



Northern Ireland
Assembly

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission **Equality Scheme 2016- 2021**



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Equality Scheme for

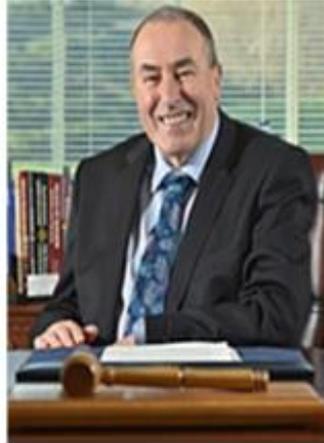
Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

2016 - 2021

Drawn in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

Foreword

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires Public Authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act.¹



The
Speaker



The Clerk /
Chief Executive

In our Equality Scheme we set out how the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (Assembly Commission) proposes to continue to fulfil the Section 75 statutory duties.

We will continue to commit the necessary resources in terms of people, time and money to make sure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that the revised Equality Scheme is implemented effectively, and on time.

We commit to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring our effective compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing our progress.

We will continue to develop and deliver a programme of communication and training with the aim of ensuring that all our staff and Directors are made fully aware of our revised Equality Scheme and understand the commitments and obligations within it. We will develop a programme of awareness raising for our consultees on the Section 75 statutory duties and our commitments in our Equality Scheme.

We, the Speaker and the Clerk / Director General of the Northern Ireland Assembly, remain fully committed to effectively fulfilling our

¹ See section 1.1 of our Equality Scheme.

Section 75 statutory duties across all our functions (including service provision, employment and procurement) through the effective implementation of our Equality Scheme.

We realise the important role that the community and voluntary sector and the general public have to play to ensure the Section 75 statutory duties are effectively implemented. Our Equality Scheme demonstrates how determined we are to ensure there are opportunities, for people affected by our work, to positively influence how we carry out our functions in line with our Section 75 statutory duties. It also offers the means whereby persons directly affected by what they consider to be a failure, on our part, to comply with our Equality Scheme, can make complaints.

On behalf of the Assembly Commission and our staff we are pleased to support and endorse this Equality Scheme which has been drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Commission guidelines.

The Speaker of the
Northern Ireland Assembly

Clerk of the Assembly/
Chief Executive

2016

Contents

Foreword	
Chapter 1 – Introduction	8
Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998	8
How we propose to fulfil the Section 75 duties in relation to the relevant functions of the Northern Ireland Assembly	8
Who we are and what we do	9
Chapter 2 - Our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the Section 75 Duties	11
Responsibilities and reporting	11
Action plan/action measures	12
Chapter 3 - Our arrangements for consulting	15
Chapter 4 - Our arrangements for assessing, monitoring and publishing the impact of policies	19
Our arrangements for assessing the likely impact adopted or proposed to be adopted on the promotion of equality of opportunity of policies	19
Screening	19
Equality impact assessment	22
Our arrangements for publishing the results of the assessments of the likely impact of policies we have adopted or propose to adopt on the promotion of equality of opportunity	23
What we publish	23
How we publish the information	24
Where we publish the information	24
Our arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact of policies we have adopted on equality of opportunity	25
Our arrangements for publishing the results of our monitoring	26
Chapter 5 - Staff training	27
Commitment to staff training	27
Training objectives	27

Awareness raising and training arrangements	28
Monitoring and evaluation	29
Chapter 6 - Our arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide	30
Access to information	30
Access to services	31
Assessing public access to information and services	31
Chapter 7 - Timetable for measures we propose in this Equality Scheme	32
Chapter 8 - Our complaints procedure	33
Chapter 9 - Publication of our Equality Scheme	35
Chapter 10 - Review of our Equality Scheme	37
Appendix 1 - Organisational chart	
Appendix 2 - Example groups relevant to the Section 75 categories for Northern Ireland purposes	
Appendix 3 - List of consultees	
Appendix 4 – Audit of Inequalities Action Plan	
Appendix 5 - Glossary of terms	
Appendix 6 – Timetable for proposed measures	
Appendix 7 – Audit of Inequalities research	

Chapter 1 — Introduction

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

- 1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires the Assembly Commission to comply with two statutory duties:

Section 75 (1)

In carrying out our functions relating to Northern Ireland we are required 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
- men and women generally
- persons with a disability and persons without
- persons with dependants and persons without.

Section 75 (2)

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, in carrying out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland we are required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

“Functions” include the “powers and duties” of a Public Authority². This includes our employment and procurement functions.

Please see below under “Who we are and what we do” for a detailed explanation of our functions.

How we propose to fulfil the Section 75 duties in relation to the relevant functions of the Assembly Commission.

- 1.2 Schedule 9 4. (1) of the Act requires the Assembly Commission as a designated Public Authority to set out in an Equality Scheme how it proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75 in relation to its relevant functions. This Equality Scheme is intended to fulfil that statutory requirement. It is both a statement of our arrangements for fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties and our plan for their

² Section 98 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

implementation.

- 1.3 The Assembly Commission is committed to the discharge of its Section 75 obligations in all parts of our organisation and we will commit the necessary available resources in terms of people, time and money to ensure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that our Equality Scheme can be implemented effectively.

Who we are and what we do

The Assembly is the devolved legislature for Northern Ireland. It is responsible for making laws on transferred matters in Northern Ireland and for scrutinising the work of Ministers and Government Departments. The Assembly sits at Parliament Buildings, Stormont, in Belfast. Members (MLAs) meet to debate issues; question Ministers and make laws for the benefit of people in Northern Ireland. Each MLA represents her or his constituency, and there are six MLAs for each of the eighteen constituencies.

- 1.4 The 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 Northern Ireland Assembly's purposes. 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 full functioning Assembly;
- The provision of services and
- The provision of a fully staffed Secretariat to support the administration of the Assembly

Functions

- 1.5 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;
 - The recruitment and ongoing development of suitably qualified and experienced staff to support the work of the Assembly.

Membership

1.6 The Assembly Commission membership comprises the Speaker to the Northern Ireland Assembly as Chair and five other Members appointed by the Northern Ireland Assembly. Current Members are:

- Mr Mitchel McLaughlin MLA (Speaker)
- Ms Caitriona Ruane MLA
- Ms Judith Cochrane MLA
- Ms Paula Bradley MLA
- Ms Karen Mc Kevitt MLA
- Mr Sam Gardiner MLA

Clerk to the Assembly / Chief Executive

1.7 The Assembly Secretariat is led by the Clerk to the Assembly / Chief Executive who is a full time Assembly official. This dual role confers the following responsibilities:

- As Clerk to The Assembly, he/she is the principal adviser to the Speaker and The Assembly on procedural matters;
- As the Chief Executive, he/she manages the Assembly Secretariat staff, co-ordinates the essential procedural and corporate support services and acts as Accounting Officer for the Assembly's budget.

Secretariat Management Group

The Secretariat Management Group comprises the following officers:

- Clerk to the Assembly / Chief Executive
- Director of Parliamentary Services
- Director of Facilities
- Director of Corporate Services
- Director of Legal and Governance Services

Chapter 2 — Our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the section 75 duties

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (a))

- 2.1 Some of our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties are outlined in other relevant parts of this Equality Scheme, for example arrangements for monitoring, equality impact assessments, complaints, review and access to information and services.

In addition we have the following arrangements in place for assessing our compliance:

Responsibilities and reporting

- 2.2 The Assembly Commission remains committed to the fulfilment of our Section 75 obligations in all parts of our work.
- 2.3 Responsibility for the effective implementation of our Equality Scheme lies with the Clerk / Chief Executive, as leader of the Secretariat staff. The Clerk / Chief Executive is accountable to the Assembly Commission for the development, implementation, maintenance and review of the Equality Scheme in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, including any good practice or guidance that has been or may be issued by the Equality Commission.
- 2.4 If you have any questions or comments regarding our Equality Scheme, please contact in the first instance the Equality Manager at the address given below:

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- 2.5 Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties are integrated into our strategic and operational business plans.³
- 2.6 Employees' job descriptions and performance plans reflect their contributions to the discharge of the Section 75 statutory duties and implementation of the Equality Scheme, where relevant. The personal performance plans are subject to appraisal in the annual performance review.
- 2.7 The Equality Team prepares an annual report on the progress we have made on implementing the arrangements set out in this Equality Scheme to discharge our Section 75 statutory duties (Section 75 annual equality progress report).

The Section 75 annual progress report will be sent to the Equality Commission by 31 August each year and will follow any guidance on annual reporting issued by the Equality Commission.

Progress on the delivery of Section 75 statutory duties will also be included in our (organisational) annual report.

- 2.8 The latest Section 75 annual progress report can be found on our website at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/publications/annual-reports-to-the-equality-commission/> or by contacting the Equality Manager via the details provided at 2.4.

- 2.9 The Assembly Commission liaises closely with the Equality Commission to ensure that progress on the implementation of our Equality Scheme is maintained.

Action plan/action measures

- 2.10 The Assembly Commission developed an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. The action plan is set out in Appendix 4 to this Equality Scheme.
- 2.11 The action measures that will make up our action plan will be relevant

³ See Appendix 6 'Timetable for measures proposed' and section 2.11 of this Equality Scheme.

to our functions. They will be developed and prioritised on the basis of an audit of inequalities. The audit of inequalities gathered and analysed information across the Section 75 categories⁴ to identify the inequalities that exist for our service users and those affected by our policies.⁵

- 2.12 Action measures will be specific, measurable, linked to achievable outcomes, realistic and time bound. Action measures will include performance indicators and timescales for their achievement.
- 2.13 Action Plans will cover the period 2016-2021 in order to align them with our corporate and business planning cycles. Implementation of the action measures will be incorporated into our business planning process.
- 2.14 We will seek input from our stakeholders and consult on our action plan before we send it to the Equality Commission and thereafter when reviewing the plan as per 2.16 below.
- 2.15 We will monitor our progress on the delivery of our action measures annually and update the action plan as necessary to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to our functions and work.
- 2.16 The Assembly Commission will inform the Equality Commission of any changes or amendments to our action plan and will also include this information in our Section 75 annual equality progress report to the Commission. Our Section 75 annual equality progress report will incorporate information on progress we have made in implementing our action plans/action measures.
- 2.17 Once finalised, our action plan will be available on our website:

www.niassembly.gov.uk or by contacting:

Equality and Good Relations Unit

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⁴ See section 1.1 of this Equality Scheme for a list of these categories.

⁵ See section 4.1 of this Equality Scheme for a definition of policies.

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If you require the action plan in an alternative format please contact us at the details provided above.

Chapter 3 — Our arrangements for consulting

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (a)) - on matters to which a duty (S75 (1) or (2)) is likely to be relevant (including details of the persons to be consulted).

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (b)) on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by us on the promotion of equality of opportunity.

3.1 We recognise the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of our statutory equality duties. We will consult on our Equality Scheme, action measures, Equality Impact Assessments and other matters relevant to the Section 75 statutory duties.

3.2 We are committed to carrying out consultation in accordance with the following principles (as contained in the Equality Commission's guidance 'Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)'):

3.2.1 All consultations will seek the views of those directly affected by the matter/policy, the Equality Commission, representative groups of Section 75 categories, other Public Authorities, voluntary and community groups, our staff and their trades unions and such other groups who have a legitimate interest in the matter, whether or not they have a direct economic or personal interest.

Initially all consultees (see Appendix 3), as a matter of course, will be notified (by email or post) of the matter/policy being consulted upon to ensure they are aware of all consultations. Thereafter, to ensure the most effective use of our and our consultees' resources, we will take a targeted approach to consultation for those consultees that may have a particular interest in the matter/policy being consulted upon and to whom the matter/policy is of particular relevance. This may include for example regional or local consultations, sectoral or thematic consultation etc.

3.2.2 Consultation with all stakeholders will begin as early as possible. We will engage with affected individuals and representative groups to identify how best to consult or engage with them. We will ask our consultees what their preferred consultation methods are and will give consideration to these. Methods of consultation and pre-consultation could include:

- Face-to-face meetings

- Focus groups
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/opt out of the consultation
- Internet discussions or
- Telephone consultations.

This list is not exhaustive and we may develop other additional methods of consultation more appropriate to key stakeholders and the matter being consulted upon.

3.2.3 We are committed to ensuring that the accessibility and format of every method of consultation we use contributes to the removal of barriers to the consultation process. Specific consideration will be given as to how best to communicate with children and young people, people with disabilities (in particular people with learning disabilities) and minority ethnic communities. We take account of existing and developing good practice, including the Equality Commission's guidance *Let's Talk Let's Listen – Guidance for public authorities on consulting and involving children and young people* (2008).

Information will be made available in alternative formats⁶, in a timely manner, usually within one week of receiving a request. We will ensure that such consultees have equal time to respond.

3.2.4 Specific training is provided (where appropriate) to those facilitating consultations to ensure that they have the necessary skills to communicate effectively with consultees.

3.2.5 To ensure effective consultation with consultees⁷ on Section 75 matters, we will continue the programme of awareness raising on the Section 75 statutory duties and the commitments in our Equality Scheme through mandatory staff training and regular meetings of the External Disability Advisory Group.

3.2.6 The consultation period lasts for a minimum of twelve weeks to allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves as part of the

⁶ See Chapter 6 of our Equality Scheme for further information on alternative formats of information we provide.

⁷ Please see Appendix 3 for a list of our consultees.

process of forming a view. However, in exceptional circumstances when this timescale is not feasible (for example implementing EU Directives or UK wide legislation, meeting Health and Safety requirements, addressing urgent public health matters or complying with Court judgements), we may shorten timescales to eight weeks or less before the policy is implemented. We may continue consultation thereafter and will review the policy as part of our monitoring commitments.⁸

Where, under these exceptional circumstances, we must implement a policy immediately, as it is beyond our authority's control, we may consult after implementation of the policy, in order to ensure that any impacts of the policy are considered.

- 3.2.7 If a consultation exercise is to take place over a period when consultees are less able to respond, for example, over the summer or Christmas break, or if the policy under consideration is particularly complex, we will give consideration to the feasibility of allowing a longer period for the consultation.
- 3.2.8 We are conscious of the fact that affected individuals and representative groups may have different needs. We will take appropriate measures to ensure full participation in any meetings that are held. We will consider for example the time of day, the appropriateness of the venue, in particular whether it can be accessed by those with disabilities, how the meeting is to be conducted, the use of appropriate language, whether a signer and/or interpreter is necessary, and whether the provision of childcare and support for other carers is required.
- 3.2.9 We make all relevant information available to consultees in appropriate formats to ensure meaningful consultation. This includes detailed information on the policy proposal being consulted upon and any relevant quantitative and qualitative data.
- 3.2.10 In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy.
- 3.2.11 We provide feedback to consultees in a timely manner. A feedback report is prepared which includes summary information on the policy consulted upon, a summary of consultees' comments and a summary

⁸ Please see below at 4.27 to 4.31 for details on monitoring.

of our consideration of and response to consultees' input. The feedback is provided in formats suitable to consultees. (Please see also 6.3)

- 3.3 A list of our consultees is included in this Equality Scheme at Appendix 3. It can also be obtained from our website at www.niassembly.gov.uk or by contacting

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- 3.4 Our consultation list is not exhaustive and is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it remains relevant to our functions and policies.

We welcome enquiries from any person/s or organisations wishing to be added to the list of consultees. Please contact a member of staff at the Equality and Good Relations Unit to provide your contact details and have your areas of interest noted or have your name/details removed or amended. Please also inform us at this stage if you would like information sent to you in a particular format or language.

Chapter 4 — Our arrangements for assessing, monitoring and publishing the impact of policies

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (b); Schedule 9 4. (2) (c); Schedule 9 4. (2) (d); Schedule 9 9. (1); Schedule 9 9.(2))

Our arrangements for assessing the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted on the promotion of equality of opportunity (Schedule 9 4. (2) (b))

- 4.1 In the context of Section 75, ‘policy’ is very broadly defined and it covers all the ways in which we carry out or propose to carry out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland. In respect of this Equality Scheme, the term policy is used for any (proposed/amended/existing) strategy, policy initiative or practice and/or decision, whether written or unwritten and irrespective of the label given to it, e.g., ‘draft’, ‘pilot’, ‘high level’ or ‘sectoral’.
- 4.2 In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy, as required by Schedule 9 9. (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
- 4.3 The Assembly Commission uses the tools of screening and equality impact assessment to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. In carrying out these assessments we relate them to the intended outcomes of the policy in question and follow Equality Commission guidance:
 - the guidance on screening, including the screening template, as detailed in the Equality Commission’s guidance ‘*Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)*’ and
 - on undertaking an equality impact assessment as detailed in the Equality Commission’s guidance ‘*Practical guidance on equality impact assessment (February 2005)*’.

Screening

- 4.4 The purpose of screening is to identify those policies that are likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations.
- 4.5 Screening is completed at the earliest opportunity in the policy

development/review process. Policies which we propose to adopt will normally be subject to screening prior to implementation, except for those circumstances outlined at 3.2.6. For more detailed strategies or policies that are to be put in place through a series of stages, we will screen at various stages during implementation.

- 4.6 The lead role in the screening of a policy is taken by the policy decision maker who has the authority to make changes to that policy. However, screening will also involve other relevant team members, for example, equality specialists, those who implement the policy and staff members from other relevant work areas. Where possible we will include key stakeholders in the screening process.
- 4.7 The following questions are applied to all our policies as part of the screening process:
- What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? (minor/major/none)
 - Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?
 - To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? (minor/major/none)
 - Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?
- 4.8 In order to answer the screening questions, we gather all relevant information and data, both qualitative and quantitative. In taking this evidence into account we consider the different needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 equality categories. Any screening decision will be informed by this evidence.
- 4.9 Completion of screening, taking into account our consideration of the answers to all four screening questions set out in 4.7 above, will lead to one of the following three outcomes:
1. the policy has been ‘screened in’ for equality impact assessment
 2. the policy has been ‘screened out’ with mitigation⁹ or an

⁹ Mitigation – Where an assessment (screening in this case) reveals that a particular policy has an adverse impact on equality of opportunity and / or good relations, a public authority must consider ways of delivering the policy outcomes which have a less adverse effect on the relevant Section 75

alternative policy proposed to be adopted

3. the policy has been 'screened out' without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.

- 4.10 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'minor' in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we may on occasion decide to proceed with an equality impact assessment, depending on the policy. If an EQIA is not to be conducted we will nonetheless consider measures that might mitigate the policy impact as well as alternative policies that might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

This screening decision will be 'signed off' by the appropriate policy lead within the Assembly Secretariat and in line with the Assembly's screening guidance.

- 4.11 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'major' in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we will subject the policy to an equality impact assessment. This screening decision will be 'signed off' by the appropriate policy lead within The Assembly Secretariat.

- 4.12 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is 'none', in respect of all of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, we will give details of the reasons for the decision taken. This screening decision will be 'signed off' by the appropriate policy lead within the Assembly Secretariat.

- 4.13 The completion of the screening process, the screening template, signed off and approved by the senior manager responsible for the policy, will be made available on our website each quarter.

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

Equality and Good Relations Unit

categories.

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- 4.14 If a consultee, including the Equality Commission, raises a concern about a screening decision based on supporting evidence, we will review the screening decision.
- 4.15 Our screening reports are published quarterly [see below at 4.20 - 4.22 and 4.23 for details].

Equality impact assessment

- 4.16 An equality impact assessment (EQIA) is a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy, whether that policy is formal or informal, and irrespective of the scope of that policy. The primary function of an EQIA is to determine the extent of any impact of a policy upon the Section 75 categories and to determine if the impact is an adverse one. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate the likely positive outcomes of a policy and to seek ways to more effectively promote equality of opportunity and good relations.
- 4.17 Once a policy is screened and screening has identified that an equality impact assessment is necessary, we will carry out the EQIA in accordance with Equality Commission guidance. The equality impact assessment will be carried out as part of the policy development process, before the policy is implemented.
- 4.18 Any equality impact assessment will be subject to consultation at the appropriate stage(s). (For details see above Chapter 3 “Our Arrangements for Consulting”).

Our arrangements for publishing the results of the assessments of the likely impact of policies we have adopted or propose to adopt on the promotion of equality of opportunity (Schedule 9 4. (2) (d); Schedule 9 9. (1))

- 4.19 We make publicly available the results of our assessments (screening and EQIA) of the likely impact of our policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.

What we publish

- 4.20 Screening reports

These are published quarterly. Screening reports detail:

- All policies screened by The Assembly Commission over the three month period
- A statement of the aim(s) of the policy/policies to which the assessment relates
- Consideration given to measures which might mitigate any adverse impact
- Consideration given to alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity;
- Screening decisions, i.e.:
 - I. whether the policy has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment.
 - II. whether the policy has been 'screened out' with mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.
 - III. whether the policy has been 'screened out' without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.
- Where applicable, a timetable for conducting equality impact assessments
- A link to the completed screening template(s) on our website

- 4.21 Screening templates

For details on the availability of our screening templates please refer to 4.13.

- 4.22 Equality impact assessments

EQIA reports are published once the impact assessment has been completed. These reports include:

- A statement of the aim of the policy assessed
- Information and data collected
- Details of the assessment of impact(s)
- Consideration given to measures which might mitigate any adverse impact
- Consideration given to alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity
- Consultation responses
- The decision taken
- Future monitoring plans.

How we publish the information

- 4.23 All information we publish is accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request. Please see 6.3 below.

Where we publish the information

- 4.24 The results of our assessments (screening reports and completed templates, the results of equality impact assessments etc.) are available on our website <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk> or by contacting the Equality Manager at:

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- 4.25 In addition to the above, screening reports (electronic link or hard copy on request if more suitable for recipients) which include all policies screened over a 3 month period is also sent directly to all consultees on a quarterly basis.
- 4.26 We will inform the general public about the availability of this material through communications such as press releases where appropriate.

Our arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact of policies we have adopted on equality of opportunity (Schedule 9 4. (2) (c))

- 4.27 Monitoring can assist us to deliver better public services and continuous improvements. Monitoring Section 75 information involves the processing of sensitive personal data (data relating to the racial or ethnic origin of individuals, sexual orientation, political opinion, religious belief, etc.). In order to carry out monitoring in a confidential and effective manner, the Assembly Commission follows guidance from the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Equality Commission.
- 4.28 We monitor any adverse impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity of policies we have adopted. We are also committed to monitoring more broadly to identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations in line with Equality Commission guidance.
- 4.29 The systems we have established to monitor the impact of policies and identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations are:
- The collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant primary quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis
 - The collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant secondary sources of quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis
 - An audit of existing information systems within one year of approval of this Equality Scheme, to identify the extent of current monitoring and take action to address any gaps in order to have the necessary information on which to base decisions
 - Undertaking or commissioning new data if necessary.

- 4.30 If over a two year period monitoring and evaluation show that a policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, we will ensure that the policy is revised to achieve better outcomes for relevant equality groups.
- 4.31 We review our EQIA monitoring information on an annual basis. Other monitoring information is reviewed four times a year by the Senior Management Group (SMG) and the members of the SMG have been trained in policy screening and will ensure new policies are robustly screened.

Our arrangements for publishing the results of our monitoring
(Schedule 9 4. (2) (d))

- 4.32 Schedule 9 4. (2) (d) requires us to publish the results of the monitoring of adverse impacts of policies we have adopted. However, we are committed to monitoring more broadly and the results of our policy monitoring are published as follows:
- 4.33 EQIA monitoring information is published as part of our Section 75 annual progress report [see 2.7]
- 4.34 Quarterly updates on policies screened will be published on the Assembly website and will be available in alternative formats.
- 4.35 All information published is accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request. Please see below at 6.3 for details.

Chapter 5 — Staff training

(Schedule 9 4.(2) (e))

Commitment to staff training

- 5.1 We recognise that awareness raising and training play a crucial role in the effective implementation of our Section 75 duties.
- 5.2 Our Clerk to the Assembly / Chief Executive wishes to positively communicate the commitment of the Assembly Commission to the Section 75 statutory duties, both internally and externally.

To this end we have introduced an effective communication and training programme for all staff and will ensure that our commitment to the Section 75 statutory duties is made clear in all relevant publications.

Training objectives

- 5.3 The Assembly Commission provides training, advice and information for its staff to achieve the following objectives:
- to raise awareness of the provisions of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, our Equality Scheme commitments and the particular issues likely to affect people across the range of Section 75 categories, to ensure that our staff fully understand their role in implementing the scheme
 - to provide those staff involved in the assessment of policies (screening and EQIA) with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
 - to provide those staff who deal with complaints in relation to compliance with our Equality Scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to investigate and monitor complaints effectively
 - to provide those staff involved in consultation processes with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
 - to provide those staff involved in the implementation and monitoring of the effective implementation of the Assembly Commission Equality Scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.

Awareness raising and training arrangements

5.4 The following arrangements are in place to ensure members of the Assembly Commission, staff on the Secretariat Management Group and all Secretariat staff are aware of and understand our equality obligations.

- We will develop a summary of this Equality Scheme and make it available to all staff.
- We will provide access to copies of the full Equality Scheme for all staff; ensure that any queries or questions of clarification from staff are addressed effectively.
- Secretariat staff will receive a briefing on this Equality Scheme within one month of approval by the Equality Commission.
- The Section 75 statutory duties form part of induction training for all new staff. The half day course titled Equality and Disability Awareness Training is delivered by the secretariat's training provider Bray Leino.
- Focused training as well as information and advice is provided for key Secretariat staff who are directly engaged in taking forward the implementation of our Equality Scheme commitments (for example those involved in research and data collection, policy development, service design, conducting equality impact assessments, consultation, monitoring and evaluation). The Equality Working Group received training in 2010 on policy screening and equality impact assessments.
- Where appropriate, training will be provided to ensure staff are aware of the issues experienced by the range of Section 75 groups.
- When appropriate and on an ongoing basis, arrangements will be made to ensure staff are kept up to date with Section 75 developments.
- All staff working with the public (for example Ushers, Security staff and Outreach staff) have received three additional half day courses: deaf awareness, visual awareness and disability awareness.

5.5 Training and awareness raising programmes will, where relevant, be developed in association with the appropriate Section 75 groups, Assembly Secretariat staff and the Assembly Commission's Learning

and Development team.

In order to share resources and expertise, the Assembly Commission will, where possible, work closely with other bodies and agencies in the development and delivery of training.

Monitoring and evaluation

5.6 Our training programme is subject to the following monitoring and evaluation arrangements:

- The extent to which training objectives have been met will be reported on as part of the Section 75 annual progress report, which will be sent to the Equality Commission.
- All Secretariat staff complete feedback forms on completion of training. The feedback data is used to review training on an ongoing basis.
- Secretariat staffs discuss the extent to which training has met their needs as part of the Assembly Performance Management System through which each member of staff has an annually agreed Performance Development Plan (PDP).

Chapter 6 - Our arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (f))

- 6.1 The Assembly Commission is committed to ensuring that the information we disseminate and the services we provide are fully accessible to all parts of the community in Northern Ireland. We keep our arrangements under review to ensure that this remains the case.
- 6.2 We are aware that some groups will not have the same access to information as others. In particular: People with sensory, learning, communication and mobility disabilities may require printed information in other formats.
- Members of ethnic minority groups, whose first language is not English, may have difficulties with information provided only in English.
 - Children and young people may not be able to fully access or understand information.

Access to information

- 6.3 To ensure equality of opportunity in accessing information, we provide information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable. Where the exact request cannot be met we will ensure a reasonable alternative is provided.

Alternative formats will 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 Assembly Commission liaises with representatives of young people and disability and minority ethnic organisations and takes account of existing and developing good practice.

We will respond to requests for information in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within one week of receiving the request.

The Assembly Secretariat runs school visits and has a fully accessible ground floor education room with video conferencing facilities to allow full participation in school projects for Special Schools and cross community school events. Signage and information leaflets are available in a total of eleven languages. Schools are asked to report if

disability issues have prevented any students from attending to shape future policy. Please refer to the Action Plan for details of work in progress at Appendix 4.

- 6.4 In disseminating information through the media we will seek to advertise in the press, including specialist press, where appropriate.
- 6.5 The Assembly Commission is committed to the use of social networking sites to facilitate the dissemination of information.

Access to services

- 6.6 The Assembly Commission is committed to ensuring that all of our services are fully accessible to everyone in the community across the Section 75 categories.

The Assembly Commission also adheres to the relevant provisions of current anti-discrimination legislation.

- 6.7 The Assembly Commission has an ongoing programme of work to improve access to Parliament Buildings.

Assessing public access to information and services

- 6.8 We monitor routinely and regularly across all our functions, in relation to access to information and services, to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted.

- 6.9 To assist in this monitoring, the following are in place:

- Members (MLAs) surveys
- Secretariat staff surveys
- Article 55 reporting
- Visitors Survey
- Complaints procedure
- Comments box for visitors
- Director General's Questions and Responses intranet page

This list is illustrative and is not meant to be exhaustive

Chapter 7 - Timetable for measures we propose in this Equality Scheme (Schedule 9 4. (3) (b))

- 7.1 Appendix 6 outlines our timetable for all measures proposed within this Equality Scheme. The measures outlined in this timetable will be incorporated into our business planning processes.
- 7.2 This timetable is different from and in addition to our commitment to developing action plans/action measures to specifically address inequalities and further promote equality of opportunity and good relations. We have included in our Equality Scheme a commitment to develop an action plan. Accordingly, this commitment is listed in the timetable of measures at Appendix 6. For information on these action measures please see above at 2.11 – 2.18.

Chapter 8 - Our complaints procedure (Schedule 9 10.)

- 8.1 The Assembly Commission is responsive to the views of members of the public and takes any complaint very seriously. The Assembly Commission will endeavour to resolve all complaints made to us.
- 8.2 Schedule 9 paragraph 10 of the Act refers to complaints. A person can make a complaint to a Public Authority if the complainant believes he or she may have been directly affected by an alleged failure of the authority to comply with its approved Equality Scheme.

If the complaint has not been resolved within a reasonable timescale, the complaint can be brought to the Equality Commission within twelve months of the complainant's first being aware of the alleged compliance failure.

- 8.3 A person wishing to make a complaint that the Assembly Commission has failed to comply with its approved Equality Scheme should contact:

The Equality Manager
Room 26
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
Ballymiscaw
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90418377

Email: equality@niassembly.gov.uk

The Assembly Commission prefers to receive complaints in writing but appreciates that this may not always be possible. Please contact the Equality Manager if you wish to make a complaint through another medium.

- 8.4 We will in the first instance acknowledge receipt of each complaint within three working days of receipt.
- 8.5 The Equality Manager will carry out an internal investigation of the complaint and will respond substantively to the complainant within one (1) month of the date of receiving the letter of complaint. Under certain circumstances, if the complexity of the matter requires a longer period, the period for response to the complainant may be extended to two (2)

months. In those circumstances, the complainant will be advised of the extended period within one month of making the complaint.

- 8.6 During this process the complainant will be kept fully informed of the progress of the investigation into the complaint and of any outcomes.
- 8.7 In any subsequent investigation by the Equality Commission, the Assembly Commission will co-operate fully, providing access in a timely manner to any relevant documentation that the Equality Commission may require.

Similarly, The Assembly Commission will co-operate fully with any investigation by the Equality Commission under sub-paragraph 11 (1) (b) of Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

- 8.8 The Assembly Commission will make all efforts to implement promptly and in full any recommendations arising out of any Commission investigation.
- 8.9 When the Assembly Commission receives complaints about its services, they, and any related correspondence is held on a shared directory, access to which is controlled by the relevant Director.

When the Assembly Commission receives complaints about the behaviour of named or otherwise identifiable members of staff, additional safeguards are in place to ensure confidentiality. Details of these complaints are not held on the shared directory but are instead held securely and locally by the head of the relevant office.

Personal data associated with a complaint is never disclosed further or used for any other purpose other than the complaint

Chapter 9 - Publication of our Equality Scheme (Schedule 9 4. (3) (c))

9.1 The Assembly Commission's Equality Scheme is available free of charge in print form and alternative formats from:

Equality and Good Relations Unit
Room 26
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BT4 3XX

Email: equality@niassembly.gov.uk
Web: www.niassembly.gov.uk
Tel: 028 90418377
Textphone: 028 90521209

9.2 Our Equality Scheme is also available on our website at:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk>

9.3 The following arrangements are in place for the prompt publication of our Equality Scheme to ensure equality of access:

- We will make every effort to communicate widely the existence and content of our Equality Scheme. This may include press releases, prominent advertisements in the press, including specialist press, the internet and direct mail shots to groups representing the various categories in Section 75.
- We will email a link to our approved Equality Scheme to our consultees on our consultation lists. Other consultees without e-mail will be notified by letter that the scheme is available on request. We will respond to requests for the Equality Scheme in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within one week of a request being received.
- Our Equality Scheme is available on request in alternative formats such as Easy Read, Braille, large print, audio formats (CD, mp3, DAISY) and in minority languages to meet the needs of those not fluent in English.

9.4 For a list of our stakeholders and consultees please see Appendix 3 of

the Equality Scheme, visit our website at

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/>

or contact

Equality and Good Relations Unit

Room 26

Parliament Buildings

Ballymiscaw

Stormont

BT4 3XX

Email: equality@niassembly.gov.uk

Web: www.niassembly.gov.uk

Tel: 028 90418377

Textphone:028 90521209

Chapter 10 — Review of our Equality Scheme (Schedule 9 8. (3))

- 10.1 As required by Schedule 9 paragraph 8 (3) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 we will conduct a thorough review of this Equality Scheme. This review will take place either within five years of submission of this Equality Scheme to the Equality Commission or within a shorter timescale to allow alignment with the review of other planning cycles.

The review will evaluate the effectiveness of our scheme in relation to the implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties relevant to our functions in Northern Ireland.

- 10.2 In undertaking this review we will follow any guidance issued by the Equality Commission. A report of this review will be made public and sent to the Equality Commission:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/>

or from:

Equality and Good Relations Unit
Room 26
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BT4 3XX

Email: equality@niassembly.gov.uk

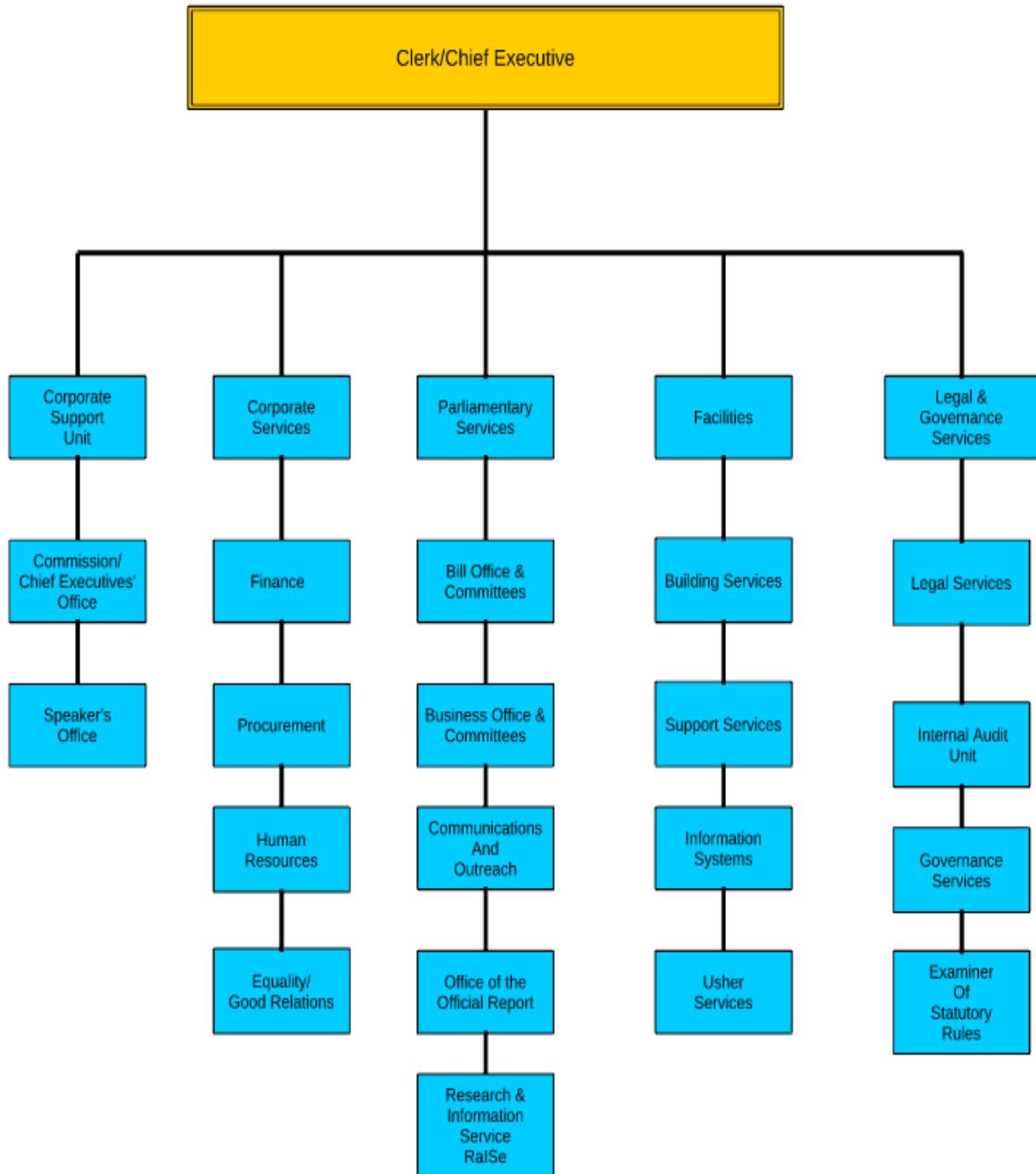
Web: www.niassembly.gov.uk

Tel: 028 90418377

Textphone: 028 90521209

Appendix 1 Organizational Chart

THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY SECRETARIAT



Appendix 2 — Example groups relevant to the Section 75 categories for Northern Ireland purposes

Please note, this list is for illustration purposes only, it is not exhaustive.

Category	Example groups
Religious belief	<p>Buddhist; Catholic; Hindu; Jewish; Muslims, people of no religious belief; Protestants; Sikh; other faiths.</p> <p>For the purposes of Section 75, the term “religious belief” is the same definition as that used in the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order . Therefore, “religious belief” also includes any perceived religious belief (or perceived lack of belief) and, in employment situations only, it also covers any “similar philosophical belief”.</p>
Political opinion	Nationalist generally; Unionists generally; members/supporters of other political parties.
Racial group	Black people; Chinese; Indians; Pakistanis; people of mixed ethnic background; Polish; Roma; Travellers; White people.
Men and women generally	Men (including boys); Trans-gendered people; Transsexual people; women (including girls).
Marital status	Civil partners or people in civil partnerships; divorced people; married people; separated people; single people; widowed people.
Age	Children and young people; older people.

Category	Example groups
Persons with a disability	Persons with disabilities as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and subsequent amendments.
Persons with dependants	Persons with personal responsibility for the care of a child; for the care of a person with a disability; or the care of a dependant older person.
Sexual orientation	Bisexual people; heterosexual people; gay or lesbian people.

Appendix 3 — List of consultees

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (a))

The Assembly Commission reviews its list of consultees annually. However, if mail is not received or is returned, we check with the organisation as to whether they wish to remain on the list.

- Action on Elder Abuse Northern Ireland
- Action on Hearing Loss
- Age Northern Ireland (Age NI)
- Alliance Party
- Al-Nisa Association Northern Ireland (Al-Nisa Association NI)
- An Munia Tober
- Assembly All Party Groups
- Association for Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus
- Autism Northern Ireland (Autism NI)
- Aware Defeat Depression
- Baha'i Community of Belfast
- Bahá'í Council for Northern Ireland (Bahá'í Council for NI)
- Ballymena Inter-Ethnic Forum
- Barnardos
- Belfast Chinese Christian Church
- Belfast City Council Youth Forum
- Belfast Hebrew Congregation
- Belfast Islamic Centre
- Belfast Jewish Community
- Bulgarian Association Northern Ireland (Bulgarian Association NI)
- Cara-Friend
- Care in Northern Ireland (Care in NI)
- Carers Northern Ireland (Carers NI)
- Cedar Foundation
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
- Committee on the Administration of Justice
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)
- Children in Need Northern Ireland (Children in Need NI)
- Childrens Law Centre
- Chinese Chamber of Commerce
- Chinese Welfare Association
- Church of Ireland
- Chief Officers 3rd (CO3)
- Community Development & Health Network Northern Ireland (Community Development & Health Network NI)
- Craigavon Traveller Support Committee
- Department of Agriculture and Regional Development (DARD)

- Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL)
- Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)
- Department of Justice
- Derry Travellers Support Group
- Derry Well Woman
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI)
- Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP)
- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS)
- Disability Action
- Department of Environment (DOE)
- Down's Syndrome Association
- Department Regional Development (DRD)
- Department of Social Development (DSD)
- Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)
- Early Years
- East Belfast Community Development Agency
- Employers Forum on Disability
- Equality Coalition
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
- Equality Forum Northern Ireland (Equality Forum NI)
- Falls Community Council
- Family Planning Association (FPA)
- Focus: The Identity Trust
- Gingerbread Northern Ireland
- GMB
- Green Party
- Guru Nanak Dev Ji Sikh Community Association
- Hare Krishna Community
- Hungarian Community Association
- Include Youth
- Indian Community Centre
- Lasi (Lesbian Advocacy Services Initiative)
- Latino America Unida
- Leonard Cheshire
- Mandarin Speakers Association
- Mediation Northern Ireland
- MENCAP
- Methodist Church in Ireland
- Mid Ulster International Cultural Group
- Multi-Cultural Resource Centre
- Newry & Mourne Senior Citizens Consortium
- Newtownabbey Senior Citizens Forum
- Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network (NI Anti-Poverty Network)
- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Schools (NI Council for Integrated Schools)
- Northern Ireland Filipino Community in Action (NI Filipino Community in Action)
- Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NI Human Rights Commission)
- Northern Ireland Mediation Service (NI Mediation Service)

- Northern Ireland Multicultural Association (NI Multicultural Association)
- Northern Ireland Muslim Family Association (NI Muslim Family Association)
- Northern Ireland Somali Community Association (NI Somali Community Association)
- Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation (NI Women's Aid Federation)
- Northern Ireland Youth Forum (NI Youth Forum)
- Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO)
- Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM)
- Northern Ireland Committee – Irish Congress Trade Unions (NIC-ICTU)
- Northern Ireland Council Voluntary Action (NICVA)
- Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA)
- Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency (NISRA)
- Northern Ireland Women's European Parliament (NIWEP)
- North West Community Network
- Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)
- National Union of Students / Union of Students in Ireland (NUS USI)
- Office of the First Minister Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM)
- Oi kwan Chinese Women's Group
- Oi Wah Chinese Women's Group
- Oi Yin Women's Group
- Older Peoples Advocate
- Omagh Access Forum
- Omagh Ethnic Minorities Community Association
- Opportunity Youth
- Pakistani Community Association
- Pobal
- Polish Association Northern Ireland (Polish Association NI)
- Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- Probation Board for Northern Ireland
- Public Achievement
- Rainbow Project
- Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)
- Roman Catholic Church
- Rural Community Network
- Sai Pak Chinese Community Project
- Save the Children
- Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP)
- Sense Northern Ireland (Sense NI)
- Sikh Cultural Centre
- Sikh Women & Children's Association
- Sinn Féin
- Staff Commission for Education & Library Boards
- Staff Commission for Local Government
- Strabane Ethnic Community Association
- The Cedar Foundation
- The Community Relations Council

- The Egyptian Society of Northern Ireland (The Egyptian Society of NI)
- The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
- The Rainbow Project
- Trademark
- Tuar Ceatha
- Barnardos
- TUV
- Ulster Scots Agency
- Ulster Teachers Union
- Ulster Unionist Party
- UNISON
- Voice Of Young People In Care (VOYPIC)
- Wah-Hip Chinese Community Association
- Women of the World
- Women's Aid
- Women's Forum Northern Ireland (Women's Forum NI)
- Women's Information Group
- Women's Resource & Development Agency
- Women's Support Network
- Youth Action Northern Ireland (Youth Action NI)
- Youth Council for Northern Ireland
- Youth Link Northern Ireland
- Youthnet

Appendix 4 - Northern Ireland Assembly Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2016-2021

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)	Lead	Timescale
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 Official's with mobility issues.	No. Minor alterations have recently 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.	Head of Building Services	To be agreed.
Implementation of access audits completed by RNIB, Disability Action and Action on Hearing Loss regarding a programme of works	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 persons with a disability. All works projects are designed and constructed in accordance with Building	No. All work items within our remit relating to the audits have been completed. Other wider 'estate' issues have been passed to DFP. Further agreed improvements will	Head of Building Services	To be agreed.

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)	Lead	Timescale
			Regulations and other relevant legislation.	be included in relevant Business Plan.		
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.	Will be included in current Business Plan (being developed in February 2016).	Head of Building Services	Proposals and recommendations will be brought to the Assembly Commission by March 2016. Timescale for works (subject to approval) TBA
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	Environmental Services Manager	Annually
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	Environmental Services Manager	Annually
Provision of translation from Irish and Ulster Scots to English to the	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different religious belief	That the Speaker/Clerks at Table receive and understand what is being said.	Yes	Editor of Debates	Ongoing

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)	Lead	Timescale
Speaker and Clerks at the table		Persons of different political opinion Persons of different racial group	Without such a service there could potentially be 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.			
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	Advisor to the Speaker	Long term direction to be revisited by new Speaker and Commission in 2016/17

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)	Lead	Timescale
				exploration of new art initiatives including working with local schools of art and architecture. Review and operation of current exhibitions policy suspended in the interim.		
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	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.	Yes	Education Manager/ Equality Manager	Ongoing
Monitoring the outcome of the EQIA on the Flying of the	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different religious belief	Monitoring includes regular consideration of:	Yes	Equality Manager	Ongoing.

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)	Lead	Timescale
Union Flag at Parliament Buildings		Persons of different political opinion Persons of different racial group	<p>complaints and other forms of feedback through current complaints mechanisms;</p> <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 Commission or other public authorities are reviewed;</p>			

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)	Lead	Timescale
			<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>			
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	Outreach Manager	July 2016
Engaging with women, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities under-represented in	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Men and women generally Persons with a disability and persons without	Increased engagement with women, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities;	Yes	Outreach Manager	Ongoing

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)	Lead	Timescale
public life through Assembly Community Connect		Persons of different racial group	inform groups how to utilise resources available through Assembly Community Connect & partner organisations			
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	Education Manager	Ongoing
Engagement with young people	Access to Services (Theme 1b of the 2011 Audit of	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	Education Manager	2016 - 2018
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	Yes	Education Team	Ongoing

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)	Lead	Timescale
			include new website activities and video resources			
Implementation of Secretariat Gender Action Plan	Recruitment and Selection (Theme 2a of Audit of Inequalities) Equality issues for existing staff	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	Equality Manager	This project lasts 2016-2018.
Provision of an Irish Language champion	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Young People	Translation of the primary section of the Education website will complete in February 2016. Delivery of programmes in Irish continues.	yes	Education Team	Ongoing
Continued facilitation of the Pensioners' Parliament	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different age	To facilitate one Parliament per year	Yes	Outreach Manager	2016-2021
Additional Minority Parliaments	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities) Good Relations (Theme 1c of	Persons of different racial group/people with a disability	To facilitate one BEM Parliament per year	Yes	Outreach Manager	2016-2021

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)	Lead	Timescale
	Audit of Inequalities)					
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.	Speaker's Office	2016-2021
Continued lighting of the exterior Parliament Buildings	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.	To light the exterior of Parliament Buildings as agreed by the Assembly Commission. 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. b) The Northern Ireland Charity of the year will have access to	Yes	Facilities	2016-2021

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)	Lead	Timescale
			<p>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>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).</p>			

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)	Lead	Timescale
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	Education Team	2016-2021
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	Speaker's Office and Communications and Outreach	2016
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	Yes	Outreach	Ongoing

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)	Lead	Timescale
			involvement of women.			
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	Outreach	Annually

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

Action taken to better promote equality of opportunity/good relations	Inequality Identified and Outcome area(s)	Section 75 Categories	Intended outcome/impact and how this will be measured	In the current service plan (Yes/No)	Lead Responsibility	Timescale
Continue to implement fair and inclusive recruitment practices	Recruitment and Selection (Theme 2a of Audit of Inequalities)	All	Ensuring that all recruitment competitions are fully accessible Apply welcome statements or affirmative action if appropriate in		Head of HR	Ongoing. The procedures for internal and external recruitment have been reviewed to ensure compliance with good practice. A guaranteed

Action taken to better promote equality of opportunity/ good relations	Inequality Identified and Outcome area(s)	Section 75 Categories	Intended outcome/impact and how this will be measured	In the current service plan (Yes/No)	Lead Responsibility	Timescale
			consultation with the Equality Commission for NI.			interview scheme has been implemented for both internal and external recruitment
Continue to implement staff surveys	Recruitment and Selection (Theme 2b of Audit of Inequalities)	All	Use the results of the staff survey to produce and implement an action plan if required Monitor the progress of the implementation of this action plan		Corporate office	Staff surveys to be undertaken regularly between 2016 and 2021 Action Plan following on from 2014 survey will be reviewed in March 2016.

Northern Ireland Assembly Equality Action Plan

Completed Actions (2012-2016)

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

Inequality Identified	Section 75 Categories	Performance Indicators	Action Measures	Lead Responsibility	Timescale
Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme 1a of the 2011 Audit of Inequalities)	People with disabilities	Improved facilities for partially sighted visitors	Colour contrast materials in toilet facilities	Facilities Manager	2012 Complete
	People with disabilities	Access through the front door for all persons	Install an electronic opening device at the front door to allow for disabled access	Facilities Manager	2012 complete
	People with disabilities	A Changing Places facility to be installed at the ground floor level	A fully equipped Changing Places facility to be installed for people with severe physical disabilities	Facilities manager	Complete
	People with disabilities	Improved facilities for partially sighted visitors	Improved blistered and corduroy paving	Facilities Manager	2012 Complete
		Improved facilities for partially sighted visitors	To provide a braille tour of the building for any visitors	Facilities manager	Complete
	People with disabilities	Improved facilities for people who are hearing impaired	To work towards Action on Hearing Loss 'Louder than Words' accreditation	Facilities manager	Complete – accreditation has been received and is renewed each year
	People with disabilities	Improved facilities for people who are hearing impaired	To provide a signed tour of Parliament Buildings in British and Irish Sign language.	Facilities manager	Complete – tour can be accessed via the external website prior to visiting or visitors to the building can use a tablet provided by Events.

Inequality Identified	Section 75 Categories	Performance Indicators	Action Measures	Lead Responsibility	Timescale
Access to Services (Theme 1b of the 2011 Audit of Inequalities)	People with disabilities	Improved environment for those with autism or on the autistic spectrum	Mystery shop and feedback session with representative groups and their users held	Facilities Manager	2012 Complete
Access to Services (Theme 1b of the 2011 Audit of Inequalities)	People with disabilities	Improved environment for those with autism or on the autistic spectrum	Creation of a quiet room, signage and review internal policies. All front line staff to be trained and Autism Champions to be identified.	Facilities Manager	Complete. Autism accreditation award received in 2012 and reassessed every year thereafter.
	People with disabilities	Improved exhibition space	Picture hanging system for ground floor	Facilities Manager	Complete. In place in Great Hall of Parliament Buildings
	People with disabilities	Improved exhibition access	Braille descriptors for Speaker's gifts	Facilities Manager	Partially complete. Braille signage erected in Great Hall for toilets.
Access to Services (Theme 1b of the 2011 Audit of Inequalities)	Young People	Increased access to the political process	Produce 5 videos to explain (1) the importance of voting (2) Council elections (3) Northern Ireland Assembly elections (4) UK Parliament elections (5) European Parliament elections	Education Manager	2014 Complete

Inequality Identified	Section 75 Categories	Performance Indicators	Action Measures	Lead Responsibility	Timescale
Access to Services (Theme 1b of the 2011 Audit of Inequalities)	Young People	Increased access to the political process	Develop NI Assembly educational material for iBook	Education Manager	2014 Complete
	Young People	Increased access to the political process	'Making a Law' animation with subtitles	Education Team	Complete
	Young People	Increased access to the political process	Develop a bespoke visitor programme for Key Stage 1 users	Education Team	Complete
	Young People	Increased access to the political process	A 'Structured Dialogue' Project funded by Erasmus+ – a report was produced by 36 young people in relation to mental health. The inquiry process involved participants consulting young people, MLAs and other stakeholders and reporting their findings to an assembly committee. The final report was presented in February 2016.	Education Team	Complete February 2016

Inequality Identified	Section 75 Categories	Performance Indicators	Action Measures	Lead Responsibility	Timescale
Good Relations (Theme 1c of the 2011 Audit of Inequalities)	Religious belief, Political opinion and/or race	Encourage joint participation	Invite post Primary schools to take part in panel Q&As and in small group discussions with MLAs. These 'Let's Talk' style events will take place in different constituencies	Education Manager	West Tyrone/Mid Ulster. Complete November 2014 Belfast Complete November 2014 Other constituencies ongoing as project continues
	Religious belief, Political opinion and/or race Religious belief, Political opinion and/or race	EQIA on the Review of the Policy of the Union Flag flying on Parliament Buildings. Completed EQIA report delivered on time and within budget	Procurement exercise undertaken for steps 2-5 of the EQIA process Risk registry and risk group established Project initiated document approved Consultation strategy developed Interim report developed	Equality Manager Equality Manager	Complete. Contract commenced on 16 July 2014.
	Religious belief, Political opinion and/or race	Consultation, to include public engagement, comments returned within agreed deadline	Pre-consultation exercise conducted Formal public consultation exercise conducted	Equality Manager	Complete. Pre-consultation ran from 1 October to 14 October 2014

Inequality Identified	Section 75 Categories	Performance Indicators	Action Measures	Lead Responsibility	Timescale
	Religious belief, Political opinion and/or race	Assembly Commission report on EQIA findings published and decision taken on policy position	Agreement by Assembly Commission of findings and consultee report formulated	Equality Manager	Complete.

Inequality Identified	Section 75 Categories	Performance Indicators	Action Measures	Lead Responsibility	Timescale
Participation (Theme 1d of the 2011 Audit of Inequalities)	Age	To encourage increased participation in politics amongst young people (Involving young people in the work of the Assembly)	Specific schools from all sectors to be targeted to take part in the Education Committee Shared and Integrated Education Inquiry	Education Manager	Sept-Nov 2014. Complete
Access to Services (Theme 1d of the 2011 Audit of Inequalities)	Age	To encourage increased participation in politics amongst young people (Involving young people in the work of the Assembly)	To assist the Environment Committee in seeking views of young people on the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill	Education Manager	Oct-Nov 2014. Complete
	Age	To encourage increased participation in politics amongst young people (Involving young	Assist OFMdfM Committee in seeking views of young people (TBUC inquiry)	Education Manager	2014 -15 Complete

Inequality Identified	Section 75 Categories	Performance Indicators	Action Measures	Lead Responsibility	Timescale
		people in the work of the Assembly)			
	Age	To encourage increased participation in politics amongst young people (Involving young people in the work of the Assembly)	Assist Education Committee in seeking views of young people (School Inspection Inquiry)	Young People	2015 Complete
	Age	To encourage increased participation in politics amongst young people (Involving young people in the work of the Assembly)	Assist Education Committee in seeking views of young people (Anti Bullying legislation)	Young People	2015 -2016 Complete
	Ethnic minority groups (note Assembly Community Connect (ACC) is currently targeting the S75 groups of Women, people with disabilities and minority ethnic groups as per the Audit of Inequalities findings).	To encourage increased participation in politics amongst Northern Ireland's ethnic minority communities	BEM Parliament		Complete
	Ethnic minority groups (note Assembly		'Get Involved' campaign and participation at Mela Festival	Outreach Manager	Complete

Inequality Identified	Section 75 Categories	Performance Indicators	Action Measures	Lead Responsibility	Timescale
	Community Connect (ACC) is currently targeting the S75 groups of Women, people with disabilities and minority ethnic groups as per the Audit of Inequalities findings).				
	Ethnic minority groups (note Assembly Community Connect (ACC) is currently targeting the S75 groups of Women, people with disabilities and minority ethnic groups as per the Audit of Inequalities findings).	To encourage increased participation in politics amongst Northern Ireland's ethnic minority communities	Commonwealth Day event at Parliament Buildings	Outreach Manager	Complete
Access to Services (Theme 1b of the 2011 Audit of Inequalities)	Women	To encourage increased participation in politics amongst women	To complete the Cinemagic 'Reel Politics' project. Young participants will be tasked with the challenge of creating short original films within five days about the benefits of young women in politics.	Outreach Manager	Complete March 2015
	Women	To encourage increased participation in	Assembly Community Connect (ACC) to target women's groups and provide relevant training	Outreach Manager	Complete.

Inequality Identified	Section 75 Categories	Performance Indicators	Action Measures	Lead Responsibility	Timescale
		politics amongst women			

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

Inequality Identified	Section 75 Categories	Performance Indicators	Action Measures	Lead Responsibility	Timescale
Recruitment and Selection (Theme 2a of Audit of Inequalities)	All	Ensuring that all recruitment competitions are fully accessible	Apply welcome statements or affirmative action if appropriate in consultation with the Equality Commission for NI.	Head of HR	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
Recruitment and Selection (Theme 2b of Audit of Inequalities)	All	To work to continue improving workplace relations	Compare the results of the 2010 and 2012 staff surveys	Head of HR/ Head of Corporate Support Unit	Complete. An action plan was established to take forward issues arising from the staff survey, including a targeted initiative to address problematic workplace relations
Recruitment and Selection (Theme 2b of Audit of Inequalities)	All	Use the results of the staff survey 2010 and the Carecall report 2011 to produce and	Monitor the progress of the implementation of this action plan	Head of HR/ Head of Corporate Support Unit	Complete. A further comparison from 2012 with the results from the impending 2014 survey will be

Inequality Identified	Section 75 Categories	Performance Indicators	Action Measures	Lead Responsibility	Timescale
		implement an action plan			made, and required actions identified

Appendix 5 — Glossary of terms

Action plan

A plan which sets out actions a public authority will take to implement its Section 75 statutory duties. It is a mechanism for the realisation of measures to achieve equality outcomes for the Section 75 equality and good relations categories.

Action measures and outcomes

Specific measures to promote equality and good relations for the relevant Section 75 and good relations categories, linked to achievable outcomes, which should be realistic and timely.

Adverse impact

Where a Section 75 category has been affected differently by a policy and the effect is less favourable, it is known as adverse impact. If a policy has an adverse impact on a Section 75 category, a public authority must consider whether or not the adverse impact is unlawfully discriminatory. In either case a public authority must take measures to redress the adverse impact, by considering mitigating measures and/or alternative ways of delivering the policy.

Affirmative action

In general terms, affirmative action can be defined as being anything consistent with the legislation which is necessary to bring about positive change. It is a phrase used in the Fair Employment and Treatment Order (NI) 1998 to describe lawful action that is aimed at promoting equality of opportunity and fair participation in employment between members of the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities in Northern Ireland.

Article 55 Review

Under the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998, all registered employers must conduct periodic reviews of the composition of their workforces and of their employment practices for the purposes of determining whether members of the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities are enjoying, and are likely to continue to enjoy, fair participation in employment in each employer's concern.

These reviews, which are commonly known as Article 55 Reviews, must be conducted at least once every three years.

Audit of inequalities

An audit of inequalities is a systematic review and analysis of inequalities which exist for service users and those affected by a public authority's policies. An audit can be used by a public authority to inform its work in relation to the Section 75 equality and good relations duties. It can also enable public authorities to assess progress on the implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties, as it provides baseline information on existing inequalities relevant to a public authority's functions.

Consultation

In the context of Section 75, consultation is the process of asking those affected by a policy (ie, service users, staff, the general public) for their views on how the policy could be implemented more effectively to promote equality of opportunity across the 9 categories. Different circumstances will call for different types of consultation. Consultations could, for example, include meetings, focus groups, surveys and questionnaires.

Council of Europe

The Council of Europe, based in Strasbourg, covers virtually the entire European continent, with its 47 member countries. Founded on 5 May 1949 by 10 countries, the Council of Europe seeks to develop throughout Europe common and democratic principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals.

Desk audit

An audit of a draft Equality Scheme to ensure that the scheme conforms with the requirements on form and content as detailed in the Commission's Guidelines (the Guide).

Differential impact

Differential impact occurs where a Section 75 group has been affected differently by a policy. This effect could either be positive, neutral or negative. A public authority must make a judgement as to

whether a policy has a differential impact and then it must determine whether the impact is adverse, based on a systematic appraisal of the accumulated information.

Discrimination

The anti-discrimination laws prohibit the following forms of discrimination:

- Direct discrimination
- Indirect Discrimination
- Disability Discrimination
- Victimisation
- Harassment

Brief descriptions of these above terms follow:

Direct discrimination

This generally occurs where a public authority treats a person less favourably than it treats (or, would treat) another person, in the same or similar circumstances, on one or more of the statutory non-discrimination grounds. A decision or action that is directly discriminatory will normally be unlawful unless: (a) in an age discrimination case, the decision can be objectively justified, or (b) in any other case, the public authority can rely on a statutory exception that permits it – such as a genuine occupational requirement exception; or, a positive action exception which permits an employer to use “welcoming statements” or to take other lawful positive action to encourage participation by under-represented or otherwise disadvantaged groups.

Indirect discrimination

The definition of this term varies across some of the anti-discrimination laws, but indirect discrimination generally occurs where a public authority applies to all persons a particular provision, criterion or practice, but which is one that has the effect of placing people who share a particular equality characteristic (e.g. the same sex, or religious belief, or race) at a particular disadvantage compared to other people. A provision, criterion or practice that is indirectly discriminatory will normally be unlawful unless (a) it can be objectively justified, or (b) the public authority can rely on a statutory

exception that permits it.

Disability discrimination

In addition to direct discrimination and victimisation and harassment, discrimination against disabled people may also occur in two other ways: namely, (a) disability-related discrimination, and (b) failure to comply with a duty to make reasonable adjustments.

- (a) Disability-related discrimination generally occurs where a public authority, without lawful justification, and for a reason which relates to a disabled person's disability, treats that person less favourably than it treats (or, would treat) other people to whom that reason does not (or, would not) apply.
- (b) Failure to comply with a duty to make reasonable adjustments: One of the most notable features of the disability discrimination legislation is that in prescribed circumstances it imposes a duty on employers, service providers and public authorities to take such steps as are reasonable to remove or reduce particular disadvantages experienced by disabled people in those circumstances.

Victimisation

This form of discrimination generally occurs where a public authority treats a person less favourably than it treats (or, would treat) another person, in the same or similar circumstances, because the person has previously exercised his/her rights under the anti-discrimination laws, or has assisted another person to do so. Victimisation cannot be justified and is always unlawful.

Harassment

Harassment generally occurs where a person is subjected to unwanted conduct that is related to a non-discrimination ground with the purpose, or which has the effect, of violating their dignity or of creating for them an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment cannot be justified and is always unlawful.

Economic appraisal

An economic appraisal is a systematic process for examining alternative uses of resources, focusing on assessment of needs,

objectives, options, costs benefits, risks, funding and affordability and other factors relevant to decisions.

Equality impact assessment

The mechanism underpinning Section 75, where existing and proposed policies are assessed in order to determine whether they have an adverse impact on equality of opportunity for the relevant Section 75 categories. Equality impact assessments require the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Equality of opportunity

The prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between people on grounds of characteristics including sex, marital status, age, disability, religious belief, political opinion, dependants, race and sexual orientation.

The promotion of equality of opportunity entails more than the elimination of discrimination. It requires proactive measures to be taken to secure equality of opportunity between the categories identified under Section 75.

Equality Scheme

A document which outlines a public authority's arrangements for complying with its Section 75 obligations. An Equality Scheme must include an outline of the public authority's arrangements for carrying out consultations, screening, equality impact assessments, monitoring, training and arrangements for ensuring access to information and services.

Good relations

Although not defined in the legislation, the Commission has agreed the following working definition of good relations: 'the growth of relations and structures for Northern Ireland that acknowledge the religious, political and racial context of this society, and that seek to promote respect, equity and trust, and embrace diversity in all its forms'.

Mainstreaming equality

The integration of equal opportunities principles, strategies and practices into the every day work of public authorities from the

outset. In other words, mainstreaming is the process of ensuring that equality considerations are built into the policy development process from the beginning, rather than being bolted on at the end. Mainstreaming can help improve methods of working by increasing a public authority's accountability, responsiveness to need and relations with the public. It can bring added value at many levels.

Mitigation of adverse impact

Where an equality impact assessment reveals that a particular policy has an adverse impact on equality of opportunity, a public authority must consider ways of delivering the policy outcomes which have a less adverse effect on the relevant Section 75 categories; this is known as mitigating adverse impact.

Monitoring

Monitoring consists of continuously scrutinising and evaluating a policy to assess its impact on the Section 75 categories. Monitoring must be sensitive to the issues associated with human rights and privacy. Public authorities should seek advice from consultees and Section 75 representative groups when setting up monitoring systems.

Monitoring consists of the collection of relevant information and evaluation of policies. It is not solely about the collection of data, it can also take the form of regular meetings and reporting of research undertaken. Monitoring is not an end in itself but provides the data for the next cycle of policy screening.

Northern Ireland Act

The Northern Ireland Act, implementing the Good Friday Agreement, received Royal Assent on 19 November 1998. Section 75 of the Act created the statutory equality duties.

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

A statutory body established under Section 68 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which works to ensure that the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland are fully protected in law, policy and practice.

Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA)

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) is an

Executive Agency within the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP).

They provide statistical and research information regarding Northern Ireland issues and provide registration services to the public in the most effective and efficient way.

OFMdfM

The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister is responsible for providing advice, guidance, challenge and support to other NI Civil Service Departments on Section 75 issues.

PAFT

The Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment (PAFT) Guidelines constituted the first non-statutory attempt at mainstreaming equality in Northern Ireland in January 1994. The aim of the PAFT Guidelines was to ensure that issues of equality and equity informed policy making and activity in all spheres and at all levels of government. PAFT has now been superseded by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Policy

The formal and informal decisions a public authority makes in relation to carrying out its duties. Defined in the New Oxford English Dictionary as 'a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by a government party, business or individual'. In the context of Section 75, the term policies covers all the ways in which a public authority carries out or proposes to carry out its functions relating to Northern Ireland. Policies include unwritten as well as written policies.

Positive action

This phrase is not defined in any statute, but the Equality Commission understands it to mean any lawful action that a public authority might take for the purpose of promoting equality of opportunity for all persons in relation to employment or in accessing goods, facilities or services (such as health services, housing, education, justice, policing). It may involve adopting new policies, practices, or procedures; or changing or abandoning old ones. Positive action is not the same as positive discrimination.

Positive discrimination differs from positive action in that positive

action involves the taking of lawful actions whereas positive discrimination involves the taking of unlawful actions. Consequently, positive action is by definition lawful whereas positive discrimination is unlawful.

Qualitative data

Qualitative data refers to the experiences of individuals from their perspective, most often with less emphasis on numbers or statistical analysis. Consultations are more likely to yield qualitative than quantitative data.

Quantitative data

Quantitative data refers to numbers, typically derived from either a population in general or samples of that population. This information is often analysed by either using descriptive statistics, which consider general profiles, distributions and trends in the data, or inferential statistics, which are used to determine 'significance' either in relationships or differences in the data.

SACHR

The Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHR) has now been replaced by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. SACHR, as part of its review of mechanisms in place to promote employment equality and reduce the unemployment differential, recommended that the PAFT Guidelines should be made a statutory requirement.

Screening

The procedure for identifying which policies will be subject to equality impact assessment, and how these equality impact assessments will be prioritised. The purpose of screening is to identify the policies which are likely to have a minor/major impact on equality of opportunity so that greatest resources can be devoted to improving these policies. Screening requires a systematic review of existing and proposed policies.

Schedule 9

Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 sets out detailed provisions for the enforcement of the Section 75 statutory duties,

including an outline of what should be included in an Equality Scheme.

Section 75

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act provides that each public authority is required, in carrying out its 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 and sexual orientation;
- men and women generally;
- persons with a disability and persons without; and
- persons with dependants and persons without.

Without prejudice to these obligations, each public authority in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Section 75 investigation

An investigation carried out by the Equality Commission, under Schedule 9 of the NI Act 1998, arising from the failure of a public authority to comply with the commitments set out in its approved Equality Scheme.

There are two types of Commission investigation, these are as follows:

1. An investigation of a complaint by an individual who claims to have been directly affected by the failure of a public authority to comply with its approved Equality Scheme;
2. An investigation initiated by the Commission, where it believes that a public authority may have failed to comply with its approved Equality Scheme.

Appendix 6 — Timetable for measures proposed

(Schedule 9 4. (3) (b))

Measure	Lead responsibility	Timetable
Section 75 Annual Progress Report [2.7]	Clerk / Chief Executive to the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly	31 August (annually)
Action plan		
Conduct Audit of Inequalities	Equality Manager	Complete
Consultation on draft action plan [2.15]	Equality Manager	TBC
Finalised action plan published [2.18]	Equality Manager	TBC
Arrangements for monitoring progress in place [2.16]	Equality Manager	In place
Consultation list reviewed and updated [3.4]	Equality Manager	September (annually) and ongoing adjustments as required

Measure	Lead responsibility	Timetable
Screening timetable [4.4]	Equality Manager	Screening Reports will be published quarterly and consultees informed.
Screening Reports [4.15]		SMG/Directors discuss regularly.
EQIA timetable [4.16]	Equality Manager	The Assembly Commission will alert consultees to forthcoming EQIAs and the consultation periods for each.
Monitoring	Equality Manager	Policies are systematically monitored to assess their impact on the relevant groups and sub groups within the equality categories. Ongoing monitoring will be reviewed annually. The Assembly Commission will publish the results of this monitoring (Schedule 9 paragraph 4 (2)(d)) in the public authorities' annual review on progress to the Equality Commission. This will be published on the Assembly website and will be available in alternative formats.
Review of monitoring information		If the monitoring and analysis of results over a two year period show that

Measure	Lead responsibility	Timetable
<p>[4.31] Publication of monitoring information [4.33;4.34]</p>		<p>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 Assembly Commission will ensure that the policy is revised to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups</p>
<p>Training Development of summary scheme [5.4] Development of overall training programme [5.5] Focussed training [5.4] Update training [5.4] Evaluation of training [5.6]</p>	<p>Equality Manager</p>	<p>On approval, the full Equality Scheme will be available to consultees and staff via the website and the intranet. A summary scheme will be generated as soon as possible after approval of the scheme by the Northern Ireland Equality Commission. Dates TBC. All Assembly Secretariat staff receive mandatory training and the Assembly Commission's Section 75 responsibilities on joining the Assembly. This content is reviewed when changes in legislation or responsibility are introduced.</p>
<p>Assessing access to</p>		<p>Review of the uptake of alternative formats,</p>

Measure	Lead responsibility	Timetable
information and services [6.9]		translation and braille services (for example) will be carried out quarterly.
Communication of Equality Scheme [9.3] Notification of consultees [9.3]	Equality Manager	All relevant material regarding the Equality Scheme, consultations, screening and monitoring will be published on the website at the earliest opportunity. Consultees will be alerted by email to any changes or additions to published material.
Review of Equality Scheme [10.1]	Equality Manager	As required by Schedule 9 paragraph 8 (3) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 the Assembly Commission will conduct a thorough review of this Equality Scheme. This review will take place either within five years of submission of this Equality Scheme to the Equality Commission or within a shorter timescale to allow alignment with the review of other planning cycles.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

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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.