



Gender Action Plan 2019-2023 Closure Report

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Purpose of the Report

1. The aim of this report is to review the implementation of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) 2019 - 2023, which placed a strategic focus on addressing gender issues and the promotion of gender equality within the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (the Assembly Commission).

Background

2. The Assembly Commission approved its first GAP on 3 March 2016. The subsequent GAP 2019-23, was approved by the Assembly Commission on 11 April 2019. It included actions under two main themes:
 - Leadership and Development; and
 - Communication and Engagement.
3. An oversight group (the GAP Implementation Group) was responsible for monitoring implementation of the actions¹. Throughout the lifetime of the GAP 2019-23, the Senior Management Team (SMT) received progress updates every six-months and the Assembly Commission received progress updates annually. Further information on progress update reports can be found [here](#).

Performance against actions

4. The GAP 2019-2023 contained 14 actions in total which can be seen in Annex A. Three actions related to the theme of 'Leadership and Development', eight related to the theme of 'Communication and Engagement' and the remaining three actions related to the administration of the Action Plan under the heading of 'Reporting and Monitoring'.
5. Table 1 summarises the number of actions completed and not completed. Annex A details the final status for each of the individual 14 actions.

Final Actions Status

Table 1

	Status Key	No of actions	% of actions
	Complete	13	93%
	Not Completed	1	7%
	Total actions	14	100.0%

¹ [Gender Action Plan \(niassembly.gov.uk\)](https://niassembly.gov.uk)

Achievements/Outcomes

6. Gender Action Plan Theme 1 - Leadership and Development.

- 6.1 The theme of 'Leadership and Development' contained three actions. All three actions have been completed. Action outcomes detailed below are of particular note.
- 6.2 Action 1 focused on examining the gender balance in people presenting papers to SMT and the Assembly Commission and required an analysis of statistics over a three-year period and a findings report to be produced.
- 6.3 Three years of data (2016-2019) relating to gender and grade were analysed and a final overview analysis report was produced by the Assembly Commission's Research and Information Service (RaISe) and presented to SMT in March 2020. Arising from this action, it is now practice for Heads of Business to invite team members involved in working on specific projects/papers to appear with them when presenting at SMT meetings.

7. Gender Action Plan Theme 2 - Communication and Engagement.

- 7.1 The theme of 'Communication and Engagement' contained eight actions. Seven of these eight actions have been completed. Action outcomes of particular note are detailed below.
- 7.2 Action 7 noted the development and issue of a Menopause Policy to provide support and assistance to staff and managers. The Menopause Guidance was developed in consultation with staff and Trade Union Side and was approved in March 2023. Issue of the Guidance will be supported by training for staff and managers.
- 7.3 Action 8 referred to participation in the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme, in support of Action 9, development of a Transgender Policy. Through participation in this programme, it was considered that the Assembly Commission would have access to a programme which offered tailored one-to-one support to help build workplaces that are inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.
- 7.4 The Assembly Commission joined the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme in 2019. Participation in this programme enabled access to relevant data, assistance and support in the development of a Transgender Policy and separate Guidance on Assisting and Supporting Transgender Visitors to Parliament Buildings.
- 7.5 Membership also aided an initial review of a range of human resource policies to ensure that no references or wording would infer, or result in, less favourable treatment for LGBT groups and that Assembly Commission policies made clear that discrimination, bullying and harassment related to sexual orientation was not acceptable.

- 7.6 Following completion of this work, membership of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme was no longer considered necessary and was not renewed.
- 7.7 The Assembly Commission has developed a Transgender Policy and separate draft Guidance on Assisting and Supporting Transgender Visitors to Parliament Buildings. The Transgender Policy was developed in consultation with staff and Trade Union Side.
- 7.8 The initial consultation was completed in October 2021. As there were no known transgender staff within the organisation, views on the draft Policy, from a staff perspective, were sought from a small number of relevant external groups. Following changes to the proposed scope of the Policy, further internal consultation took place at the end of 2022.
- 7.9 The Transgender Policy was approved in February 2023 and has issued to staff. It should be noted that, in compliance with the Assembly Commission's Equality Scheme, the draft Guidance on Assisting and Supporting Transgender Visitors to Parliament Buildings will now be consulted on with relevant external groups.

8. Gender Action Plan – Monitoring and Reporting

- 8.1 Progress on implementation of the GAP has been monitored on an ongoing basis by the GAP Implementation Group. Minutes of meetings of the Group can be found [here](#). Progress reports were also provided to SMT every six months and can be accessed [here](#).

Non-completed Action

9. At the closure point of the GAP one action was still in progress.
- 9.1 Action 10 aimed to provide training to staff on transgender issues once a Transgender Policy had been developed. This was to ensure staff were trained and equipped with knowledge to manage transgender issues in the workplace in accordance with the Assembly Commission Policy. While this action is not complete at the date of the Closure Report, work is underway by the Human Resources Office to identify and provide appropriate training.

Conclusion

10. The GAP 2019-23 has achieved 13 of its 14 actions (93%). Work is progressing to ensure implementation of the outstanding action.
- 10.1 At its October 2022 meeting, SMT discussed the requirement for a further gender action plan. It was noted that work on the preparation of the Audit of Inequalities had not identified significant gender issues.

10.2 On that basis and in light of progress made through the GAP 2019-23, and the preceding GAP 2016-2018, it was determined that a further specific gender action plan was not required at this time but that gender issues should continue to be monitored and addressed through other equality plans.

Gender Action Plan 2019-2023

Final Status Update

	Status Key	No of actions
	Complete	13
	Not Completed	1
Total actions		14

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Final progress update
Gender balance in presenting to SMT and Assembly Commission	1) Continue to collect data at SMT and Assembly Commission level until April 2019 and produce reports on findings. (Figures for Assembly Community Connect to be included on resumption of full business.)	One further year of complete data collected and analysed for 2018-19. Final overview analysis report of all three years of data.	Lead: Commission and Clerk/Chief Executive's Office/RaISe Status: Complete
Gender Balancing on Groups	2) Monitoring of checklist returns on staff volunteering and representation on groups/panels.	Monitoring data to be collected for two further years: 2018-19 and 2019-20. (Two returns were received for the first	Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit/RaISe and relevant Directors/HoBs

Theme 1 – Leadership and Development			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Final progress update
	To be completed by HoBs and Directors utilising guidance issued by the Equality Unit	reporting period, January 2017 to March 2018). RaISe to analyse three years of data, including any findings in the final analysis report on gender balance in presenting to SMT and Commission.	Status: Complete
Continued focus on equal pay	3) The Assembly Commission will continue to conduct an equal pay review every two years and address issues arising	Equal pay reviews will be conducted every two years and gender-related statistically significant differences in pay (as determined by NISRA) will be considered by SMT	Lead: Human Resources Office Status: Complete

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	
Senior Women's Network	4) Implement Senior Women's Network (AG4 and above) to meet at least twice a year.	To have in place a network that enables issues to be identified, discussed and – if appropriate – solutions proposed or raised at the appropriate platform; and where good practice can be shared and highlighted.	Lead: Gender Action Plan Implementation Group. Status: Complete
Awards	5) Consider third party recognition awards and apply for awards as appropriate.	Application process completed and submission made.	Lead: Gender Action Plan Implementation Group.

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	
			Status: Complete
	6) Apply for Bronze Diversity NI Charter Mark	Bronze Diversity NI Charter Mark achieved. Actions identified to progress to Silver Diversity NI Charter Mark within two years	Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit/HR. Status: Complete
Menopause Policy <i>Action added October 2019</i>	7) Develop a Menopause Policy to provide support and assistance to staff and managers	Menopause Policy is developed and issued to staff.	Lead: Human Resources Office/Equality and Good Relations Unit Status: Complete
Transgender – Inclusion in the Workplace	8) Participate in the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme.	Through participation in this programme, the Assembly Commission would have access to a programme which offers organisations tailored one-to-one support to help build workplaces that are inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.	Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit with assistance from HR Office. Status: Complete
Development of a Transgender Policy	9) Develop a Transgender Policy to address both managing and supporting staff and dealing with visitors to Parliament Buildings	Transgender Policy is developed and issued to staff	Lead: Human Resources Office and Equality Unit. Status: Complete

Theme 2 – Communication and Engagement

Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	
Raise awareness around transgender issues	10) Provide training to staff on transgender issues once Policy developed.	Staff are trained and equipped with knowledge to manage transgender issues in the workplace in accordance with Commission Policy	<p>Lead: Human Resources Office.</p> <p>Status: Not completed</p> <p>The Transgender Policy was approved by SMT on 28 February 2023. The Equality Manager is currently working with the Learning and Development Team to identify and provide training for staff and managers.</p>
Research	11) Participate in QUB PhD Project ‘Gender equality in the UK and Germany: HR Management in light of conflicting constitutional logics’	Through participation in the project, the Assembly Commission will have feedback via anonymised employees’ insights on gender equality in the organisation and relevant HR policies, which could be used to inform any further actions that may be required.	<p>Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit with assistance from HR Office.</p> <p>Status: Complete</p>

Reporting and Monitoring			
Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	
Regular monitoring of progress against identified actions	12) Provide progress update to SMT every six months	Every six months, following liaison with business areas, provide summary of directorate activity to SMT/, charting progress against targets and including any additional actions.	Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit. Status: Complete
	13) Report to the Equality Commission annually on progress	As part of annual report to the Equality Commission, provide full update of Directorate activity against Action Plan targets.	Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit Status: Complete
Central administration and co-ordination of work of Gender Action Implementation Group (GAIG)	14) Co-ordinate and oversee the roll-out of implementation of the Action Plan	Co-ordination of meetings and work of the Implementation Group; Support provided to business areas where necessary; Progress of business areas tracked against targets; and Written updates to SMT on progress against specific actions every six months.	Lead: Equality and Good Relations Unit. Status: Complete