



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Good Relations Strategy 2012-2016 Consultation Results



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## Contents

1.	Introduction	2
2.	Background to the Policy	4
3.	Consultation Methods	6
4.	Consultation Responses	7
5.	Conclusions	42
Appendix 1	Revised Good Relations Action Plan	43
Appendix 2	List of Organisations Consulted	51
Appendix 3	Organisations Responding to the Consultation Exercise	54

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's purpose (hereafter referred to as the 'Commission') is to serve and support the Assembly in its role of representing the interests of the electorate; making effective legislation; and influencing the Executive and holding it to account.
- 1.2 The Commission's vision is to be at the forefront of providing outstanding and progressive parliamentary services. The Northern Ireland Act 1998 states, "there shall be a body corporate known as the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission ("the Commission") to perform:
  - (a) the functions conferred on the Commission by virtue of any enactment;
  - and
  - (b) any functions conferred on the Commission by resolution of the Assembly."
- 1.3 The Commission is the body corporate of the Northern Ireland Assembly. It has the responsibility, under section 40(4) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, to provide the Assembly, or ensure that the Assembly is provided, with the property, staff and services required for the Assembly to carry out its work.
- 1.4 The Commission may delegate any of its functions to the Speaker or a member of staff of the Assembly and may determine its own procedures.
- 1.5 The Commission is chaired by the Speaker and consists of five other

## Assembly Members:

- Chairperson, The Speaker, Mr William Hay
  - Mr Peter Weir, Democratic Unionist Party
  - Mr Barry McElduff, Sinn Féin
  - Mr Leslie Cree, MBE, Ulster Unionist Party
  - Mr Pat Ramsey, Social Democratic and Labour Party
  - Mrs Judith Cochrane, Alliance Party
- 1.6 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Commission, when carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine categories of persons namely:
    - between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
    - between men and women generally;

- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without and, without prejudice to the obligation above, to also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

1.7 The Commission, in its Equality Scheme, sets out how it will fulfil its statutory obligation in this regard and how it will promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

## 2. Background to the Policy

- 2.1 The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's working definition of Good Relations is "The growth of relationships and structures for Northern Ireland that acknowledge the religious, political and racial context of this society, and that seeks to promote respect, equity and trust, and embrace diversity in all its forms."<sup>1</sup>
- 2.2 Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a statutory duty on public bodies, such as the Commission, to proactively address good relations. Section 75 (2) formalises the shift from managing diversity and difference to promoting diversity and integration. It involves considering steps to promote good relations amongst, for example, employees, service users and others affected by our policies.
- 2.3 The Commission is committed, through its Equality Scheme, to the principle of equality of opportunity and good relations. In that context the Commission will aim to ensure that the entire community can have full and fair access to, and participate in, the operations of the Northern Ireland Assembly.
- 2.4 To assist in achieving its vision, the Commission, at its meeting of 10th December 2009, reiterated and formalised its commitment to Good Relations, it stated:
- "The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission is committed to the promotion of good relations between persons of differing religious belief, political opinion or racial group and is committed to challenging sectarianism and racism."*<sup>2</sup>
- 2.5 Good Relations Action Plan (2010-2011)
- The Commission approved a one-year Good Relations Action Plan in 2010. Following the end of the 2010-2011 plan period a progress report was issued to the Equality Commission in September 2011 setting out the progress made towards the actions detailed within the plan.
- 2.6 Good Relations Strategy (2012-2016)
- The Commission has now developed new targets and actions in the current Strategy which spans a 4 year period in line with our Corporate Strategy.
- This Good Relations Strategy contains the Commission's Good Relations Policy and its second Good Relations Action Plan for the 2012 – 2016 period.
- 2.7 The principles that inform this policy are those which are common to good relations work in Northern Ireland. The Commission is committed to, and supports, the

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1 <http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/Good%20Relations%20Summary%20Guide.pdf>

2 <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/commission/2007mandate/minutes/2009/091210.htm>

principles of equity<sup>3</sup>, diversity and interdependence<sup>4</sup>, through the promotion of good relations within its work, in the secretariat and with all other stakeholders affected by our policies.

- 2.8 Through this policy the Commission, when delivering its services and policies, will integrate these principles into daily practice.
- 2.9 The Commission is fully committed to the effective implementation of this Good Relations Strategy. All necessary resources in terms of people, time and finance will be made available for this purpose.
- 2.10 The Commission will ensure the effective communication of the Good Relations Strategy to all staff and will provide training and guidance for staff in relation to their responsibilities.
- 2.11 The Commission confirms its commitment to submitting an annual report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of this Strategy as well as carrying out a four year review of this plan.
- 2.12 The Commission internally and externally consulted on the draft version of this Strategy, and has incorporated consultee suggestions into the final version of this publication. We are grateful to all those who participated in this consultation and provided comments to us.
- 2.13 The Good Relations Strategy will be regarded as a work in progress and amended and updated as necessary to reflect any further consultation comments received and any issues emerging from the Commission's engagement with representative groups, staff, visitors and the public.

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3 *Equity is about ensuring that all sections of society have equal opportunities to participate in economic, political and social life through redressing inequalities arising independently from people's choices. Diversity is about acknowledging how our differences as individual human beings and as members of groups can improve the quality of our lives. Interdependence is about recognizing that we are shaped by our relationships, and that our potential as human beings and as a society is dependent on the quality of our interactions with one another.*

4 *The Equity, Diversity and Interdependence Framework: a Framework for Organisational Learning and Change, 2002, Future Ways Programme, University of Ulster and International Fund for Ireland Community Bridges Programme.*

## 3. Consultation Methods

- 3.1 The Commission approved the Good Relations Strategy for consultation on the 8th April 2012. The Consultation period was due to last for 12 weeks until Friday 10 August 2012. This date was later extended to Friday 17 August 2012 to allow one further organisation to respond.
- 3.2 The consultation document made clear that the Commission wished to consult as widely as possible on the Draft Good Relations Strategy 2012-2016 and, with this objective in mind, the following actions were taken:
- 3.3 A postmaster email was issued to all secretariat staff, MLA's and party support staff detailing information about the consultation document, signposting staff to the document and detailing how to respond. A link <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/ABOUT-THE-ASSEMBLY/Corporate-Information/Policies/Northern-Ireland-Assembly-Commission-Good-Relations-Strategy-2012-2016/> to the consultation document was distributed directly to the Commission's Section 75 consultees (see consultee list at appendix 2) and was made available to the public.
- 3.4 Advertisements were placed in the three main regional newspapers inviting the public to comment on the consultation report. These advertisements indicated that the consultation document was available on the Assembly website. It also indicated that the consultation document could be made available in alternative formats on request.
- 3.5 Consultation meetings were held with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, the NI Community Relations Council and the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM).



## 4. Consultation Responses

- 4.1 The aim of this section is to summarise the feedback from consultees as part of the consultation process and the Commission's response.
- 4.2 In total 9 consultee responses were received by the Commission.

### 4.3 Consultation Responses

Organisation	Comment	Response
Disability Action	As disability is one of the grounds listed under hate crime. Disability Action requests the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission to include Disability Equality Training in any Good Relations training programme to ensure multiple identity issues are considered. (Item 7.2)	Noted. The NI Assembly Commission (the Commission) provides Equality Training which includes anti-discrimination to all Assembly secretariat staff. The content of the training is reviewed to ensure that it meets current legislation and addresses all relevant issues.
	Disability Action welcomes the Commission's statement regarding the Action Plan being a 'work in progress' which will be amended and updated as necessary through the life of the plan. Additionally, Disability Action would recommend amending as per the monitoring outcome. (Item 8.3)	Noted. The Commission will update the Action Plan as a result of monitoring outcomes.
	Disability Action welcomes the Commission's consultation commitment. (Item 9.1)  Regarding the Good Relations Action Plan Disability Action would make the following comments:	Noted.
	Table headings should be carried over to each page for ease of reference.	Noted, action completed.
	The percentage of disabled people within the Northern Ireland population is higher than GB, due in part, to the conflict. Disability Action recommends the Commission to include people with disabilities works/artefacts in any planned exhibition. (Item 1.5, 1.6)	During 2012 an exhibition by visual artist Maurice Orr which celebrated disability arts, culture and sport as part of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Unlimited programme was displayed in the Great Hall, Parliament Buildings.  The sound track for the exhibition together with multi-sensory interpretation, provided through Braille and audio narrative provided an understanding of art through many senses, and a deeper understanding of disability access for all audiences.  The exhibition was selected by the Arts Council as one of the ten best projects in the UK and is part of a programme of temporary exhibitions agreed by the Assembly Commission for 2012. Any future plans for exhibitions submitted to the Assembly Commission by the Speaker's Art Group will take account of disability arts.
	Welcome consultation measures, please ensure the inclusion of disabled people. (Item 1.8)	Noted.

Organisation	Comment	Response
Disability Action (continued)	Teachers from special schools must be included. (Item 1.12)  Special schools must be included. (Item 1.15)	Teachers from all sectors receive a written invitation to attend annual Education Service Teacher Conferences – teachers representing special schools regularly attend these events.  The Education programme is available to all – the programme and content is tailored to meet the needs and the ability of participants. We regularly have visits from special schools.  The Assembly Art Competition 2011/12 included a category for special needs entrants. Winners were selected from the 5 Education & Library Boards.
	Include disability representative organisations. (Item 1.18)	The Assembly seeks to engage with any and all sectors wherever possible.
	Good relations champion training and development must include cross-cutting Disability Equality Training. (Item 2.5)	Noted. The Commission provides Equality Training which includes anti-discrimination to all Assembly Secretariat staff. The content of the training is reviewed to ensure that it meets current legislation and addresses all relevant issues.
	Timescales listed as on-going are not measurable. Also, it is difficult for the consultee to identify whether the actions are referring to existing (long/short-term) or new measures.	Noted. Whilst some actions are noted as ‘on-going’ e.g. the continued implementation of the NI Assembly Commission Equality Scheme, all actions are monitored on an annual basis and progress on the action plan is reported to the Equality Commission for NI through the Assembly Commission’s Annual Progress Report.
	Disability Action recognises the time and effort that has gone into producing this document for consultation and thanks the NI Assembly Commission for the opportunity to respond and looks forward to continued dialogue.	Noted.
HR Internal Comments	Could you clarify what best practice relates to (Action 2.14)	This relates to best practice in the area of Good Relations and falls under the responsibility of the Commission’s Corporate Services Directorate. This means that Corporate Services will keep abreast of any new developments, research and/or publications in Northern Ireland (and further afield) to see if these items would be useful to the Commission and if this is the case how these may be adopted. Following adoption these new ‘policies’ will be screened and consulted on.

Organisation	Comment	Response
HR Internal Comments (continued)	Regarding action (3.1) we would recommend changing the focus to state that when providing training, equality issues will be accounted for (HR responsibility) and that the recording of equality training/refresher training be recorded in PDPs (staff responsibility)	Noted. Change made within Action Plan.
	Congratulations on a very comprehensive Good Relations Strategy and Action Plan	Noted.
Volunteer Now	Volunteers played an important part in the successful Family Fun Day and Jubilee Celebration Day that happened on the Stormont Estate this year. The volunteers provided meeter and greeter roles, stewarding roles which helped to make the events run smoothly. The Commission may wish to consider how citizens can get involved as volunteers in events and initiatives organised by the Commission (1.8). Volunteer Now would be happy to discuss how this could be arranged.	It is important to point out that the Family Fun Day and the Jubilee Celebration Day event were organised by the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) as they are responsible for the Stormont Estate. However, the Northern Ireland Assembly works closely with the DFP on these issues and officials have already met with DFP and Volunteer Now regarding how to move forward.
	Volunteering is a good way for building relations between groups. It often offers opportunities for people to meet that wouldn't get the opportunity in any other avenue of their lives. Promoting Employer Supported Volunteering is a useful way for the Commission to encourage networking, relationship building and understanding between Assembly staff and Community and Voluntary Sector groups. There has been a number of ESV events held on the grounds of Stormont, where groups of volunteers have carried out some gardening work. We would encourage more of this but also involving assembly staff volunteering in CVS organisations which can start with a short exchange of information from both parties on what their area of work involves. Helping to meet objective (1.1.4).	The new Employer Supported Volunteering policy addresses these issues.

Organisation	Comment	Response
Volunteer Now (continued)	<p>As ESV is being encouraged in the NI Governments Volunteering Strategy for others (Join In, Get Involved, Build a Better Future, DSD, 2011), it is important that the NI Government leads the way and practices what it preaches in this regard. Feedback on the impact of this engagement on community relations/ good relations could be requested after the events and addressed in the staff survey planned.</p>	<p>The Commission has very recently implemented an Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) Policy. In the development of the Policy, information from a number of sources was referred to, including Volunteer Now. The ESV Policy provides for review on an annual basis to ensure that the Policy is achieving the anticipated benefits from engaging with the Community. Information will be sought from volunteers and their line managers to assist in the evaluation of the Policy and of ESV activities.</p>
	<p>We welcome the Commission's plans to develop a NI Youth Assembly. We would encourage the Commission to become a delivery partner of the Millennium Volunteers. This programme is supported by the Department of Education and the funding comes through the Youth Council for NI. It involves young people (aged 14-25 yrs old) being recognised for volunteering. It includes young people being given a record book in which they can keep a tally of hours volunteered and training and skills developed.</p>	<p>The Millennium Volunteer project has already been discussed as part of wider dialogues between the Northern Ireland Assembly (NIA), Volunteer Now and DFP. It is hoped that the NIA can facilitate Millennium volunteers participating in activities within the NIA and in conjunction with DFP.</p>
	<p>We welcome your aim to encourage Committees to meet for sessions outside of Parliament Buildings. As it may encourage a more diverse range of people to attend and experience electoral activities.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>

Organisation	Comment	Response
Volunteer Now (continued)	We would encourage the Commission to consider new ways of engaging with people on policy development and legislation. This includes involving people even as early as a pre-consultation stage and thinking of ways of targeting people or groups to make consultation as representative as possible. There is a need generally to extend beyond the usual suspects in terms of consultation (Related to point 2.15).	<p>The NIA already engages in this way through its Community Outreach. However, once the Northern Ireland Assembly Community Link programme is established later in the year it will be easier for this work to be taken forward. The Commission often carries out pre-consultation on a range of issues, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Education Service involved young people in the scrutiny of the Marine Bill. Students gave evidence to the Environment Committee in June 2012.</li> <li>▪ The Education Service developed a youth panel to consult on the creation of a Youth Assembly. The Assembly received a NICCY Gold Participation Award for this work.</li> <li>▪ The Education Service assisted the Education Committee with the School Council inquiry in 2011/12. This involved consultation with pupils representing all sectors.</li> </ul> <p>It is important that there is no confusion between the consultation duties of the Executive departments and those of the Assembly. Consultation on the development of departmental policy is the responsibility of the relevant department.</p> <p>The term “usual suspects” is somewhat unfortunate and perhaps should be reconsidered. The Assembly welcomes consultation responses from any useful source.</p>
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland	<p>Aim 1: Dialogue and Consultation (1.2)</p> <p>On an annual basis how often do the Equality and Good Relations Working Group meet?</p>	<p>The Equality and Good Relations Working Group normally meet on a quarterly basis. However, due to the Commission’s separation from the NI Civil Service resulting in staff changes and the Equality Manager working directly with staff groups to assist in screening exercises this group has not met in the last year. The Commission is currently reviewing the membership and shortly an invitation will be made for new members.</p>

Organisation	Comment	Response
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland <i>(continued)</i>	(1.3) Did the Holywell consultants produce a report following the internal good relations audit? If so, perhaps it could be linked into the Strategy policy in some way.	<p>The current Good Relations Strategy incorporated recommendations arising from the Internal Good Relations Audit conducted by Holywell Consulting as agreed by the Commission at their meeting on the 19 April 2012.</p> <p>The report is available on the Assembly website at <a href="http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Publications/Good-Relations/NIA-Good-Relations-Report.pdf?epslanguage=en-GB">http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Publications/Good-Relations/NIA-Good-Relations-Report.pdf?epslanguage=en-GB</a></p>
	(1.7) Does the Commission publicise the list of historic anniversaries?	<p>Yes. A list of historic anniversaries has been published by the Commission. This is available on the Assembly website at <a href="http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/News-and-Media/Press-Releases/PERSPECTIVES-ON-AN-AGREED-SERIES-OF-EVENTS-TO-MARK-THE-DECADE-OF-CENTENARIES-AT-PARLIAMENT-BUILDINGS/">http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/News-and-Media/Press-Releases/PERSPECTIVES-ON-AN-AGREED-SERIES-OF-EVENTS-TO-MARK-THE-DECADE-OF-CENTENARIES-AT-PARLIAMENT-BUILDINGS/</a></p> <p>An equality screening form has been completed and is also available on the Assembly website.</p>
	(1.10) I would suggest amending the anticipated outcome as follows: 'where practicable we will respond to questions within one week'.  Depending on the nature of the question it may not always be possible to post a reply within the time frame.	<p>Noted. We will adopt our action plan at point (1.10) to reflect this change.</p>

Organisation	Comment	Response
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland <i>(continued)</i>	(1.16/1.17) It would help if there was more clarity as to the format of the participation.	<p>At the Balmoral Show the NI Assembly ran a number of Committee Meetings. It also hosted a stand in the main hall that provided information about how to get involved with the Assembly. This provided a platform to encourage participation from people from rural backgrounds.</p> <p>The Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust reviews its membership annually to assess the membership profile based on region, sector and size. Events are then tailored to target those sectors that are least engaged. This includes regional recruitment events and presentations on topics specific to certain sectors.</p> <p>In previous years the Assembly has had a 'footfall' stand in the King's Hall at the Balmoral Show. This has been used to promote what the Assembly has to offer in terms of tours, visiting etc. and also how to engage with the democratic process at the Assembly, i.e. how to engage with committees etc. The rural-dwelling community is a group that can be harder for us to reach and the Balmoral Show is the biggest show of its kind in Ireland and therefore represents a significant opportunity to reach this group. In addition, the Assembly has had a marquee at the Show in 2010 and 2012 where committees held activities and interacted with those at the Show. Obviously the Assembly will need to assess how it modifies its offering at the Balmoral Show when the Show moves to the Maze/Long Kesh site.</p> <p>The NIABT undertakes a number of activities throughout the year, including regular briefing breakfasts, visits to businesses for MLAs, educational visits for business members and MLAs and a changing range of other activities.</p>
	Aim 2: Promotion of Good Relations. (2.4) How are the good relations champions identified?	This action is due to commence in 2013, the criteria for the identification of Good Relations champions has still to be decided, however the Commission will take advice from the Equality Commission for NI and other relevant bodies.
	When the language policy is drawn up it should identify how best to deal with linguistic diversity and how the Commission will respond in languages other than English.	Noted.



Organisation	Comment	Response
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (continued)	Aim 3: Training and Development.  (3.1) Have staff an opportunity to identify training needs as part of their annual appraisal process?	Yes, each member of staff completes a Personal Development Plan each year as part of the annual appraisal process.
	Other Issues:  You may wish to mention something about the current representation of the Commission's workforce.	Noted, the action plan has been updated to include this point. Workforce composition is monitored on an annual basis.
	If there are any strategies in place to attract under-representative groups to apply for work with the Commission these could also be outlined in the Strategy.	Noted, the action plan has been updated to include this point. Strategies for attracting under-represented groups are included in our Recruitment policy, however at present there is no external recruitment.
NUS-USI	NUS-USI strongly welcomes the opportunity to take part in the consultation process for the Good Relations Strategy and commends the efforts of the Commission in developing policy proposals to help in relation to building a shared future in Northern Ireland.	Noted.
	On point 1.6 we believe it is crucial that our diversity and shared history is represented and celebrated.	Noted.
	As regards points 1.12 to 1.18 it is absolutely crucial that the Assembly conducts strong outreach programmes as outlined in this plan so that the message which is disseminated is that the Assembly is open to everyone and is engaging with the people.	The Assembly is committed delivering the discussed range of outreach initiatives to ensure the Assembly is open to everyone and is engaging with people. With the introduction of the Northern Ireland Assembly Community Link a forward work plan will be made available to voluntary and community groups of all the activities.
	A crucial element of maximising the opportunities that the Assembly provides to the public are the work placement schemes (2.19 and 4.6). Many students already go there on placement on a number of initiatives, but if possible we would like to see even more paid placements available. This enhances outreach for the Assembly while also providing extra opportunities for people in education.	The Assembly's Bursary programme is specifically linked to the achievement of a Masters in Legislative Studies and Practice run in conjunction with Queen's University. The Assembly would welcome suggestions around specific plans for engagement with particular young people, including the cost implications.

Organisation	Comment	Response
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM)	<p>NICEM has a long tradition of engaging with the Northern Ireland Assembly, in particular through its secretariat support to the All Party Group on Minority Ethnic Communities. Therefore, NICEM welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission’s consultation on its Good Relations Strategy 2012-2016. NICEM also welcomes the Commission’s commitment to challenging racism and the promotion of good relations between persons of differing religious belief, political opinion and racial group, in particular its aim to ensure “that the entire community can have full and fair access to, and participate in, the operations of the Northern Ireland Assembly”</p>	Noted.
	<p>International human rights monitoring bodies have often been critical of the under-representation of minority groups in political life in Northern Ireland.<sup>5</sup> The often intimidating physical appearance and historic significance of Parliament Buildings can act as a barrier to full and fair access to the Assembly. Whilst the Scottish Government has addressed many such barriers in their design of their Parliament we are well aware that Stormont does not have luxury of starting from scratch. Therefore, NICEM welcomes initiatives such as the recent establishment of the Speaker’s Art Group and the proposed use of exhibition spaces to reflect the multi-cultural aspects of Northern Ireland society as well as making the space more connected to and reflective of the community. In the consultation document, the Commission points out that it will display art by minority ethnic groups “in particular”. As an umbrella organisation, NICEM would be willing to engage with the Commission to signpost it to relevant ethnic minority groups.</p>	<p>The Commission will continue to look for ways to make Parliament Buildings more welcoming and accessible. During the current year the Assembly exhibited an Intercultural Art Exhibition on behalf of the Arts Council which provided exposure for up and coming ethnic minority artists who are currently living in Northern Ireland. We note the comments made by NICEM and welcome NICEM’s offer to engage on this issue.</p>

<sup>5</sup> See generally, *Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Third Opinion on the UK, Doc. ACFC/OP/III(2011)006, 30 June 2011; UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding Observations on the UK, UN Doc. CERD/C/GBR/CO/18-20, 14 September 2011.*

Organisation	Comment	Response
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) <i>(continued)</i>	NICEM also welcomes the initiative to hold Committee meetings outside the Parliament Buildings as this could lead to greater accessibility for minority groups that are not based in Belfast. This is particularly relevant for NICEM's work as it has recently, as part of its Strategic Advocacy Programme, set up three regional offices covering Belfast and the North East, Mid-Ulster and Down and the North West. NICEM would therefore, like to be informed and to be given notice of the Central Committee Office's intentions to hold meetings outside Parliament Buildings so that we will be able to inform groups and individuals who may wish to engage with the committee on specific issues.	<p>We do not collate details of external meetings for publication but rather include this information in the published details of forthcoming Assembly business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ External meetings of committees are listed on the business diary on the Assembly website <a href="http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/committees/businessdiary.aspx">http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/committees/businessdiary.aspx</a></li> <li>▪ In addition, committees will normally include details of meetings outside Parliament Buildings and visits in their forward work programmes which can be found on the webpages of each Assembly committee.</li> </ul>

Organisation	Comment	Response
<p>Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p>NICEM would like to express its concern about the facilitation of minority ethnic needs in the Assembly's catering service as this acts as a barrier to accessing the Assembly. Requests to facilitate dietary requirements where necessary should be fulfilled and catering staff should have the skill set to understand requests such as vegetarian, halal, kosher etc. It may be helpful for the Assembly to review catering as to whether or not it is value for money and reflective of the needs of diverse audiences. In addition, NICEM recommends that where appropriate communities should be permitted to serve food from their own cultural background as a means of promoting good relations. For example at a recent event launching research regarding Filipino community, if community members had been allowed to bring traditional Filipino food more community members would have been encouraged to attend, permitting such activities enhances cultural diversity and it is a more affordable way for minority communities to participate with the Assembly.</p>	<p>As part of a comprehensive range of services provided by the Support Services contractor the Commission endeavours to offer the widest range of dietary needs for all building users and visitors alike.</p> <p>Indeed, as part of the recent renewal of the Support Services contract, which started in July 2012, the NIAC stipulated in the contract specification that:</p> <p>“The Commission strives to meet the differing demands of special dietary needs of our wide customer base and the Service Provider is required to provide health related options e.g. diabetic, low salt, allergies, intolerances, ethnic, religious (halal, etc.) and others (vegan, etc.) that may be reasonably requested from time to time. Prior notice will be given whenever possible and the Service Provider will be required to respond to such requests within a reasonable time period.”</p> <p>As part of their bid the winning contractor responded:</p> <p>“Our philosophy is to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Healthy eating and wellbeing to our customers</li> <li>▪ Fresh, nutritious, energising food</li> <li>▪ Food freshly produced on site wherever possible</li> <li>▪ Seasonal produce and ingredients from local suppliers</li> <li>▪ Use organic produce where pricing permits</li> <li>▪ Respond to dietary needs of all customers</li> <li>▪ Champion Fair Trade products</li> <li>▪ Lifestyle friendly, sustainable and ethically sourced menus</li> <li>▪ Premium offers at great prices, alongside value ranges and enticing marketing promotions”</li> </ul> <p>As well as:</p> <p>“The function portfolio has been designed to ensure that we use local in-season foods.</p>

Organisation	Comment	Response
<p>Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) (continued)</p>		<p>Care has been taken to ensure healthy cooking methods are used in the preparation of all food. Special dietary requirements will also be catered for as required.”</p> <p>Unfortunately we are not able to allow customers to bring their own food in line with Health &amp; Safety and Food Safety law however please rest assured that the NIAC will continue to develop this aspect of the catering service further in line with best practise, guidance and regulatory bodies.</p>
	<p>Language is one of the most obvious barriers facing BME communities living in Northern Ireland and can affect accessibility to the Assembly. Therefore, it is essential that the needs of BME communities are accounted for in the Language Policy which is currently being developed by the Commission. Specific needs include the provision of information in relevant BME languages and access to quality interpreting and translation services where necessary.</p> <p>This importance of catering for the linguistic needs of BME communities as well as national minority languages is integral to the promotion of good relations.</p> <p>In order for the Commission to discharge it’s legal obligations under section 75(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 it is essential to respect the language rights of persons of differing religious belief, political opinion and racial group.</p>	<p>In discharging its obligations under section 75(2) of the NI Act, 1998 and the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 the Commission recognises that provision of information in different languages is important.</p> <p>Staff receive training in the use of appropriate language in the workplace. The Secretariat has a range of leaflets in 11 languages and a welcome message in a range of languages, for those whose first language is not English. These leaflets are also accessible on our website.</p> <p>The Commission’s Equality Scheme states that “We are aware that some groups will not have the same access to information as others... Members of ethnic minority groups, whose first language is not English, may have difficulties with information provided only in English.</p> <p>To ensure equality of opportunity in accessing information, we provide information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable. Where the exact request cannot be met we will ensure a reasonable alternative is provided.”</p> <p>Assembly Committees also issue ‘A Guide for Witnesses Appearing before Committees’. This guidance states that “The Assembly can provide an interpreter or other forms of communication support services if required. To avail of any of these services or advise of additional adjustments please contact the Committee Office...”</p> <p>The Commission is currently considering language guidance.</p>

Organisation	Comment	Response
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) <i>(continued)</i>	<p>NICEM welcomes the efforts of the information and outreach section of the Assembly Commission. In particular, the community link networking initiative and the focus meetings with sectoral and voluntary groups. In particular, BME women often face particular barriers and NICEM would welcome efforts by the Commission to improve access of BME women to the Assembly and NICEM would be willing to work alongside the Commission in order to achieve greater accessibility. NICEM recommends that this should form a key priority in the Commission's strategy for the upcoming four years, given that the UK government will undergo examination by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in the coming year.</p>	<p>The Northern Ireland Assembly Community Link (NIACL) will offer Third Sector organisations an opportunity to share their knowledge and experience with elected representatives; whilst also allowing them to develop a greater understanding of the processes and structures of the Assembly and how they can get involved. The NIACL shall be open to all individuals connected with Third Sector organisations that wish to engage with the Assembly, its processes and structures. It is likely that the NIACL will target the most disengaged, with women being one of those key groups. Additionally if NICEM wishes to host an event for BME women in conjunction with the Assembly, the Outreach Team would be happy to facilitate.</p>
	<p>While there is good community participation of the BME community in the All Party Group on Minority Ethnic Communities, NICEM would welcome all efforts by the Commission to encourage and support greater participation, especially from groups and individuals who have not previously had any engagement.</p>	<p>Noted. The extent to which there is community participation in an All Party Group is a matter for the All Party Group in question. The rules on All Party Groups (which were agreed by the Committee on Standards and Privileges) state that "Membership of All Party Groups are limited to MLAs but, <u>at the discretion of each group</u>, outside organisations and individuals are often welcome to attend their meetings and to inform and support their work" (paragraph 1.1). See link: <a href="http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Publications/All-Party-Groups/APG_Rules.pdf">http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Publications/All-Party-Groups/APG_Rules.pdf</a></p> <p>The Commission supports those All Party Groups who wish to encourage and support greater participation through the provision of All Party Group webpages (which can set out contact details, details of forthcoming meetings etc.), as well as through the provision of appropriate meeting rooms when All Party Groups wish to involve others.</p>

Organisation	Comment	Response
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) <i>(continued)</i>	<p>One initiative which NICEM is very supportive of is the establishment of the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly and we would like to emphasise the importance of representation from the BME community in the make-up of the Assembly, given the under-representation of BME youths in decision-making processes. At this point it is useful to recall some of the UK's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), namely the inter-linked principles of non-discrimination<sup>6</sup> and the right of the child to be heard.<sup>7</sup> The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has also called for special measures to be taken to encourage participation by vulnerable groups. Given these obligations and the good relations duty, NICEM feels it is of utmost importance that representatives of the BME community are involved in the Youth Assembly.</p> <p>In terms of practical suggestions NICEM feels that the All Party Group on Ethnic Minority Communities could help to inform some discussions. Perhaps an ethnic minority representative of the Youth Assembly could occasionally attend the All Party Group and feedback on relevant issues from the youth assembly. NICEM would be willing to engage further with the Commission in the development of the Youth Assembly.</p>	<p>The Assembly notes the comments made by NICEM and welcomes the offer of assistance in the development of the Youth Assembly.</p>

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6 Article 2 UNCRC.  
7 Article 12 UNCRC.

Organisation	Comment	Response
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) <i>(continued)</i>	<p>Section 75(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a positive duty on public authorities to promote good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. That means that public authorities must adopt a pro-active approach. Based on the Assembly Commission's vision for the Good Relations Strategy, as outlined at section 5.2 of the consultation document, and its mandate to serve and support the Assembly, NICEM urges the Commission to use the strategy as a scrutiny tool to challenge racism. This requires a range of measures to be adopted, in particular ensuring that staff undertake effective anti-discrimination and equality training. Such training must go beyond basic cultural awareness in order to realise the Assembly Commission's vision of challenging racism, in particular institutional racism. NICEM is well experienced in the provision of such training and would be willing to engage with the Assembly Commission on this issue.</p>	<p>The Commission provides Equality Training which includes anti-discrimination to all Assembly Secretariat staff. The content of the training is reviewed to ensure that it meets current legislation and addresses all relevant issues.</p>
	<p>In addition, at sections 2.4 and 2.5 of the consultation document, the Commission suggests the establishment of Good Relations Champions. NICEM welcomes this initiative and suggests that the Commission build upon initiatives in the last Race Relations Strategy 2005-2010 (and hopefully the forthcoming Strategy) to establish departmental champions by creating the position of Race Relations Champion within the Assembly Commission. NICEM also suggests that the Assembly Commission links in with good practice initiatives in other Departments and further afield, for example the BEM link initiative in the Department of Justice, whilst this initiative is fairly new and its impact is yet to be seen it does represent a proactive step in the right direction.</p>	<p>Noted. This action is due to commence in 2013, the criteria for the identification of Good Relations champions has still to be decided, however the Commission will take advice from the Equality Commission for NI, NICEM and other relevant bodies. The Commission has contacted the Department of Justice and gathered information on their BEM link initiative.</p>



Organisation	Comment	Response
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) <i>(continued)</i>	<p>In the consultation document the Assembly Bursary Programme was mentioned. Education and training as well as employability within the BME community is a key priority for NICEM. NICEM would like to request more information, particularly in relation to the advertising of this bursary scheme as BME communities often face increased financial pressure as they often have to pay international student fees.</p>	<p>Further information about the bursary programme can be found on <a href="http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Visit-and-Learning/External-Liaison-Unit/Bursary-Programme">http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Visit-and-Learning/External-Liaison-Unit/Bursary-Programme</a></p> <p>The programme is run in conjunction with Queens University Belfast who are responsible for the marketing of the course and selection of the students, however if you have any further questions please contact Louise Close via 02890 521169 or <a href="mailto:louise.close@niassembly.gov.uk">louise.close@niassembly.gov.uk</a></p>
	<p>NICEM notes at section 2.14 of the consultation document that the Assembly Commission intends to adopt best practice. NICEM would like to request more information on the sources the Assembly Commission looks to in order to ascertain best practice, for example what kind of engagement the Commission has with other regions in the UK. In addition, NICEM would urge the Commission to look to the UK's international human rights obligations to inform best practice. For example, in its concluding observations resulting from the 2011 examination of the UK by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Committee recommended that:</p> <p>The State party is invited to examine whether the legislative and policy framework for dealing with the situation in Northern Ireland could not benefit by being underpinned by the standards, duties and actions prescribed by the Convention and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action on inter-sectionality between ethnic origin, religion and other forms of discrimination.<sup>8</sup></p>	<p>The Commission takes account of relevant international human rights obligations in discharging its obligations under UK law. Legal and policy advice on such matters will recognise the importance of international standards in understanding concepts such as race and discrimination on grounds of race. The Commission's approach to best practice will be informed by this understanding. In addition, the Commission is a public authority and is subject to section 6 of the HRA. As such it must act in a manner consistent with the European Convention on Human Rights, and must understand these rights in light of relevant jurisprudence of the European Court on Human Rights, including that dealing with race</p> <p>The Commission will take account of any other best practice guidance which is published during the lifetime of the Strategy and which is relevant to Northern Ireland – for example, relevant guides may be developed under the Equality Act 2010, which places duties analogous to section 75(2) on public bodies in GB.</p> <p>The Commission also meets with equality personnel in other UK legislatures in order to identify 'best practice' in proactively achieving equality outcomes and to identify whether these methods would work in the context of the Assembly Commission.</p>

8 *UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding Observations on the UK, UN Doc. CERD/C/GBR/CO/18-20, 14 September 2011, para. 20.*

Organisation	Comment	Response
Opportunity Youth	<p>Opportunity Youth supports the publication of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's Good Relations Policy and Action Plan and supports the promotion of good relations between people of differing religious belief, political opinion or racial group and welcomes the commitment to challenging sectarianism and racism in all forms.</p> <p>Opportunity Youth endorses the use of art and other creative industries as a method of promoting good relations and reflecting diversity within our community. Development of an exhibitions policy and an annual schedule for displays of works or artefact which symbolise Northern Ireland is a laudable ambition. Opportunity Youth believe that not only should the art represent all sections of society but the artists too. Opportunity Youth work with many young people considered disadvantaged in the community and within prisons who have found therapeutic recourse through participation in the arts. Projects have included mural painting, amateur dramatics and a train carriage restoration.</p> <p>Opportunity Youth believe officials should explore the possibility of commissioning and encouraging young people including those from within the prison population to produce art for display in the Northern Ireland Assembly.</p>	<p>The Commission will seek opportunities to display art from across the youth sector.</p>
	<p>Opportunity Youth recognise the number of upcoming commemorative anniversaries in the next decade. These events should be marked in an inclusive manner. Opportunity Youth believe the focus on these historic events should not be entirely retrospective and must be significantly geared towards the future. This means including young people in all events to mark anniversaries and commemorations. Our young people are still being held hostage by the past and need to be challenged and educated on a positive shared future.</p> <p>Opportunity Youth recommend the Commission identifies important roles and positions for young people in their programme of events and initiatives.</p>	<p>It is important to understand that the Commission's policy is aimed at creating a framework to allow commemorative anniversaries to be marked only within the confines of Parliament Buildings in an agreed way to avoid controversy. These will be small scale events focusing on Members and other invited guests relevant to the particular occasion. The approach being taken by the Commission should not be confused with the policy being developed by the Executive which will deal with how the Decade of Centenaries is handled in the wider community across Northern Ireland.</p>

Organisation	Comment	Response
Opportunity Youth (continued)	<p>Opportunity Youth welcome the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's role in organising the 'Youth Work is Political' conference along with partners from the community voluntary and sector. Opportunity Youth believe there should be an annual event of this nature involving other organisations such as ourselves.</p> <p>Opportunity Youth fully support the proposal to establish a community link networking body and would be fully prepared to play an active role in any such initiative including attending focus meetings and committees.</p>	<p>The intention is that the NIACL will be open to all community and voluntary sector organisations and it is hoped that all participating organisations will make the most out of the opportunities that the Link provides.</p>
	<p>Opportunity Youth commends the Northern Ireland Assembly on its educational outreach service to schools which is highly regarded. However, Opportunity Youth would like to see a similar effort made towards organisations such as ourselves to allowing the young people we work with the same opportunity to visit and experience Parliament Buildings and develop links that would allow them to learn together and about each other. Opportunity Youth brings together many hundreds of young people from all sections in the community in several different environments including educational, personal development, team-building and counselling. We believe the participants of these programmes who have disengaged or have been left behind from main stream education would benefit from the programmes provided by the Assembly.</p>	<p>The Education Programme is not restricted to schools and is open to youth sector organisations on the same basis as schools.</p>
	<p>Similarly, Opportunity Youth advocate that consideration is given to the involvement of young people regarded as 'Not in education, employment or training' in the development of the NI Youth Assembly. Given approximately 20 per cent of 16-24 year-olds in Northern Ireland are classed as NEET it is imperative that this generation is given a proper voice on the issues being considered by the Northern Ireland Assembly including those which will have a direct impact on their lives, prospects and futures.</p>	<p>In the proposals for a Youth Assembly careful consideration has been given to how to recruit a membership which is representative of Northern Ireland's young people – this would include young people who find themselves Not in Education, Employment or training, or NEET young people. Any recruitment process would seek input from the Equality Commission.</p>

Organisation	Comment	Response
Opportunity Youth (continued)	In addition, Opportunity Youth believe the Northern Ireland Assembly should build further relationships with training providers including Opportunity Youth to allow our young people the opportunity to participate on the work experience programme.	The Commission engages with organisations from a wide variety of sectors and welcomes suggestions for further engagement, including through its work experience programme.
	<p>Furthermore, Opportunity Youth recommend the Assembly Bursary programme be widened to move beyond university students in order to reach vulnerable and disadvantaged young people outside mainstream education.</p> <p>We suggest a foundation or legacy programme that would identify marginalised or disenfranchised young people and provide them with an opportunity to further their training, improve their employability prospects and enhance their life chances.</p>	The Assembly's Bursary programme is specifically linked to the achievement of a Masters in Legislative Studies and Practice run in conjunction with Queen's University. The Assembly would welcome suggestions around specific plans for engagement with particular young people, including the cost implications.
Early Years	The aim of the Commission to ensure that the entire community can have a full and fair access to, and participate in, the operations of the Northern Ireland Assembly is to be supported. It is recommended here that more explicit reference is made from the outset of the document, to set the theme throughout, of incorporating the voices and participation of our youngest citizens in associated processes.	Noted.
	<p>The Committee's Commitment to good relations is stated as: "The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission is committed to the promotion of good relations between persons of differing religious belief, political opinion or racial group and is committed to challenging sectarianism and racism."</p> <p>We further recommend that this should be enhanced, in recognition of our society in transition with new cultural dynamics, by the stated commitment focusing on the wider concepts of diversity as well as the issues affecting the two main traditions.</p>	The Commission's commitment emanates from the wording of the Section 75(2) legislation. Whilst section 75(2) does not refer explicitly to diversity other than in terms of political opinion, religious belief and racial group, we recognise the importance that such diversity, and in particular the engagement of children and young people, have in promoting equality of opportunity.

Organisation	Comment	Response
<p>Early Years (continued)</p>	<p>It is vital that the Commission encourage dialogue and consultation, and most importantly active participation, on issues related to good relations to ensure diversity and understanding is promoted with all levels of stakeholder, including children and young people. Research has shown that internationally, there are numerous programmes that address good relations with older children and teenagers but there is a significant gap in relation to early intervention.</p> <p>In this respect we would highlight the work of the Faces and Spaces – Children’s Shared Space Programme being led by our organisation as an example of early intervention work in good relations being piloted in five interface areas throughout Northern Ireland to develop and support Children’s Shared Space Partnerships focused on young children and families living in these areas.</p>	<p>It is perhaps more appropriate for Executive departments to be involved in the programmes set out above. The primary aim of the Commission’s Engagement Strategy is to make the work of the Assembly as accessible as possible and to communicate it as widely as possible. The Commission’s Good Relations policy is designed to ensure that the Assembly is meeting the needs of as many and diverse groups as possible in its work. However, it might be useful for the work highlighted by Early Years to be brought to the attention of the Assembly Education Committee so that it can be considered and communicated back to the Department for Education etc.</p>
	<p>Whereas it is appropriate that this section of the Good Relations Action Plan include general two way dialogue actions relating to teachers, pupils, youth workers, community and voluntary organisations and agricultural and business sector representatives the present actions do not adequately reflect the importance of also engaging with pre-school children and those who care for and educate them in acknowledgement of the fact that the shared education pathway begins in our pre-school settings, day nurseries and SureStart programmes operating across the region.</p>	<p>It is perhaps more appropriate for the Department of Education to engage these groups in the development of education policy. The Assembly Education Programme does not develop education policy; its primary aim is to deliver curriculum relevant programmes regarding the role and function of the Assembly and to engage as many young people and those who work with them as possible.</p>
	<p>Furthermore, as well as such specific education, community and voluntary, agriculture and business sector focussed initiatives, consideration of proposals for cross-sectoral events and information sessions would greatly improve the present action plan by adding an important extra networking opportunity to the existing perceived outcomes of two way information gathering from such activities.</p>	<p>The Commission undertakes considerable sector-specific and cross-sectoral engagement. The Commission would welcome any suggestions for specific events that complement the work of the Executive departments.</p>

Organisation	Comment	Response
Early Years (continued)	<p>Within this section the actions regarding participation of external groups in Speaker events, encouraging Committees to meet outside Parliament Buildings and the identification and training of good relations champions to ensure good relations is central within the working of the Assembly are to be commended. It would be important here that such champions are representative of all levels, political and administrative, present in the Assembly structure.</p>	<p>The Commission notes the comment.</p>
	<p>Whilst the extension of good relations training to all staff and Party staff is also positive it would be recommended that such staff refresher and new training be a compulsory measure rather than being 'offered' as refresher training to all staff. We contend, based on considerable practical experience in this field, that when doing training on good relations and changing attitudes with adults the participants need to more fully explore their attitudes towards difference based on their own real experiences than would be possible through such a medium as e-learning. Such experiences can be easier for participants to share in a group environment which is well facilitated. We would recommend therefore that such good relations and diversity awareness training needs to be experiential, based on the principles of anti-bias and should be available to all staff. Clearer linkages should also be made between this Aim and Aim three relating to training and development.</p>	<p>Equality training is provided to all Assembly Secretariat staff as they are employees of the Commission; however it can only be <b>offered</b> to party staff as they are not our employees. The content of the training is reviewed to ensure that it meets current legislation and addresses all relevant issues.</p>
	<p>We would also support here the creation of a NI Youth Assembly and would call for the Commission to approve and work to foster this process, which has been in development since early 2010, to encourage greater engagement and access of children and young people in the work of the NI Assembly.</p>	<p>The Commission notes the comment.</p>

Organisation	Comment	Response
<p>Early Years (continued)</p>	<p>Aim 3 Training and Development – Monitoring. As noted above, it is imperative that the Commission ensure training is an integral part of the overall good relations strategy by working closely with training providers and partners. The monitoring and reporting of induction training action should be enhanced in the present draft by clarification being provided on the frequency and methodology to be employed around these particular processes and also reference being included to monitoring and reporting of refresher and on-going training.</p>	<p>Equality training is provided by an external Learning &amp; Development provider and the content of the training is reviewed to ensure that it meets current legislation and addresses all relevant issues.</p>
	<p>Aim 4 Management Information and Data. Action 4.5 within this aim relates to continued use of social media to engage with people and NI and hear their views. Whilst this measure is important, in cognisance of the digital age, it would be more comfortably located within Aim 1 (Dialogue and Consultation) or Aim 2 (Promotion of Good Relations), particularly as Action 4.7 relates to monitoring user comments collection from feedback from all engagement activities. Actions to allow for the collection of management information and data regarding good relations are to be welcomed. The development and implementation of a structured and common approach to data collection and monitoring will be a significant step in this respect. We would strongly endorse the implementation of a central data collection and monitoring framework whereby information could be easily shared across directorates and with interested stakeholders accordingly.</p>	<p>The Commission notes the comment and the suggested change has been made.</p>

Organisation	Comment	Response
Early Years (continued)	<p>The aforementioned Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme, during the academic year 2008/09, underwent a rigorous and independent randomised controlled trial carried out by an interdisciplinary team comprising the Centre for Effective Education at Queen's University Belfast, the National Children's Bureau (NCB) Northern Ireland and Stranmillis University College. The trial, the largest of its kind internationally covered 74 settings across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. To aid the Assembly Commission's development of appropriate indicators associated with a Strategic monitoring framework we would make reference to the following parental and practitioner outcomes identified as part of the</p> <p>Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased recognition of the importance of doing diversity work (with young children)</li> <li>▪ Increased confidence in dealing with diversity issues (with young children)</li> <li>▪ Reduction in prejudices held about others (focusing specifically on sectarianism)</li> <li>▪ Increased levels of empathy towards others in general</li> </ul>	The Commission thanks Early Years for their comments and will consider them.
Northern Ireland Community Relations Council	CRC has previously commented on the Assembly Commission's Good Relations Strategies and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this important area of work for the Assembly Commission once again.	Noted.



Organisation	Comment	Response
Northern Ireland Community Relations Council <i>(continued)</i>	<p>Firstly, the undertaking of an audit by Holywell Consultancy is a positive development. The subsequent publication of a report<sup>9</sup> which highlighted opportunities, challenges, as well as proposing a range of recommendations, will assist the Assembly Commission with its good relations efforts.</p> <p>The action plan itself focuses on a range of priorities i.e. dialogue and consultation, promotion of good relations, training and development, and finally information management and data. It also clearly sets out related activities aimed at making a contribution to the promotion of good relations. And finally, it aligns these actions with an identified timeframe, a lead department and potential outcomes – these are positive features of this programme of work.</p>	The Commission notes the CRC's comments regarding the Holywell Consultancy audit.

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9 <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Publications/Good-Relations/NIA-Good-Relations-Report.pdf>

Organisation	Comment	Response
Northern Ireland Community Relations Council <i>(continued)</i>	<p>The range of actions and activities etc are considerable. However, under a number of proposed activities it is unclear what the specific good relations aspect is. Several of the actions seek to promote/enhance engagement and dialogue with a range of stakeholders, however they do not necessarily have a good relations focus. An example is participation in the Balmoral Show which states an expected outcome of 'people from different rural backgrounds and the agricultural sector will have had the opportunity to discuss political issues'. Given the geographic remit of the Assembly, we would expect the Commission to promote outreach work; however, CRC would argue that whilst the Assembly will want to promote engagement at these regional events, it must specifically provide an opportunity for GR focussed dialogue if it wants to include this action as a good relations activity in the proposed action plan. This generic logic is a frequent occurrence throughout the action plan which is disappointing. CRC recognises the genuine commitment to developing this area of work and feels there are certainly opportunities to strengthen these actions and ensure a strong good relations focus and outcome. CRC therefore recommends that the Assembly Commission revisit the action plan with a renewed determination to craft good relations activities within the engagement and dialogue sphere of activity.</p>	<p>The Commission notes the CRC's comments. The Assembly presence at the Balmoral Show provides an excellent opportunity to engage with Northern Ireland's rural and farming community. At the Balmoral Show the NI Assembly ran a number of Committee Meetings where political opinion on issues could be sought. It also hosted a stand in the main hall that provided information about how to get involved with the Assembly. This provided a platform to encourage participation from people from rural backgrounds.</p>

Organisation	Comment	Response
<p>Northern Ireland Community Relations Council <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p>The proposed commemorative events and related initiatives are a reflection of the debate taking place in wider society and are a welcomed inclusion. Other actions such as engagement with schools (individually and in partnership), teachers, youth workers and local communities are extremely important areas of engagement, and all have the potential to impact positively on the development and promotion of good relations. Again, we would stress the need to ensure that this engagement has a strong good relations focus in order to achieve the desired good relations outcomes.</p> <p>As part of CRC's commemorative work we developed a set of principles in conjunction with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) which were adopted as the guiding principles for our Decade of Centenaries Project. Our partnership with HLF led to the development of a series of Commemorative lectures entitled 'Commemorating the Past, Shaping the Future' which proved to be hugely popular and included participation from councils, political parties, community and historical groups, teachers and students, departments, agencies and the general public. A diverse range of historical themes were examined and considered the contemporary challenges and issues as we move into the centenary decade. It is also worthwhile noting that significant progress has been made at governmental level in NI and indeed also in the Republic and at Westminster in terms of developing principles and acknowledging the need for leadership and to mark the centenaries. It is therefore important to acknowledge the context within which the Assembly Commission's work is taking place. CRC believe it is critical these events are as inclusive as possible, and would therefore ask the Commission to ensure these events are open to all staff members.</p>	<p>In formulating its policy, including a set of principles to underpin its approach, the Commission did consider what other organisations were doing and gave particular attention to the work undertaken in this area by CRC. It is important to understand that the Commission's policy is aimed at creating a framework to allow commemorative anniversaries to be marked only within the confines of Parliament Buildings in a manner which encourages consensus. The approach being taken by the Commission should not be confused with the policy being developed by the Executive which will deal with how the Decade of Centenaries is handled in the wider community across Northern Ireland. Practical considerations alone necessitate that events hosted by the Speaker within Parliament Buildings under this policy will be relatively small scale with a focus on Members and other invited guests relevant to the particular occasion being marked. Where space is available, opportunities will be available for staff to attend some of these events. Indeed, staff were invited to the first event marking the centenary of the Titanic which featured the Assembly Secretariat choir. Work is also underway to ensure there is a record of these events on the Assembly website which will be accessible to all.</p>

Organisation	Comment	Response
Northern Ireland Community Relations Council <i>(continued)</i>	<p>Whilst there may be merit in undertaking certain dialogue with MLA's around commemorations, it would be beneficial for all those working in Parliament buildings to access these events. It is essential the significant steps taken at MLA level are progressed and developed into a wider programme of activity that enables a wider, more public conversation. This not only shows leadership at having the confidence for creating a space to allow these discussions, but also feeds into wider context of reconciliation and conflict transformation.</p> <p>The Commission should seriously consider the Holywell proposal for marking the 21st June as a Day of Reflection within the Assembly. CRC supports the marking of this day, and the Commission should explore opportunities for providing a designated space to mark this symbolic occasion. The Commission should seek guidance from Healing Through Remembering to ensure the most appropriate form of action.</p> <p>This important period as to how we remember the past and the examination of issues must be inclusive, rather than restrictive and CRC is available to discuss how this dialogue might be facilitated as a collective piece of work.</p>	

Organisation	Comment	Response
Northern Ireland Community Relations Council <i>(continued)</i>	<p>Holywell Consultancy recommended further utilisation of the space in the great hall/ long gallery to showcase aspects of culture, and peace and reconciliation projects. CRC believes the public display of such work would strengthen the good relations plan and associated outcomes. It is important to recognise the symbolism of the Assembly as a hub for decision making, and a place where new relationships have, and continue to be forged. It therefore requires symbolic gestures and events to showcase, despite our difficult past, how as a society there are gains to be made.</p> <p>It is CRC's recommendation that public spaces should be further developed as a shared space that explores good relations issues, promotes dialogue, and encourages the examination of issues that have shaped this region. CRC is pleased to see a number of proposals linked to exhibitions as these public displays offer a valuable mechanism for promoting our diverse culture and identities. However, a good relations lens must be applied and it would be beneficial to encourage community, national and international projects, again encouraging debate and dialogue on various perspectives.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the CRC's comments with respect to exhibitions. There is already a group which advises the Speaker on the hosting of exhibitions in the Assembly. This group places a particular emphasis on bringing exhibitions to the Assembly which will appeal to the widest possible audience as well as attracting groups which would not normally visit the Assembly. It should be remembered that there is limited exhibition space in the Assembly and that its primary function is that of a working legislature which means that exhibitions must fit in around this role. However, it is hoped that the level of exhibitions can be enhanced in the future and the Commission is always looking for innovative ways to host thought provoking exhibitions.</p>
	<p>There are a number of recent exhibitions which the Commission could consider for best practice. Belfast City Council recently opened their new exhibition 'Decade of Centenaries Exhibition', which is open to all. The Assembly Commission should examine how exhibitions could be integrated into the political tour of the building and arrange reflective discussions post tour. This would be particularly valuable for local groups/schools and enhance the tour as well as its good relations engagement with the public.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the CRC comments. The Commission is aware of the Belfast City Council exhibition and has already undertaken considerable work looking at how the Assembly can mark the 'Decade of Centenaries'.</p>

Organisation	Comment	Response
Northern Ireland Community Relations Council <i>(continued)</i>	<p>Good practice can also be found in the Scottish Parliament's Festival of Politics<sup>10</sup>. This year's programme covers a range of political themes and debates. It is significant that the festival organisers have not shied away from the contentious issues, and have included a theatre performance of 'Singin' I'm no a Billy He's a Tim<sup>11</sup> and a Conversation on Sectarianism<sup>12</sup>. This form of discussion is notable, as well as being showcased as a public festival. CRC would encourage the Assembly Commission to engage with the Scottish Parliament Festival organisers to explore similar events for the Assembly. Finally, given the range of good relations events and community festivals in the North, as well as CRC's own 'Community Relations Week' showcase, it would be worthwhile to examine how these discussions could be integrated into the regional political arena.</p> <p>In conclusion, it is critical the Assembly Commission is seen to be leading the way, and should therefore seriously consider recommendations from the audit report which relate to conflict transformation.</p>	The Commission notes the suggestions made and will take them under consideration.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.festivalofpolitics.org.uk/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.festivalofpolitics.org.uk/56.htm>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.festivalofpolitics.org.uk/65.htm>

Organisation	Comment	Response
Northern Ireland Community Relations Council <i>(continued)</i>	<p>The specific actions that refer to educational work have huge potential to impact positively on good relations. At a minimum they will bring children, teachers and youth workers together from different backgrounds. However, CRC would like to see this area of work enhanced and would urge the Commission and the relevant lead division to consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Co-ordinate educational activity and align with DE's Community Relations Equality &amp; Diversity Policy<sup>13</sup></li> <li>▪ Ensure the Teachers' conferences and the 'Youth Work is Political' Conference include a good relations component e.g. to raise awareness of the value of active involvement in citizenship and politics<sup>14</sup></li> <li>▪ Ensure the professionals participating in these events come from a range of formal and informal educational divisions.</li> <li>▪ Link the outcomes of these conferences to professional development aims.</li> <li>▪ Develop a programme of engagement that requires pre/post cross-community interaction between educational leaders/pupils.</li> <li>▪ Consider using thematic issues to stimulate discussion between schools e.g. shared space, flags; and ensure this work links to curriculum and CRED objectives.</li> </ul>	<p>The Commission welcomes the CRC's comments with respect to the Assembly's engagement with the youth sector in its various forms. The suggestions are interesting and will be considered within the context of the Assembly Education Service's principal aim of providing opportunities for young people to be able to access the Assembly and to better understand its work as a legislature.</p>
	<p>The development of a Youth Assembly is a positive achievement. CRC would stress the need to ensure that those participating are given good relations training, thereby providing the skills and motivation to deal with sensitive issues (if they arise). The Commission should also explore the opportunity of developing a Statement of Commitment to Good Relations with the junior assembly members.</p>	<p>The Commission notes the CRC's comments.</p>

13 <http://www.credni.org/>

14 1825 Project Ltd, *Politics Made Simple (PMS) funded by EU Measure 2.1 (2006-2008)*

Organisation	Comment	Response
Northern Ireland Community Relations Council <i>(continued)</i>	<p>The work experience programme provides another opportunity to develop good relations within the Assembly. The Commission should build a programme of engagement which incorporates good relations themes, and set tasks both as individuals and groups.</p> <p>All of the actions raised above have been included in the Commission's action plan, but it is unclear how they will incorporate good relations. In their current state they remain vague and generic and CRC calls on the Commission to revisit these actions and supplement them with distinct good relations activity to ensure the strongest outcomes for the promotion of good relations.</p>	The Commission notes the CRC's comments and will consider them within the context of the aims of the Work Experience Programme.



Organisation	Comment	Response
Northern Ireland Community Relations Council <i>(continued)</i>	<p>CRC is pleased at the commitment to continue to provide training on equality and good relations. It is important this training continues regardless of progress and the Equality Commission recently reiterated this when it stated ‘when tackling any long-standing challenges complacency, based on past success, can be fatal. Our vigilance in terms of workplace relationships has to be continually refocused not only to ensure that old tensions don’t recur; but to take account of the new realities faced by a changing society..... we must maintain the mechanisms, the commitment and focus, which have served us well up to now in tackling any expressions of sectarian divisions within the workplace<sup>15</sup>’.</p> <p>CRC is concerned that given the following statement ‘It (S75 (2)) involves considering steps to promote good relations amongst, for example, employees, service users and others affected by our policies’<sup>16</sup>, the training will only be made available to political party staff. CRC understands that the Commission has no direct authority over this independent staff consort, but we believe the above statement provides the justification for ensuring this group of staff are included in any good relations training. It is important to be seen to be inclusive, regardless of the employer, and to commit everyone who works in that space to the critical issue of developing and improving good relations within this very public and shared political arena. It is crucial for the Commission to ensure that all staff are aware of the vision and objectives of the Commission in relation to these issues, as well as stressing the important role they play in promoting and encouraging good relations throughout the Assembly buildings along with other staff and visitors.</p>	Equality training is provided to all Assembly Secretariat staff as they are employees of the NI Assembly Commission however it can only be <b>offered</b> to party staff as they are not our employees. The training is provided by an external Learning & Development provider and a mix of grades attends each training session.

15 Equality based on respect [http://www.equalityni.org/sections/Default.asp?cms=News%5FNews&cmsid=1\\_2&id=349&secid=1\\_1](http://www.equalityni.org/sections/Default.asp?cms=News%5FNews&cmsid=1_2&id=349&secid=1_1) 31/07/2012

16 Para 3.2. Action Plan.

Organisation	Comment	Response
Northern Ireland Community Relations Council (continued)	<p>CRC recommends that the Assembly Commission agree a mechanism for including party political staff in good relations training. It is proper that everyone avail of this important training therefore enhancing working relationships within the whole assembly (this should apply to new and refresher training).</p> <p>CRC also advocates that this training should take place on a cross-sectional basis and should not be confined or constrained by grade – mixing of ranks will raise awareness of issues, and develop trust and confidence in the process. No one should be exempt from good relations training.</p>	
	<p>Finally, the staff survey should give a clear focus to issues that arise from the good relations training and questions received through the Director General's suggestion box. Updating staff on issues and progress should become a regular reporting feature.</p>	<p>The staff survey includes equality and good relations questions and findings are published and appropriate action is taken based on findings. Questions received through the Director General's suggestion box are answered within one week and are published on our intranet to keep staff updated.</p>
	<p>The identification and training of good relations champions is a welcome development. CRC would like further information in relation to how these champions will report back to the commission, monitor change, how frequently they will meet and how they will formally link their activities with the wider staff collective.</p>	<p>This action is due to commence in 2013, the criteria for the identification of Good Relations champions has still to be decided, however the Commission will take advice from the Equality Commission for NI and other relevant bodies such as CRC.</p>

Organisation	Comment	Response
Northern Ireland Community Relations Council <i>(continued)</i>	<p>According to the Audit Report<sup>17</sup> a number of challenges remain e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Visitors – ‘Public Attitudes Survey 2009’ carried out by Ipsos MORI found that of those consulted to inform the report 23% of Nationalist had visited Parliament Buildings compared with 38% of Unionists.</li> <li>▪ MLA Behaviour - there still remain divisions between elected members; it must be recognised that this is a place emerging from a violent past and the significance of actions cannot be underestimated or lost on elected representatives.</li> <li>▪ Flags &amp; Emblems - will continue to be a divisive issue within the Assembly. The visible manifestations of difference are precious to people in Northern Ireland.</li> <li>▪ A limited understanding of the meaning and significance of some flags and emblems can lead to increased divisions and tensions.</li> <li>▪ Parliament Buildings Location - to access the buildings means passing through predominantly Loyalist areas of Belfast. This can be off putting for members of the Nationalist community, particularly at certain times of the year.</li> <li>▪ Fledging Peace Process – Peace Process is still relatively young and as such remains quite sensitive to outside pressures and influences.</li> </ul>	The Commission notes CRC’s comments.
	CRC would welcome the opportunity to discuss our comments and the above issues in more detail and look forward to engaging with the Commission over the coming months.	The Commission welcomes future engagement with CRC.
	Finally, a number of relevant strategies are currently being developed or finalised, including OFMDFM’s Cohesion, Sharing & Integration, DCAL’s Irish Language and Ulster Scots Strategy, and the work of OFMDFM’s Flags Working Group. It is important the Commission’s Action Plan takes cognisance of these emerging policy developments.	Noted.

17 <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Publications/Good-Relations/NIA-Good-Relations-Report.pdf>

## 5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The Commission has carefully considered the findings of this consultation exercise. The Commission believes the additional actions and revisions suggested by consultees will have a beneficial effect in terms of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In light of the consultation comments received the Commission has revised its Good Relations Action Plan which can be found at Appendix 1.
- 5.2 We appreciate the time taken by consultees in responding to this consultation exercise.

# Appendix 1

## Revised Good Relations Action Plan

### Aim 1 Dialogue and Consultation

The Commission will encourage dialogue and consultation on issues related to good relations to ensure diversity and understanding is promoted and appropriate initiatives/activities are fostered. This will be achieved by:

Action	Directorate/Area	Timescale <sup>18</sup>	Anticipated Outcome
1.1 Good Relations Policy and Action Plan.	Commission and Corporate Support Unit.	September 2012.	Implementation of Policy and Action Plan.
		September 2012.	Communication of Policy and Action Plan to all staff.
		October 2012.	Staff training updated to cross-reference with Policy and Action Plan.
1.2 Equality and Good Relations Working Group.	Commission and Corporate Support Unit.	2013.	Continued meetings discussing equality and good relations issues
1.3 The Commission engages with Holywell consultants to discuss outcomes arising from the internal good relations audit research.	Commission and Corporate Support Unit.	April 2012.	The production of a series of actions on how to take forward good relations within the NI Assembly, under the responsibility of the Commission.  Good Relations Action Plan is updated to include actions.
1.4 To continue implementation of the NIAC Equality Scheme to ensure employees understand their obligations concerning equality and good relations.	Commission and Corporate Support Unit.	On-going.	Compliance with Section 75 of the NI Act 1998.
1.5 Speaker's Art Group: Development of an Exhibitions Policy and yearly exhibitions schedule.	Office of the Speaker.	May 2012 and annual schedule thereafter.	To present a yearly plan to the Commission, for approval, of exhibitions in the Great Hall.

<sup>18</sup> Timescales refer to commencement dates

\* Denotes this action may cross reference through multiple actions contained within the plan

Action	Directorate/Area	Timescale <sup>18</sup>	Anticipated Outcome
1.6 Consider Art works/artefacts which symbolise the diverse nature of our society*.	Office of the Speaker/ Commission and Corporate Support Unit.	November 2012.	Officials to explore availability of existing art works/artefacts for long term loan for consideration by the Commission, before giving any consideration to procurement of new items.
1.7 The Speaker, assisted by the Speaker's Engagement and Liaison Group, makes proposals to the Commission on the marking of Commemorative Anniversaries*.	Office of the Speaker.	April 2012 and annually thereafter.	A list of historic anniversaries to be marked is agreed.  An annual programme of events is agreed by the Commission to mark historic anniversaries and commemorations.
1.8 The Commission to agree a range of events and initiatives to promote the 80th anniversary of the construction of Parliament Buildings.	Office of the Speaker.	November 2012	A range of events and initiatives to promote Parliament Buildings will have been undertaken to target under-represented groups and the wider public.
1.9 To answer Assembly Questions for written and oral answer applicable to equality and good relations.	Information and Outreach.	Written Questions– Daily basis  Oral Questions – Quarterly basis.	To answer written and oral questions as set out in Commission and Corporate Support Unit guidance.
1.10 To respond to and publish staff equality and good relations questions as received through the 'Director General's suggestion box'.	Information and Outreach.		Where practicable to respond to questions within one week.
1.11 To conduct a staff survey every two years which includes questions regarding equality and good relations issues.	Information and Outreach.	Every two years, as proposed by Internal Communications Working Group (ICWG) and Senior Management Group (SMG).	Identification of equality and good relations issues to be addressed.  Issues arising to be addressed or forwarded to the appropriate Directorate for consideration.
1.12 To organise three teachers' conferences per year for teachers.	Information and Outreach.	Annually.	Teachers from different schools come together to learn about the work of the Assembly and meet MLAs
1.13 To organise with the Participative Democracy Partnership, Youth Action NI, Save the Children Fund and Public Achievement the 'Youth Work is Political' Conference.	Information and Outreach.		Increase in Youth Workers knowledge of the way the Assembly works.

Action	Directorate/Area	Timescale <sup>18</sup>	Anticipated Outcome
1.14 Establish a community link networking body.	Information and Outreach.	April 2012 and on-going after establishment.	A better understanding will be created on the work of the NI Assembly by community and voluntary organisations.  Information is gathered from the community and voluntary sector to inform the work of the NI Assembly and contribute to our thinking on good relations as appropriate.
1.15 The Assembly delivers its education programme in a format which provides for schools from different backgrounds to learn together*.	Information and Outreach.	On-going.	Schools from different backgrounds will have had the opportunity to learn together and about each other.
1.16 Participate in the Balmoral Show*.	Information and Outreach.	On-going.	People from different rural backgrounds and the agricultural sector will have had the opportunity to discuss political issues.
1.17 To participate in the Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust (NIABT)*.	Information and Outreach.	On-going.	People from different backgrounds in the business sector will have had the opportunity to learn together and share opinions on issues of mutual interest. The good relations duty will have been considered and factored in as a qualifying/high priority criterion for membership.
1.18 Hold focus meetings with sectoral and voluntary groups to inform committee business.	Information and Outreach.	On-going.	We will have provided different groups with opportunities to work together to inform Committee decisions/ deliberations.
1.19 Provide legal advice to the NI Assembly Commission, and to staff, in relation to obligations under S75(2) of the NI Act 1998.	Legal and Governance Services.	On-going.	Legal Services continue to provide advice on an on-going basis.

## Aim 2 Promotion of Good Relations

The Commission will promote equality of opportunity and good relations in all aspects of its work by ensuring that all its services are delivered effectively and encourage diversity. This will be achieved by:

Action	Directorate/Area	Timescale	Anticipated Outcome
2.1 Public display of Speaker's gifts.	Office of the Speaker.	On-going.	The display of Speaker's gifts within public areas in Parliament Buildings.
2.2 Participation of external groups in Speaker's events within Parliament Buildings.	Office of the Speaker.	On-going.	Participation and inclusion of external groups in identified events held at Parliament Buildings.
2.3 Consider the good relations resource requirements.	Assembly Commission.	November 2012.	Agreement has been reached regarding the resource requirements needed for the delivery of this four-year action plan.
2.4 Identification of good relations champions (Commissioners and staff members).	Secretariat wide.	2013.	A core team to ensure good relations is central within the working of the Assembly.
2.5 Training and development of good relations champions*.	Commission and Corporate Support Unit.	2013.	On-going good relations learning takes place.
2.6 Refresher good relations training is offered to all staff*.	Commission and Corporate Support Unit.	2013.	Mainstreaming of good relations is understood and its impact on the organisation.
2.7 Ensure good relations training is made available to Party staff.	Commission and Corporate Support Unit.	2013	The implications of good relations are understood.
2.8 Provide advice and guidance to the NI Assembly Commission, and to staff, on how to incorporate equality and good relations into Directorate Business Plans*.	Commission and Corporate Support Unit.	New Directorate Plans covering the 2012-2013 Period and subsequent Directorate Business Plans.	Promotion of good relations into secretariat Directorates.
2.9 To develop a Language Policy*.	Commission and Corporate Support Unit.	During the current mandate.	Development of a clear and concise policy with measurable standards.
2.10 Continue to utilise applicable codes and guidance from the Equality Commission NI as it relates to the recruitment of staff.	Commission and Corporate Support Unit.	On-going.	Commission policies continue to reflect best practice in recruitment and continue to ensure equality of opportunity for all potential job applicants.



Action	Directorate/Area	Timescale	Anticipated Outcome
2.11 Development of a NI Youth Assembly.	Information and Outreach.	Recruitment Autumn/Winter 2012. (Subject to a tender process and the successful awarding of a contract).  In place by April/May 2013 (N.B. this entire process is subject to Commission approval).	To encourage greater engagement of young people in the work of the NI Assembly.  To make the Assembly more accessible to young people and to give young people of NI an opportunity to have their voices heard on issues being considered by the NI Assembly.
2.12 Develop opportunities for shared learning and space e.g. exhibitions/displays/ Education/Youth Assembly.	Cross-Directorate.	On-going.	Opportunities to promote good relations as part of public engagement.
2.13 To develop a visitors policy to Parliament Buildings.	Facilities/Keeper of the House.	September 2012.	A protocol is in operation for access to Parliament Buildings.
2.14 Identify best practice from other sources and adopt practice following consultation with Section 75 groups and internal stakeholders.	Corporate Services Directorate.	On-going.	Best practice implemented and communicated.
2.15 Advertisement of committee inquiries and the committee stage of Bills in each of the main daily newspapers offering opportunities to all sections of the community to submit evidence.	Clerking and Reporting.	On-going.	Improved access opportunities for people to contribute to policy development and legislative scrutiny processes.
2.16 Plans in place to encourage Committees to actively engage with the community by meeting regularly outside Parliament Buildings.	Clerking and Reporting.	On-going.	Improved opportunities for all sections of the community to contribute to policy development and legislative scrutiny processes.
2.17 Establishment of a charities policy.	Information and Outreach.	2013 and annually thereafter.	Commission chooses charity for 2012-2013 period
2.18 Use exhibition spaces to reflect the multi-cultural aspects of Northern Ireland society.	Information and Outreach.	2013.	Display work undertaken by various groups and in particular minority ethnic groups.
2.19 Continued operation of a work experience programme.	Information and Outreach.	2013.	Target 16-24 year olds as noted in Engagement Strategy. Working with providers through established relationships.

Action	Directorate/Area	Timescale	Anticipated Outcome
2.20 Continued operation of a pilot alternative placement programme with Stranmillis College (Primary school level).	Information and Outreach.	2013.	To allow the Assembly to ensure that its current education programmes continue to be compatible with teacher training best practice.
2.21 Continued use of 'social media' to engage with people of NI and hear their views on the Assembly and political issues.	Information and Outreach.	On-going.	We will have listened to the people of NI and provided different groups with a democratic understanding and the opportunity to develop mutual positions in a shared (cyber) space.

### Aim 3 Training and Development

The Commission will ensure training is an integral part of the good relations strategy. The Commission will work closely with its training providers and others, where applicable, in the development and delivery of good relations training. This will be achieved by:

Action	Directorate/Area	Timescale	Anticipated Outcome
3.1 When providing training, equality issues will be accounted for (HR Office responsibility) and the recording of equality training/refresher training will be recorded in Personal Development Plans (PDP) by all staff.	Corporate Services Directorate (HR and Commission Support and Corporate Services).	2013.	On-going learning in relation to equality takes place.
3.2 Monitoring of mandatory staff training which includes the promotion of good relations as part of the induction process for any external appointments that occur.	Corporate Services Directorate.	2012.	Induction training monitored and reported on.

## Aim 4 Management Information and Data

The Commission will put in place the necessary arrangements to allow for the collection of management information and data regarding good relations. This will be achieved by:

Action	Directorate	Timescale	Anticipated Outcome
4.1 Develop and implement a programme plan system to collect and collate data across Directorates.	Commission and Corporate Support Unit.	October 2012.	A structured and common approach to data collection and monitoring developed.  A central data collection and monitoring framework implemented.
4.2 To conduct a Good Relations EQIA.	Commission and Corporate Support Unit.	2013.	Information detailed on actions to be taken and timetabled within the Good Relations Plan.
4.3 Continue to hold meetings with representatives from the LGBT sector.	Commission and Corporate Support Unit.	On-going.	Information is provided to the Commission in order to inform appropriate strategies and policies.
4.4 Revise Commission and Senior Management Group template submissions to include screening forms as a mandatory criterion.	Commission and Corporate Support Unit.	April 2012.	Submit proposals to Senior Management Group and Assembly Commission.
		May 2012.	Draft and circulate screening guidance to staff.
		On-going.	Direct staff to screening training.
4.5 Continue to consider opportunities for the Assembly Bursary Programme, through the Master's Degree programme with Queens University Belfast, to assist in the development of Assembly Policies.	Information and Outreach.	On-going.	The in-house resource of university students will have been used in a way which can provide closer stakeholder input to shape and inform Assembly policies and the delivery of our services.
4.6 To monitor user comments collected from feedback processes in place for all engagement activities.	Information and Outreach.	On-going.	Feedback is used, where appropriate, to help inform decisions and build the promotion of equality and good relations into the delivery of services.
4.7 Continued implementation of fully compliant procurement policies and practices.	Corporate Services.	On-going.	Commission policies continue to reflect best practice in public procurement, and in doing so, provides opportunities for economic and social well-being of the community.

Action	Directorate	Timescale	Anticipated Outcome
4.8 Maintain an inventory and monitor the condition of all artefacts belonging to the Assembly.	Facilities.	1 April 2012 and annually thereafter.	An assurance that all artefacts belonging to the Assembly are kept and maintained in an appropriate manner.
4.9 The Commission will continue to monitor its Workforce composition and complete annual monitoring returns in accordance with statutory requirements.	Corporate Services	Annually	The Commission will consider strategies for attracting under-represented groups when appropriate and will take into account Equality Commission guidance and advice.

## Appendix 2

### List of External Organisations Consulted

- Action on Hearing Loss
- Age NI
- Alliance Party
- Al-Nisa Association NI
- An Munia Tober
- Association for Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus
- Autism NI
- Aware Defeat Depression
- Baha’I Community of Belfast
- Bahai Council for NI
- Ballymena Inter-Ethnic Forum
- Barnardos
- Belfast Chinese Christian Church
- Belfast City Council Youth Forum
- Belfast Hebrew Congregation
- Belfast Islamic Centre
- Belfast Jewish Community
- Bulgarian Association NI
- Cara-Friend
- Care in NI
- Carers Northern Ireland
- CCMS
- Children in Need NI
- Childrens Law Centre
- Chinese Chamber of Commerce
- Chinese Welfare Association
- Church of Ireland
- CO3
- Community Development & Health Network NI
- Craigavon Traveller Support Committee
- DARD
- DCAL
- DEL
- Department of Justice
- Derry Travellers Support Group
- Derry Well Woman
- DETI
- DFP
- DHSSPS
- Disability Action
- DOE
- Down’s Syndrome Association
- DRD
- DSD
- DUP
- Early Years
- East Belfast Community Development Agency
- Employers Forum on Disability
- Equality Coalition
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
- Equality Forum NI

- Falls Community Council
- FPA
- Gingerbread Northern Ireland
- GMB
- Green Party
- Guru Nanak Dev Ji Sikh Community Association
- Hare Krishna Community
- Hungarian Community Association
- Include Youth
- Indian Community Centre
- Lasi (Lesbian Advocacy Services Initiative)
- Latino America Unida
- Lenord Cheshire
- Lesbian Line
- Mandarin Speakers Association
- MENCAP
- Methodist Church in Ireland
- Mid Ulster International Cultural Group
- Multi-Cultural Resource Centre
- Newry & Mourne Senior Citizens Consortium
- Newtownabbey Senior Citizens Forum
- NI Anti-Poverty Network
- NI Council for Integrated Schools
- NI Filipino Community in Action
- NI Human Rights Commission
- NI Mediation Service
- NI Multicultural Association
- NI Muslim Family Association
- NI Somali Community Association
- NI Women's Aid Federation
- NI Youth Forum
- NIACRO
- NICEM
- NIC-ICTU
- NICVA
- NIPSA
- NISRA
- NIWEP
- North West Community Network
- Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health
- NSPCC
- NUS USI
- OFMDFM
- Oi kwan Chinese Women's Group
- Oi Wah Chinese Women's Group
- Oi Yin Women's Group
- Older Peoples Advocate
- Omagh Access Forum
- Omagh Ethnic Minorities Community Association
- Opportunity Youth
- Pakistani Community Association
- Polish Association NI
- Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- Probation Board for Northern Ireland
- Public Achievement
- RNIB
- Roman Catholic Church

- Rural Community Network
- Sai Pak Chinese Community Project
- Save the Children
- SDLP
- Sense NI
- Sikh Cultural Centre
- Sikh Women & Children's Association
- Sinn Fein
- Staff Commission for Education & Library Boards
- Staff Commission for Local Government
- Strabane Ethnic Community Association
- The Cedar Foundation
- The Community Relations Council
- The Egypitan Society of NI
- The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
- The Rainbow Project
- Trademark
- Traditional Unionist Voice
- Tuar Ceatha
- Tuar/Barnardos
- Ulster Scots Agency
- Ulster Teachers Union
- Ulster Unionist Party
- UNISON
- VOYPIC
- Wah-Hip Chinese Community Association
- Women of the World
- Women's Forum NI
- Women's Information Group
- Women's Resource & Development Agency
- Women's Support Network
- Youth Action NI
- Youth Council for Northern Ireland
- Youth Link Northern Ireland
- Youthnet

## Appendix 3 Organisations Responding to the Consultation Exercise

1. Disability Action
2. Volunteer Now
3. Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
4. NUS-USI
5. Internal Directorate Comments
6. Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM)
7. NI Community Relations Council
8. Opportunity Youth
9. Early Years











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