

## April 2021 Update - Audit of Inequalities Action Plan

Action taken to better promote equality of opportunity/good relations	Inequality Identified and Outcome Area(s)	S75 Category	Intended outcome/impact and how this will be measured	In the current service Business Plan (Yes/No)	Status Update
1) Improve accessibility to the Chamber and Official's Boxes within the Chamber	Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme 1a of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons with a disability and persons without	Improved accessibility to Chamber for all Members. Increased capacity for Officials with mobility issues.	No. Minor alterations have already been carried out to facilitate a wheelchair-using MLA. Further improvements will require extensive re-modelling of the chamber. If required (and approved), such works will be included in future Business Plans.	<p><b>Lead:</b> Head of Building Services  <b>Timescale:</b> Keep under review  <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b></p> <p>A project is being undertaken by the Communications Office to refresh broadcasting facilities, including in the Assembly Chamber. Accessibility issues will be considered as part of the project.</p>
2) Implementation of access audits completed by RNIB, Disability Action and Action on Hearing Loss regarding a programme of works	<p>Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme 1a of Audit of Inequalities)</p> <p>Access to Services (Theme 1b of Audit of Inequalities)</p>	Persons with a disability and persons without	Improved accessibility to Parliament Buildings for persons with a disability. All works projects are designed and constructed in accordance with Building Regulations and other relevant legislation.	No. All work items within our remit relating to the audits have been completed. Other wider 'estate' issues have been passed to DoF. Further agreed improvements will be included in	<p><b>Lead:</b> Head of Building Services  <b>Timescale:</b> Keep under review  <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b></p>

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				relevant Business Plan.	
3) Investigate options to further improve facilities for wheelchair users	Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme 1a of Audit of Inequalities)  Access to Services (Theme 1b of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons with a disability and persons without	Improved accessibility to Parliament Buildings for all building users and specifically for wheelchair users. Improvements to means of escape in the event of an emergency for wheelchair users.	Included in Business Plan developed in February 2016.	<b>Lead:</b> Head of Building Services <b>Timescale:</b> Proposals and recommendations brought to the Assembly Commission by March 2016. <b>Status: Complete for reporting period.</b>  Agreed alterations have already taken place to the counters in the Members' bar, the Business Office, Reception and Office Resources.
4) Maintain Action on Hearing Loss Award	Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme 1a of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons with a disability and persons without	Work towards maintaining Action on Hearing Loss 'Louder than Words' accreditation.	Yes	<b>Lead:</b> Environmental Services Manager <b>Timescale:</b> Annually <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b>
5) Maintain National Autistic Society Autism Award	Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme 1a of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons with a disability and persons without	Work towards maintaining Autism accreditation.	Yes	<b>Lead:</b> Environmental Services Manager <b>Timescale:</b> Annually <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b>
6) Provision of translation from Irish and Ulster Scots to English to the Speaker and Clerks at the table	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different religious belief Persons of different political opinion	That the Speaker/Clerks at Table receive and understand what is being said. Without such a service there could potentially be	Yes	<b>Lead:</b> Editor of Debates <b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing <b>Status: Partially Achieved.</b>  Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the simultaneous interpreting service is not currently being provided to the Speaker

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		Persons of different racial group	a breach of Assembly Standing Orders. Measured by exception i.e. Speaker/Clerks at Table advise that no such service is provided and by recording translation audio channel on SLIQ system.		and Clerks at Table, but a retrospective translation service is in place to monitor the use of Irish to ensure that there are no breaches of Standing Orders and that Assembly business is properly transacted. Other than single words or common phrases, there has been no usage of Ulster Scots.
7) Ensure Parliament Buildings is welcoming to all sections of society and cultures by reviewing art, artefacts and exhibitions	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different religious belief Persons of different political opinion Persons of different racial group	Review of initiatives on how art and exhibitions might be used in Parliament Buildings	Consideration of new art initiatives to allow opportunities to reflect the wider community within Parliament Buildings.  A paper was tabled at the January 2016 Commission meeting updating the Commission on the Speaker's exploration of new art initiatives including working with local schools of art and architecture. Review and operation of	<b>Lead:</b> Engagement <b>Timescale:</b> Long term direction to be revisited by new Speaker and Commission in 2016/17 <b>Status: In progress</b>  On 17 February 2021, the Assembly Commission agreed a project to review the display of artefacts within Parliament Buildings and develop key events and figures connected to the parliamentary history of the buildings which will be reflective of different sections of the community.  A review of how art and exhibitions might be used within Parliament Buildings as part of community outreach will also be undertaken.

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				current exhibitions policy suspended in the interim.	
8) Language Policy	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different religious belief Persons of different political opinion Persons of different racial group	<p>The Education Service now provides a programme in Irish to primary and post primary pupils. In 2015, plans were put in place to translate the primary section of the website – this will be available in Feb 2016. Some video resources are also available in Irish.</p> <p>Development of a Language Policy for the Assembly Commission</p>	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Education Service/Equality Manager <b>Timescale: Complete</b></p> <p><b>Status:</b> The Education Programme is available in Irish. No Irish schools have availed of the programme during the reporting period. The Education Service (ES) delivers consultation workshops in Irish when consulting young people from Irish Medium schools on behalf of Assembly Committees. During the reporting period, two Irish Medium schools agreed to participate in a consultation exercise on behalf of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights.</p> <p>The translation of the primary section of the ES website is now complete and due to be published by end April 2021. The Key Stage 3 section has been translated by CCEA and is currently being reviewed by Assembly staff. Translation of Key Stage 4 pages by CCEA is also underway.</p> <p><b>Lead:</b> Equality and Good Relations Unit <b>Timeline:</b> Jan 2017 and 2017 <b>Status: Action suspended</b></p>

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					<p>While a language paper was presented to SMG in January 2017 and March 2017 in anticipation of it being presented to the Assembly Commission when the Assembly resumed normal business, this action has now been superseded by the new language commitments in the New Decade, New Approach (NDNA) deal, which was published in January 2020. The Assembly Commission will consider the actions required within its remit in the context of the legislation passed by the Assembly.</p> <p>In addition, the Committee on Procedures is expected to take forward the NDNA commitment to develop new Standing Orders to be agreed by the Assembly to provide for simultaneous translation of Assembly business into Irish and Ulster Scots. Once such Standing Orders are agreed by the Assembly, the Assembly Commission will ensure that the resources are in place to deliver any new procedures agreed by the Assembly.</p>
9) Monitoring the outcome of the EQIA on the Flying of the Union Flag at Parliament Buildings	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different religious belief Persons of different political opinion	Monitoring includes regular consideration of: complaints and other forms of feedback through current complaints mechanisms;	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Equality Manager  <b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing  <b>Status: Complete</b></p> <p>As outlined in the 2017-18 Annual Equality Progress Report to the Equality Commission, the Assembly Commission considered the EQIA final decision report</p>

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		Persons of different racial group	<p>the results of research/surveys relating to the promotion of good relations. A visitor survey is conducted three times a year in October, February and June. A question relating to the monitoring of this EQIA has been added. The current policy sits within the area of Good Relations which is monitored on an ongoing basis. A good relations monitoring report is issued to SMG every 6 months detailing the updated policy position and progress. Audits are also conducted to monitor for any adverse impacts.</p> <p>any EQIAs of related policies carried out by the</p>		<p>in June 2015, and it agreed by majority that the Union Flag would fly from Parliament Buildings on designated days as defined by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.</p> <p>The Equality Commission advises that, if the monitoring and analysis of results of EQIAs over a two-year period show that the policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, the public authority must ensure that the policy is revised to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups. Monitoring of the flag EQIA from June 2015 to June 2017 did not identify a greater adverse impact or opportunities to promote greater equality of opportunity.</p>

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			<p>Commission or other public authorities are reviewed;</p> <p>any research carried out by public authorities or independent bodies is considered in relation to the into the impacts of the display of flags and emblems.</p> <p>A report will be brought to the Commission in June 2016 summarising the impact of the policy during its first year of operation under the above headings. This will form part of the Annual Equality Progress report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.</p>		

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10) Monitoring of revised Engagement Strategy	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	All groups	Monitoring by July 2016 in line with directorate wide business plan reviews	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Engagement  <b>Timescale:</b> July 2016  <b>Status: Complete</b></p> <p>The Engagement Strategy has now been incorporated into the Corporate Strategy 2018-23 and Corporate Plan 2019-23.</p>
11) Engaging with women, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities under-represented in public life through Assembly Community Connect	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Men and women generally Persons with a disability and persons without Persons of different racial group	Increased engagement with women, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities; inform groups how to utilise resources available through Assembly Community Connect & partner organisations	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Engagement  <b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing  <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b></p> <p>Consultation and co-design has taken place with a wide range of section 75 groups in this reporting period including older people, women, LGBTQ, disability, BAME, asylum seekers and young people outside of education. This work has led to tailored training and Committee stakeholder events being successfully delivered during this time period.</p>
12) Engagement with young people through Education Service visits programme	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different age	Education Programmes provided for young people from Key Stage 2 (age 8) to Key Stage 5 (Post 16)	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Education Service  <b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing  <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b></p> <p>Due to COVID-19 and the closure of Parliament Buildings, as well as the closure of schools from Christmas 2020 to mid-March 2021, the visits programmes during this period has been</p>



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					a virtual one. The Education Programme has been delivered to 42 groups of which 90% were schools and the rest university or youth groups. Most groups received the standard education programme and some participated in the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights consultation process. Special programmes were developed for under-graduate students Planning from Ulster University and Masters students of Human Resources, also from Ulster University.
13) Engagement with young people	Access to Services (Theme 1b of the 2011 Audit of Inequalities)	Young people	In 2016, the Education Service will apply for Erasmus+ to fund a youth partnership programme. This project will aim to recruit young people who face social and economic barriers to participation	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Education Service  <b>Timescale:</b> 2016 - 2018  <b>Status: Complete</b></p> <p>Application was completed but was unsuccessful.</p>
14) Development of appropriate resources to support learning about the Assembly	Access to Services (Theme 1b of the 2011 Audit of Inequalities)	Young people	Develop and update a variety of educational resources across all Key stages (all ages) this will include new website activities and video resources	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Education Service  <b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing  <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b></p> <p>With the closure of Parliament Buildings to the public, the closure of schools between Christmas 2020 and mid-March 2021 and the difficult circumstances under which schools were operating when open, the Education Service</p>

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					<p>developed a virtual visits programme (through use of MS Teams) for primary and secondary level students; produced several new resources now available online, including recorded lessons – one for Key Stage 2 and one for Key Stage 4; recorded talks by invited guests for Key Stages 4 and 5 (including academics, a Westminster Clerk, Chair of the Education Committee and representatives from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission); and new animations on the 1998 Belfast Agreement (Key Stages 4-5) and How to Get Involved (Key Stages 3-4). Scripts were submitted to CCEA for 2 further animations on the topics of Committees and Making Legislation (Key Stages 4-5). The Assembly's EU Affairs Manager gave a talk on Brexit and Northern Ireland, and more recorded talks are also in planning stage, including by Chairs of the Justice and Health Committees and representatives from the Equality Commission.</p>
15) Implementation of Secretariat Gender Action Plan	<p>Recruitment and Selection (Theme 2a of Audit of Inequalities)</p> <p>Equality issues for existing staff</p>	Men and women generally	The removal of any actual or perceived barriers to gender equality within the secretariat through the implementation of a gender action plan.	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Equality Manager  <b>Timescale:</b> This project lasts 2016-2018  <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b></p> <p>The 2016-18 Gender Action Plan is complete; the 2019-23 Gender Action Plan is now in place and six-monthly updates are provided to SMG. Within the</p>

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					reporting period, a six-monthly update was tabled at the March 2021 SMG meeting, and meetings of the Gender Action Plan Implementation Group were held in December 2020 and February 2021.
16) Provision of an Irish Language champion	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Young People	Translation of the primary section of the Education Service website will complete in February 2016. Delivery of programmes in Irish continues.	yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Education Service  <b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing  <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b></p> <p>The Education Service continues to offer delivery of the programme in Irish. Three Irish Medium schools were invited to take part in consultation focus groups on behalf of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights. Delivery was delayed due to school closures. Sessions are expected to take place in May 2021.</p> <p>Translation of the primary section of the Education Service website is now complete. The new section will be published by end April 2021. Translation of the Key Stage 3 section of the site has been completed by CCEA.</p>
17) Continued facilitation of the Pensioners' Parliament	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different age	To facilitate one Parliament per year	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Engagement  <b>Timescale:</b> 2016-2021  <b>Status: In progress</b></p>

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					Subject to COVID-19 restrictions, it is proposed that the Assembly in conjunction with AGE NI will deliver the Pensioners' Parliament on 15 September 2021.
18) Additional Minority Parliaments	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)  Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different racial group/people with a disability	To facilitate one BEM Parliament per year	Yes	<b>Lead:</b> Engagement <b>Timescale:</b> 2016-2021 <b>Status: Action suspended</b>  This action was suspended because the partner organisation, NICEM, no longer exists. However, the possibility of a BAME Parliament is currently being investigated as part of a series of events to mark the centenary of the creation of Northern Ireland/ partition.
19) Continued Implementation of the 'Perspective on...' series	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.	To hold events as agreed by the Assembly Commission for 2016, namely: Easter Rising; Battle of the Somme	Assembly Commission to agree future events at the beginning of the 2016-2021 mandate in 2016.	<b>Lead:</b> Speaker's Office <b>Timescale:</b> 2016-2021 <b>Status: Complete for reporting period:</b>  The Speaker hosted a lecture on the centenary of the Government of Ireland Act in December 2020. In February 2021, the Commission agreed a programme of events to mark the centenaries in 2021 of the creation of Northern Ireland/ partition and the first sitting of the Northern Ireland Parliament.
20) Continued lighting of the exterior Parliament Buildings	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Promoting good relations between persons of different religious	To light the exterior of Parliament Buildings as agreed	Yes	<b>Lead:</b> Events <b>Timescale:</b> 2016-2021 <b>Status: Complete for the reporting period.</b>

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		<p>belief, political opinion or racial group.</p>	<p>by the Assembly Commission.</p> <p>The Commission will schedule up to 4 days (consecutive or not) during a calendar year for event(s) of its choice in line with the policy.</p> <p>b) The Northern Ireland Charity of the year will have access to the system for up to 5 days (consecutive or not) during its 12 months term.</p> <p>c) The Assembly Commission will grant up to another 8 days for events during a calendar year when requests are made (paragraphs g) in line with the policy (1 day per event).</p>		<p>A revised External Lighting Policy was approved by the Commission in December 2019. A review of this policy was completed in March 2021 and will be brought before the Commission at its next meeting.</p>

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			Altogether there will be up to 17 days scheduled per year in line with the policy with potential extraordinary ad-hoc requests as specified at paragraphs h) & i).		
21) Continue annual series of 'Let's Talk' events across constituencies	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Young People	Hold events in school venues which will involve all constituencies	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Education Service  <b>Timescale:</b> 2016-2021  <b>Status: Partially achieved.</b></p> <p>The 'Let's Talk' events, which are usually held at venues across Northern Ireland with groups of schoolchildren and MLAs, have been suspended due to the continuing public health crisis. However, to encourage engagement by young people, the Education Service recorded a series of talks by invited speakers to encourage discussion in the classroom, and schools were invited to submit questions for speakers in advance. Speakers to date have included Chris Lyttle MLA, Chair of the Education Committee; Dr Claire Rice, Newcastle University; David McCann, political commentator; Judith Boyce, House of Commons Clerk; Shauna Mageean, Assembly EU Officer and representatives from the NIHRC. Further talks by Chair of the Justice and Health</p>

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					Committees and the Equality Commission are at the planning stage.”
22) Speaker to host 'Assembly Women's Week' in 2016 which will focus on encouraging women to participate and increasing female representation	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Gender	The week will host a range of different events including discussion with female role models, increasing female representation on public and private boards, increasing female presence in the media.	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Speaker's Office and Communications and Engagement  <b>Timescale:</b> 2016  <b>Status: Complete for reporting period:</b></p> <p>Given the inability to hold a physical event due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the Speaker hosted a social media campaign for International Women's Day which featured videos of 19 high-profile women talking about the challenges they had overcome.</p>
23) 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.	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Men and Women generally	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.	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Engagement  <b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing  <b>Status: Ongoing</b></p> <p>The Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust (NIABT) Board of Trustees agreed in 2017 that the NIABT should be dissolved. Dissolution was not possible during the political hiatus 2017 to January 2020. Since the restoration of normal Assembly business in January 2020, work has been under way to effect dissolution, which is expected to happen in the 2021/22 year. The Corporate Strategy and Plan include actions to improve connections and ensure</p>

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					engagement with a wide range of groups, including the business community. An independent piece of research is currently being carried out to assess how the Assembly should engage with business. The output from this research will develop future engagement strategies.
24) Regular meetings with Section 75 groups to inform reviews of Engagement Strategy.	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	All s75 Groups	Annual meetings with appropriate groups to inform reviews of Strategy.	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Engagement  <b>Timescale:</b> Annually  <b>Status: Complete for reporting period</b></p> <p>The Engagement Strategy has now been incorporated into the Corporate Strategy and Corporate Plans. However, consultation and co-design has taken place with a wide range of Section 75 groups in this reporting period including older people, women, LGBTQ, disability, BAME, Asylum seekers and young people outside of education. This work has led to tailored training and Committee stakeholder events being successfully delivered during this time period.</p>

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



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25) Continue to implement fair and inclusive recruitment practices	Recruitment and Selection (Theme 2a of Audit of Inequalities)	All	<p>Ensuring that all recruitment competitions are fully accessible</p> <p>Apply welcome statements or affirmative action if appropriate in consultation with the Equality Commission for NI.</p>		<p><b>Lead:</b> Head of HR  <b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing. The procedures for internal and external recruitment have been reviewed to ensure compliance with good practice. A guaranteed interview scheme has been implemented for both internal and external recruitment  <b>Status: Complete</b></p> <p>A number of recruitment competitions have progressed during 2020/21 in line with the Assembly Commission's policies and procedures. The Guaranteed Interview Scheme remains in place.</p>
26) Continue to implement staff surveys	Recruitment and Selection (Theme 2b of Audit of Inequalities)	All	<p>Use the results of the staff survey to produce and implement an action plan if required</p> <p>Monitor the progress of the implementation of this action plan</p>		<p><b>Lead:</b> Corporate Support  <b>Timescale:</b> Staff surveys to be undertaken regularly between 2016 and 2021  Action Plan following on from 2014 survey will be reviewed in March 2016.  <b>Status: In progress</b>  A staff survey was undertaken in 2017 and an action plan developed and implemented.  A further staff survey was undertaken in 2019.  The results of the 2019 Staff Survey were presented to the Secretariat Management Group in April 2020. The Clerk/Chief Executive and Directors further considered</p>

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					<p>the findings and recommendations in May 2020 with a view to producing and implementing an action plan. Further progress was however delayed as efforts were directed to managing the Assembly Commission's COVID-19 response. While a number of actions have been implemented the action plan needs to be revisited in light of current circumstances.</p> <p>A staff COVID-19 Well-being and Communications survey was undertaken in June 2020 and actions arising from this are being implemented.</p>