



Northern Ireland
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Barbara Love and Niall Robb

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Audit of Inequalities 2016

1 Background

This paper presents the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Audit of Inequalities 2016. The purpose of an Audit of Inequalities is to provide a strategic picture of inequalities relevant to the role and functions of an organisation. The Audit of Inequalities 2016 was carried out by the Assembly's Research and Information Service (RaISe) with input from Directorates. It will inform the development of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's Equality Scheme (2016-2021).

Please note that this Audit updates a review of the Audit of Inequalities 2011 which was conducted in 2015. It supplements information held by the Equality and Good Relations Unit in its work to support the Assembly Commission in complying with Section 75(1&2) of the Northern Ireland Act and section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

2 Role and Functions of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

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

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

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

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

3 About the Audit of Inequalities

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

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

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

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

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

Public authorities must submit an equality scheme to the Equality Commission detailing their arrangements for fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties and a plan for their performance. In the revised guide, the Equality Commission recommends that public authorities develop action measures to effectively demonstrate that they have paid due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations through the implementation of their equality scheme. In preparing action measures/action plans, the Equality Commission further recommends that public authorities:

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

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission carried out its first Audit of Inequalities between November 2010 and January 2011 and produced a revised Equality Scheme for 2012-2016. This Scheme was approved by the Equality Commission on 28 March 2012. While equality and good relations data and information relevant to the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission’s Equality Scheme are monitored and reviewed on an on-going basis, this second Audit has been carried out to inform an Equality Scheme covering the period 2016-2021, which the Assembly Commission is currently developing.

4 Developments since the last Audit of Inequalities

This section highlights developments in a number of key areas since the last Audit of Inequalities. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all activities undertaken by the Assembly Commission in fulfilling the statutory requirements of Section 75(1&2) of the Northern Ireland Act and section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. It does, however, demonstrate that the Assembly Commission has invested considerable

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

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

effort and resources with regards to equality and good relations issues brought to their attention.

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

4.1a Access to Parliament Buildings

Disability

Work to improve access for those with disabilities to Parliament Buildings or areas within Parliament Buildings has continued in consultation with the external Disability Advisory Group which consists of representatives from various disability related charities including Autism NI, The Cedar Foundation, Disability Action, MENCAP, National Autistic Society and REAL Network. This has included the production of British and Irish signed version of the tour of Parliament Buildings and a Braille tour map, an access video available on the Assembly website for people with autism showing what to expect when visiting Parliament Buildings, maintenance of the 'Louder Than Words' charter mark accreditation following an audit by Action on Hearing Loss in August 2014.

Since the last Audit, the Assembly Commission has also made adjustments to assist an MLA who is a wheelchair user.

4.1b Access to Services

Disability

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

When required, special access arrangements can be made and programmes and resources can be tailored accordingly, such as adapting presentations, providing large print documents, or using subtitled videos for Outreach and Education activities.

Staff including Education, Outreach and Events staff have received special training, to further enable them to cater for the needs of all visitors (e.g. Autism Awareness Training, Deaf Awareness Training).

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

Religious Belief and/or Political Opinion

In terms of language, Standing Order 78 stipulates that Members may speak in the language of their choice in the Assembly Chamber. A Member using a language other than English must provide translation.

In response 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 and will be live in February 2016.

4.1c Good Relations

In order to ensure that Parliament Buildings is welcoming to all sections of society and cultural backgrounds, a Visitor's Survey, including questions on the environs of Parliament Buildings and good relations, is carried out by Secretariat staff periodically.

The implementation of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's Good Relations Action Plan is also on-going and this is monitored and reported to Secretariat Management Group on a 6-monthly basis.

Assembly questions, both oral and written, have been screened for any Section 75 issues. Subsequent to the screening exercise, the Commission agreed a protocol for the answering of written questions.

In 2015, the Education Service worked with: the Committee for Education to consult young people on inquiries into Shared and Integrated Education and the School Inspectorate & Bullying in Schools Bill and the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to ask young people what they thought about the TBUC Strategy (Together Building a United Community). Focus groups were facilitated in the Irish language on the TBUC Strategy, Shared and Integrated Education and the School Inspectorate Bullying in Schools Bill consultations.

In 2015, the Northern Ireland Assembly was awarded Erasmus+ funding to develop a Structured Dialogue project which is nearing completion. The aim is to "encourage positive, respectful relationships and represent the voices of young people on issues which affect their lives". The recruitment process for the Erasmus+ project ensured the representation of young people from different community backgrounds (nationalist, unionist, other), different social backgrounds and those with disabilities. The following section discusses these and other work undertaken by the Education Service in more detail.

4.1d Participation

One Assembly Question was asked regarding engagement with a number of groups.

AQW 49669/ 11-16	Ms Claire Sugden	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail how the Assembly Commission's Engagement Strategy 2015-16 is increasing engagement with (i) young people; (ii) older people; and (iii) other under-represented groups.
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Young people

The Education Service delivers an inward visits programme for schools, youth groups and other groups seeking an educational focus to their visit. Whilst the vast majority of groups fall between the Primary 5 and A-Level age range (approximately 8-years old through to 18-years old), some groups fall outside that. The Education Service sees a high number of university groups during an average academic year. They have also engaged with a number of younger children, having delivered programmes to Key Stage 1 groups³. They have also met with a small number of Early Years groups⁴. The visits programme is open to all schools including special schools.

The Education Service works with many youth organisations which bring together young people from a variety of backgrounds, for example, the Bytes project, the Pathways Project and Belfast YMCA.

The Education Service also collaborates with organisations to deliver specific projects e.g. the BBC (Schools Report), Politics Plus (Youth Congress Debate November 25 2015) and the UK Youth Parliament (Make your Mark Campaign).

The Education Service works with the 'NEETs' Forum (working with young people not in employment, education or training) to encourage young people from these 'hard to reach' groups to engage with democratic politics. This has involved outreach visits to NEET groups and encouraging forum members to participate in Committee Inquiries.

In 2015, in addition to the work on the Shared and Integrated Education and the School Inspectorate & Bullying in Schools Bill, the TBUC Strategy (Together Building a United Community), the Education Service worked with the Committee for the Environment to find out what young people thought of the Road Traffic Bill's proposed changes to the rules for learner and new drivers. The Education Service used focus groups and an online survey tool to gather young people's views.

The Education Service is further engaging young people in the work of the Assembly through its 'Connections' Project, which aims to promote dialogue between decision makers and young people. Financed by the European funding stream, Erasmus+, the

³ Key Stage 1 covers years 3 and 4 at Primary school

⁴ Early Years covers 0-6 year olds (pre-school and those in years 1 and 2 at Primary school)

project, running between January 2015 and January 2016, involves 36 participants, aged between 16 and 18 from a range of backgrounds. They have been challenged to research an issue of their choice and communicate their findings to the Assembly. The young people decided to focus on the issue of mental health and have made 3 short films; conducted focus groups, and designed an online survey on mental health services, which received over 2000 responses. The group will have the opportunity to deliver research findings to Assembly Committees in early 2016.

The Assembly has contacted the National Assembly for Wales and the Flemish Parliament with the intention of making a future joint application to Erasmus+. It is proposed that the three institutions work as partners to deliver a project similar in structure to Connections. This partnership would add a trans-national dimension to the current arrangement.

The Education Service also works with youth organisations which bring together young people from a variety of backgrounds. For example, it is part of the Participative Democracy Partnership with Youth Action, Public Achievement, and Save the Children, the aim of which is to encourage youth workers to involve young people in the work of their democratic institutions.

Older people

The Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament was launched in 2011 and allows older people from across Northern Ireland to have their say on the issues that matter to them. 2015 saw a new development for the Parliament – the hosting of themed parliaments on specific topics. These parliaments allow for more in-depth discussion and debate on one exclusive topic – a topic that has been raised as a significant concern through the NI Pensioners Parliament.

Gender, disability and ethnic minorities

Assembly Community Connect (ACC) works to enhance connections between the Assembly and the Community and Voluntary sector through education and outreach. Assembly Community Connect provides free training, information and support for the local community and voluntary sector. During 2014/15 there was increased registrations to ACC and the Advisory group's agreed strategy of concentrating on women, persons with a disability and the Black Ethnic Minority (BME) sector has been implemented by targeting these groups for bespoke events - e.g. the NI Rural Women's Network event on 15 October 2014, the Disability Sport event on 8 December 2014 and the Stronger Together BME conference on 10 February 2015.

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

4.2a Recruitment and Selection

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

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

4.2b Equality issues for existing staff

A number of projects are currently underway to address equality issues for existing staff. Examples include an annual disability audit amongst Secretariat staff, completion of the Positive Working Relationships Initiative and the development of the Assembly Secretariat's Gender Action Plan. Further details of the Positive Working Relations Initiative and the development of a Gender Action Plan are contained in section 5.2.

5 Findings of the Audit of Inequalities 2016

A wide range of sources were considered as part of this Audit, namely:

- The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Equality Scheme (2012-16), Audit of Inequalities (2011) and associated action plan;⁵
- Section 75 and Fair Employment monitoring data;
- Minutes of meetings (e.g. Assembly Commission and Secretariat Management Group);
- Annual Reports to the Equality Commission;⁶
- Internal surveys including the Internal Good Relations Survey and the Gender Equality Survey;
- Internal data such as data on school visits by school type and Section 75 data on Assembly Community Connect initiative participants;

⁵ <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/ABOUT-THE-ASSEMBLY/Corporate-Information/Policies/Equality-Scheme-2012-2016/>

⁶ <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/ABOUT-THE-ASSEMBLY/Corporate-Information/Publications/Annual-Reports-to-the-Equality-Commission>

- Questions and complaints raised by MLAs, staff and the public;
- Data on the gender composition of MLAs; and,
- Findings of the latest Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey.

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

5.1a Access to Parliament Buildings

Disability

Access to Parliament Buildings for those with disabilities has been discussed and progressed in consultation with key stakeholders as well as at meetings of Secretariat Management Group and the Assembly Commission.

The below Assembly Question was also asked in 2015.

Ref No.	Member	Question
AQW 47161 /11-15	Ms Claire Sugden	To ask the Assembly Commission for an assessment of the use of headsets during tours of Parliament Buildings, to enhance the visitor experience.

A computer tablet is now available for visitors who are deaf or hearing impaired, which provides a signed version of the current tour script in Irish and British sign language for use in Parliament Buildings. The tablet is held by the Events office and brought down on request.

5.1b Access to Services

Religious Belief / Political Opinion

Language is an issue that continues to be raised in Assembly Questions to the Assembly Commission.

The table below details Assembly Questions regarding language directed to the Assembly Commission during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 sessions.

Ref No.	Member	Question
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AQO 7087/ 11-15	Mr Máirtín Ó Muilleoir	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on whether it intends to revisit its decision to prevent members of the Commission answering tabled written questions to the Commission in both Irish and English.
AQO 8491/ 11-15	Mr Dominic Bradley	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the development of a language strategy, with particular reference to the Irish language.
AQW 51124 /11- 16	Mr Jim Wells	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail why the World War 1 exhibition in the Great Hall of Parliament Buildings has a bilingual text in English and Irish.

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.

5.1c Good Relations

Good Relations issues are addressed through the Assembly Commission's Good Relations Strategy.

The table below details Assembly Questions regarding Good Relations in general directed to the Assembly Commission during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 sessions.

Ref No.	Member	Question
AQO 7086/1 1-15	Mr Phil Flanagan	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the actions it has taken to ensure that the Assembly, and in particular Parliament Buildings, is inclusive, accessible and welcoming to all sections of society.
AQO 7095/1 1-15	Mr Daithí McKay	To ask the Assembly Commission, given that the Assembly is a political institution, does it have any plans to review the restrictions on political expression at events in Parliament Buildings organised by Members and political parties.
AQW 41118/ 11-15	Mr Phil Flanagan	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail any prayer groups, or similar gatherings, either formal or informal, organised by the Commission, Commission staff or others, that take place within Parliament Buildings.
AQW 42748/ 11-15	Mr Phil Flanagan	To ask the Assembly Commission, pursuant to AQW 41118/11-15, (i) whether the prayer and Bible study meeting is open to members of all religious faiths and none; (ii) whether room bookings are made for these meetings; if so (iii) to provide further details; (iv) which individual or organisation organises the prayer and Bible study meetings; and (v) how often these meetings taken place.
AQW 43874/ 11-15	Mr Phil Flanagan	To ask the Assembly Commission, pursuant to AQW 42748/11-15, in what room number these meetings take place; and how building users are notified that prayer or bible study meetings are due to take place.

AQO 9191/1 1-16	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission what role it had in, and knowledge it had of, the format and content of the Assembly Remembrance Event in Parliament Buildings on 11 November 2015.
AQO 9189/1 1-16	Mr Nelson McCausland	To ask the Assembly Commission what reference is made during regular guided tours of Parliament Buildings to the memorials to former Members murdered by illegal paramilitary organisations.

Feedback from visitors regarding Good Relations in Parliament Buildings

Feedback from the Visitor Survey has been very positive. Data collected from 232 completed questionnaires received in June 2014, and between November 2014 and February 2015, showed that:

- The majority of visitors felt that Parliament Buildings was either welcoming to people of different ethnic origin, religion or political opinion (85.8%) or neutral (neither welcoming nor unwelcoming to people from different religious or political backgrounds or ethnic groups) (9.3%). Only one respondent (0.4%) did not feel Parliament Buildings was welcoming to these groups.
- Most respondents felt the symbols or emblems made either a positive contribution to Good Relations (65.6%) or that they make neither a positive nor a negative contribution (17.9%). Seven respondents (3.3%) felt that the symbols or emblems make a negative contribution to Good Relations.
- Of those who had viewed the artwork/exhibitions on display (n = 113), most felt that the artwork and exhibitions in Parliament Buildings make either a positive contribution (83.2%) or neither a positive or negative contribution to Good Relations within the Northern Ireland Assembly (7.1%). Two respondents (1.8%) felt that the artwork and exhibitions in Parliament Buildings make a negative contribution to Good Relations.

Art, Artefacts and Exhibitions

An Art Advisory Group, Chaired by the Principal Deputy Speaker and consisting of a member from each of the larger parties, representatives from the NI Arts Council, National Museums Northern Ireland, and relevant Secretariat officials has been established:

“To advise the Speaker generally on matters relating to the display of works of art in Parliament Buildings and to make proposals on the siting of works of art to the Speaker. The working group may from time to time also be asked for its views on other issues where it is considered to have an interest”.

The Speaker has been clear that the Art Advisory Group has no role in advising on the more politically sensitive areas of the Good Relations policy in relation to art, specifically the display of historic artefacts which instead falls within the corporate responsibilities of the Commission.

Art, Artefacts and Exhibitions have been discussed by the Assembly Commission (21/01/2015, 18/02/2015). There is also a Speakers Art Group.

The table below details Assembly Questions regarding art, artefacts and exhibitions directed to the Assembly Commission during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 sessions.

Ref No.	Member	Question
AQW 37723/11-15	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission how much has been spent on art each year since May 2007; and what is the current value of the Assembly's collection.
AQW 42813/11-15	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission where the silver maces from the Northern Ireland Commons and Senate are now located.
AQW 47067/11-15	Mr Peter Weir	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on plans to provide symbols of permanent recognition at Parliament Buildings for C.S Lewis and Seamus Heaney.

Flags

Following the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's agreement to review its policy on the flying of the Union flag at Parliament Buildings and to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) to consider the potential equality of opportunity and good relations impacts of any changes to the policy, a full public consultation was held from 27 October 2014 to 2 February 2015. Policy Arc, the independent consultancy company facilitating the consultation produced a report to assist the Assembly Commission in making its decision on the review of the policy. This EQIA Final Decision Report was presented to the Commission on 17 June 2015.

The flying of the Union Flag has been discussed at Secretariat Management Group (01/05/2015 and 04/09/2015).

This issue has also been discussed at several Assembly Commission meetings (08/06/2015, 17/06/2015, 24/06/2015, and 04/11/2015). At its meeting on 17 June 2015, the Commission agreed by majority that, as recommended, the Union flag will now be flown from Parliament Buildings on designated days as defined by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (currently 18 days per annum). This is an increase of three days on the current policy.

The table below details Assembly Questions regarding the flying of flags directed to the Assembly Commission during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 sessions. A number of these questions arose out of the unauthorised placement of the Irish flag on the roof of Parliament Buildings.

Ref No.	Member	Question
AQW 36458/11-15	Mr Phil Flanagan	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail the estimated cost of the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the Review of the Policy on the Flying of the Union Flag at Parliament Buildings.
AQW 39273/11-15	Mr Nelson McCausland	To ask the Assembly Commission how the questions and options included in the EQIA on the flying of the Union flag at Parliament Buildings were determined; and by whom.
AQW 44222/11-15	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission when the results of the consultation on flying the Union Flag from Parliament Buildings will be published.
AQW 44910/11-15	Mr Stephen Moutray	To ask the Assembly Commission when will the outcome of the consultation on the flying of the Union Flag at Parliament Buildings be made public.
AQW 46742/11-15	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail the access arrangements in place on 2nd and 3rd June 2015 affecting (i) the roof of Parliament Buildings, (ii) the discrete area where the flag poles are situated, and how and by whom the credentials of those approved to be in these areas were checked for each and every trip to the subject areas.
AQW 46743/11-15	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission whether an incident of interference with the flying of the Union flag on Parliament Buildings took place on 2nd June 2015.
AQW 46744/11-15	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission what actions were taken and by whom to secure the removal of the unauthorised flags flown from Parliament Buildings on 3rd June 2015.
AQW 46745/11-15	Mr David McIlveen	To ask the Assembly Commission what steps will be taken to ensure tighter security at Parliament Buildings following the flag incident on 3rd June 2015.
AQW 46831/11-15	Lord Morrow of Clogher Valley	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail (i) prior to the flag incidents at Parliament Buildings on both the 2 and 3 June 2015 how many contractors were routinely operating on-site; (ii) following the incidents how many contractors were found not to be authorised to have access to the building; and (iii) how and why was this security breach permitted to occur.
AQW 46856/11-15	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission how a foreign flag came to be flown from Parliament Buildings on 3 June 2015 and what investigations have been concluded.
AQW 47001/11-15	Lord Morrow of Clogher Valley	To ask the Assembly Commission, further to the MLA briefing of 8 June 2015 and in respect of points 7 and 8 in the Update Report on Reposes to Flag Incident, (i) on how many occasions in the past has alleged inclement weather caused issues with flags flying on the flagpoles, (ii) to provide or place in the Assembly Library logged report and actions taken following previous said incidents: and (iii) as an issue has allegedly been identified, what has action been taken to address this to secure the flags more appropriately when being flown, and provide evidence of same.
AQO 8496/11-15	Mr Pat Sheehan	To ask the Assembly Commission what consideration it has given to the Equality Impact Assessment on the review of the policy on the flying of the Union flag at Parliament Buildings.

AQO 8494/1 1-15	Mr Paul Givan	To ask the Assembly Commission to outline the actions it has taken following the unauthorised flying of flags from Parliament Buildings on Wednesday 3 June 2015.
AQO 8498/1 1-15	Mr Jonathan Craig	To ask the Assembly Commission whether the recent flying of flags on the roof of Parliament Buildings breaches the contractual obligations of the building contractor undertaking the roof project.
AQO 9196/1 1-16	Mr Gordon Dunne	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the investigation into the security breach in June 2015 that resulted in the unauthorised flying of a flag on Parliament Buildings.

The Assembly Commission agreed four days for the lighting of Parliament Buildings in relevant colours in 2015.

Under the Commission's external lighting policy, the Commission can agree up to four days to light up Parliament Buildings each year.

The four days on which the Commission agreed to light the building are as follows:

- 9th March (purple) to mark International Women's Day
- 17th March (green) to mark St Patrick's Day
- 12th July (orange)
- 11th November (red) to mark Remembrance Day

A limited number of additional days each year are also considered by the Commission on request from charitable, community or non-profit organisations or in relation to specific events.

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission remains committed to commemorating a range of anniversaries to be marked within Parliament Buildings throughout the upcoming decade of centenaries. The initiative-entitled "Perspectives On..." is designed to reflect on our history and allow MLAs the opportunity to discuss the issues and give their own views.

5.1d Participation

The Northern Ireland Assembly engages with the public through a number of services including the Education Service, the Outreach Unit and Events Office. The public can also attend debates, Committees and take tours.

The Education Service delivers an inward visits programme for schools, youth groups and other groups seeking an educational focus to their visit.

The Northern Ireland Assembly (NIA) Outreach Unit is responsible for advancing and encouraging the public's understanding of the Assembly and the political process in Northern Ireland. It provides the business community, voluntary sector and delegations

from across the world with the opportunity to engage and learn more about the legislature. The Outreach Unit consists of three business areas Assembly Community Connect (ACC), Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust (NIABT) and Parliamentary Outreach.

The Events Office organises events which range from Report Launches, Charity Fundraisers, Dinners, Receptions and Concerts.

School visits

The table below shows a gender breakdown of groups who have used the Education Service for the period January 2015 – December 2015. While the majority of groups were mixed (91.1%), a higher proportion of both groups and participants were female only (7.5%) when compared to male only (1.4%). It should be noted that school visits are open to all schools in Northern Ireland.

Groups who have used the Education Service by gender Jan – Dec 2015

Group Type	No. of groups	Percentage	No. of participants	Percentage
Female	32	7.5%	1,236	8.4%
Male	7	1.4%	327	2.2%
Mixed	390	91.1%	13,184	89.4%
Total	429		14,747	

The following table shows the number of school visits to the Northern Ireland Assembly through the Education Service by school type (a proxy for religion). At primary level, the highest number of school visits were from the controlled sector, while at secondary level the highest number of school visits were by maintained secondary school. At primary level the difference was much less marked. As stated above, school visits are open to all schools in Northern Ireland.

School visits by school type Jan – Dec 2015

School Type	2015	
	Total Groups	Total Visitors
Controlled Grammar	15	387
Controlled Grammar (External Outreach)	1	75
Controlled Primary	67	1924
Controlled Primary (External Outreach)	3	285
Controlled Secondary	31	891
Controlled Secondary (External Outreach)	5	551
Integrated Primary	5	146
Integrated Secondary	10	257
Maintained Primary	34	1002
Maintained Primary (External Outreach)	4	359
Maintained Secondary	35	1131
Maintained Secondary (External Outreach)	12	868
Special Secondary	5	62
Voluntary Grammar	46	1393
Voluntary Grammar (External Outreach)	6	600
Voluntary Primary	4	123
All	283	10054

Two Assembly Questions to the Assembly Commission related to school visits during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 sessions, as shown below.

Ref No.	Member	Question
AQO 7824/11-15	Mr Gregory Campbell	To ask the Assembly Commission what is the estimated number of visits to Parliament Buildings by individuals or groups from each constituency since 2012.
AQO 8497/11-15	Mr Máirtín Ó Muilleoir	To ask the Assembly Commission to outline the number of schools and groups that have availed of the education service since January 2015.

Engaging with Young People

The Erasmus+ Youth Panel and other youth engagement programmes were discussed by Assembly Commission on 21/01/2015 and by the Secretariat Management Group on 03/04/2015 and 04/09/2015. Two Assembly Questions to the Assembly Commission related to the Youth Assembly during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 sessions, as shown overleaf.

Ref No.	Member	Question
AQW 47650 /11- 15	Mr Chris Lyttle	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the establishment of a Northern Ireland Youth Assembly.
AQO 9187/ 11-16	Mr Chris Lyttle	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly.

As already noted, the Northern Ireland Assembly was awarded Erasmus+ funding to develop a Structured Dialogue project. The aim is to “encourage positive, respectful relationships and represent the voices of young people on issues which affect their lives”. Financed by the European funding stream, Erasmus+, the project, running between January 2015 and January 2016, involves 36 participants, aged between 16 and 18 from a range of backgrounds. They have been challenged to research an issue of their choice and communicate their findings to the Assembly. The young people decided to focus on the issue of mental health and have made 3 short films; conducted focus groups; and designed an online survey on mental health services, which received over 2000 responses. The group will have the opportunity to deliver research findings to Assembly Committees in early 2016.

The Education Service’s series of Let’s Talk events around Northern Ireland brings together young people and their MLAs. In 2014-15, these events, involving young people from different schools and neighbouring constituencies, were held in Armagh, Ballymena, Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Newry and Omagh. The programme includes a panel style Q&A and round table discussions and uses electronic response technology to get the young people’s views on issues. It is hoped to increase the number of events held and plans are underway to hold these in Antrim, Belfast, Craigavon, Omagh, Derry/Londonderry, Enniskillen and Bangor. To reflect the Engagement Strategy’s emphasis on value for money, all of this year’s events will be held in schools rather than venues for hire.

The Education Service also works with other organisations on special projects. The Education Service facilitated the Northern Ireland Youth Forum’s Youth Congress to hold its annual sitting in the Assembly Chamber on 25 November 2015. Over 80 young people from a range of youth organisations took part in the event. Preparation workshops were held on the morning of the event, prior to the debate.

CINEMAGIC ‘Reel Politics’ project was a partnership project with Belfast City Council and Cinemagic, a film education organisation. Running from January to March 2015, it involved 24 young women from across Northern Ireland between the ages of 16 and 25. The Education and Outreach services co-operated in the organisation of this programme. Working in groups, the women explored the issues of underrepresentation of women in politics and produced three short films on the topics of Social Media,

Domestic Abuse and lack of female representation in STEAM sectors (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths). The films were screened on International Women's Day on 6 March.

Engaging with Teachers and those working with young people

The Education Service organises 3 CPD (Continuing Professional Development) events annually for teachers in primary and post-primary Education.

Trainee teachers from Stranmillis College are also provided with a 2 weekwork experience programme in January.

In line with engagement objectives, the Education Service continues to develop new educational materials to support teaching and learning about the Assembly. In 2015-16, a number of new videos were produced on the following topics:

- Elections (a set on Assembly, Council, Westminster and European Parliament elections);
- 'The Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly';
- An Introduction to the Assembly (set of 3 for primary, Key Stage 3 and 4, and Post 16 age groups); and soon to be released,
- 'Political Parties in the Assembly' and 'The Education Service' (promotional video).

An iBook, *A Guide to the Assembly and Parliament Buildings*, for students aged 16+ was published, with PDF version for greater accessibility.

Two Assembly Commission Questions were asked about a specific programme relating to young people in the 2014-15 and 2015-16 sessions.

Ref No.	Member	Question
AQO 9197/11-16	Mr Daithí McKay	To ask the Assembly Commission whether the Communicating in a Political World event on 10 November 2015 was carried out as part of its agreed External Relations Strategy.
AQO 9199/11-16	Mr Barry McElduff	To ask the Assembly Commission who organised the Communicating in a Political World event in Parliament Buildings on 10 November 2015.

Special interest and cross-community groups

In terms of special interest and cross-community groups, the Education Service has provided programmes for the following organisations during 2015:

- A range of students – law, nursing, business, agriculture, public policy, planning, journalism;
- Bytes Project;
- Roe Valley Learning Community;
- National Citizen's Service;
- Public Achievement;
- Stop Peace Unravelling;
- North West Forum for People with Disabilities;
- Antrim Youth Council;
- YMCA;
- Rotary International Youth Leadership Programme;
- Neets Youth Forum;
- Northern Ireland Youth Forum;
- Rathbone Youth Forum;
- Pathways Project;
- Bryson Future Skills; and,
- BME Project, Lisburn.

Outreach events

The following table outlines Outreach events focusing on gender, disability and ethnic group that the Assembly has been involved with in 2015.

Date	Title	No. of Participants
27 Nov 15	Insight into Assembly business	11
24 Nov 15	How the Assembly Works	11
13 Nov 15	Committee Witness Training	10
20 Oct 15	How the Assembly Works	17
16 Oct 15	NIGAG - Insight Into	15
16 Oct 15	Cancer Focus - fellowship visit, Maeve McLaughlin	
01 Oct 15	Intergenerational Parliament	135
30 Sep 15	One Assembly; Many People - Community Relations Week	120

29 Sep 15	How the Assembly Works	31
24 Sep 15	Special Olympics fellowship visit - Claire Sugden	40
18 Sep 15	Committee Witness Training	10
09 Sep 15	NOW Project - Reading Rooms event	40
23 Jun 15	How the Assembly Works	26
19 Jun 15	Insight into Committee for Culture Arts & Leisure	12
02 Jun 15	ACC Annual Networking Event	70
29 May 15	Insight into the Committee for Social Development	27
28 May 15	Co3 Breakfast Cookstown	40
26 May 15	How the Assembly Works	46
19 May 15	Social Enterprise Dinner	30
01 May 15	Aspire/Focus on Family - Fellowship visit, Claire Sugden	20
01 May 15	Claudy Rural Development - Fellowship visit, Claire Sugden	20
24 Apr 15	Insight into HSSP Committee	20
23 Apr 15	Fermanagh Rural Community Initiative - Fellowship visit, Phil Flanagan	20
23 Apr 15	RSPB fellowship visit, Phil Flanagan	5
24 Mar 15	How the Assembly Works	13
20 Mar 15	VOYPIC Fellowship Visit with Maeve	12
13 Mar 15	Get Involved East Belfast	26
06 Mar 15	Cinemagic - Welsh Speaker and Dinner	170
03 Mar 15	CO3 Dinner	36
25 Feb 15	CDHN conference and AGM	50
24 Feb 15	How the Assembly Works	14
20 Feb 15	Chinese Welfare Association (CWA) New Year Celebrations	300
16 Feb 15	CO3 Annual Conference	190
10 Feb 15	Stronger Together Conference Derry - Exhibition Stand	100
09 Feb 15	NIGAG - Insight Into	25
30 Jan 15	Insight Into How a Bill becomes Law	15
27 Jan 15	How the Assembly Works	30
27 Jan 15	Regional Development Stakeholder Event	53
26 Jan 15	Corrymeela - Stop Peace Unravelling	50
14 Jan 15	Corrymeela - How the Assembly Works	11

The table below presents a demographic profile of 'Insight Into' participants in 2015. 'Insight into' is a free Assembly Community Connect seminar series which provides a detailed insight into the Assembly's processes and procedures. Delivered by experienced Assembly Clerks who have worked in Committees, the Bill Office, and Business Office, each session concentrates on a particular theme related to the work of the Assembly and its Committees.

Age, gender and disability of 'Insight into' seminar participants, 2015

	Nov 15	Jun 15	Apr 15	Jan 15	Total	%
Age Group						
Under 25	3	1	5	3	12	27%
25-39	4	3	10	3	20	45%
40-59	3	5	2	2	12	27%
Gender						
Male	5	2	3	5	15	34%
Female	5	7	14	3	29	66%
Disability						
Yes					2	4.5%
No					42	95%

The table below presents a demographic profile of 'Get Involved' participants in 2015. Get involved is a free Assembly Community Connect conference which brings the Assembly and its work to the local community. Groups learn more about how the Assembly works, and get the opportunity to question their local MLAs about the issues that matter to them.

Age, gender and disability of 'Get Involved' conference participants, March 2015

	No.	%
Age Group		
Under 25	1	6%
25-39	7	41%
40-59	7	41%
60+	2	12%
Gender		
Male	9	56%
Female	7	44%
Disability		
Yes	1	6%
No	16	94%

The table below presents a demographic profile of 'How the Assembly works' participants in 2015. 'How the Assembly works' is Assembly Community Connect training which provides an overview of how the Assembly functions and comprises of four presentations from the Committee, Bill, Business and Outreach Offices. It is aimed at:

- Those who wish to increase their understanding of how the Assembly works; and,
- Those who want to promote greater understanding of the work of their organisation through more effective communication with the Assembly and its MLAs.

Both under 25 year olds and those aged over 60 were under-represented in 'How the Assembly works' training, when compared with their proportions in the general population. Overall, a higher proportion of participants were female than male. A lower proportion of people with disabilities attended this training when compared to the estimate of people with disabilities in the general population which is around 20%.

2015 Age, gender and disability of 'How the Assembly works' training participants,

	Jan 15	Feb 15	Mar 15	May 15	June 15	Sept 15	Oct 15	Nov 15	Total	%
Age Group										
Under 25	1	1	1	6	0	4	2	1	16	10%
25-39	8	6	3	20	7	8	5	1	58	38%
40-59	13	6	8	4	11	15	9	7	73	47%
60+	2	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	7	5%
Gender										
Male	8	6	4	8	1	10	7	1	45	29%
Female	16	8	9	22	20	17	8	8	108	71%
Disability										
Yes	5	0	0	2	1	3	0	0	11	7%
No	19	14	13	28	20	24	15	9	142	93%

Pensioners Parliament

The Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament was launched in 2011 and allows older people from across Northern Ireland to have their say on the issues that matter to them. Since its establishment, the parliament has engaged with thousands of older people across Northern Ireland through a variety of ways.

The Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament takes place over two days in Belfast and sees around 200 older people from across the province coming together. The Parliament involves participation from policy experts, influential people and senior politicians; and allows for debate and voting on Parliament motions. 2015 saw a new development for the Parliament – the hosting of themed parliaments on specific topics; these allow for more in-depth discussion and debate on one exclusive topic – a topic that has been raised as a significant concern through the NI Pensioners Parliament. Due to scheduling difficulties the 2015 Pensioners Parliament has been postponed until February 2016.

Gender: Women in Politics

Following the election of May 2011, 20 of the 108 MLAs were women (18.5%) and there was only one MLA of ethnic minority background (less than 1%). As of January 2015, 23 of the 108 MLAs are women (21.3%) and there remains only one MLA of ethnic minority background. These figures show that, while the number of women MLAs has increased slightly, both women and those of ethnic minority background remain under-represented in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Gender: Family Friendly Sittings

One Assembly Commission Question submitted to the Assembly Commission in the 2014-15 and 2015-16 sessions related to family friendly sittings.

Ref No.	Member	Question
AQW 46683 /11- 15	Mr Daithí McKay	To ask the Assembly Commission to outline any engagement it has had with the Committee on Procedures in relation to adopting a family friendly cut-off time of 5pm each sitting day as is the practice of the Scottish Parliament.

Gender: Transgender

One question was asked regarding meeting the needs of transgender visitors in relation to toilet facilities.

Ref No.	Member	Question
AQW 49614/ 11-16	Mr Phil Flanagan	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail what changes will be made to Parliament Buildings to meet the needs of transgender visitors in relation to toilet facilities.

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

5.2a Recruitment and Selection

Data on age, gender, community background and disability is gathered for Assembly Secretariat staff. Data on the other Section 75 categories is not collected at present. The following tables show the breakdown of Secretariat staff by these groupings and by grade as at December 2015.

Age group	No.	%
20-29	9	2.6
30-34	42	12.1
35-39	66	19.1
40-44	67	19.4
45-49	62	17.9
50-54	43	12.4
55-59	39	11.3
60-64	15	4.3
65+	3	0.9

Grade	Male	Female
1-3	12	2
4	16	20
5	21	26
6	28	36
7	55	37
8	68	25

Grade	Protestant	Roman Catholic	Not determined
1-3	8	6	0
4	13	20	3
5	22	20	5
6	32	30	2
7	56	36	0
8	68	21	4

Grade	Nos. with a disability
1-4	3
5-6	5
7-8	21

Gender equality in recruitment

Gender equality within the Assembly Secretariat has been discussed at meetings of the Assembly Commission (18/03/2015) and Secretariat Management Group (29/05/2015, 04/09/2015, 02/10/2015 and 28/10/2015).

It was requested at the 17/06/2015 meeting of the Assembly Commission that best practice is observed by the Commission regarding the gender balance of recruitment panels and appointments.

In terms of gender, there is an under-representation of females at the most senior grades of the NIA Secretariat. Currently, there is one female temporary member of the, Secretariat Management Group (Clerk/Chief Executive and Directors) but permanent members are all male. There is also a gender imbalance amongst the Usher/Control Room Operative group, the majority of whom are male.

As of 1 December 2015, the majority of staff working in the NIA Secretariat at grades 1-3 were male (86%) whilst a minority (14%) were female. There was a higher proportion of males than females at grades 7 (60% compared to 40%) and 8 (73% compared to 27%). There was a higher proportion of females than males at grades 4 (56% compared to 44%), grades 5 (55% compared to 45%) and grades 6 (56% compared to 44%); although the gender gaps are smaller.

In comparison with the Northern Ireland workforce, there is a higher proportion of males employed in the NIA Secretariat as Managers, Directors and Senior officials (SOC1), in Associate Professional and Technical occupations (SOC3), and in Elementary occupations (SOC9). In contrast, there is a higher proportion of females in Professional occupations (SOC2), and Administrative and Secretarial occupations (SOC4) in the NIA Secretariat when compared with the Northern Ireland workforce.

5.2b Equality issues for existing staff

Positive Working Relationships

The Positive Working Relations Initiative (PWRI) was introduced within the Ushering Business Area. The first action of this Initiative was for an external facilitator to conduct interviews with all Ushering management and staff, focussing on personal experiences of behaviours in the workplace. The facilitator produced a report outlining the key themes that emerged from the interviews and making recommendations on how positive working relationships could be developed and sustained within Ushering Services.

During Stage 2 of the PWRI, the external facilitator ran a series of workshops with all Ushering staff, allowing them to reflect on the report, focus positively on the way

forward, integrate the Assembly's corporate values into day-to-day working practices and highlight organisational expectations and consequences.

To build on this work, meetings were facilitated to establish working agreements and goals; individual coaching sessions were provided for managers and team workshops for managers and staff.

The outcome of the PWRI has been an improvement in the trust and rapport between Ushering staff and in particular between AG8 staff and their managers. Achievement of this was also supported by the amalgamation of the Security Officer and Usher roles into one team. Following completion of this work, views were sought from staff, managers and Trade Union Side regarding how best to build on the achievements of PWRI. Subsequently, it has been decided that future work on relationship building will be progressed corporately, for example through the 2015 Staff Survey Action Plan.

Gender Action Plan

The Gender Action Steering Group was established in June 2013 to discuss how the secretariat might examine the existence of any barriers in relation to gender in the Northern Ireland Assembly, and to consider necessary actions. In late 2013, a questionnaire was developed by the Gender Action Plan Steering Group in consultation with the Equality Commission and the Assembly's internal communications group. In February 2014, the questionnaire was circulated to secretariat staff, with 192 respondents.

The results showed that most staff agreed that they are treated equally regardless of their gender in the Secretariat. The majority of staff also reported that they have not experienced any barriers or difficulties in the Assembly Secretariat because of their gender.

The main barriers or issues highlighted by the research were in relation to:

- The lack of females at senior management level and in decision-making;
- The gender imbalance in certain business areas;
- Unacceptable behaviours and particularly inappropriate comments and attitudes relating to gender (experienced by both males and females);
- Balancing working and caring responsibilities, including negative attitudes towards those with caring responsibilities;
- Carrying out duties because of stereotyping and gender roles; and,
- Paternity provision.

On foot of this work and extensive research into gender activities in Northern Ireland and further afield, a draft Gender Action Plan has been developed, setting out actions and measures to further promote gender equality within the Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat. It is a cross directorate action plan which covers the entire organisation for a two year period, 2016-2018, and supports the Assembly in complying with its Section 75 duties. The Plan is to be presented at the March meeting of the Assembly Commission. Implemental will follow, subject to approval.

The Gender Action Plan 2016-18 was discussed at meetings of the Assembly Commission (24/6/2015 and 4/11/2015).

Three Assembly Questions to the Assembly Commission in the 2014-15 and 2015-16 sessions concerned gender equality and the Gender Action Plan.

Ref No.	Member	Question
AQO 7090/11-15	Ms Rosaleen McCorley	To ask the Assembly Commission to outline its plans in relation to gender equality within the secretariat.
AQO 8492/11-15	Ms Rosaleen McCorley	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the Gender Action Plan.
AQO 9192/11-16	Mrs Pam Cameron	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the Gender Action Plan.

People with dependent children

During 2015 the Assembly Commission ended its salary plus childcare scheme due to budgetary constraints. Staff can, however, apply for Childcare Vouchers if using registered childcare. The Assembly Commission again considered the changes to the Assembly Childcare Scheme at its meeting in December 2015. The Assembly Commission agreed that two further mitigation measures would be introduced with effect from 1 November 2015. The first of these relates to staff who incur additional childcare costs as a direct result of the need to attend or remain in their place of employment outside of their normal working pattern to facilitate Assembly business. The second relates to staff whose children have a disability that is unlikely to be accommodated within usual childcare arrangements.

5.2c Contracts

Based on Legal Advice received it is considered that the terms and conditions for the procurement of contracts included extremely detailed compliance provisions, encouraging best practice in equality, which are more robust terms than those recommended by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

6 Other sources of information

Results from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey

Results from the most recent (2014) Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) Survey by gender, age and religion are presented below. Results are compared to the 2013 survey.

NILT Question 'From what you have seen and heard so far, do you think that having a Northern Ireland Assembly is giving ordinary people...'

	Male		Female	
	2014	2013	2014	2013
	%	%	%	%
...more say in how Northern Ireland is governed	18	21	15	20
less say	10	7	10	7
or, is it making no difference?	65	64	66	63
Don't know	6	9	9	10

Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) Survey

Those aged 65+ were least likely (13%) to think that having a Northern Ireland Assembly is giving ordinary people more say in how Northern Ireland is governed whilst those aged 55-64 registered the highest belief in the Assembly giving ordinary people say in how NI is governed (21%). Attitudes to the Assembly are 21% or lower across the board with no discernible pattern relating to age.

NILT Question 'From what you have seen and heard so far, do you think that having a Northern Ireland Assembly is giving ordinary people...'

	18-24		25-34		35-44		45-54		55-64		65+	
	2014	2013	2014	2013	2014	2013	2014	2013	2014	2013	2014	2013
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
...more say in how Northern Ireland is governed	17	15	19	17	19	23	14	19	21	24	13	23
less say	9	3	5	6	10	9	11	8	9	5	12	8
or, is it making no difference?	56	68	57	55	64	61	72	69	68	63	71	63
Don't know	17	14	19	22	7	7	2	5	2	8	5	6

Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) Survey

In 2013, there was little difference in the proportion of Protestants and Catholics who think that having a Northern Ireland Assembly is giving ordinary people more say in how Northern Ireland is governed. However in 2014, a higher proportion of Catholics than Protestants said this, whilst the number of Protestants and Catholics believing that the Assembly is giving ordinary people more say in how Northern Ireland is governed fell, by 6 and 4 points respectively. Those with no religion were least likely to think that having a Northern Ireland Assembly is giving ordinary people more say in how Northern Ireland is governed.

NILT Question ‘From what you have seen and heard so far, do you think that having a Northern Ireland Assembly is giving ordinary people...’

	Catholic		Protestant		No religion	
	2014	2013	2014	2013	2014	2013
	%	%	%	%	%	%
...more say in how Northern Ireland is governed	19	23	16	22	12	11
less say	9	6	10	8	11	6
or, is it making no difference?	61	63	71	64	64	65
Don't know	10	8	3	6	13	17

Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) Survey

7 Summary of inequalities identified in the review

The table below summarises the inequalities identified in this Audit for each of the Section 75 categories including those already identified by the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission.

	Issues identified in the review
Religious Belief	<p>Work is on-going, through a number of activities, to ensure Parliament Buildings is welcoming to all persons regardless of their religious belief including those with no religion such as the appointment of a Language Champion in the Education Service.</p> <p>Consideration will be given to seeking advice from the Equality Commission, where necessary, and relevant actions will be considered as appropriate e.g. affirmative action when advertising future vacancies.</p>

	Issues identified in the review
Political opinion	<p>Work is on-going, through a number of activities, to ensure Parliament Buildings is welcoming to all persons regardless of their political opinion such as the appointment of a Language Champion in the Education Service and, following an EQIA on the matter, agreement to fly the Union flag from Parliament Buildings on designated days.</p> <p>Development of a Language Policy is ongoing.</p> <p>Implementation of the agreed protocol for the answering of written questions.</p>
Racial group	<p>Work is on-going to ensure Parliament Buildings continues to be welcoming and to engage with all racial groups, including minority ethnic groups and new migrants.</p> <p>Training and engagement with people from minority ethnic groups and sector through Assembly Community Connect.</p>
Age	<p>Through the Education Service, work is on-going to engage with young people through Let's Talk events and projects such as Erasmus+. Events are also held to develop teachers.</p> <p>Work is on-going to develop new ways to engage with young people e.g. through social media and Digital First EQIA.</p> <p>Work is on-going to continue to ensure participation of older people and the aging population such as through the Pensioners Parliament.</p>
Marital status	No data available
Sexual orientation	No issues raised by stakeholders
Men and women generally	<p>Work is on-going to develop and implement Gender Action Plan for Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat.</p> <p>Training and engagement with women and the women's sector through Assembly Community Connect.</p>

	Issues identified in the review
	Work is on-going to encourage the participation of women in politics including support for female Members.
Disability	<p>Work is on-going, through stakeholders, to continue to improve access in Parliament Buildings for Members, visitors and staff with disabilities.</p> <p>Training and engagement with people with disabilities and disability sector through Assembly Community Connect.</p> <p>Provided that they have demonstrated in their application form that they meet the essential criteria for the post, an applicant with a disability will be offered a guaranteed interview.</p>
Dependants	Mitigating measures regarding changes to the Childcare scheme have been agreed and are to be implemented.