Northern Ireland Assembly

EQUALITY IMPACT

ASSESSMENT:

NORTHERN IRELAND

ASSEMBLY ENGAGEMENT

STRATEGY 2015-16

Consultation

This Draft EQIA Consultation Report is now available for consultation. All comments are welcome and will be accepted in any format. The consultation period will last for a period of 14 weeks and the deadline for submission of comments is 16th March 2015.

All comments should be sent to:

Consultation Response

Outreach Manager

Room 135

Northern Ireland Assembly

Parliament Buildings

Ballymiscaw

Stormont

Belfast

BT4 3XX

Telephone: 02890 521169

Email: outreach@niassembly.gov.uk

If there is any information in this report which is not clear or if you require further information, please contact the Outreach Manager on the above number. All relevant documents can be accessed on the Northern Ireland Assembly at www.niassembly.gov.uk

Please note that all responses will be treated as public, and may be published on the Northern Ireland Assembly website. If you do not want your response to be used in this way, or if you would prefer it to be used anonymously, please indicate this when responding.

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I. TABLES AND CHARTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1   This EQIA is being carried out in accordance with the Assembly Commission's[1] statutory duties under Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ('the 1998 Act'). Section 75 requires the Commission, in carrying out its functions in Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity

> between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age,
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> marital status or sexual orientation;
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> between men and women generally;
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> between persons with a disability and persons without; and
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> between persons with dependents and persons without.

1.2   Without prejudice to these obligations, the Commission is also required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious beliefs, political opinion or racial group.

1.3   Schedule 9 of the 1998 Act sets out the detailed procedure for the implementation of these duties including the conduct of screening exercises and EQIAs of policies.

1.4   When undertaking an EQIA, the Commission follows the guidance issued by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in February 2005[2] which recommends that there should be seven stages in the EQIA process:

Stage 1 :	Definition of the aims of the policy
Stage 2 :	Consideration of available data and research
Stage 3 :	Assessment of potential and actual impacts

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[1] 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.
[2] Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment, Equality Commission for NI, 2005 (pp.3-4)

Stage 4 :   Consideration of measures

Stage 5 :   Formal consultation

Stage 6 :   Decision and publication of the results of the EQIA

Stage 7 :   Monitoring for adverse impact.

1.5   This report sets out the findings of the first four stages of the EQIA process.

The policy and purpose of the EQIA

1.6   An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy to determine the extent of differential impact upon the groups within the nine equality categories and whether that impact is adverse. If it is decided that the policy has an adverse impact on one or more of the nine equality categories, the Commission must consider measures which might mitigate the adverse impact and alternative ways of delivering policy aims which have a less adverse impact on the relevant equality category.[3]

1.7   In order to determine whether a policy has any adverse differential impact, it is necessary to consider the people affected by the policy, their needs and experiences and the equality categories to which they belong. It is also important to note that while an EQIA must encompass and address the impact of a policy on all nine categories, it may not be that each category will be given equal emphasis throughout the assessment process; instead the EQIA must be responsive to emerging issues and prioritise accordingly[4].

1.8   This Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) considers the Northern Ireland Assembly Engagement Strategy 2015 – 2016 with specific reference to its impact on the categories of people specified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

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[3] Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment, Equality Commission for NI, 2005 (pp.3-4)
[4] Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment, Equality Commission for NI, 2005 (pp.4)

1.9 The Assembly's original Engagement Strategy covered the period from 2009 to 2013. The majority of the recommendations and initiatives in that Strategy have been implemented. For those that have not been implemented the principal reasons for not progressing these objectives are either due to the demand for financial efficiencies required by the Comprehensive Spending Review or where the objective has been met by other means.

1.10 At its June 2013 meeting, the Assembly Commission approved a proposal to close the original Engagement Strategy and develop a new Strategy to build upon its progress.

1.11 Following extensive research, including information used for this EQAI detailed in Section 3, the new 2015 - 2016 strategy was developed and was subject to equality screening in May 2014 (Appendix 1).

1.12 Based on available data the exercise identified only minor actual or likely adverse impacts on the equality of opportunity for those affected by the policy; however, the Assembly felt it was still necessary to carry out a full impact assessment because of the following five issues:

- The policy has been classed as having "major" relevance to the promotion of equality of opportunity;

- A public consultation exercise is needed as people affected by the policy have a legitimate expectation that a consultation exercise will be conducted;

- Potentially, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment;

- The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;

- The Engagement Strategy is a high level policy and is likely to generate further policies or actions that are relevant to the promotion of equality of opportunity.

1.13   The Assembly also recognised that the completion of an EQIA might have wider benefits, including the identification of additional ways to enhance both equality of opportunity and the strategies currently proposed.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1   The Assembly's first Engagement Strategy covered the period from 2009 to 2013. The majority of the recommendations and initiatives in that Strategy were implemented. For those that were not, the principal reasons are either due to the demand for financial efficiencies required by the Comprehensive Spending Review or the objective has been met by other means. At its June 2013 meeting, the Assembly Commission approved a proposal to develop a new Engagement Strategy.

2.2   The next Assembly Election is on 5 May 2016. This Strategy will guide the Assembly's engagement activities until a new Assembly Commission takes over.

2.3   In order to develop a Strategy that will be successful in achieving its objectives, it should be reflective of the entire organisation and led by the Assembly Commission. It will also support Member- and Committee-led engagement.

2.4   Legislatures are increasingly faced with the challenge of engaging with the public, on the assumption that it will lead to greater understanding of, and enhance trust in, political institutions.

2.5   While this remains an important objective, other factors, outside our control, can have a major impact on the likelihood of achieving that. Therefore, the Engagement Strategy 2015-16 focuses on Assembly/ parliamentary engagement activity and highlights that this is only part of wider political engagement and that parliamentary engagement activity cannot and should not be used in isolation as a measure of success or otherwise.

2.6   The Strategy details how the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission will consolidate and improve its engagement with stakeholders. It will take account of existing outreach and wider engagement activities with a view to consolidation,

cohesion and value for money, develop strategic partnerships in priority areas, seek the views of stakeholders and consider best practice in other legislatures and support Members where appropriate in their own engagement efforts.

2.7   In order to be able to develop a forward looking strategy, it is important to first place the Assembly's existing engagement in context.

2.8   The impact of the 2009-2013 engagement activity can be demonstrated quantitatively by way of the number of participants in our education programme, community, business and parliamentary outreach programmes, web users, social media followers, visitor numbers to Parliament Buildings, the degree of media coverage, number of participants in community, business and parliamentary outreach programmes and number of event delegates.

2.9   In the 2013-2014 year:

- 17,318 children and young people took part in the Assembly Education programme

- The Assembly had 17,000 Twitter followers and 2,000 Facebook followers

- There were 846,000 web users and three million page views on www.niassembly.gov.uk

- More than 35,000 pages of web content and growing by 5,000 pages per year.

- Nearly 11,000 people watched or listened to Assembly interviews and videos

- The Assembly generated 175 pieces of coverage across print, broadcast and online media and handled 144 media enquiries

- Assembly Community Connect (ACC) organised/participated in 52 events engaging with more than 9,000 people

- Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust (NIABT) organised/participated in 24 events engaging with more than 1,100 people

- The Assembly hosted 91 parliamentary and other delegations from all over the world

- 750 events took place, welcoming over 40,000 people to Parliament Buildings

- 14,000 people took part in over 800 tours at Parliament Buildings

3. AIMS OF THE STRATEGY

3.1   Over the last decade parliaments around the world have followed contradictory paths; on the one hand the value of parliamentarianism has expanded considerably, on the other, parliaments have become the public face of political disengagement. While the value of parliamentarianism has been reinforced, the scepticism towards legislatures has in fact increased. Also, while trust in parliaments has steadily declined, these institutions have never been more active in developing mechanisms to engage with the public.

3.2   It has been suggested that for a long time the relationship between parliament and the public was not a priority for legislatures. However, the Assembly Commission has placed engagement high on its agenda with the original Engagement Strategy (2009-2013) and this, its successor, the Northern Ireland Assembly Engagement Strategy 2015-2016.

3.3   Legislatures are increasingly faced with the challenge of engaging with the public, on the assumption that it will lead to greater understanding of, and enhance trust in, political institutions.

3.4   While this remains an important objective, other factors, outside our control, can have a major impact on the likelihood of achieving it. Therefore, the 2015-16 Strategy focuses on parliamentary engagement activity and highlights that this is only part of a wider political engagement effort and that parliamentary engagement activity cannot and should not be used in isolation as a measure of success or otherwise.

3.5   General media coverage and anecdotal evidence would point to the fact that the need has never been greater for the Assembly to engage with its stakeholders. While that remains an overriding objective, it is important to note that the current financial and corporate conditions are very different to those of 2009 when the original strategy was developed.

3.6   The Northern Ireland Assembly Engagement Strategy 2015-16 details how the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission will consolidate and improve its engagement with stakeholders.

3.7   When developing the strategy the Assembly took account of existing outreach and wider engagement activities with a view to consolidation, cohesion, value for money, views of stakeholders, and best practice in other legislatures.

Vision

3.8   The vision of the strategy is to make a significant contribution to the way the Assembly Commission will achieve its wider corporate vision to ensure that the Assembly and its work are accessible to all and communicated widely.

3.9   The Strategy will help to achieve the Assembly Commission's three corporate aims to:

1. *Provide outstanding parliamentary services* by -
Using new and emerging digital and other technology and initiatives to ensure that information on Assembly business is available in a timely way and in a range of appropriate formats that meet the needs of stakeholders.

2. *Influence, enable and deliver change* by -
Developing partnerships to increase and enhance education, business, community and parliamentary outreach programmes to help stakeholders understand, engage and participate in the democratic process.

3. *Be an efficient and progressive organisation* by -
Seeking to continuously deliver value for money programmes, review and improve our services and make the Assembly accessible to all.

3.10   The Strategy will also:

1) Take account of existing outreach and wider engagement activities with a view to consolidation and cohesion (Assembly Community Connect (ACC)[5], Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust (NIABT)[6], Committee visits etc)

2) Seek to develop strategic partnerships in priority areas (eg community outreach and hard-to-reach areas)

3) Seek the views of internal and external stakeholders (including other legislatures)

4) Seek to support Members in their own engagement efforts and initiatives

5) Be mindful of current financial constraints and deliver value for money

3.11 The draft strategy proposes that the Assembly Commission should be delivered through five broad-based work strands of

1. **Information and Communication**

2. **Education**

3. **Outreach**

4. **Participation**

5. **Visitor Experience**.

3.12 The Good Relations Vision for the Assembly Commission: "The Commission is committed through its Equality Scheme to the principle of equality of opportunity and good relations. In this context the Commission will aim to ensure that the entire community can enjoy full and fair access to, and participate in, the operations of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Additionally, the adoption of this Good Relations Action Plan will ultimately support the Commission's vision of:

'An Assembly that strengthens democracy and engages the people (of Northern Ireland) in creating a better future for all'."

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[5] Assembly Community Connect works to enhance connections between the Assembly and the Community and Voluntary sector through education and outreach.
[6] The Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust (NIABT) works to forge links with, and promote the exchange of knowledge and information between, local businesses and parliamentarians in Northern Ireland.

3.13 The commitment of the Commission to the promotion of good relations is also detailed in this document through the integration of the values of equality, diversity and interdependence into the everyday practice of the organisation.

3.14 The Commission, through its Engagement Strategy, will develop partnerships with public bodies, agencies, community groups, businesses, schools and others to foster a sense of belonging to an integrated and mutually supportive society in which diversity is valued and welcomed. We will increase participation by identifying and developing partnerships with individuals and organisations in the public, private and community and voluntary sectors that have the capacity and experience to reach a wider and more diverse range of groups than the Assembly can do alone. We will work in partnership with these groups to create new programmes and events that meet the needs of their users.

3.15 We will work closely with tourism organisations and event organisers to ensure that where appropriate, the Assembly can be and is involved in early planning discussions for major events and initiatives for which Parliament Buildings (and the wider Stormont Estate where appropriate) can be made available as venues and/or hosts.

3.16 Parliament Buildings hosts a large number of events and visitors each year and has a significant opportunity to play a leading role in the encouragement of dialogue, shared learning and mutual respect for different faiths and cultural backgrounds.

3.17 Ultimately, all citizens form the audience for this strategy but broad-based, generic activity aimed at "the public" is unlikely to succeed. While it is important that the Assembly works to be accessible to everyone, it is also important to break down audiences into groups/sectors/types and tailor engagement to suit the audience.

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[7] http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/ABOUT-THE-ASSEMBLY/Corporate-Information/Policies/Equality-Policies/

3.18   In addition, in times of austerity, it is important to work closely with organisations that can help us to deliver our objectives and add value to our work, while not duplicating our or others' efforts.

Objectives

3.19   This strategy proposes that the Assembly Commission will focus on achieving three key objectives (detailed below). This activity covers current activity and new initiatives planned for 2015-2016. A glossary of terms can be found at page 81.

> **1   *To use traditional, social and emerging digital media to raise awareness, understanding and participation with the Assembly, its Members, Committees and the wider democratic process.***

Providing information to stakeholders in an appropriate and timely way is key to this strategy. How people receive information is changing; the pace of change is rapid.

The Assembly is currently developing a Digital First Strategy. Digital First refers to the process of creating information or content digitally in the first instance, followed by distribution via appropriate platforms e.g. websites, mobile devices, paper. It does not mean 'web-first' or 'web-only' given the proliferation of mobile devices such as smartphones and tablet computers.

It is not the end of printing altogether; rather it is a 'platform free' mindset and all-inclusive approach to content production. When planning the communication of information we will therefore continue to consider all forms of content e.g. video, audio, photo, interactive features etc. All content will continue to be equally well-produced and then pushed through appropriate platforms i.e. web / mobile first and paper later if necessary.

While the Engagement Strategy details a much wider framework for public engagement, both strategies naturally dovetail in instances where new forms of

digital engagement are designed to increase public participation with the Assembly.

Although the website has been redeveloped and is cosmetically improved, the functionality and content of the website will be improved. We will work to improve the visitor journey through the site and maximise the opportunities available through the Assembly Information Management System (AIMS) portal and its planned development. This will also consider public accessibility as referred to in the Disability Action Plan[8].

The Assembly Commission has developed a draft Language Policy and Guidance which refers to the fact that in addition to English, many other languages are used in Northern Ireland, including indigenous minority languages, minority ethnic languages and British and Irish sign language. The Commission has a number of statutory and other obligations to consider when dealing with requests for or access to information in languages other than English.

The Education website will be translated into Irish and we will review the main Assembly website to ensure that key documents like information leaflets are updated and available in other languages. We will seek to provide information in other formats and languages where appropriate.

We will appoint and dedicate resources to lead a project to develop, re-use and maximise the existing website content. We will investigate new initiatives like a regular roundup that highlights key procedural business, visiting dignitaries and education groups, develop the FAQ section, look at an e-Zine, daily digest, higher quality images/video/audio, short videos for Instagram, links to audio boo and sound cloud.

We will investigate specialist training to develop skills in the areas of data mining, semantic analysis and search engine optimisation which will enable us to better understand how our data is being used.

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[8] http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Corporate/Disability%20Action%20Plan/Five-Year-Review-of-Disability-Action-Plans.pdf

The current media landscape is very different to that of the initial Engagement Strategy. There are fewer journalists in Northern Ireland overall and even fewer now based in or regularly attending Parliament Buildings for debates and Committee meetings. This places an onus on the Assembly to explore and use other ways to ensure information is made accessible to the media in the appropriate format as referred to in the Disability Action Plan.

While we will continue to support the wider media and journalists based in Parliament Buildings in particular with information by way of timely provision of procedural papers, press releases, personal interaction, a weekly media briefing and an efficient and professional media enquiry service, we will review our communications approach to focus on providing live and recorded audio, video and streamed information as well as training and support on the developed website and AIMS.

We will also build relationships with and provide support for regional media outlets who find it particularly difficult to travel to Parliament Buildings, political and specialist correspondents, bloggers and political commentators. We will continue to support and develop Committee engagement with the media through dedicated Communications Teams allocated to each Committee. We will produce informative articles to stimulate debate and discussion and increase individual social media presence where appropriate.

2   *To build partnerships with relevant stakeholders to create and improve engagement opportunities with underrepresented and/or hard-to-reach groups, build synergies and improve the effectiveness of our engagement.*

Our existing education, community, business and parliamentary outreach activity will be extended to target key groups and those currently under-represented. This will be supported by high quality content that is available on the website.

We will continue to provide dedicated education rooms for schools, equipped with state of the art technology to aid learning and encourage participation. We

will run three seminars for primary and post primary schools every year so that teachers (as well as the young people they teach) have the information they need in order to be able to participate fully in the Education Programme. All content on the Education website will be translated into the Irish language in 2015.

The current Education programme will be developed to increase the level of outreach and involvement of schools including those not in formal education. We will continue to seek new/ develop existing strategies to advise, supplement, support and promote aims and initiatives with colleagues in Education/Outreach /Events.

We will continue to pursue the concept of developing a Youth Assembly by proactively identifying and lobbying funding and delivery partners within the NI Executive and other relevant bodies like the British Council and the Irish Department for Foreign Affairs. We will also work with others to consider learning from and innovative approaches to youth engagement at local government level in Northern Ireland and in other legislatures.

There are existing projects in place to raise awareness about the Assembly in all sectors, particularly the Community and Voluntary Sector. Rather than duplicate this work, we will concentrate our efforts on identifying and developing mutually effective partnerships so that we are targeting resources effectively and maximising the opportunities to reach those we need to in order to create and build awareness about the work of the Assembly and give participants the information and confidence to engage at the desired level, especially targeting underrepresented and hard-to-reach groups. Hard to reach groups were defined from research completed for the Northern Ireland Assembly Commissions Audit of Inequalities 2011[9].

This partnership approach will also support Assembly Committees in their wider engagement activities. To support this, we will allocate resources from the Outreach Team to partner with named Committees to facilitate and assist

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[9] http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/ABOUT-THE-ASSEMBLY/Corporate-Information/Policies/Equality-Scheme-2012-2016/

effective Committee engagement with relevant stakeholders and groups. This will improve event and wider planning, develop a plan to build overall awareness of the work of Assembly Committees inside and outside Parliament Buildings, help develop the consultation process, build media awareness and understanding and develop a social media plan.

More specifically, we will develop the concept of Committee Days/Assembly Week – a series of events, meetings and initiatives organised outside Parliament Buildings to highlight the Assembly's role and remit and provide opportunities for people to engage directly in the democratic process. This could involve Committee meetings and/or stakeholder events, education programmes in schools, engagement with local community and voluntary groups and the business community.

We will forge and facilitate links between the Assembly and academic institutions so that academic research findings are available to inform the Assembly's scrutiny and legislative responsibilities. To advance this objective the Assembly will continue to develop its Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series. We will also work with relevant academics to stay up to date and build staff knowledge of current programmes and initiatives that could help the Assembly to increase its engagement in the community, voluntary and private sectors.

We will also pilot new ways to consult young people (and other stakeholders) during Committee enquiries by tailoring the means of consultation to suit the audience. For example, focus groups, Skype, Twitter etc., in order to communicate best with stakeholders in a way that meets their needs and ensure that we get good quality, meaningful feedback which in turn will lead to relevant and meaningful policy and decision-making.

Education will also be considered in its wider form by way of helping other stakeholders (e.g. the business community, voluntary and community sector and other target groups) to understand how the Assembly works and to give them the tools, tactics and confidence to engage.

We will continue to identify and develop partnerships with educational bodies in order to develop meaningful and effective educational resources and programmes. We will develop a range of video resources to increase understanding of and the differences in local and central governance.

Senior Assembly staff will hold at least annual meetings with organisations representing all of the Section 75 (of the Northern Ireland Act 1998) groups to inform reviews of the Engagement Strategy. The Engagement Steering Group will consider establishing an Advisory Group (including appropriate external stakeholders).

3   To increase visitor numbers to Parliament Buildings and deliver an excellent visitor experience.

Parliament Buildings is a working legislature but given its iconic nature and place in the fabric and history of Northern Ireland, it is also of interest to people as a tourist and historical attraction.

Parliament Buildings is also a listed building. For that reason, fixed signage in the building, other than that required for statutory compliance, is minimal (it is also the case that visitors are generally required to be escorted thus limiting the need for directional signage).

Fixed signage within Parliament Buildings is either pictorial, tactile or in English, for example, portable braille tactile maps have been produced to enhance tours of Parliament Buildings for those with visual disabilities/impairments. We will continue to monitor the quality of signage within Parliament Buildings.

A welcome sign has been provided in the Great Hall via the annunciator in a number of languages. Languages on the welcome message reflect the growing diversity of visitors to the Assembly and this will be kept under review. Signage in other formats will be considered within the draft language policy and in keeping

with the limitations of a listed building once the policy is approved by the Assembly Commission.

All visitors will expect that the quality standard delivered will be characterised by excellence. Whether this is the quality of services and tours, cleanliness of the environment, staff interaction, expertise, multi-lingual products and services, innovation or flexibility, we will embed a culture of excellence in all facets of the visit.

We will seek and maximise opportunities to encourage citizens, tourists and visitors to visit the Building by working closely with tourism partners to make better use of existing tourism and visitor initiatives and work closely with bus and tour operators to maximise the numbers of people who come into the building, rather than merely on to the Estate by changing the timing of public tours to coincide with bus tours.

We will also identify opportunities to create our own and participate in others' events and programmes by making Parliament Buildings available as a venue for appropriate arts, language, cultural and other appropriate events and initiatives. We will explore how ours and others' websites and social media sites can be used to help raise awareness of these initiatives.

We will support our staff to deliver a first class visitor experience through specialist customer service training. We will also encourage and maximise marketing opportunities by encouraging those who visit to share their experiences online.

We will undertake a project to ensure that how the Assembly and Parliament Buildings is marketed and reflected on external sites is accurate and appropriate. We will dedicate resources and take a proactive approach to online and other feedback by regularly monitoring sites like Trip Advisor and taking swift action to respond appropriately where necessary.

Implementation Plan

3.20   A summary of the above objectives, the tactics used to deliver them and the targets for success can be found at **Annex A**.

3.21   **It must be noted that this EQIA is based on a high level strategy and individual projects/activities will be equality screened on a case by case basis.**

4. DATA & RESEARCH

Introduction

4.1 The second step of the equality impact assessment process considers whether available data and research can provide an insight into the potential impacts on people in the various Section 75 categories. This section of the report sets out the available information.

The main stakeholder groups in relation to the policy are:

- *Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs)*
- *Visitors to Parliament Buildings;*
- *Secretariat staff;*
- *Party support staff;*
- *Contract staff;*
- *Trade Unions;*
- *The general public.*

4.2 This EQIA uses a mix of qualitative and quantitative data from a number of sources.

4.3 In brief, the following sources were employed:

Qualitative information

- Assembly Questions (both Oral and Written) asked to the Assembly Commission
- Feedback from Education and Outreach Service users
- Meetings and research into UK parliamentary engagement strategies
- Meetings with other bodies e.g. NI Tourist Board, Visit Belfast, festival organisers
- Consultation with senior Assembly staff, Outreach Manager and Equality Manager

- Feedback from External Disability Advisory Group and secret shopper feedback from Disability Action, RNIB, RNID and Autism NI
- External Relations Strategy
- Good Relations Strategy Consultation Results Report
- Youth Assembly Research Papers
- Review of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's Audit of Inequalities and Equality Scheme.
- 5 year review of the Disability Action Plans
- Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body - Equality Monitoring Report 2012/13

Quantitative Information

- Census information
- Data held on the Visitor Experience
- Public Attitude Survey
- Social media statistics for the NIA, Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust (NIABT) and Assembly Community Connect (ACC) and website statistics including audio boo and video downloads
- Education and Outreach engagement level statistics

4.4 **Northern Ireland 2011 Census and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998**
The most recent census for Northern Ireland was undertaken in 2011. A number of reports have been made available on the basis of its findings. Section 75 and Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which came into force on 1 January 2000, placed a statutory obligation on public authorities in carrying out their various functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- 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 dependents and persons without.

In addition, Public Authorities are also required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, and racial group. Census 2011 did not collect any data on sexual orientation.

4.5 **Public Attitude Survey 2009[10]**

The Public Attitudes Survey was commissioned in 2009 to understand public attitudes towards the work of the Northern Ireland Assembly and to measure the level of public engagement with the Assembly on an on-going basis. To establish the baseline measures of public engagement with the Assembly, Omnibus research was conducted in December 2009 and early January 2010 with 1,025 adults aged 16 plus.

4.6 **Visitor Experience Report 2014**

The Visitor Experience Report evaluated the visitor experience and assessed satisfaction levels for tours and events. The report was developed from feedback forms which were made available to general visitors of Parliament Buildings and organisations who take part in tours and functions. The visitors' book also was used to capture the experience of all visitors to Parliament Buildings.

4.7 **Good Relations Strategy Consultation Results Report[11]**

Holywell Consultancy, with the support of Green Hat Consultancy, was commissioned by the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission to carry out an Internal Good Relations Audit in June 2010. Its aim was to 'produce an audit report on Good Relations issues within the Assembly and to prepare the implementation plan for policy and practice for the 2010-2011 period.'

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[10] http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2010/General/15710.pdf
[11] http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/ABOUT-THE-ASSEMBLY/Corporate-Information/Policies/Northern-Ireland-Assembly-Commission-Good-Relations-Strategy-2012--2016-/

4.8 **Assembly Questions (both Oral and Written) asked to the Assembly Commission**

The purpose of Assembly Questions is to ask for information or to press for action. The Commission Member responsible for Information and Outreach will respond to Assembly Questions related to engagement services. The findings reported in the responses relating to Section 75 have been used in this report.

4.9 **Feedback from Education and Outreach Service users and engagement level statistics**

The Education and Outreach service engage with over 30,000 people annually. Feedback and statistics relating to Section 75 issues have been considered in this report.

4.10 **Social media statistics for the NIA, Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust (NIABT) and Assembly Community Connect (ACC) and website statistics including audio boo/sound cloud and video downloads.**

4.11 **Meetings with other bodies e.g. NI Tourist Board, Visit Belfast, festival organisers, consultation with senior Assembly staff, Outreach Manager and Equality Manager**

Discussions took place with internal and external stakeholders on proposed initiatives.

4.12 **Youth Assembly Research Papers**

Proposals were developed by the Youth Panel between March 2010 and February 2011. The Youth Panel made study visits to other youth parliaments and consulted with young people and other interested parties. An online survey was conducted and regional meetings were held to hear the views of young individuals and youth leaders. The Panel also met with other stakeholders, political parties, the Minister for Education and Junior Ministers from OFMDFM.

4.13 **Feedback from External Disability Advisory Group and secret shopper feedback from Disability Action, RNIB, RNID and Autism NI**

Feedback on accessibility of Parliament Buildings and its engagement services were gathered from the above sources.

4.14 **External Relations Strategy**

The External Relations Strategy seeks to highlight the external relationships on which the Commission should focus.

4.15 **Review of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's Audit of Inequalities[12]**

This paper provides a strategic picture of inequalities relevant to the role and functions of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission. It presents the findings of a systematic review and evaluation of existing reliable and verifiable data, both qualitative and quantitative, for each of the section 75 equality and good relations categories. It identifies a number of potential inequalities and data gaps for consideration by the Assembly Commission.

4.16 **5 year review of the Disability Action Plans[13]**

This report covers the 5 year review of the Disability Action Plans (DAPs) published by the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission ("the Commission") for the period 15 December 2007 – 31 March 2013.

Benchmarking

4.17 As part of the development of the Engagement Strategy 2015-16 the Assembly benchmarked its engagement with that of parliaments in the UK, Ireland and abroad, with specific reference to the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly's engagement with Section 75 groups. The following meetings and documents supported this work.

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[12] http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/ABOUT-THE-ASSEMBLY/Corporate-Information/Policies/Equality-Scheme-2012-2016/

[13] http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/ABOUT-THE-ASSEMBLY/Corporate-Information/Policies/Disability-Action-Plan1/

4.18   **Meetings and research into parliamentary engagement strategies**

Discussions took place with the UK legislatures and the Oireachtas and a research paper was completed to provide information on the approaches taken by other legislatures in engaging with the public. It identifies areas of good practice from legislatures in the UK, Ireland and beyond and looks at how digital and social media are playing an increasingly central role in engagement strategies. It pays particular attention to the strategies adopted by the UK Parliament and Oireachtas. No specific information in relation to Section 75 issues were raised in this paper.

4.19   **Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body - Equality Monitoring Report 2012/13[14]**

This is the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body's (SPCB) third equality monitoring report which covers the period April 2012 – March 2013. The report demonstrates the SPCB's achievements on equality and brings together information on how its policies and practices have advanced equality, including their engagement strategies.

4.20   **National Assembly for Wales Assembly Commission Annual Equality Report April 2013 – March 2014[15]**

This is the second annual report relating to the Welsh Assembly's Equality Plan 2012-2016 and highlights the work that they have undertaken to balance their commitments under the Equality Act 2010 and to demonstrate leadership across the public sector.

4.21   Benchmarking identified that the Northern Ireland Assembly's Engagement Strategy is in line with that of the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament. All institutions demonstrate a desire to engage with a diverse range of representative organisations, schools, colleges and community groups and have a particular focus on the engagement of women, young people, ethnic minorities and those

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[14]http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/StaffAndManagementResources/2013_10_09_SPCB_FINAL_Equality_Monitoring_Report_2012-13.doc
[15]http://www.assembly.wales/NAfW%20Documents/About%20the%20Assembly%20section%20documents/Annual%20Equality%20Report%202013-2014.pdf

with disabilities. Strategies in each legislature also focus on accessibility of the building, accessibility provision for visitors, and accessible information and services.

5. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

Introduction

5.1　The next stage of the EQIA process is to assess whether the current policy or any changes to it may have a differential impact on people in one or more of the Section 75 groups, and then to determine the extent of differential impact and whether that impact is adverse. This section sets out conclusions based on the information detailed above.

5.2　The exercise examines whether, based on the available evidence, there is, or is likely to be, a differential impact on any of these groups caused by the implementation of the Engagement Strategy and whether that differential impact is direct or indirect on the relevant group and whether it is adverse.

5.3　For the most part, any impacts are likely to be indirect, since the strategy is designed to be open and accessible to all, however will target specific underrepresented groups.

5.4　The nine categories are:

    I.   Religious belief
   II.   Political opinion
  III.   Racial group
  IV.   Age
   V.   Marital status
  VI.   Sexual orientation
 VII.   Gender
VIII.   Disability
  IX.   Dependants

5.5 We consider each category in turn below.

Religious Belief

5.6 The results of the 2011 census showed that 45.1 per cent of the population were either Catholic or brought up as Catholic in 2011, while 48.4 per cent belonged to or were brought up in Protestant, Other Christian or Christian-related denominations.

Table 1: Religion or religion brought up in 2011

Religion (or religion brought up in)	Census 2011	
	Count	Per cent
Protestant and Other Christian	875,717	48.4
Catholic	817,385	45.1
Other religions	16,592	0.9
None	101,169	5.6

Source: NISRA, Table KS07b (2003); KS212 (2012)

5.7 The Public Attitudes Survey in 2009 found that Catholics are less likely than Protestants to discuss Northern Ireland politics with friends and family (29% compared with 37%). The main reasons for people not visiting Parliament Buildings include lack of interest (51%) and never having previously thought about it (29%) with the lack of interest is greater among Catholics (56%).

5.8 The Northern Ireland Assembly Internal Good Relations Audit 2011 asked if Parliament Buildings, the location of the Northern Ireland Assembly, is a place of welcome to people from different political/religious backgrounds or ethnic groups. 72.0% felt Parliament Buildings is a place of welcome to people from

different political/religious backgrounds or ethnic groups, while 5.6% felt Parliament Buildings is not welcoming to people from different political/religious backgrounds or ethnic groups. 18.9% were neutral on the issue. The recent feedback from visitors regarding Good Relations in Parliament Buildings showed that 88% of respondents felt that Parliament Buildings is welcoming to people of different ethnic origin, religion and political opinion (5 answering 'Neutral', 2 answering 'No opinion' and no one responded 'No').

These results were also taken into consideration when assessing the impact on **Political Opinion** and **Racial Group.**

5.9 Research for the Youth Assembly showed that 87.5% [16]of organisations and 82.9% of individuals agreed/strongly agreed that the Youth Assembly should have members to represent different groups such as people with disabilities, male, female, Protestant, and Catholic etc. 87.5% of organisation and 82.9% of individuals agree or strongly agree.
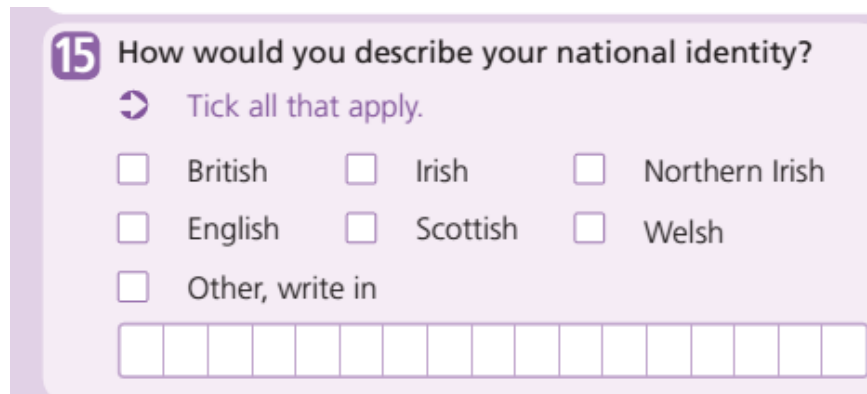
These results were also taken into consideration when assessing the impact on **Gender, Disability, Political Opinion** and **Racial Group.**

5.10 The Audit of Inequalities recommended that consideration should be given to ensuring Parliament Buildings is welcoming to all persons regardless of their religious belief including those with no religion.

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[16] There were 638 respondents to the Youth Assembly consultation.

Political opinion

5.11 The Census 2011 questionnaire did not contain any questions pertaining to *political opinion*. The closest proxy for this item is *National Identity*.

Source: Census 2011 Household Questionnaire, March 2011

5.12 The question on national identity allowed multiple responses. Respondents were given the option of declaring themselves as *British, Irish, Northern Irish, English, Scottish* or *Welsh*.

5.13 In 2011, two-fifths (40%) of residents declared a *British Only* national identity (without selecting any additional national identities), a quarter (25%) had *Irish Only* and just over a fifth (21%) had *Northern Irish Only*. Of the various combined national identities, *British and Northern Irish Only* was the most prevalent (6.2%), while 5% of respondents included national identities other than British, Irish or Northern Irish.

Table 2: National Identify of usual residents, Census 2011

National Identity	Count	Per cent
All usual residents	1,810,863	100.0
British only	722,379	39.9
Irish only	457,482	25.3
Northern Irish only	379,267	20.9
British and Northern Irish only	111,748	6.2
Irish and Northern Irish only	19,132	1.1
British, Irish and Northern Irish only	18,406	1.0
British and Irish only	11,877	0.7
Other	90,572	5.0

Source: Table KS202, Census 2011

5.14   Whilst Parliament Buildings receives a high number of visitors each year, visits by members of the Nationalist/Republican community could be improved. The 'Public Attitudes Survey 2009' carried out by Ipsos MORI found that of those consulted to inform the report 23% of Nationalists had visited Parliament Buildings compared with 38% of Unionists.

5.15   As a response to an Assembly question on the whether the views that nationalists held of the old Stormont Parliament are referred to, in order to provide a balanced overview, it was noted that the core script for the tour was approved by cross-party support at the Assembly Commission in 2001. The aim of the tour of

Parliament Buildings is to provide an insight into the day-to-day procedural work of the Assembly. In addition, the tour aims to highlight the building's architecture and usage and therefore does not reference political opinion.

5.16 The following table shows the percentage main language used by all usual residents aged 3 taken from the 2011 Census:

Table 3: Percentage of all usual residents aged 3 and over whose main language is:

Language	%
English	96.86
Polish	1.02
Lithuanian	0.36
Irish (Gaelic)	0.24
Portuguese	0.13
Slovak	0.13
Chinese	0.13
Tagalog/Filipino	0.11
Latvian	0.07
Russian	0.07
Malayalam	0.07
Hungarian	0.06
Other	0.75

5.17 In response to an Assembly question asked relating to visits by Irish Language schools and requests for resources in Irish, an Irish Language Champion has been appointed in the Education Service, who can deliver the education programme in Irish. In partnership with CCEA (Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment), the Primary Section of the Education Service dedicated website is also currently being translated into Irish.

5.18 Conclusions in the Good Relations Audit 2014 found that whilst Parliament Buildings receives a high number of visitors each year, visits by members of the Nationalist/Republican community could be improved.

5.19 Conclusions in the Audit of Inequalities 2014 recommended consideration should be given to the need to ensure implementation of language policy.

Racial group

5.20 On Census Day 2011, 1.8 per cent (32,400) of the resident population of Northern Ireland belonged to minority ethnic groups, more than double the proportion in 2001 (0.8 per cent), see Table 4.

5.21 The main minority ethnic groups were Chinese (6,300 people), Indian (6,200), Mixed (6,000) and Other Asian (5,000), each accounting for around 0.3 per cent of the resident population. Irish Travellers comprised 0.1 per cent of the population.

5.22 Compared with 2001, the minority ethnic count rose from 14,300 to 32,400. Gains were recorded for all groups with the exception of Irish Travellers, whose numbers fell from 1,700 in 2011 to 1,300 in 2011.

Table 4: Minority Ethnic Groups in Northern Ireland, Census 2011.

Minority Ethnic Group	Census 2011	
Ethnic Group	Count	Per cent
Total residents	1,810,863	
White	1,778,449	98.2
Chinese	6,303	0.4
Indian	6,198	0.3

Mixed	6,014	0.3
Other Asian	4,998	0.3
Other	2,353	0.1
Black African	2,345	0.1
Irish Traveller	1,301	0.1
Pakistani	1,091	0.1
Black Other	899	0.1
Bangladeshi	540	0
Black Caribbean	372	0
Total ethnic pop	**32,414**	

Source: NISRA, Table KS06 (2003); KS201 (2012)

5.23   ACC hosts events specifically targeted to ethnic minorities including the Black and Ethnic Minority Parliament, Ethnic Minorities 'Get Involved' Conference and attendance at the Belfast Mela, engaging with over 1300 people in 2014.

5.24   The Audit of Inequalities 2011 identified that ethnic minorities are under-represented in public life.

5.25   The Audit of Inequalities 2014 recommended that consideration should be given to the need to ensure that Parliament Buildings is welcoming and to engage with all racial groups.

Age

5.26   Table 4 presents the age of usual residents by broad age band. While children aged 0-15 account for 21% of the population, a similar proportion (20%) are aged 60 and over. The median age is 37 years.

Table 5: Age of usual residents by Broad Age Band, Census 2011

Age Band	Count	Per Cent
All usual residents	1,810,863	
Age 0-15 years	379,323	20.9
Age 16-24 years	227,634	12.6
Age 25-44 years	498,046	27.5
Age 45-59 years	347,850	19.2
Age 60-64 years	94,290	5.2
Age 65-74 years	145,600	8.0
Age 75+	118,120	6.5
Mean age (years)	37.6	
Median age (years)	37.0	

Source: Table KS102, Census 2011

5.27   The Public Attitudes Survey 2009 showed that 16-34 year olds (16% and 25% respectively) are less likely than average to have discussed Northern Ireland politics with family and friends. The main reasons for not visiting Parliament Buildings include lack of interest (51%) and never having previously thought about it (29%) with the lack of interest greater among 16-24 year olds (64%).

5.28   The Visitor Experience Report 2014 identified that the majority of visitors to Parliament Buildings for tours and events were over 40 years of age, with the 25-30 age group the least represented.

Chart 1: Number of Visitors to Parliament Buildings for tours and events by age 2010-2013
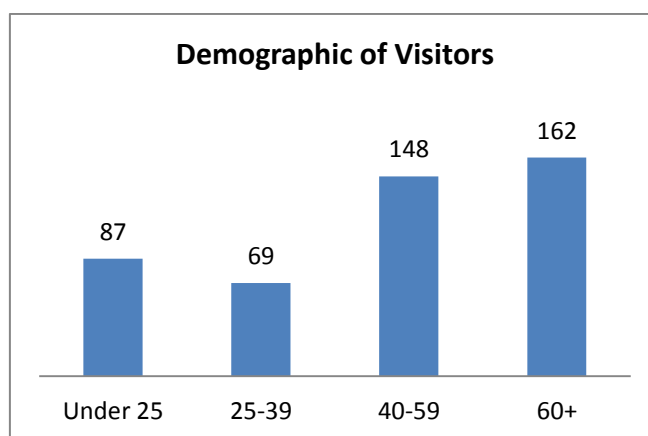
5.29   The Education Service[17] provides an education programme for schools visiting Parliament Buildings. All schools are contacted at the start of each academic year to invite them to participate in the programme.

5.30   Table 5 outlines how many primary and post-primary schools from the controlled, maintained and integrated sectors took part in the Northern Ireland Assembly education programme in the last three years from September to June.

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[17] The Assembly Education Service provide free education programmes and resources for young people, teachers, youth leaders, or anyone who wants to learn about the role of the Assembly and the work we do.

Table 6: Statistics on primary and post-primary schools from the controlled, maintained and integrated sectors that took part in the Northern Ireland Assembly education programme

01/07/11 – 30/06/12

Sector	No. of groups	No. of participants
Primary controlled	86	2414
Primary maintained	104	2966
Primary integrated	4	85
Post-primary controlled	71	2007
Post-primary maintained	69	2171
Post-primary integrated	19	578

01/07/12 – 30/06/13

Sector	No. of groups	No. of participants
Primary controlled	68	2143
Primary maintained	40	1233
Primary integrated	1	46
Post-primary controlled	79	2693
Post-primary maintained	70	2572
Post-primary integrated	13	363

01/07/13 – 30/06/14

Sector	No. of groups	No. of participants
Primary controlled	62	1809
Primary maintained	49	1583
Primary integrated	5	172
Post-primary controlled	66	2019
Post-primary maintained	57	2053
Post-primary integrated	12	332

5.31   The internet has been identified as an opportunity to engage with young people and a strategy of developing online, media rich, interactive activities has been adopted. The Assembly's Education Service website content has been designed to suit a range of ages and ability levels with a variety of media rich resources utilising sound, image, animation and video material.

5.32   Following research conducted for the Youth Assembly to assess the age range for young people to get involved with the Youth Assembly, organisations most commonly identified 14 as the youngest age (44.2%) while individuals most commonly identified 12 as the youngest age. For the oldest age, organisations preferred 25 (30.8%) followed by 18 (15.4%). Individuals preferred 18 (26.4%) followed by 25 (20.6%).

5.33   Assembly Community Connect engages with over 7000 people per annum. The majority of attendees are between 25-59 years of age.

Table 7: Age range of attendees at ACC training events

Age Group	
Under 25	14%
25-39	34%
40-59	37%
60+	15%

5.34   The Assembly has held the annual Pensioners' Parliament since 2011. The Northern Ireland Pensioners' Parliament, NIPP, enables older people from across Northern Ireland to have their say on the issues that matter to them.   Organised by Age Sector Platform, the Parliament empowers older people here to make their voice heard by key decision makers. Over 80 representatives take part annually.

5.35 The review of the Audit of Inequalities in 2014 recommended that consideration should be given to engaging with young people through the Education Service and to seek funding for a Youth Assembly. It also identified the need to develop new ways to engage with young people e.g. through social media and the need to ensure participation of our older and aging population.

Marital status

5.36 The 2011 Census revealed that almost half (48%) of people aged 16 years and over on Census Day were married, and over a third (36%) were single. Just over 1,200 people (0.1%) were in registered same-sex civil partnerships. A further 9.4% of residents were either separated, divorced or formerly in a same-sex civil partnership, while the remaining 6.8% were either widowed or a surviving partner.

Table 8: Marital Status of residents aged 16+ years, Census 2011

Marital Status	Count	Percent
All usual residents aged 16+ years	1,431,540	
Married	680,831	47.6
Single	517,393	36.1
Same-sex civil partnership	1,243	0.1
Separated	56,911	4.0
Divorced	78,074	5.5
Widowed or surviving partner	97,088	6.8

Sexual orientation

5.37   There is no Northern Ireland census data on sexual orientation.

5.38   There is some data available for the UK as a whole. In 2010, the Office of National Statistics (ONS) published the report, Measuring Sexual Identity: An Evaluation Report based on the data generated by the Integrated Household Survey (IHS). This evaluation found that 1.4% of the population in the UK identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (the report does not cover transgendered people). For Northern Ireland specifically, this figure was 0.9%.

5.39   Since March 2014 ACC has asked on event feedback form for people to indicate if they work with or are from the LGBT community. Of the 472 participants to complete the feedback forms 11 people indicated they work with or are from the LGBT community.

5.40   Of the 2000 contacts ACC holds, currently six organisations/individuals have registered who have stated they work with or are from the LGBT community.

5.41   The Assembly's Equality Office consults with the Rainbow Project, Here NI and Cara-Friend, as part of its formal Section 75 duties.

Gender

5.42   Table 9 revels that on Census Day 2011, 51% of usual residents were female, and 49% were male.

Table 9: Gender of usual residents, Census 2011

Gender	Count	Per Cent

All usual residents	1,810,863	
Males	887,323	49.0
Females	923,540	51.0

Source: Table KS101, Census 2011

5.43 The Public Attitudes Survey 2009 showed that women (21% and 27%) are less likely than average to have discussed Northern Ireland politics with family and friends. Women are more likely than men to have visited Parliament Buildings for leisure (43% compared with 31%) or as part of an educational visit (28% compared with 17%), while men are more likely than women to have visited to attend an event (25% compared with 12%) or for work (6% compared with 2%).

5.44 The majority of schools who attend the education service are mixed (89.05%), however there is a slightly larger percentage of female only schools take part in education service (6.97%) than male only schools (3.54%).

Table 10: Groups who have used the Education Service by gender, January 2012 – September 2014

Group Type	No. of groups	Percentage	No. of participants	Percentage
Female	92	6.34%	3259	6.97%
Male	43	2.96%	1655	3.54%
Mixed	1310	90.28%	41658	89.05%
Total	1445		46572	

5.45   Through Assembly Community Connect, a greater number of females have attended educational seminars (64%) than males (36%). However, ACC currently has a focus on encouraging women's groups to attend which may affect the figures.

Table 11: Percentage of males and females attending ACC training events

Gender	
Male	36
Female	64

5.46   Since the start of the new mandate the Outreach Unit has hosted and attended 19 events specifically targeting women's groups to inform them about how they can get involved with the Assembly, the political process and political life. Additionally women's groups regularly take part in ACC monthly training.

5.47   ACC has also developed an active contact database of over 250 women's groups from across Northern Ireland that it engages with regularly to promote training opportunities and events which encourage greater participation of women in politics.

5.48   The Assembly is involved in the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) group which is part of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). The CWP was established to find ways to increase female representation in Parliament and works towards the mainstreaming of gender considerations in all CPA activities and programmes. Jo-Anne Dobson MLA is a member of the CWP and attended the British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Inaugural Conference, in March 2014, with the theme of Enhancing the Participation of Women in Politics.

5.49   The Audit of Inequalities identified that women are underrepresented in public life. The Audit recommended that consideration should be given to considering ways of encouraging participation of women in politics and support for female Members.

Disability

5.50   Table 12 shows that in 2011, just over one in five of the resident population (21%) had a long-term health problem or disability which limited their day-to-day activities.

5.51   The most common long-term conditions among the resident population were: a mobility or dexterity problem (11%); long-term pain or discomfort (10%); shortness of breath or difficulty breathing (8.7%); chronic illness (6.5%); and an emotional, psychological or mental health condition.

Table 12: Long-term conditions, Census 2011

Long-term conditions	Count	Per cent
All usual residents	1,810,863	
A mobility or dexterity difficulty	207,173	11.4
Long-term pain or discomfort	182,820	10.1
Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing	157,890	8.7
A chronic illness	118,554	6.6
An emotional, psychological or mental health condition	105,528	5.8
Other condition	94,617	5.2
Deafness or partial hearing loss	93,091	5.1
A learning, intellectual, social or behavioural difficulty	40,177	2.2
Frequent periods of confusion or memory loss	35,616	2.0
Blindness or partial sight loss	30,862	1.7
Communication difficulty	29,871	1.7

Source: NISRA (2012) Table KS302

5.52   The Visitor Experience Report 2014 shows that 11% of respondents stated they had a disability. It showed that 89% of those that visited Parliament Buildings felt that disability access was good or excellent. It should be noted that in 2010, 8% in felt that disability access was poor, but this dropped to 3% in 2012.

Chart 2: Visitor statistics for those with a disability

Those visiting with a disability

■ No ■ Yes ■ No repsonse

2%

11%

87%

DISABILITY ACCESS (%)

■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Fair ■ Poor

4%

8%

29%

59%
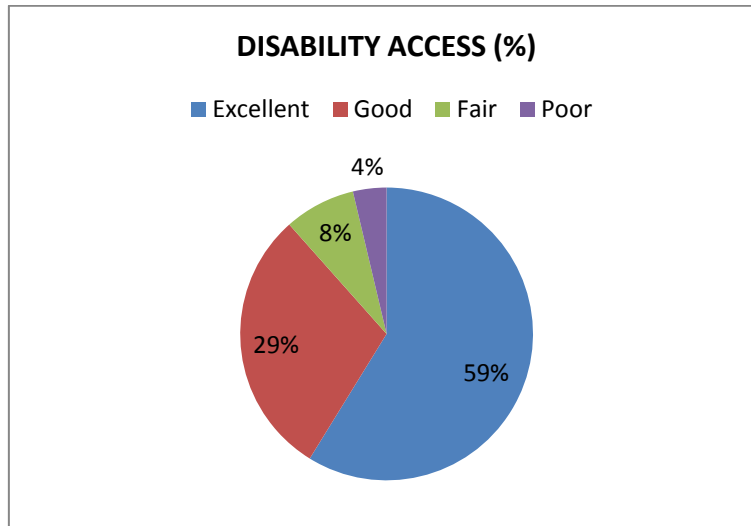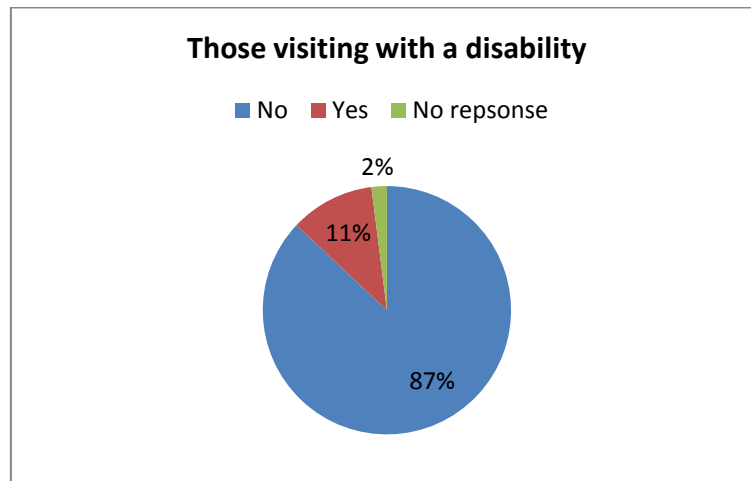
5.53   The Audit of Inequalities 2011 identified that potential inequalities for people with a disability included: access for those with disabilities to Parliament Buildings or areas within Parliament Buildings, access to sessions for those with a disability, and that people with disabilities are underrepresented in public life. Since the

2011 Audit of Inequalities, steps have been taken to improve access for those with disabilities to Parliament Buildings or areas within Parliament Buildings. This has included the installation of access ramps at front entrance to Parliament Buildings; the erection of Braille signage; Changing Places Facility; improved access to the Chamber, voting lobbies and the public gallery; the production of British and Irish signed version of the tour of Parliament Buildings and a Braille tour map. These projects have been developed with input from key stakeholders and the Disability Advisory Group.

5.54   The Assembly Commission also holds the Louder than Words Charter Mark, which demonstrates its commitment to improve access and services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. In November 2012, the Commission became the first organisation to receive the National Autistic Society autism access award.

5.55   A number of actions are also on-going such as the consideration of options to improve disability access to the 4th Floor of Parliament Buildings as part of a roof maintenance project; work around Digital First[18] and the implementation of recommendations from access audits.

5.56   In order to improve access for events, induction loop systems have been fitted in the Great Hall, the Chamber, the Senate, the Long Gallery and a number of rooms used by Committees. Portable induction loops are also available.

5.57   When required, special access arrangements to Parliament Buildings can be made and the programme and resources tailored accordingly, e.g. adapting presentations, providing large print documents, or using subtitled videos. Education and Outreach Officers receive special training, to further enable them

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[18]   Digital First aims to develop the Assembly's systems, workflows and procedures so that information and content can be created once and then re-used whenever and wherever it is required in the most suitable format. This project is undergoing an EQIA.

to cater for the needs of all visitors (e.g. Autism Awareness Training, Deaf Awareness Training).

5.58   The Education Service website also adheres to W3C web usability standards, ensuring that it is accessible to people with disabilities.

5.59   Following feedback from the disability advisory group and mystery shoppers on tours of Parliament Buildings accessibility to Parliament Buildings has been improved in recent years.

5.60   Tour guides are now trained to deliver tours for people with autism, sight impairments and signed tours can be arranged on request. Outreach staff have also been trained to deliver training to these groups.

5.61   Although the Assembly Commission does not operate specific internships that are solely available for people with disabilities, it does operate the following work based programmes which are available to people with disabilities.

5.62   The following table details the number of special schools and the number of participants that took part in the education programme since 2011.

Table 13: Visits by special schools through the education programme

	No. of Groups	No. of Participants
01/07/11 – 30/06/12	6	94
01/07/12 – 30/06/13	2	35
01/07/13 – 30/06/14	4	74

5.63   The following table details the number students with a disability and the type of disability who have visited the Assembly through the education programme.

Table 14: Number students with a disability and the type of disability who have visited the Assembly through the education programme.

Date of visit	Description of issue	Numbers involved
30/01/2013	Severe autism	1
16/04/2013	Autism	2
13/03/2013	Autism	1
25/04/2012	Autism	2
30/04/2013	Autism	5
16/05/2013	Heart condition	1
04/06/2013	walks with a cane	1
21/06/2013	Hearing impairment	1
14/05/2013	Unspecified learning difficulties	8
07/11/2013	Autism	1
14/01/2014	one pupil had mobility impairment	1
14/01/2014	Hearing impairment	2
07/11/2013	Unspecified learning difficulties	14
10/02/2014	Wheelchair user	1
28/02/2014	Autism	1
10/06/14	Access to toilet facilities	1
10/06/14	diabetes	1
23/06/2014	airbourne nut allergy	1

5.64   Statistic drawn from those attending ACC training events show 14% of attendees have a disability.

Table 15: Percentage of people with a disability who attend ACC events

Disability

Yes	14%
No	86%

Mental Health	17%
Learning	3%
Physical	43%
Other	37%

5.65   The audit of inequalities recommended consideration should be given to Continue to optimise access in Parliament Buildings for Members, visitors and staff with disabilities.

5.66   The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a Disability Action Plan showing how it proposes to fulfil its duties to promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities; and the need to encourage participation by people with disabilities in public life ('the disability duties'). It focuses on measures focused on the Commission's responsibilities and policies designed to meet our obligations under disability legislation which covers internal and external users, including engagement activities. A 5 year review of the Disability Action Plans was published by the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission ("the Commission") for the period 15 December 2007 – 31 March 2013. The Assembly completed 97% of the actions and measures for the 2008-2011 plan, 96% for 2011-12 and 87.5% for 2012-16 (as

the plan runs to 2016 and the outstanding actions are due to be completed prior to the end of this period). Full results can be found on the Assembly website[19].

Dependants

5.67   *Persons with Dependents* are generally classified as persons with personal responsibility for:

- the care of a child; the care of a person with a disability; or the care of a dependant older person.

(i)   Care of a Child

Table 15 shows that on Census Day 2011, there were a total of 238,071 households with dependent children in Northern Ireland. This figure represents a third (33.8%) of all households.

Table 16: Households with Dependents, Census 2011

Households with Dependent Children [1]	Count	Per Cent
Total number of households	703,275	
Households with dependent children [1]	238,071	33.8

Source: Table KS105, Census 2011

[19] http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Corporate/Disability%20Action%20Plan/Five-Year-Review-of-Disability-Action-Plans.pdf

1. The Census definition of a **dependent** child is "a person in a household aged 0 - 15 (whether or not in a family) or a person aged 16-18 who is a full-time student and in a family with parent(s)."

(ii) Care of Person with a Disability

A total of 213,980 residents (11.8%) provide unpaid care in Northern Ireland to those with a long-term physical or mental health disability (all ages). The duration of care ranges between one hour and 50 or more hours per week.

Table 17: Residents who provide Unpaid Care, Census 2011

Unpaid Care [1]	Count	Per Cent
All usual residents	1,810,863	
Provides no unpaid care	1,596,883	88.2
Provides 1-19 hours unpaid care per week	122,301	6.8
Provides 20-49 hours unpaid care per week	35,369	2.0
Provides 50+ hours unpaid care per week	56,310	3.1

Source: Table KS301, Census 2011

Note

1. 'Provision of unpaid care' - the term 'care' covers any unpaid help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of long-term physical or mental health or disability.

(iii)   Care of a Dependent Older Person

A total of 32,328 residents of all ages provide some form of unpaid care
(ranging from one hour to 50 hours per week) to those aged 65 years or over.
Please note that this figure excludes residents living in communal
establishments (paid care).

**Table 18: Number of residents providing unpaid care to those aged 65
years or over, Census 2011**

Unpaid Care [1]	Count
Number of residents providing unpaid care to those aged 65 years or over	32,328

Source: Table DC3304, Census 2011

6. **MITIGATION AND ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES**

6.1   The EQIA process requires that, if it is decided that the policy may have an adverse impact on people in one or more of the Section 75 groups, then the authority must consider alternative policies and measures which might mitigate the adverse impact.[20] This section of the report therefore sets out the alternative policies under consideration and looks at whether additional measures need to be put in place to minimise the negative impact of any changes to the current policies and to better promote good relations in the Assembly.

6.2   EQIA has identified a number of enhancements and mitigation measures to address the differential impact Section 75 groups currently face, and these are set out in more detail in this section. In general, the proposed Engagement Strategy is designed to enhance the effectiveness of existing activities and focuses on developing programmes and initiatives designed to promote equality of opportunity for all groups which will help to ensure that all citizens have equal access to the Assembly and the tools and confidence to engage with it.

6.3   The Commission recognises that none of the Section 75 categories operates as a silo and that people have multiple identities. It is also recognised that the Engagement Strategy is a living document and can and will be monitored and amended if and when issues are raised.

6.4   Subject to the findings of the consultation, it is the conclusion of this EQIA that, with the adoption of these proposals, the risk of an adverse impact arising from the Engagement Strategy falling into one or more of the Section 75 categories would be mitigated adequately.

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[20] Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment, Equality Commission for NI, 2004 (pp.30-31)

6.5   As well as these specific mitigations, when the Engagement Strategy is initiated, we plan to continue monitoring based on the section 75 categories in order to develop further our understanding of the impacts.

6.6   **As noted earlier this EQIA is based on a high level strategy and individual projects/activities will be subject to equality screening.**

Religious Belief

6.7   Section 5 identified that although Parliament Buildings was generally a welcoming place for people of different religions, some religions identify and engage less with the Assembly than others. It was also identified that Parliament Buildings and its services should be welcoming to all persons regardless of their religious beliefs.

6.8   As all tactics within the strategic objectives do not exclude any section of the community, therefore it is deemed that the Engagement Strategy will not have an adverse impact on people of different religious beliefs.

6.9   The following tactics will positively encourage people of different religious beliefs to engage with the strategy:

Tactic: Develop outreach plan to target constituencies and maximise the number of schools participating in the Education Programme.
Mitigating measure: This tactic will ensure schools in all 18 constituencies participate in the Education Programme. This will include schools of different religious backgrounds.

Tactic: Develop work of Assembly Community Connect to identify and target Strategic Partners to deliver programmes to priority and umbrella groups to create awareness of the Assembly and build confidence in interacting with it.
Mitigating measure: All events will seek to be cross community.

Tactic: To provide a first class visitor experience to guests in PB by undertaking accredited training to become "World Host Status".

Mitigating measure: Greater visitor numbers and an excellent visitor experience, ensuring the visitor experience is suitable for all.

Tactic: Develop relationships with tourism, event and visitor bodies to facilitate the use of Parliament Buildings as a venue for appropriate events.

Mitigating measure: Assembly/Parliament Buildings participation in major tourism events, greater visitor numbers, ensuring the building is accessible to all.

Tactic: Regular meetings with Section 75 groups to inform reviews of Engagement Strategy.

Mitigating measure: Annual meetings with appropriate groups to inform reviews of Strategy.

Political Opinion

6.10   Section 5 identified that although Parliament Buildings receives a high number of visitors, visits by members of the Nationalist/Republican community could be improved and that considerations should be given to the implementation of the language policy, particularly in relations to services provided in Irish.

6.11   As all tactics within the strategic objectives do not exclude any section of the community, therefore it is deemed that the Engagement Strategy will not have an adverse impact on people of different political opinion.

6.12   The following tactics will positively encourage people of different political opinions to engage with the strategy:

Tactic: Develop outreach plan to target constituencies and maximise the number of schools participating in the Education Programme.

Mitigating measure: This tactic will ensure schools in all 18 constituencies participate in the Education Programme. This will include schools of different religious backgrounds.

Tactic: Develop work of Assembly Community Connect to identify and target Strategic Partners to deliver programmes to priority and umbrella groups to create awareness of the Assembly and build confidence in interacting with it.

Mitigating measure: All events will seek to be cross community and take place in all constituencies.

Tactic: Increase accessibility and reach of the Education website and encourage participation in online activities.

Mitigating measure: Translate Education website into the Irish language.

Tactic: To provide a first class visitor experience to guests in PB by undertaking accredited training to become "World Host Status".

Mitigating measure: Greater visitor numbers and an excellent visitor experience, ensuring the visitor experience is suitable for all.

Tactic: Review visitor signage and materials in line with draft Language Policy.

Mitigating measure: Visitors feel welcome and information and services are available to them in an appropriate format.

Tactic: Develop relationships with tourism, event and visitor bodies to facilitate the use of Parliament Buildings as a venue for appropriate events.

Mitigating measure: Assembly/Parliament Buildings participation in major tourism events, greater visitor numbers, ensuring the building is accessible to all.

Tactic: Regular meetings with Section 75 groups to inform reviews of Engagement Strategy.

Mitigating measure: Annual meetings with appropriate groups to inform reviews of Strategy.

Racial Group

6.13 Section 5 identified that ethnic minorities are underrepresented in public life and that Parliament Buildings is welcoming to and should engage with all racial groups.

6.14 As all tactics within the strategic objectives do not exclude any section of the community, therefore it is deemed that the Engagement Strategy will not have an adverse impact on people of different racial groups.

6.15 The following tactics will positively encourage people of different racial groups to engage with the strategy:

Tactic: Develop work of Assembly Community Connect to identify and target Strategic Partners to deliver programmes to priority and umbrella groups to create awareness of the Assembly and build confidence in interacting with it.

Mitigating measure: ACC will seek to encourage the involvement of ethnic minority groups though targeted events.

Tactic: To provide a first class visitor experience to guests in PB by undertaking accredited training to become "World Host Status".

Mitigating measure: Greater visitor numbers and an excellent visitor experience, ensuring the visitor experience is suitable for all.

Tactic: Review visitor signage and materials in line with draft Language Policy.

Mitigating measure: Visitors feel welcome and information and services are available to them in an appropriate format.

Tactic: Develop relationships with tourism, event and visitor bodies to facilitate the use of Parliament Buildings as a venue for appropriate events.

Mitigating measure: Assembly/Parliament Buildings participation in major tourism events, greater visitor numbers, ensuring the building is accessible to all.

Tactic: Regular meetings with Section 75 groups to inform reviews of Engagement Strategy.

Mitigating measure: Annual meetings with appropriate groups to inform reviews of Strategy.

Age

6.16   Section 5 identified that 16-34 year olds are less likely to engage with politics. The education services delivers an extensive service to schools across Northern Ireland at both primary and secondary level, however it was identified that more could be done to connect with young people through social media and the potential development of a Youth Assembly. It also identified that the Assembly needs to ensure participation of our older and aging population.

6.17   As all tactics within the strategic objectives do not exclude any section of the community, therefore it is deemed that the Engagement Strategy will not have an adverse impact on people of different ages.

6.18   The following tactics will positively encourage people of different ages to engage with the strategy:

Tactic: Develop new communications plan to include greater social media interaction and support Committee communication.

Mitigating measure: A co-ordinated and engaging approach to traditional and social media and improved understanding of Committee role and work.

Tactic: Undertake audit of existing video and audio materials to ensure that we are maximising the benefits of existing audio, video and printed materials.

Mitigating measure: An enhanced suite of professional audio and video materials. This will ensure that it is accessible to all ages.

Tactic: Develop outreach plan to target constituencies and maximise the number of schools participating in the Education Programme.

Mitigating measure: This tactic will ensure that schools in all 18 constituencies participate in the Education Programme.

Tactic: Develop targeted Education Programme and initiatives to increase wider young people's engagement with the Assembly.

Mitigating measure: Identify partner(s) and develop programme to improve youth engagement with the Assembly (including NEETs).

Tactic: Review and update current work experience programme.

Mitigating measure: Improved satisfaction and better informed participants of the programme.

Tactic: Develop work of Assembly Community Connect to identify and target Strategic Partners to deliver programmes to priority and umbrella groups to create awareness of the Assembly and build confidence in interacting with it.

Mitigating measure: ACC will aim to partner with organisations to support engagement with our older and aging population.

Tactic: To provide a first class visitor experience to guests in PB by undertaking accredited training to become "World Host Status".

Mitigating measure: Greater visitor numbers and an excellent visitor experience, ensuring the visitor experience is suitable for all ages.

Tactic: Develop relationships with tourism, event and visitor bodies to facilitate the use of Parliament Buildings as a venue for appropriate events.

Mitigating measure: Assembly/Parliament Buildings participation in major tourism events, greater visitor numbers, ensuring the building is accessible to all ages.

Tactic: Regular meetings with Section 75 groups to inform reviews of Engagement Strategy.

Mitigating measure: Annual meetings with appropriate groups to inform reviews of Strategy.

Marital Status

6.19   Data collected for Section 5 identified that there were no issues to mitigate for those of different marital status.

6.20   As all tactics within the strategic objectives do not exclude any section of the community, therefore it is deemed that the Engagement Strategy will not have an adverse impact on people of different marital status.

6.21   As a live document, the Engagement Strategy will be monitored and amended as necessary.

Sexual orientation

6.22   Data collected for Section 5 identified that there were no issues to mitigate for those of different sexual orientation.

6.23   As all tactics within the strategic objectives do not exclude any section of the community, therefore it is deemed that the Engagement Strategy will not have an adverse impact on people of different sexual orientation.

6.24   As a live document, the Engagement Strategy will be monitored and amended as necessary.

Men and women generally

6.25   Section 5 identified that women are underrepresented in public life and consideration should be given to encouraging participation of women in politics and public life.

6.26   As all tactics within the strategic objectives do not exclude any section of the community, therefore it is deemed that the Engagement Strategy will not have an adverse impact on men and women generally.

6.27   The following tactics will positively encourage men and women generally to engage with the strategy:

   Tactic: Develop work of Assembly Community Connect to identify and target Strategic Partners to deliver programmes to priority and umbrella groups to create awareness of the Assembly and build confidence in interacting with it.
   Mitigating measure: ACC will aim to partner with organisations to support engagement with women.

   Tactic: To launch the 2015-16 Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS) Programme to facilitate communication of academic research to assist the Assembly's scrutiny and legislative responsibilities.
   Mitigating measure: Deliver 16 KESS initiatives.

   Tactic: Develop a business outreach plan by delivering targeted training to businesses to raise awareness of the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust (NIABT) in the private sector.
   Mitigating measure: Increase NIABT members by 5% year on year and improve wider understanding of how businesses can engage with the Assembly. The NIABT will specifically run events to encourage the involvement of women.

Tactic: Regular meetings with Section 75 groups to inform reviews of Engagement Strategy.

Mitigating measure: Annual meetings with appropriate groups to inform reviews of Strategy.

Disability

6.28   Section 5 identified that the majority of people with a disability felt that access to Parliament Buildings was good or excellent. It also identified that the Assembly currently provides a wide range of facilities and has trained staff to ensure the building and its services are accessible for people with a disability. However, the Assembly is still committed to continue to optimise access in Parliament Buildings and its services.

6.29   As all tactics within the strategic objectives do not exclude any section of the community, therefore it is deemed that the Engagement Strategy will not have an adverse impact on people of different gender.

6.30   The following tactics will positively encourage people of different abilities to engage with the strategy:

Tactic: Undertake audit of existing video and audio materials to ensure that we are maximising the benefits of existing audio, video and printed materials.
Mitigating measure: An enhanced suite of professional audio and video materials. This will ensure that it is accessible to all.

Tactic: Review and update current work experience programme.
Mitigating measure: Improved satisfaction and better informed participants of the programme.

Tactic: Develop work of Assembly Community Connect to identify and target Strategic Partners to deliver programmes to priority and umbrella groups to create awareness of the Assembly and build confidence in interacting with it.

Mitigating measure: ACC will aim to partner with organisations to support engagement with those with a disability.

Tactic: To provide a first class visitor experience to guests in PB by undertaking accredited training to become "World Host Status".

Mitigating measure: Greater visitor numbers and an excellent visitor experience, ensuring the visitor experience is suitable for all.

Tactic: Develop relationships with tourism, event and visitor bodies to facilitate the use of Parliament Buildings as a venue for appropriate events.

Mitigating measure: Assembly/Parliament Buildings participation in major tourism events, greater visitor numbers, ensuring the building is accessible to all.

Tactic: Regular meetings with Section 75 groups to inform reviews of Engagement Strategy.

Mitigating measure: Annual meetings with appropriate groups to inform reviews of Strategy.

Dependants

6.31   Data collected for Section 5 identified that there were no issues to mitigate for dependants.

6.32   As all tactics within the strategic objectives do not exclude any section of the community, therefore it is deemed that the Engagement Strategy will not have an adverse impact dependants.

6.33   As a live document, the Engagement Strategy will be monitored and amended as necessary.

All Section 75 Groups

6.34   All additional tactics found in the implementation plan at **Annex A** do not exclude
       any Section 75 group.

7. FORMAL CONSULTATION

7.1   The next stage of the EQIA process involves formal consultation with interested parties to obtain:

- views on the assessment of impacts (section 5 above);
- any further information which could be useful in assessing the impacts;
- comments and suggestions on the mitigating measures (section 6 above)
- comments and suggestions with regard to the consultation process.

Principles of consultation

7.2   The Commission's equality scheme includes a commitment to ensure that the accessibility and format of every method of consultation contributes to removal of barriers to the consultation process. The equality scheme makes clear that all consultations will seek the views of those directly affected by the policy; in the case of the review of the policy on the Engagement Strategy, this will include all users of the building and the public in general.

7.3   The Commission anticipates that the EQIA may attract a significant response and welcomes comments from any individual or organisation with an interest in the policy.

Publication of information

7.4   The Commission's equality scheme ensures that, as a matter of course, all consultees of the scheme will be notified (by email or post) of the EQIA being consulted on.

7.5   Information about the EQIA (including all relevant background documents) will be placed on the Northern Ireland Assembly website and attention will be drawn to the consultation process through social media. A standard response form will be available to assist individuals and organisations to respond, but responses will be accepted in any format (e.g. letter, email, telephone, SMS).

7.6   The Commission is also committed to making information available in alternative formats on request and ensuring that consultees who require alternative formats have equal time to respond. Alternative formats may include Easy Read, Braille, audio formats (CD, mp3 or DAISY), large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language; the Commission has arrangements in place to provide alterative formats in a timely manner.

7.7   As much background information as possible has been included within this report. If there is any information which has not been provided, the Commission will make every effort to do so on request. If any consultee has difficulty accessing the background information, the Commission will consider providing summaries in other formats.

(a)   Equality Scheme consultees

All consultees listed in of the Commission's equality scheme will be notified (by email or post) of the availability of the documentation on the website and given details of how to respond. This list includes all political parties, government departments and Trade Unions.

(b)   General public

A public notice drawing attention to the consultation will be placed in the Belfast Telegraph, Irish News and Newsletter in the first week of the consultation period. This will indicate that the documentation is available on the website and will provide details of how to respond.

(c)   Staff and users of the building

At the start of the formal consultation period, staff and users of the building (including MLAs, party support staff and contract staff)will be informed by email of the availability of the documentation and the arrangements for responding to the consultation (see below).

Opportunities to respond

7.8   A standard response form will be provided to assist respondents and it is envisaged that this will be the primary means by which members of the public and equality scheme consultees will respond. The response form can be returned by email or can be downloaded and sent by post.

7.9   As stated above, secretariat and party staff will be contacted via email to inform them of the consultation process. This email will include a questionnaire. There will be an option to return the response form anonymously.

7.10   The Commission will also arrange four half-day sessions on dates that will be notified to consultees well in advance, when they will be available at Parliament Buildings. Attendance will be purely voluntary and consultees will be able to telephone or email the Outreach Manager to arrange a suitable time. Consultees will also have an opportunity to make individual responses to the Outreach Manager by telephone or email.

7.11   The Head of Communications and Outreach will also be available to meet with Trade Union representatives and any of the consultees listed in the Commission's equality scheme on request.

Timescale

7.12   The consultation period in respect of this EQIA will last for fourteen weeks to allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves in order to form a view. The closing date for responses is **Monday, 16th March 2015**.

Decision and publication of the results of the EQIA

7.13   At the end of the consultation period, the EQIA report will be revised to take account of all comments received from consultees. The final EQIA report will then be submitted to the Commission to assist them to make a final decision on the review of the policy. The Commission's decision will be incorporated into a summary report which will set out the consideration given to the impact of alternative policies and mitigating actions.

7.14   The final summary report will be made available on the Northern Ireland Assembly website and consultees will be notified of the availability of the report. This will complete Step 6 of the EQIA process.

Monitoring

7.15   The final stage in the EQIA process is the establishment of a system to monitor the impact of the policy. The results of the monitoring must be reviewed on an annual basis and must be published in the Commission's annual Section 75 report to the Equality Commission[21].

7.16   If the monitoring and analysis of results over a two year period show that there has been a greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, the Commission will take steps to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups.

Full details of the proposed monitoring framework will be included in the final EQIA report.

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[21] Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment, Equality Commission for NI (2004) p50

ANNEX A - Implementation Plan

Objective 1 To use traditional, social and emerging digital media to raise awareness, understanding and participation with the Assembly, its Members, Committees and the wider democratic process.

Tactics	Target	Financial Implications	Priority and completion date	Responsible
Develop a more co-ordinated approach to web and other content creation and management	New Information Officer to be in post by 1 January 2015	Existing resources	1 January 2015	Head of Communications and Outreach
Develop new communications plan to include greater social media interaction and support Committee communication	A co-ordinated and engaging approach to traditional and social media and improved understanding of Committee role and work	Existing resources	High - 31 March 2015	Head of Communications and Outreach
Undertake audit of existing video and audio materials to ensure that we are maximising the benefits of existing audio, video and printed materials	A suite of professional audio and video materials	£10,000	High – 31 May 2015	Head of Communications and Outreach
Develop new audio/video production plan to enhance existing archive, better inform and target specialist video/web based media and growing presence on web based video forums	An enhanced suite of professional audio and video materials	Existing resources	Ongoing	Head of Communications and Outreach

Tactics	Target	Financial Implications	Priority and completion date	Responsible
Commission professional support to enhance the website and guide AIMS development	More stable site available on multiple platforms, improved search facility and more engaging and accessible content	£34,000	High - Immediate	Head of Communications and Outreach and Head of Information Systems Office
Provide a professional media support service inside and outside Parliament Buildings	Informed, engaged and supported media	Existing resources	High - Immediate	Head of Communications and Outreach
To launch the 2015-16 Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS) Programme to facilitate communication of academic research to assist the Assembly's scrutiny and legislative responsibilities	Deliver 16 KESS initiatives	£1,000	High – start January 2015	Head of Research and Information Service

Objectives 2: To build partnerships to create and improve engagement opportunities with under-represented and / or hard-to-reach groups, build synergies and improve effectiveness of our engagement.

Tactics	Target	Financial Implications	Priority and completion date	Responsible
Develop a business outreach plan by delivering targeted training to businesses to raise awareness of the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust (NIABT) in the private sector	Increase NIABT members by 5% year on year and improve wider understanding of how businesses can engage with the Assembly. Increase MLA participation by 20%	Existing resources	High - Immediate	NIABT Co-ordinator
Develop work of Assembly Community Connect to identify and target Strategic Partners to deliver programmes to priority and umbrella groups to create awareness of the Assembly and build confidence in interacting with it	Develop formal business plan to set membership targets, develop programmes and increase participation	£8,000	High – immediate	Head of Communications and Outreach
Increase awareness of and participation in the work of Committees by supporting engagement outside Parliament Buildings and arranging complementary education and outreach activity	Hold Democracy/Assembly Week To arrange a week of representative proceedings/events/ receptions covering legislative, outreach and	£40,000 (over two years)	30 November 2015	Head of Communications and Outreach and Clerk Assistants

Tactics	Target	Financial Implications	Priority and completion date	Responsible
	education activity to highlight the full range of legislative and outreach work undertaken by the Assembly and provide media opportunities to raise awareness			
Increase accessibility and reach of the Education website and encourage participation in online activities	Translate Education website into the Irish language	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment covering cost	1 February 2016	Head of Research and Information Services
Develop targeted Education Programme and initiatives to increase wider young people's engagement with the Assembly	Identify partner(s) and develop programme to improve youth engagement with the Assembly (including NEETs)	Existing resources	High - 1 January 2015	Head of Research and Information Services and Head of Communications and Outreach
Allocate outreach resource to Committees to help co-ordinate joint approach to Committee engagement	Engagement is co-ordinated, effective and targeted in areas of need	Existing resources	High – 1 January 2015	Head of Communications and Outreach and Clerk Assistants

Tactics	Target	Financial Implications	Priority and completion date	Responsible
Develop outreach plan to target constituencies and maximise the number of schools participating in the Education Programme	Schools in all 18 constituencies participate in the Education Programme	Existing resources	High – 31 March 2015	Head of Research and Information Service
Review and update current work experience programme	Improved satisfaction and better informed participants of the programme	Existing resources	High – 31 March 2015	Head of Research and Information Service
Regular meetings with Section 75 groups to inform reviews of Engagement Strategy	Annual meetings with appropriate groups to inform reviews of Strategy	Existing resources	Throughout 2015-2016	Head of Communications and Outreach
Consider establishing an Engagement Strategy Advisory Group	Regular meetings with external stakeholders to inform reviews of Strategy	Existing resources	1 February 2015	Engagement Strategy Steering Group

Objective 3 To increase visitor numbers to Parliament Buildings and deliver an excellent visitor experience.

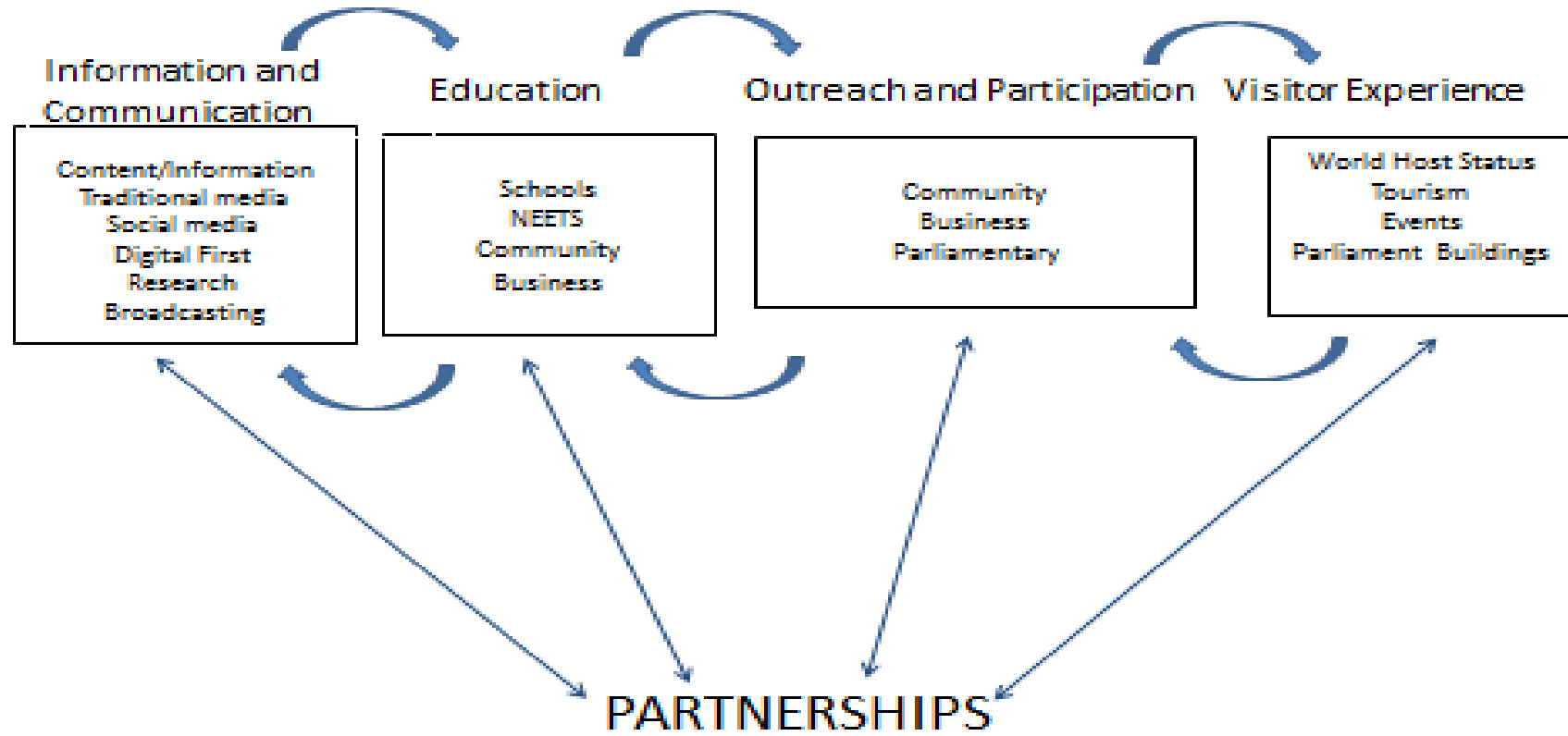| Tactics	Target	Financial Implications	Priority and completion date	Responsible
To provide a first class visitor experience to guests in PB by undertaking accredited training to become "World Host Status"	Greater visitor numbers and an excellent visitor experience	£2,500	Complete	Head of Support Services
Audit external tourism/visitor websites like Trip Advisor to ensure consistent and appropriate digital presence	Accurate visitor information available, better informed visitors and increased positive feedback	Existing resources	Complete and with continuous update and refresh	Head of Support Services and Head of Communications and Outreach
Undertake feasibility study of extending/relocating the gift shop to provide improved catering and retail space for visitors	Greater footfall and retail takings as a result of increased space and capacity		31 March 2015	Head of Support Services and Head of Building Services
Review visitor signage and materials in line with draft Language Policy	Visitors feel welcome and information and services are available to them in an appropriate format		In line with the approval of the draft language policy	Head of Support Services and Head of Communications
Develop relationships with tourism, event and visitor bodies to facilitate the use of Parliament Buildings as a venue for appropriate events	Assembly/Parliament Buildings participation in major tourism events, greater visitor numbers	Depends on individual events	Immediate and ongoing in line with individual events	Head of Support Services and Head of Communications

Possible Future Projects

Like all public sector organisations, the Assembly is mindful of the current financial climate in which we operate. The result of this is that the Assembly's need to undertake its core business of legislating and its wider remit to engage with the population to encourage awareness and participation needs to be prioritised and balanced.

In reality, this means that there are engagement projects that we would like to undertake at this time, but the money to fund them is not currently available. However, they remain important and will be considered if the financial situation changes.

Objective	Tactics	Target	Estimated funding required
To increase the Assembly's engagement with the Community and Voluntary sector (Head of Communications)	Appoint an additional member of staff to the Community Outreach Team	Greater numbers participating in programmes to enhance connections through training, information and support	£41,000
Develop a Youth Assembly (Head of Research and Information Services)	To increase the Assembly's engagement with young people	Better informed and engaged young people and a forum to participate on issues of particular importance to them	£417,000 (2.5 years)

Engagement Infographic

Our Engagement Approach

Information and Communication

Content/Information
Traditional media
Social media
Digital First
Research
Broadcasting

Education

Schools
NEETS
Community
Business

Outreach and Participation

Community
Business
Parliamentary

Visitor Experience

World Host Status
Tourism
Events
Parliament Buildings

PARTNERSHIPS

Glossary of Terms

AIMS - Assembly Information Management System – A database of procedural information such as MLA details, Assembly Questions and Plenary Business.

Audioboo / Soundcloud – platforms that allow us to host and share audio (Interviews) to the community.

Google+ - social network based around subject matter as communities.

Instagram – photo sharing social network. Pictures can be geo-tagged (by location) which can aid social discovery.

Search engine optimisation – ensuring your website content is visible on search results. This is about using metadata to determine how search results are displayed and creating new content that helps the public find our content.

Data Mining – the process of sifting through large volumes of data and turning that into useful information. For example, providing good customer service, judging public opinion or even just analysis of your search results.

Semantic analysis – researching data sets to find relationships and meaning. This is useful for developing an understanding of our users i.e. who they are, whether they are making positive or negative comments, how influential they are.

KESS - Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland. The series is collectively sponsored by Queen's University, Belfast, University of Ulster, Open University and the NI Assembly Research Service.