year.	Report on progress on the Disability Action Plan 2022-25 to SMT every six months and the Assembly Commission every year and publish these six-monthly update reports on the Assembly website.	Revised Schedule June/December each year

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation's annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

No

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- i **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.
 - ii **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.
 - iii **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

Annex 1

Schools participating in the education programme 2022-2023

1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

Report by School Type	No of Groups	No of Participants
Controlled Grammar	8	282
Controlled Primary	44	2059
Controlled Secondary	26	550
Further and Higher Education	7	146
Integrated Primary	5	163
Integrated Secondary	3	100
Maintained Primary	31	966
Maintained Secondary	25	843
Special Secondary	3	42
University	6	157
Voluntary Grammar	32	1252
Voluntary Primary	3	68
Total	193	6628