

# Northern Ireland Assembly



## Northern Ireland Assembly Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2015-16

### Contact:

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Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/equality-scheme-2012-2016/>

### Signature:

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**This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.**

**It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties, and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.**

**This report reflects progress made between April 2015 and March 2016**

## PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme

### Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice

- 1 In 2015-16, please provide **examples of key policy/service delivery developments** made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission ('the Commission') continues to progress the equality agenda throughout its business. This section records examples of key policy/service delivery developments undertaken by the Commission in furtherance of its statutory obligations. It covers the period between April 2015 and March 2016. The actions recorded below are related to outcome areas addressed in the Assembly's various equality action plans.

*Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.*

The following examples illustrate key policy and service delivery developments within the Northern Ireland Assembly secretariat.

#### **Examples of key policy developments made during the reporting period**

<b>Policy Development area</b>	<b>Anticipated outcome(s)/Action taken</b>
Corporate Strategy	The current Corporate Strategy 2012-2017 (revised 2015) states equality and corporate governance arrangements as part of the strategic goals of the organisation.
Equality Scheme 2016-2021	<p>A review of the Assembly's Equality Scheme was undertaken in line with Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) guidance during December 2015 and January 2016 which resulted in some minor amendments.</p> <p>Changes to the Equality Scheme were: updates to the administrative implementation of functions e.g. changes in Membership of the Assembly Commission and personnel; and some small drafting amendments. The Scheme will be kept under review and continuously updated to reflect future changes.</p> <p>The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland verbally agreed the Equality Scheme on 12 April 2016. An email will be issued to all staff, building users and consultees directing them to the revised scheme on the Assembly</p>

	website once formal confirmation is received from the Equality Commission for NI.
Audit of Inequalities 2016-2021	<p>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 the 2012-2016 period.</p> <p>During 2014 a mid-point review of the Audit of Inequalities was undertaken and published on 6 January 2015.</p> <p>The mid-point review of the Audit of Inequalities was placed on the Assembly website and was issued to the Equality Commission (see Annexe 2). The Equality Commission acknowledged the review and welcomed the approach taken.</p> <p>In reviewing the Commission Equality Scheme the Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) conducted a final review of the 2011 Audit of Inequalities which underpinned the 2012-2016 Assembly Equality Scheme and developed a further Audit of Inequalities for the period 2016-2021. It should be noted that the Audit of Inequalities is a fluid document and can be added to throughout the period of its lifespan.</p> <p>The 2016-2021 Audit of Inequalities highlights work scheduled for the 2016-2021 period. This is reflected in the Audit of Inequalities Action Plan (see appendix 4 of the Equality Scheme).</p>
EQIAs 2015-2016	<p>During the reporting period a programme of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) concluded. These EQIAs were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. EQIA on the Policy Review of the flying of the Union Flag from Parliament Buildings.</li> <li>2. EQIA on the Engagement Strategy</li> <li>3. Digital First EQIA</li> </ol> <p>Details of these EQIAs can be found at <a href="http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/publications/equality-screening-and-equality-impact-assessments-eqias/">http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/publications/equality-screening-and-equality-impact-assessments-eqias/</a></p>
Draft Disability Action Plan 2016-2021	<p>The draft Disability Action Plan covers the period 2016-2021 and pre-consultation with Directorates took place during drafting of the current plan. As per guidance issued by the ECNI, and commitments given in the Northern Ireland Assembly Equality Scheme, a 12-week consultation with stakeholders and the general public is currently underway and will conclude on 10 June 2016. Details of the consultation can be found at <a href="http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/publications/equality-screening-and-equality-impact-assessments-eqias/">http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-</a></p>

	<a href="http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/disability-action-plan1/">assembly/corporate-information/policies/disability-action-plan1/</a>
Draft Good Relations Action Plan 2016-2021	The draft Good Relations Action Plan covers the period 2016-2021 and pre-consultation with Directorates took place during drafting of the current plan. As per guidance issued by the ECNI, and commitments given in the Northern Ireland Assembly Equality Scheme, a 12-week consultation with stakeholders and the general public is currently underway and will conclude on 10 June 2016. Details of the consultation can be found at <a href="http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/good-relations-action-plan/">http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/good-relations-action-plan/</a>
Gender Action Plan 2016-2018	The Gender Action Plan sets out actions and measures to promote gender equality within the Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat. It is a cross-directorate plan which covers the entire organisation for a two-year period, 2016-18. A staff consultation concluded on 8 January 2016 and the Assembly Commission agreed the Action Plan for implementation at their meeting of 3 March 2016.
Connections project 2015-2016	<p>The Northern Ireland Assembly completed work on a project called Connections which aimed to promote dialogue between decision makers and young people. It was funded by the European funding stream Erasmus+. The project ran between February 2015 and February 2016. The Assembly recruited 36 young people, aged between 16 and 18, from across Northern Ireland. The participants were challenged to research an issue of their choice and communicate their findings to the Assembly. The project was designed to build the research and communication skills of the participants. There were also benefits for elected Members as they had the opportunity to engage with young people from a wide range of backgrounds including those from 'hard to reach' groups.</p> <p>The group decided to focus on the issue of mental health. After talking with experts in the field and doing preliminary research the participants agreed to narrow their focus to 3 areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health services</li> <li>• The role of education in mental health</li> <li>• Mental health in the family and community</li> </ul> <p>They made 3 films (launched to coincide with World Mental Health Day) and presented their findings to MLAs on 3 Assembly Committees.</p>

**Examples of service delivery made during the reporting period**

<b>Section 75 Category</b>	<b>Promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations</b>
<p>Age (Young People)</p> <p><b>Race to Stormont</b></p>	<p>The Education Service launched a new election activity for young people from ages 11 to 16+. 'Race to Stormont 2016' has been produced in partnership with the multimedia and curriculum teams at the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).</p> <p>In the resource, Committee Chairs talk about some of the issues considered by the Assembly, and teachers' notes provide opportunities for more in-depth learning about topics such as mental health and cyber-bullying. Animations explain what happens during an election campaign, how the STV (single transferable vote) system works and what happens after the election, including the operation of 'Hondt'. Further information can be found at <a href="http://education.niassembly.gov.uk/racetostormont/">http://education.niassembly.gov.uk/racetostormont/</a>.</p>
<p>Age (Young People)</p> <p><b>Connections Project</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the summer of 2014, the Assembly applied to the European Union's Erasmus + funding stream. The €50,000 award enabled the Assembly to develop a youth engagement project.</li> <li>• The project, entitled 'Connections' started in April 2015 and finished its work in January 2016 and gave 36 young people from a variety of backgrounds the opportunity to actively participate in democratic life by working closely with the Assembly on an issue of importance to them.</li> <li>• The participants chose 'mental health' and spent a week in August 2015 producing three short films on various aspects of the issue.</li> </ul> <p>The Northern Ireland Assembly screened three films, made by young people, on the important theme of mental health. The films were made as part of the project 'Connections', which was funded through the EU's Erasmus+ programme and involved young people working with MLAs and mental health agencies.</p> <p>The research that underpins the films was carried out by the participants and will be presented to a number of Assembly Committees later this year. Speaker of the Assembly, Mitchel McLaughlin MLA, who introduced the programme said: "I am very pleased to screen the films that have come about through an innovative partnership between young people and the Assembly, made possible by a grant from the Erasmus + programme.</p> <p>"The issue of mental health is extremely important; we have 25% more mental illness than in the rest of the UK—this is something that touches all of us; young people, our communities and our local representatives.</p>

	"We hope that this project will strengthen democracy by giving young people an opportunity to influence decision-making on an issue that concerns them and concerns all of us."
Age (Young People) <b>Let's Talk Politics</b>	Let's Talk Politics (various locations)  A series of successful 'Let's Talk Politics' events aimed at sixth form students from schools across different constituencies took place where participants were able to quiz their local political representatives on the issues that matter to them and their local communities.
Age (Young People) <b>Commonwealth Day</b>	Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, and President of the Assembly Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Mitchel McLaughlin MLA, hosted the annual event in March 2015 to mark Commonwealth Day in Parliament Buildings. The theme of Commonwealth Day was "Young Commonwealth" and the event, held in conjunction with "Rock the Vote", focused on encouraging young people to participate and get involved in the political and democratic process. In his remarks to the youth audience, Speaker McLaughlin spoke of the potential that those brought up during the peace process can bring to local politics. <a href="http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/news-and-media/press-releases/democracy-needs-young-people-to-get-involved-says-speaker/">http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/news-and-media/press-releases/democracy-needs-young-people-to-get-involved-says-speaker/</a>
Age (older people) <b>International day of older people</b>	Assembly hosts debate to mark international day of older people  On 1 October 2015 a debate involving members of the <u>Age Sector Platform</u> and the <u>Northern Ireland Youth Forum</u> has took place in the Assembly Chamber. The event, which was hosted by the Speaker of the Assembly, Mitchel McLaughlin, marked the International Day of Older People and focused on how the skills and experience of older people can be transferred to the younger generation. <a href="http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/news-and-media/press-releases/assembly-hosts-debate-to-mark-international-day-of-older-people/">http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/news-and-media/press-releases/assembly-hosts-debate-to-mark-international-day-of-older-people/</a>
Men and Women generally <b>Assembly Women's week</b>	The Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Mitchel McLaughlin MLA, welcomed members of the public to the Assembly's events for its first <u>Women's Week</u> which began on 7 March 2016 and continued throughout the week. The events were all built around the theme of supporting and increasing the participation of women in all spheres of public life and included a range of panel events and a screening of the film 'Suffragette' which tells of the struggle to get votes for women. Speaker McLaughlin said: "Highlighting the need for more women in the Assembly and the wider public sphere has been a priority for me since becoming Speaker. The current level of 23 women MLAs out of a total of 108 is the best the Assembly has achieved since 1998 but is still totally imbalanced compared to the fact that 51% of our population is female. Addressing that requires positive effort and a focus on the barriers women face. The events that make up Assembly Women's Week cover a number of different areas including looking at the obstacles to women contributing to public life

	<p>in greater numbers and recognising the many role models of great female achievement which exist locally.”</p> <p>The Women’s Week events programme can be accessed via the following link <a href="http://assemblyweek.com/">http://assemblyweek.com/</a></p>
<p>Men and Women generally</p> <p><b>International Women’s Day</b></p>	<p>On 6 March 2015 the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly hosted an event in Parliament Buildings to mark International Women's Day. The Speaker introduced a discussion with Dame Rosemary Butler, Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales, who had accepted an invitation from the Speaker to discuss her own successful campaign to encourage more women into public life.</p> <p>In his own speech, the Speaker outlined that he was considering how he might encourage party political consensus on wider Assembly reform which would be beneficial towards increasing the gender balance of the Assembly. The Speaker also revealed that he had written to Party Leaders and the Committee of Procedures to ask them to consider introducing a measure which would increase greater female participation in the team of Speaker and Deputy Speakers after the next Assembly election. Extracts from Speaker McLaughlin's speech are below:</p> <p>"On Monday, Parliament Buildings will be lit up to mark International Women's Day. That will serve as a backdrop to a debate in the Assembly on a report from the Assembly and Executive Review Committee on Women in Politics. It will be an important debate. All of us acknowledge that there are still too few women in the Assembly and we need to look at what more we can all do to create a better gender balance in future mandates.”</p>
<p>Men and Women generally</p> <p><b>Gender Project</b></p>	<p>Continued participation in Business in the Community’s three-year Gender Project, which supports organisations to increase gender diversity, shift workplace behaviours and create enabling workplaces for men and women.</p>
<p>Men and Women generally</p> <p><b>Transgender Policy</b></p>	<p>Initial discussions have taken place in the development of a transgender policy to address both managing and supporting staff and visitors at Parliament Buildings.</p>
<p>Disability</p> <p><b>Assembly charity of the year</b></p>	<p>On 17 September 2015 the Assembly announced that Positive Futures had been chosen as its charity of the year. Positive Futures is the leading local charity for people with a learning disability, acquired brain injury or autistic spectrum condition. The charity supports children, young people and adults with such conditions and their families in Northern Ireland. It is dedicated to ensuring that everyone has a role to play in our society; and that learning disabilities of any kind should not prevent them from full and active participation. The Assembly is very pleased to be able to help them with their important work.</p>
<p>Disability</p>	<p>The Education Service conducts focus groups on behalf of Assembly Committees. The Research and Information Service (RaISe) has developed a framework for selecting a broad cross-section of the</p>

<b>Assembly Committee Focus Groups</b>	youth population. The framework will continue to ensure that children who attend special schools participate in every consultation.
<b>Disability Youth Congress</b>	Approximately 90 young people took part in the annual sitting of the Northern Ireland Youth Congress in the Assembly Chamber on 25 November 2015. Participants came from across Northern Ireland and included young people with a range of special educational needs (ADHD, Asperger's syndrome, autism). Young people from Mencap also participated in the debate.
<b>Disability Education Films</b>	The Education Service has created a number of short films which aim to explain the work of the Assembly to young people and encourage them to engage with its work. Videos have been subtitled to broaden the accessibility of the resources to young people who have hearing impairments.
<b>Disability Programme of works</b>	Additional work in the Assembly The Commission has approved, during the reporting period, a range of works to improve access for those with disabilities within Parliament Buildings This includes relocating the retail outlet to allow for improved ramped access from the lower ground floor to the ground floor, fire safety modifications to the lifts and changes to the counter in the 'Members' Bar'. The Commission has also approved a door control system to allow for automatic opening of interior doors on the basement, ground floor and first floor levels.
<b>Disability External Events</b>	Assembly Commission secretariat staff were invited to speak at a number of events during the reporting period in relation to our work in the area of disability. This included: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's 'Disability Access Day 2016'</li> <li>2. Disability Action Plans implementation scheme update event</li> <li>3. Equality plans and best practice events hosted by ECNI</li> <li>4. National Autistic Society National Conference</li> <li>5. We also participated in a short film made for ECNI as part of their Disability Action Plan best practice guide</li> </ol>
<b>Disability Awards</b>	The Assembly Commission retained the following awards, on completion of its annual assessment: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Action on Hearing Loss Award (standards at Annexe 1)</li> <li>2. Autism Award from National Autistic Society (standards at Annexe 1)</li> </ol>
<b>Good Relations Lecture on the Irish Famine</b>	To mark the 175 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Irish Famine the Speaker as Chair of the Assembly Commission hosted a lecture by Dr Gerard McAtasney from Queens University. The lecture took place on Monday 21 September 2015 in the Senate Chamber.
<b>Good Relations Lighting of Parliament Buildings</b>	On 5 March 2015 the Assembly Commission announced that it had agreed four days for the lighting of Parliament Buildings. Under the Commission's external lighting policy, the Commission can agree up to four days to light up Parliament Buildings each year. A limited number of additional days each year will also be considered by the



	<p>Commission on request from charitable, community or non-profit organisations or in relation to specific events.</p> <p>The four days on which the Commission have agreed to light the building are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9th March (purple) to mark International Women's Day</li> <li>• 17th March (green) to mark St Patrick's Day</li> <li>• 12th July (orange)</li> <li>• 11th November (red) to mark Remembrance Day</li> </ul> <p>The Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, and Chair of the Assembly Commission, Mitchel McLaughlin MLA said: "As the home of the Assembly, Parliament Buildings should set a lead in demonstrating respect to all sections of our community. I therefore commend the very constructive role Assembly Commission members have played in reaching consensus on this list of days on which the Building will be lit...The fact that on these days "the house on the hill" will be seen lit up from miles around will I hope send a positive message of the agreement that is possible and that deserves credit."</p>
Good Relations <b>Community Relations and Cultural Awareness Week</b>	As part of Community Relations and Cultural Diversity Week, the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Mitchel McLaughlin MLA, hosted an event "One Assembly, Many Peoples" to celebrate the diversity of the community. The Speaker used his speech to highlight the need for the membership of the Assembly to be more representative of the community and revealed that he had written to Party Leaders to ask them to be mindful of that while selection processes are conducted for the next Assembly election.
Good Relations <b>Visitors survey</b>	A number of visitors' surveys were conducted during the reporting period to assess visitors' views of Good Relations at Parliament Buildings based on their experience during their visit. This information informed the Commission's Audit of Inequalities research which was conducted during the reporting period.
Good Relations <b>Royal British Legion Event</b>	On 29 February 2016 Mitchel McLaughlin MLA, Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, held a reception in Parliament Buildings for the Royal British Legion. The reception was attended by around 150 members of the Legion and MLAs. <a href="http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/news-and-media/press-releases/speaker-mclaughlin-recognises-role-of-royal-british-legion/">http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/news-and-media/press-releases/speaker-mclaughlin-recognises-role-of-royal-british-legion/</a>
Good Relations <b>Irish Champion Translation of website</b>	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 will also be translated into Irish.
Good Relations <b>Perspectives on Series</b>	In April 2012, the Assembly Commission agreed a policy to manage how historic anniversaries would be marked with official events in Parliament Buildings throughout the decade of centenaries. The policy established the 'Perspectives On...' series and included a process and principles to agree which anniversaries should be marked and how. The policy requires the Commission at the start of

	<p>each year to approve the nature of the events to mark the anniversaries which it has already agreed</p> <p><b>“Lecture on the Easter Rising and the Complexity of Remembering”</b></p> <p>On the 14 March 2016, to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Easter Rising, the Speaker of the Assembly, Mitchel McLaughlin MLA hosted a lecture in Parliament Buildings on the 1916 Easter Rising, with a lecture by the Rev Dr Johnston McMaster of the Irish School of Ecumenics.</p>
All Categories	<p><b>Equality Screening Programme</b> The programme of equality screening continued during the reporting period and results were published on the Assembly website each quarter (in line with Equality Commission guidance) <a href="http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporateinformation/publications/equality-screening-and-equality-impact-assessments-eqias/">http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporateinformation/publications/equality-screening-and-equality-impact-assessments-eqias/</a> The equality screening form is kept under continuous review.</p> <p><b>Assembly Oral and Written Questions</b> During the reporting period the Equality and Good Relations Unit continued to provide draft answers to Assembly oral and written questions regarding equality and good relations issues. This process allows MLAs to scrutinise policies and events directly relating to Parliament Buildings in the context of the Assembly Commission’s Section 75 and Good Relations obligations.</p> <p><b>Knowledge Exchange Seminars 2015-2016</b></p> <p><b>“Promoting evidence-led policy and law-making within Northern Ireland”</b> – that is the underlying aim of the Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS). KESS is the first of its kind in the United Kingdom, formally partnering a legislative arm of government – the Assembly - with academia. Aiming to encourage debate and improve understanding, KESS provides a forum to present and disseminate academic research findings in a straightforward format, on issues that are relevant to the Programme for Government. It seeks to bring the findings to the attention of key participants and decision-makers in the policy and law-making processes in Northern Ireland, such as MLAs and Assembly committees, as well as the wider public sector.</p>

- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2015-16 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

The Commission’s 2012 –2016 Equality Action Plan is attached at Annexe 4. The updated 2016-2021 Action Plan is appended at Annexe 3 and the underpinning research to support the Audit of Inequalities can be found at Annexe 5.

- 3** Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2015-16 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

x      Yes                      ☐      No (go to Q.4)                      ☐      Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

The Assembly Commission consulted on proposals to introduce a Gender Action Plan for secretariat staff covering the 2016-2018 period. Following a series of pre consultation meetings, research, workshops and a guest speaker session held during 2015, a formal consultation took place with staff and trade union side (TUS) which concluded on 8 January 2016. On 3 March 2016 the Assembly Commission approved the Gender Action Plan for secretariat staff resulting in the new policy and timescales being implemented across Assembly directorates.

- 3a** With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

The introduction of a Gender Action Plan is expected to impact positively on staff across the NI Assembly secretariat as the action plan aims to address gender equality which will impact on both men and women positively.

In March 2014, the Northern Ireland Assembly's Research and Information Service (RaISe) produced a report entitled 'Perceptions of barriers to gender equality in the Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat.' This paper presented findings of a survey on perceptions of barriers to gender equality amongst Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat staff. In addition to the consideration of data, a literature review and further research reports, exploring improving the gender balance at senior levels through learning and development and the gender composition of the NI Assembly workforce, advice was also sought from the Equality Commission for NI and the Commissioner for Public Appointments in the development of actions within the Gender Action Plan.

The difference that will be made for individuals (Men and Women generally) through the implementation of the Gender Action Plan will be through the aims of the action plan which are:

1. To develop and implement policies/strategies/actions to remove barriers, actual and perceived, to gender equality within the organisation;
2. To increase women's participation at decision-making level in the Secretariat, particularly at a senior level;
3. To foster a culture of awareness and understanding of gender issues and gender equality within the organisation;
4. To have in place a suite of policies which:
  - are gender-sensitive

PART A

- promote gender equality
- reflect good practice
- comply with legislation

**3b** What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(tick all that apply)*

- ☐ As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy *(please give details):*
- ☐ As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details):*
- ☐ As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details):*
- ☐ As a result of changes to access to information and services *(please specify and give details):*
- x Other *(please specify and give details):*

The changes occurred due to a number of factors which included trends identified in the Article 55 and 52 returns, discussions with senior management and their commitment to gender equality and changes to the organisational structure.

**Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures**

**Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)**

**4** Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2015-16 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- x Yes, organisation wide
- ☐ Yes, some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- ☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Job descriptions within the Assembly Secretariat are generic in nature and may not make specific reference to Section 75. However, lists of duties for posts reflect compliance with Assembly Commission policies which will inherently include Section 75.

- 5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2015-16 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- ☒ Yes, organisation wide
- ☐ Yes, some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- ☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Performance Management System assesses compliance with the Corporate Values. The Value of "One Team" makes reference to showing mutual respect for all and valuing diversity and to be fair and consistent in the treatment of the team and other colleagues. A mandatory section 75 awareness session, in partnership with the Centre for Applied Learning CAL, was launched through an online learning package on the Assembly's Moodle platform.

- 6 In the 2015-16 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? *(tick all that apply)*

- ☐ Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- ☒ Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- ☐ Yes, in some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's ongoing corporate plan
- ☐ No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2013-14 report
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Commission's Corporate Strategy covered the period from April 2012 through to March 2016. When the Strategy was originally developed it had been intended that it would cover the final three years of the 2011-15 Assembly mandate and the first year of the 2015-19 mandate. However the passage of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014 had the effect of extending the 2011-15 Assembly by a further year. Therefore in order to cover the first year of the new mandate it has been necessary to

update and extend the existing Corporate Strategy. The Corporate Strategy for the Northern Ireland Assembly covers the time period 2012-2017 (Revised 2015).

The Corporate Strategy has nine aims, including having equality and corporate governance arrangements in place which command confidence and which facilitate compliance with statutory responsibilities.

### Equality action plans/measures

**7** Within the 2015-16 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:

39

Actions ongoing:

1

Actions to commence:

0

Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

As provided for at question 2 the Commission's 2012 –2016 Equality Action Plan is attached at Annexe 4. All actions detailed for the 2012-2016 period were completed.

An example of an action included in the Equality Action Plan was that of the EQIA on the review of the flying of the Union flag at Parliament Buildings.

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.

At this meeting, the Commission agreed by majority that 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 full report, which contains information on the EQIA process, the consultation and recommendations, can be accessed here <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/review-of-the-policy-on-the-flying-of-the-union-flag-at-parliament-buildings/>

**8** Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2015-16 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

Not applicable

- 9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2015-16 reporting period, the following have been identified: *(tick all that apply)*

- ☐ Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality
- ☐ Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way
- ☐ Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities
- x Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

### Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)

- 10 Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: *(tick one box only)*

- ☐ All the time                      x                      Sometimes                      ☐ Never

- 11 Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2015-16 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

During the reporting period 3 EQIAs were consulted on. These were the Engagement Strategy, Digital First and the Review of the flying of the Union flag at Parliament Buildings.

An example of good practice in consultation: Review of the flying of the Union flag at Parliament Buildings EQIA.

A pre-consultation plan was drafted and a consultation strategy to contribute to meeting the provisions of Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and allow the appointed contract holders to progress the aim of the contract; *“To undertake a thorough and systematic analysis of the policy and options to determine the extent of differential impact upon the groups within the nine equality categories and whether that impact is adverse.”*

The approach to pre-consultation on the EQIA of the review of the policy on the Flying of the Union Flag at Parliament Buildings can be found on the Assembly website at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/review-of-the-policy-on-the-flying-of-the-union-flag-at-parliament-buildings/> The approach to formal consultation on the EQIA of the review of the policy on the Flying of the Union Flag at Parliament Buildings can also be found at this page.

The consultation process, which included pre-consultation, targeted three main groups of stakeholders, which were: Equality Scheme consultees, the general public and users of Parliament Buildings including Members, Secretariat staff, party support staff, contract staff and visitors.

A risk register was put in place for this area of work and was reviewed on a regular basis by Secretariat staff.

The aim of the consultation strategy was to ensure that stakeholders in each of the equality categories affected by the policy were informed of the opportunity to comment and were provided with a fair opportunity to submit their views.

The Commission's Equality Scheme includes a commitment to ensuring that the formal consultation period lasts for a minimum of twelve weeks to allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves as part of the process of forming a view. As this formal consultation process took place over a period when consultees were less able to respond, i.e. over the Christmas break, fourteen weeks was allowed for consultation.

Pre-consultation sought to serve several purposes:

- To inform key stakeholders about the EQIA process and the forthcoming formal consultation;
- To familiarise them with some of the key issues that the EQIA will consider;
- To obtain their perceptions of the key issues and, in particular, the need for changes to the current policy (without prejudice to any comments they may wish to make during the formal consultation period);
- To identify any problem areas that may need special attention during the development of the Draft EQIA Consultation Report.

#### Formal Consultation

The formal consultation strategy set out the approach to consultation on the EQIA of the Review of the Policy on the Flying of the Union Flag at Parliament Buildings. The strategy included plans for a wide ranging consultation process with the public and also users of Parliament Buildings (including Secretariat staff, party staff, contract staff and visitors). The aim of the consultation strategy was to ensure that stakeholders in each of the equality categories affected by the policy were informed of the opportunity to comment and were provided with a fair opportunity to submit their views.

A number of methods were used to inform consultees of the EQIA process and as it is good practice to accept responses in the format most suited to the respondent documentation provided contact details in various formats including:

- email
- post
- telephone
- textphone
- SMS
- social media (facebook and twitter).

- 12** In the 2015-16 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees:** *(tick all that apply)*



PART A

- ☒ 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/out of the consultation
- ☐ Internet discussions
- ☐ Telephone consultations
- ☐ Other (*please specify*):

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

The Assembly Commission has benefited from carrying out a number of pre-consultation exercises which have informed and focused the overall consultation process and its outcomes.

- 13** Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2015-16 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

☒ Yes                      ☐ No                      ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Equality Unit held a pre-consultation meeting with its External Disability Advisory Group and a number of organisations representing those with disabilities in relation to the development of its Draft Disability Action Plan 2016-2021 and consultation methods.

The Education Service worked with the Education Committee to consult young people on the Inquiry into School Inspections and the Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill, raising awareness of both the issues and how the Assembly works. Focus groups were held with schools, including special schools and an Irish medium school, and youth groups.

The Education Service worked with 36 young people as part of an Erasmus + 'Connections' project to investigate and raise awareness of the issue of mental health. The young people consulted young people and stakeholder organisations, using interviews, focus groups and an online survey (which got 2,300 responses). They made 3 films (launched to coincide with World Mental Health Day) and presented their findings to MLAs on 3 Assembly Committees.

<http://education.niassembly.gov.uk/youth-engagement>

The Education Service posts 'latest news' articles on its dedicated website to raise awareness of issues and laws passed by the Assembly, e.g. mental health and the Addressing Bullying in Schools Bill.

It also raised awareness of a wide range of issues through a new online election resource called *Race to Stormont 2016*, which includes video interviews with Committee Chairs, each talking about 3 issues considered by their Committee and of interest/relevance to young people. Schools and the youth sector were informed about the new resource.

<http://education.niassembly.gov.uk/racetostormont/>

The Education Service advertised its services/projects widely using mailshots to schools, the C2K noticeboard and E-Pipe (youth sector organisations).

The Outreach Unit delivered awareness training to potential consultees from all s75 backgrounds on how to engage with the Assembly through the 'How the Assembly Works' programme, the work of Committees through its 'Insight into' series and the Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust (NIABT) briefings. It targeted specific s75 groups through bespoke events such as the Intergenerational Parliament, Pensioners Parliament and 'One Assembly; Many People' for Community Relations Week. The Outreach Unit also ran a week-long series of events for Assembly Women's Week to engage women with the Northern Ireland Assembly and its work.

Assembly Community Connect also launched a new session in 2015 – Committee Witness Training – to support consultees from all s75 groups when engaging with committees.

Assembly Community Connect and the NIABT have developed a database of over 2000 contacts from across all s75 groups to which it communicates the work of the Assembly.

**14** Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2015-16 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

☒ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not applicable – no commitment to review

#### **Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

Consultations and screening of Assembly Commission policies can be found at the URLs below: -

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

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/disability-action-plan1/>

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/policies/good-relations-action-plan/>

**15**

Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year (*as recorded in screening reports*):

11

- 16** Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2015-16:

11	Policy consultations conducted with <b>screening</b> assessment presented.
0	Policy consultations conducted <b>with an equality impact assessment</b> (EQIA) presented.
3	Consultations for an <b>EQIA</b> alone.

- 17** Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:

Please see Assembly Commission equality consultations using the link below.

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

- 18** Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? *(tick one box only)*

x Yes ☐ No concerns were raised ☐ No ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

During the reporting period the Assembly's Childcare Allowance Scheme was screened out with mitigations. The Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) and a member of staff questioned the screening decision and stated that an EQIA should have been completed. Two formal complaints were received. The Assembly Commission gave a commitment to rescreen the policy. The policy has now been rescreened and the Assembly Commission agreed that two further mitigating measures would be introduced with effect from 1 November 2015.

#### **Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

- 19** Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2015-16 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

x Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Results of EQIAs can be found at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/publications/equality-screening-and-equality-impact-assessments-eqias/>

**Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

- 20** From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2015-16 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes ☒ No, already taken place  
☐ No, scheduled to take place at a later date ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details:

- 21** In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The monitoring of Article 55 and 52 returns, alongside other factors, contributed to the development of the 2016-2018 Gender Action Plan as discussed at question 3.

- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2015-16 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

Not applicable

- 23** Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

A number of pre-consultation exercises have occurred during 2015/ 2016 which have gone on to inform and focus full consultation exercises that have occurred/are occurring in specific areas. An example is the pre-consultation with key stakeholders of the 2016-2021 Disability Action Plan (DAP). Formal consultation is currently ongoing.

**Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)**

- 24** Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2015-16, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

## PART A

In addition to internal Learning and Development requests, the Learning and Development team have facilitated the following internal training for staff events in Parliament Buildings:

	<b>Title of Training</b>	<b>Organisation/ Provider</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Numbers attended</b>
	Alcohol & Drugs (Facts & Effects)	<b>Addiction NI</b>	16 Jan 15	Up to 25
	Start to Sign	<b>Action on Hearing Loss</b>	January 15	17
	Equality Screening	<b>John Kremer</b>	February 16	18
	Dignity at Work	<b>MOODLE COURSE (On-line)</b>	Launched March 15	Mandatory
	Protecting Information L1	<b>MOODLE COURSE (On-line)</b>	June 15	For Record Managers
	1 <sup>st</sup> Aid Refresher Training	<b>British Red Cross</b>	8-9 Oct 15	12
	Fire Warden and Searchers Training	<b>DFP Fire Safety Unit</b>	30 Oct 15	8
	Building Personal Resilience	<b>Carecall</b>	4 Dec 15	19
	Building Personal Resilience	<b>Carecall</b>	11 Dec 15	20
	The 'C's' of Change	<b>University of Ulster Business School</b>	13 Nov 15	17
	Social Media Mop up	<b>Ineqe</b>	27 Nov 15	10
	Child and baby First Aid	<b>British Red Cross</b>	8 Jan 16	13
	Child and baby First Aid	<b>British Red Cross</b>	22 Jan 16	14
	Building Personal Resilience	<b>Carecall</b>	29 Jan 16	12
	Social Media Mop up	<b>Ineqe</b>	4 Feb 16	18
	Being confident: Knowing your worth & selling yourself	<b>Karen Hunter</b>	5 Feb 16	19
	Child and baby First Aid	<b>BritishRedCross</b>	19 Feb 16	15

PART A

	Paediatric First Aid (2 day course)	<b>BritishRedCross</b>	3-4 Mar 16	12
	Child and baby First Aid	<b>BritishRedCross</b>	11 Mar 16	15
	The mindful manager	<b>Carecall</b>	11 Mar 16	Up to 25
	Child and baby First Aid	<b>BritishRedCross</b>	16 Mar 16	15
	Strategies for managing change	<b>University of Ulster</b>	23 Mar 16	Up to 25
	Section 75: Equality	<b>Moodle – CAL</b>	Launched	Mandatory 107 to date
	Contract Management	<b>S Lewington</b>	March 16	12
	Records Management Training	<b>M Dalton</b>	Feb onwards	35 approx

In addition to formal training, information/awareness sessions have also been delivered to staff in the following:

	<b>Title of Training</b>	<b>Organisation/ Provider</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Numbers completed training/ registered</b>
	Why Weight	<b>Action Cancer</b>	Jan – May 15	19
	Dealing with Bereavement	<b>CRUISE</b>	16 Oct 15	16
	Making a Will	<b>Business in the Community</b>	6 Nov 15	24
	Moodmatters	<b>Aware-NI</b>	15 Dec 15	10
	Breast and Cervical Cancer Awareness	<b>Women's Network</b>	15 Jan 16	14
	Bowel Cancer Awareness	<b>Women's Network</b>	22 Jan 16	17
	Prostate Cancer Awareness	<b>Action Cancer</b>	29 Jan 16	15

## Living Life to the Full

The Learning and Development team are facilitating two 6 week courses for Assembly staff. The course is entitled Living Life to the Full (LLtF) and is being delivered by Aware NI. The commencement date was February 2016. LLtF is a self-help programme based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) concepts, which focuses on thinking, behaviour and feelings. The programme has been developed by Dr Chris Williams, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Glasgow, who is a recognised expert in developing self-help resources based on CBT. At present there are 34 staff enrolled for the courses.

### **Women in Public Life**

The Learning and Development team are supporting applications for 5 female Assembly staff to take part in the Women in Public Life 2016 programme with PoliticsPlus.

**25** Please provide any examples of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

- All training delivered within the Assembly is set up with desired course objectives. Staff are then required to undertake an evaluation of each training using an on-line evaluation system on the Assembly itrent after completion of the event. This on-line facility has been developed to seek the views of staff in relation to training objectives being met;
- Staff taking part in 'Start to Sign' reported an increased knowledge, awareness and recognition of Deaf and Hard of Hearing people;
- Staff attending the mental health masterclasses have indicated that each of the sessions was worthwhile but that further training was required in the field. Learning and Development have responded by sourcing further training in specific areas to support staff;
- Staff attending the 'Building Confidence' workshop made some of the following comments:
  - *Very helpful and enjoyable session (I was so tired when it started and the room was so warm I thought I wouldn't be able to stay awake but I had no difficulty – thank you!)*
  - *Enjoyable course – First day of the rest of my life*
  - *I really enjoyed this course, the attendees were all very interested and participated well – Brilliant!*
  - *Great course, great coach, interesting discussions and outcomes and good techniques and explanations*
  - *Very helpful course!*
  - *Great session*
  - *Enjoyed the course, very interesting, well delivered*

### **The extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme:**

In partnership with the Centre for Applied Learning (CAL), the Learning and Development team have released an on-line training course on Section 75 to all staff to complete by 31 March 2016. In conjunction with the e-learning package, copies of the Equality Scheme, associated action plan and other relevant resources have also been made available to all staff. The Learning and Development team intend to develop a further e-learning package on DDA as a mandatory training course for all staff.

The Learning and Development team respond to requests from staff who are dealing with mental health concerns and proactively source additional support and training. A wellbeing survey was conducted with all Assembly staff in 2015/16 and has resulted in defining future training needs as part of the People Service Plan for 2016/17.

The Gender Action plan will also be utilised in outlining future training needs for Assembly staff.

Further training is made available on request to those staff involved in:

- The assessment of policies;
- The complaints procedure; and
- The consultation and monitoring process.

#### **Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)**

- 26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2015-16, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

During 2015-16 we have through active participation in partnerships and networks, sought to improve our understanding of any issues and needs that may impact access to information. We undertake regular consultation with, and seek feedback from, these partnerships and formal and informal networks to assist the Assembly in assessing and monitoring information, products and services in relation to equality issues and their impact.

We also use compliments and complaints received about information or services to identify the impact of good practices and any adverse impact of existing practices.

The NI Assembly websites adhere to W3C web usability standards ensuring that it is accessible to people with disabilities. These requirements are checked regularly and when required changes are made. The website is now fully responsive and therefore more accessible to all users regardless of the devices being used to access the site, and the website includes an accessibility section.

The Assembly published its Digital First Strategy in 2015 and carried out an EQIA from July to October. The aim of the Digital First Strategy is to use digital platforms and channels to create and provide rich content for external and internal stakeholders enabling them to participate, interact and engage with the Assembly. We will do this by embracing digital activity and increasing skills internally to ensure that we continue to meet the corporate aim of ensuring that the Assembly and its work are accessible to all and communicated widely.



Regardless of the changes being brought about by the Assembly's Digital First Strategy we continue to provide information in alternative formats (braille, easy read, audio, large print etc.) including hard copy when requested for those people who are not able to access content online or who have difficulty accessing information via their PC, Tablet or Smartphone. We also have regular discussions with other legislatures and parliaments in the UK who are working on similar digital strategies and initiatives with particular regard to digital accessibility.

### Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

- 27** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2015-16?

Insert number here:

2

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

Please refer to question 18 above.

### Section 3: Looking Forward

- 28** Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

March 2021

- 29** Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

The Assembly Commission will focus on the implementation of its revised Equality Scheme, and new Equality, Good Relations and Disability Action Plans.

- 30** In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next (2015-16) reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

- ☐ Employment
- ☐ Goods, facilities and services
- ☐ Legislative changes
- ☐ Organisational changes/ new functions

PART A

☒ Nothing specific, more of the same

☐ Other (please state):

## PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

The Assembly Commission is currently consulting on its Draft Disability Action Plan (DAP) for the 2016-2021 period. The 2014-2015 return detailed 16 actions fully achieved and 2 partially achieved. Of the partially achieved actions, one has been achieved (Digital First EQIA) within the current reporting period and the further partially achieved action has been absorbed into a larger action in the new draft 2016-2021 DAP. This draft DAP is included at Annexe 6.

**1. Number of action measures** for this **reporting period** that have been:

**18**

Fully achieved

**1**

Partially achieved

**0**

Not achieved

**2. Please outline below details on all actions that have been fully achieved in the reporting period.**

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs <sup>i</sup>	Outcomes / Impact <sup>ii</sup>
National <sup>iii</sup>			
Regional <sup>iv</sup>	To continue to hold meetings of the external disability advisory group.	One full meeting was held within the reporting period. Individual meetings were also held between NIA and some disability organisations.	Input into issues such as strategy, access and policies.

PART B

Local <sup>v</sup>			
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2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Start to sign	Training session delivered by Action on Hearing Loss to 17 staff	Updated understanding and application to work
2	Dignity at Work	Mandatory on-line course issued to all staff (379 staff)	Updated understanding and application to work
3	EQIA workshops	Training session delivered to 12 staff	Updated understanding and application to work
4	Section 75: Equality	Mandatory on-line course issued to all staff (238 completed to date)	Updated understanding and application to work
5	Breast and Cervical Cancer Awareness	Training session delivered to 14 staff	Staff awareness raised
6	Bowel Cancer Awareness	Training session delivered to 17 staff	Staff awareness raised
7	Prostate Cancer Awareness	Training session delivered to 15 staff	Staff awareness raised

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Monitor of adjustments made	Signers provided for some events and Assembly Chamber	Events and Chamber motion made accessible to those who utilise signers.

PART B

2	To retain accreditation from the National Autistic Society	Full audit conducted	Accreditation retained and actions in place to make Parliament Buildings more accessible for users.
3	To retain Action on Hearing Loss accreditation	Full audit conducted	Accreditation retained and actions in place to make Parliament Buildings more accessible for users.
4	To record numbers of staff with a disability.	Audit undertaken	Allows measures to be put in place as necessary.
5	Continued implementation of the Northern Ireland Assembly guaranteed interview scheme	Complete	Accessibility for people with disabilities
6	To make Parliament Buildings accessible to all	Completion of work on the installation of ramps and upgrading of the external lighting.	Increase visibility and accessibility by users.
7	Assembly website	Adhere to W3C web usability standards ensuring that it is accessible to people with disabilities and outcomes of the Digital First Strategy.	Monitoring of complaints and compliments received.
8	Digital First EQIA	EQIA Completed	Identified actions implemented. Report can be found at <a href="http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/publications/equality-screening-and-equality-impact-assessments-eqias/">http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/about-the-assembly/corporate-information/publications/equality-screening-and-equality-impact-assessments-eqias/</a>

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to ‘**encourage others**’ to promote the two duties:

PART B

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1			
2			

2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1	To complete a draft disability action plan for the 2016-2021 period.	Draft actions identified for implementation following period of public consultation.	Increase in accessibility to the services and physical environment of Parliament Buildings
2			

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestonesvi / Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	Development of staff guides for staff			This action was absorbed into a larger action and is set out in the 2016-2021 draft DAP.

PART B

2				

4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1		
2		

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

Use of questionnaires, interviews, action plan review and feedback systems.

(b) Quantitative

Screening and EQIA processes have assisted in the delivery of the Digital First Strategy.

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

PART B

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

Please select

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation's annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

No



- 
- <sup>i</sup> **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.
- <sup>ii</sup> **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.
- <sup>iii</sup> **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments
- <sup>iv</sup> **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level
- <sup>v</sup> **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.
- <sup>vi</sup> **Milestones** – Please outline what part progress has been made towards the particular measures; even if full output or outcomes/ impact have not been achieved.

## **Annexe 1**

### **Louder Than Words Charter mark**

#### **Standard 1**

- Train Staff to communicate with Customers Deaf Awareness Training to be given to all frontline staff, Health & Safety/internal trainers and to be incorporated in induction courses. Peripheral staff to have basic deaf awareness briefings.
- Staff Accessing Further Information Staff working with deaf colleagues to have basic work based sign course and line managers of deaf staff to have received deaf awareness training Staff working with text phones to be trained in their use.

#### **Standard 2**

- Have Clear and Visible Deaf Awareness Polices. Equal Opportunities Policies to include deaf/disabled staff.
- Communication and Support Provision
- Accessibility of Policies and Communication
- Communication of Polices Any customer charters / policies to include deaf/disabled staff. Availability of policy. Customer Charters and internal policies must be easily available and in plain English.

#### **Standard 3**

- Provide Clear information about your products and services. Information must be easy to read and conform to plain English guidelines. (See attached leaflet)
- Written Information
- Web Based Information Website/intranet needs to be accessible and any video clips or audio components to have a text alternative
- Training, videos/promotional videos, and materials 100% of new videos to be subtitled. 100% of new videos aimed at deaf and disabled people to have sign language insert.

#### **Standard 4**

- Use appropriate equipment and maintain it correctly Deaf and hard of hearing staff must be assessed for equipment and provided with it as necessary.
- Text phones and Text - Relay Text phone must not be on answer-phone. 80% of customers must be satisfied with the equipment provided, e.g. text phones and induction loops
- Loop system Induction loops must be provided in 25% of meeting rooms, 50% of customer counter points and at main reception points. . Induction loops must be tested every 3 months and text phone at least every six months. Loop signs must be displayed wherever a loop sign is installed. Text phone numbers must be advertised on headed paper and on leaflets.

#### **Standard 5**

- Create a good listening environment.
- Signage must be clear, visible and well lit. 80% of customers must be satisfied that background noise levels are low, that signage is clear and lighting levels good enough for lip-reading. Visual alternatives must be provided for any audible announcements

### **Standard 6**

- Produce and follow clear health and safety procedures
- Evacuation plans must be clear, visible and easy to read. . 100% of deaf staff that cannot hear the fire alarm must have a vibrating pager. Flashing lights to be installed in remote areas where customers are left on their own.
- 100% Health and safety officers aware of issues around evacuation of deaf staff. Lifts to be equipped with either an amplified telephone or a notice advising of evacuation procedures.

### **Standard 7**

- Meet requests for communication support whenever possible 100% of key staff must be able to book communication support. 100% of the communication support you use must be registered with CACDP or SASLI (for Scotland). Organisations must offer a range of communication support including interpreters, lip speakers, note takers and speech to text or palantype. 100% of deaf and hard of hearing staff to be assessed for communication support as appropriate.
- Different forms of Language Service Professionals (LSP's) 80% of customers must be satisfied with the communication support provided.

### **Standard 8**

- Be comfortable and familiar with the service Text Relay provides. Staff must know how to use Text Relay Service. Text Relay service should be included in customer materials.

### **Standard 9**

- Consult customers and staff Customers and staff should be surveyed on an annual basis to check satisfaction with services offered. An Action Plan should be drawn up to ensure that concerns raised are dealt with
- Surveys

### **Standard 10**

- Be open about your employment practices
- Job description in plain English
- Recruitment and selection - Communication support must be available for 100% of interviews for deaf and hard of hearing candidates (as required). Internal job and promotion opportunities must be accessible to deaf and hard of hearing staff.
- Training and development - Line managers and teams of deaf and hard of hearing staff must have face-to-face deaf awareness training. Communication support must be offered to deaf and hard of hearing staff for all training courses. Deaf staff must be satisfied with any communication support provided for training courses.
- Appraisal and promotion
- Reasonable adjustments - 100% of deaf and hard of hearing staff should have Access to Work (or equivalent) assessment. At least 60% of staff should be satisfied with communication between them and their line manager.

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## Access Award (National Autistic Society) Standards

- **Standard 1. Train staff to communicate with customers**  
Training its staff in autism awareness is the first step to an organisation being truly autism aware and meeting the needs of all people.
- **Standard 2. Have clear and visible disability policies**  
It is important that an organisation's policies do not discriminate in any way against people with disabilities in particular autism. They must address the needs of people with autism to ensure that they have the same access to information and to employment as other people.
- **Standard 3. Provide clear information about your products and services.**  
Any materials that an organisation produces about its products and services need to be accessible to all persons. This includes brochures, leaflets, forms, fact sheets and videos. Some people may find it easier for information to be provided in plain English, online or through pictures etc.
- **Standard 4. Create a good listening environment**  
At reception, customer service points and meeting rooms, steps must be taken to reduce background noise where possible. It would be beneficial if a quiet room could be provided in the event that if someone needs a quiet moment prior to attending a meeting or event.
- **Standard 5. Produce and follow clear health and safety procedures**  
Fire, smoke and lift alarms must be accessible to all persons. Guidance should be provided in advance advising
- **Standard 6. Meet request for communication support whenever possible.**  
Communication support needs to be provided both for customers and staff.
- **Standard 7. Be comfortable and familiar with the services which NAS and Autism NI provide**
- **Standard 8. Consult customers and staff.**

To ensure that an organisation is providing the best service to all customers, service users, staff and job applicants, it is important that it regularly consults with them. This can be done either by running focus groups or by sending questionnaires. The areas consulted on should include quality of autism awareness, ease of accessing information and quality of any communication support provided.

- **Standard 9. Be open about your employment practices.**

Job opportunities should be accessible to people with autism. Care should be taken to ensure that job description and application forms are in plain English and without jargon or acronyms. All internal vacancies should be clearly displayed on notice boards and Intranets. Interviews for people with disabilities must be provided with the appropriate communication support as requested. Well before the interview, it should be established whether the candidate requires special assistance, and if so, what type.

- **Standard 10. Has Consideration been given to sensory issues**

Policies, procedures, local protocol & guidelines, planning and practise take into account the nature of sensory differences in people with autism



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

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**Barbara Love and Laura McCaughey**

# Review of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's Audit of Inequalities

## 1 Background

This paper presents a review of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's Audit of Inequalities (2011). The purpose of the 2011 Audit was to inform the development of a revised Equality Scheme (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 paper formally reviews the 2011 Audit of Inequalities.

The review was carried out by the Assembly's Research and Information Service (RaISe) and focuses on:

- Inequalities identified in the 2011 Audit and the steps taken by the Assembly Commission and Secretariat since then to address these inequalities; and,
- Equality data and information relevant to the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission that has been produced since the 2011 Audit.

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

While this paper presents the findings of a formal review, it is important to note that progress against the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Equality Scheme (2012-16) and associated action plan is reviewed regularly on a policy by policy basis. Progress is reported to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. As evidenced in the findings of this review, the Assembly Commission has taken a proactive role in tackling emerging inequalities. It is worth recognising that the complex inequalities identified in this review are already being considered and addressed by the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission.

## 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 Review<sup>1</sup>, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland published a revised guide to the two statutory duties.<sup>2</sup> 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 Audit of Inequalities between November 2010 and January 2011 and produced a revised Equality Scheme

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

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



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 are monitored and reviewed on an on-going basis, this paper formally reviews the 2011 Audit of Inequalities.

## 4 Progress since the 2011 Audit of Inequalities

This section considers the inequalities identified in the 2011 Audit and summarises some of the main actions undertaken since then to address them as well as on-going actions. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all activities undertaken by the Assembly Commission to address inequalities. It does, however, demonstrate that the Assembly Commission has invested considerable resources and made good progress in tackling the inequalities identified in the previous Audit.

### 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*

Since the 2011 Audit of Inequalities, steps have been taken to improve access for those with disabilities to Parliament Buildings or areas within Parliament Buildings. This has included the installation of access ramps at the front entrance to Parliament Buildings; the erection of Braille signage; Changing Places Facility;<sup>3</sup> improved access to the Chamber, voting lobbies and the public gallery; the production of British and Irish signed version of the tour of Parliament Buildings and a Braille tour map. These projects have been developed with input from key stakeholders including 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.

A number of actions are also on-going, such as the consideration of options to improve disability access to the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor of Parliament Buildings as part of The Roof Project, work around Digital First<sup>4</sup> and the implementation of recommendations from access audits.

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<sup>3</sup> This provides fully accessible public toilet facilities for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities. Changing places toilets include an adult-sized, height-adjustable changing bench, hoist and plenty of space

<sup>4</sup> Digital First aims to develop the Assembly's systems, workflows and procedures so that information and content can be created once and then re-used whenever and wherever it is required in the most suitable format. This project is undergoing an EQIA.

#### 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 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.

#### 4.1c Good Relations

The Northern Ireland Assembly's Education Service and Outreach Unit work with external organisations to encourage widespread participation in the education programme and the work of the Assembly. For example, the Education Service works with the Peace and Reconciliation Group on cross-community 'Let's Talk' events, which aim to bring young people from a wide variety of backgrounds together with elected politicians and community leaders. The 'Get Involved' events organised by the Outreach Unit are run by constituency, with MLAs from all Parties in attendance, and bring groups from all community backgrounds together.

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 currently carried out three times a year. This survey will be continued and will include questions regarding the flying of the Union Flag in the next round as part of the formal consultation of the EQIA on the Policy Review of the flying of the Union Flag at Parliament Buildings. The implementation of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's Good Relations Action Plan is also on-going and this is monitored and reported to SMG on a 6-monthly basis.

Assembly Questions, both oral and written are currently being screened for any Section 75 issues that may arise of relevance to the Assembly Commission.

#### 4.1d Participation

##### *Young people*

The 2011 Audit of Inequalities identified young people as being less involved in democracy. 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 groups<sup>5</sup>. They have also met with a small number of Early Years groups<sup>6</sup>. The visits programme is open to all schools including special schools.

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.

The Northern Ireland Assembly has also just been 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". The Education Service will establish a youth panel for Northern Ireland, which will give 36 young people the opportunity to actively participate in democratic life by working closely with the Northern Ireland Assembly. The youth panel will assist the Assembly in its work by representing the views of young people by consulting young people across Northern Ireland about the issues that concern them. The young people

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<sup>5</sup> Key Stage 1 covers years 3 and 4 at Primary school

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

involved will complete an inquiry into an issue chosen by the participants. The recruitment process will ensure the representation of young people from different community backgrounds (nationalist, unionist, other), different social backgrounds and those with disabilities.

### *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. Organised by Age Sector Platform, 2014 marks the fourth year of the Parliament.

### *Gender, disability and ethnic minorities*

The 2011 Audit also identified that women, people with disabilities, and ethnic minorities are all under-represented in public life. In 2013/14, Assembly Community Connect particularly focussed on these groups. Assembly Community Connect aims to:

- Create and deliver an outreach programme which mutually supports the Assembly, MLAs and the community and voluntary sector;
- Build capacity and skills through shared knowledge;
- Develop the community and voluntary sector's understanding of, and participation in, the structures and work of the Assembly;
- Develop MLAs' understanding of the work of the community and voluntary sector and to create understanding about the impact of public policy and decision making; and,

Work with the community and voluntary sector to create better understanding for MLAs through education and experience.

Assembly Community Connect has delivered a range of initiatives in support of these aims, particularly focusing on women, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities. A number of further actions for consideration have been identified. It was requested that women's groups should be afforded greater access to engage with MLAs, an area of work which ACC would aim to progress. The outcome of these discussions led to the following recommendations:

- a) Participation in International Women's Day;
- b) ACC to target specific women's groups and to develop channels of support conducive to facilitating the work they currently undertake;

- c) ACC to support the educational element of the Political Pop-Up Academy;
- d) In conjunction with Politics Plus, ACC to investigate the possibility of developing mentoring opportunities between MLAs and women in the community; and,
- e) ACC to liaise with Department of Social Development in respect of three key groups identified by ACC for support in 2014

It is also worth noting that the Assembly and Executive Review Committee is currently conducting an Inquiry into 'Women and Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly', the findings of which may have implications for the Assembly Commission. Internally, work is also underway in developing a Gender Action Plan for Secretariat staff.

### *Black and Minority Ethnic Parliament*

In association with the Northern Ireland Council on Ethnic Minorities, (NICEM), a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Get Involved and a Black and Minority Ethnic Parliament was held on 30th April. Nearly 100 delegates participated in the Parliament. This provided an opportunity for Members of the Black and Minority Ethnic community to question Ministers on issues important to them.

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

### 4.2a Recruitment and Selection

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. For example, 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. Consideration is also given to the use of welcome statements in job advertisements for under-represented groups where necessary. A welcome statement was used in 2010 for security officer posts:

*“However, as women and Roman Catholics are currently under represented in the workforce, applications would be particularly welcome from women and Roman Catholics. All applications for employment will be considered on the basis of merit.”*

#### 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, the commissioning of Carecall<sup>7</sup> to undertake a series of staff focus groups and meetings to better understand perceived inequalities in terms and conditions, the Positive Working Relations Initiative and the development of a 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 current review

This section considers new data and information since the 2011 Audit. A wide range of sources were considered, namely:

- The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Equality Scheme (2012-16), Audit of Inequalities (2011) and associated action plan;<sup>8</sup>
- Section 75 and Fair Employment monitoring data and the latest Article 55 Review;
- Data used to inform equality impact assessments;
- Minutes of meetings (Assembly Commission, Secretariat Management Group, and Disability Advisory Group meetings) since the introduction of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Equality Scheme (2012-16);
- Annual Reports to the Equality Commission;<sup>9</sup>
- Internal surveys including the Internal Good Relations Survey, Staff Survey, Survey of Services to Members and their Support staff 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;
- Feedback from key stakeholders and groups with an interest in equality;
- Feedback from visitors including the survey of Visitors to Parliament Buildings;
- Questions and complaints raised by MLAs, staff and the public;
- External research findings such the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey and

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<sup>7</sup> A commercial subsidiary of the Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health that provides services to improve the mental wellbeing of individuals and organisations.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/ABOUT-THE-ASSEMBLY/Corporate-Information/Policies/Equality-Scheme-2012-2016/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/ABOUT-THE-ASSEMBLY/Corporate-Information/Publications/Annual-Reports-to-the-Equality-Commission>

the 2011 Census; and,

- Data on the composition of MLAs.

## 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 through the external Disability Advisory Group, Secretariat Management Group (SMG) and the Assembly Commission. While access has improved greatly for those with physical disabilities since the last Audit, a number of Members have raised access issues as a result of having their accommodation on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, through both Assembly Questions (as below) and the NIA Survey of Services 2014.

The table below details Assembly Questions regarding access to Parliament Buildings directed to the Assembly Commission during the current mandate.

Ref No.	Member	Question
AQO 6331/11-15	Mr Chris Lyttle	To ask the Assembly Commission to outline its efforts to improve access to Parliament Buildings for people with a disability.
AQW 32853/11-15	Mr Phil Flanagan	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail any plans to make the Assembly Chamber more accessible for (i) Members; (ii) visitors to the public gallery; and (iii) officials in the officials' box who have a physical disability.
AQW 34123/11-15	Mr Ross Hussey	To ask the Assembly Commission what steps have been taken, under welfare at work provisions, to provide suitable office accommodation for Members with physical disabilities.
AQW 34124/11-15	Mr Ross Hussey	To ask the Assembly Commission what reasonable adjustments have been made in relation to Members with a disability who have to attend the Assembly Chamber in a specified timeframe, when the only suitable travel arrangements are lifts.

## 5.1b Access to Services

### *Religious Belief / Political Opinion*

Language is an issue that has been raised in Assembly Questions to the Assembly Commission. Questions have primarily focused on requests for an update on the Language Policy; questions regarding measures to address the needs of Irish language speakers; and plans to reflect the culture and ethos of the Irish language. Language has also been raised as an issue in the NIA Survey of Services 2014.

One Assembly Question related to the use of and cost of translation of Ulster Scots for which there were no costs.

The table below details Assembly Questions regarding Language directed to the Assembly Commission during the current mandate.

Ref No.	Member	Question
AQO 1686/11-15	Mr Phil Flanagan	To ask the Assembly Commission what measures it intends to implement in Parliament Buildings to address the needs of the Irish Language Community.
AQO 3047/11-15	Ms Bronwyn McGahan	To ask the Assembly Commission what plans it has to reflect the culture and ethos of the Irish Language.
AQO 3629/11-15	Mr Chris Hazzard	To ask the Assembly Commission when the language policy will be agreed and the Assembly website updated to include Irish.
AQO 4347/11-15	Mrs Dolores Kelly	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the Irish Language Strategy.
AQO 5808/11-15	Mr Pat Sheehan	To ask the Assembly Commission to outline the steps it is taking to ensure its Members can answer both Written and Oral Assembly Questions in Irish.
AQO 5813/11-15	Mr Dominic Bradley	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on its policy on the use of the Irish language.
AQO 6326/11-15	Ms Rosaleen McCorley	To ask the Assembly Commission how it plans to address the recent criticisms of the Assembly, in relation to the Irish language, contained in the report by the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.
AQO 967/11-15	Ms Jennifer McCann	To ask the Assembly Commission how it intends to implement measures to address the needs of the Irish language community in Parliament Buildings.
AQW 24907/11-15	Mr Cathal Ó hOisín	To ask the Assembly Commission whether one of its Members can respond to a Question for Written Answer in Irish and English if they wish; and for a breakdown of any vote taken on the subject.
AQW 31686/11-15	Ms Rosaleen McCorley	To ask the Assembly Commission for an assessment of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages report regarding the unavailability of Irish simultaneous interpretation in the Assembly and to detail any



		plans to fulfil its obligations under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.
AQW 3560/ 11-15	Mr John Dallat	To ask the Assembly Commission how many times Ulster-Scots was spoken in Assembly plenary sessions over the last twelve months; and to detail the cost of translation for this period.

The Assembly Commission are currently considering the initial findings of an equality screening exercise in relation to the guidance and approach for answering questions to the Assembly Commission for Oral and Written response. The rationale for the screening is based on the Commission's decision "to respond to all questions for written answer in the language which had been used to ask the question" (Minutes from June 2013). One Commission Member has requested to respond bi-lingually in English and Irish to all questions for written answer falling under her current portfolio arrangements. At present all questions for written response are responded in English.

The initial equality screening exercise found that no adverse impact was identified in relation to the procedures governing the administration of questions for oral answer. In relation to questions for written answer, the initial screening indicated an adverse impact in respect of two of the nine equality of opportunity categories, namely religion and political opinion. The Commission's views are now sought on the information presented and on how to proceed with the screening exercise. The Commission has been asked to consider measures that might mitigate the equality impact of the policy in relation to Assembly Questions for written response. The matter is due for further consideration at the Commission meeting in January 2015.

### 5.1c Good Relations

Good Relations is dealt with by the Good Relations Strategy (2012-2016) and action plan. Monitoring and progress against the Good Relations Strategy is discussed and reviewed at SMG on a 6-monthly basis and issues around good relations are discussed at every Assembly Commission meeting.

#### *Feedback from Members regarding Good Relations in Parliament Buildings*

The table below details Assembly Questions regarding Good Relations in general directed to the Assembly Commission during the current mandate.

Ref No.	Member	Question
AQO 1692/1 1-15	Mr Conall McDevitt	To ask the Assembly Commission, in light of the Good Relations Strategy, what consideration has been given to ensuring that Parliament Buildings reflects both sections of the community in historical terms.

AQO 5803/1 1-15	Ms Rosaleen McCorley	To ask the Assembly Commission what steps it is taking to make Parliament Buildings more inclusive.
AQO 6328/1 1-15	Mr Danny Kinahan	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on any events planned to commemorate centenaries over the next seven years.
AQO 6329/1 1-15	Mr Alex Maskey	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on how it is making Parliament Buildings more inclusive for all communities.
AQO 970/11- 15	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission why the plaques naming those murdered by the IRA are not mentioned during the guided tours of Parliament Buildings.
AQO 971/11- 15	Mr David McNarry	To ask the Assembly Commission whether it will consider extending the official tour of Parliament Buildings to include a visit to Lord Craigavon's tomb.
AQW 31349/ 11-15	Mr Stephen Moutray	To ask the Assembly Commission what plans it has to scatter poppy seeds in the grounds of Parliament Buildings to commemorate The Great War 1914 - 1918 following the launch of the Royal British Legion 2014 Commemorative Poppy Seed Campaign.
AQW 7303/1 1-15	Mr Daithí McKay	To ask the Assembly Commission what actions are being taken to make Parliament Buildings more welcoming to people from a nationalist or republican background; and how it will ensure that these political traditions will be reflected.
AQW 7763/1 1-15	Mr Daithí McKay	To ask the Assembly Commission whether consideration has been given to the procurement of paintings, statues and other art and antiques that reflect nationalist and republican history, given the make-up of the existing materials on display.
AQW 8108/1 1-15	Mr Daithí McKay	To ask the Assembly Commission, in relation to the tour of Parliament Buildings (i) what reference is made to the old Stormont Parliament of 1921-72; and (ii) whether the views that nationalists held of the old Stormont Parliament are referred to, in order to provide a balanced overview.
AQW 2632/1 1-15	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission why the script used for official tours of Parliament Buildings has no reference to the memorial tablets to former Members who were murdered by the IRA; and if it will amend the script to include a reference to the memorials.

### *Feedback from Assembly Secretariat staff regarding Good Relations in Parliament Buildings*

The 2012 staff survey found that around two thirds of staff (65.5%) felt that the Assembly Commission is committed to promoting Good Relations. Staff attitudes around good relations in the Assembly Secretariat are improving. Just over a third of staff (36.4%) believe that more could be done to promote good relations in the Assembly Secretariat, a decrease of 10.3 percentage points from the 2010 figure of 46.7%.

### *Good Relations Audit*

The Northern Ireland Assembly Internal Good Relations Audit (June 2011)<sup>10</sup>, conducted by Holywell Consultancy, identified a number of aspects that work well. These include the NIA as a workplace, the historical location, the elections, positive commitments to good relations, positive feedback from visitors, artefacts and memorabilia, shared areas, security, and a range of factors around how the Assembly operates. A number of challenges were also identified in relation to Parliament Buildings and the Assembly and these are being considered by the Assembly Commission.

### *Feedback from visitors regarding Good Relations in Parliament Buildings*

Feedback from the Visitor Survey has been very positive. Data collected from 60 respondents during the period October 2013 to June 2014 showed that:

- All of the visitors who completed the survey felt welcome in Parliament Buildings;
- 52 of the 59 respondents felt that Parliament Buildings is welcoming to people of different ethnic origin, religion and political opinion (5 answering 'Neutral', 2 answering 'No opinion' and no one responded 'No');
- All respondents felt that the staff treated them with respect irrespective of their ethnic origin, religion and political opinion;
- Of the respondents who had viewed the art and exhibitions on display, 31 felt the art work and exhibitions make a positive contribution to good relations and 8 felt that the art work and exhibitions made neither a positive or negative contribution to good relations. One respondent commented that the art work is "representative of the history of times past and current". No respondent said that the art work and exhibitions made a negative contribution to good relations; and,
- 45 respondents felt that the symbols and emblems contributed positively to good relations, 5 respondents felt that the symbols and emblems made neither a positive or negative contribution to good relations and 5 had 'No opinion.' No respondents said that the symbols and emblems make a negative contribution to good relations. One respondent commented on the effort to show an understanding of Northern Ireland's history "architecturally, culturally and philosophically". One respondent commented that "Most symbols inside of the building seem neutral and connected people from different backgrounds in

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Publications/Good-Relations/NIA-Good-Relations-Report.pdf>

Northern Ireland". Another commented that the art and symbols recognise and represent all of the six counties in Northern Ireland.

### *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 are regularly discussed by the Assembly Commission (08/05/12, 25/09/12, 19/04/12, 27/02/12, 26/02/14, 02/04/14, and 29/04/14). 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 current mandate.

Ref No.	Member	Question
AQO 1691/1 1-15	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission whether it will arrange an exhibition in Parliament Buildings of all the items of art and artefacts that belong to the Assembly and which are currently in storage or on loan.
AQW 12974/ 11-15	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission whether it is possible for an MLA to view the items of art and artefacts which belong to the Assembly and which are currently in storage.
AQW 32162/ 11-15	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission whether it has given any consideration to holding an exhibition of art and other materials owned by the Assembly which are currently being held in storage.
AQW 6688/1 1-15	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission what was the cost of the obelisk marking the Hillsborough Agreement which has been placed in the Members' Lobby of Parliament Buildings; why the obelisk was considered necessary, and why it was placed in the Members' Lobby.

### *Flags*

In addition, the flying of the Union Flag has been raised in a number of questions by staff to the Clerk/Chief Executive, and in the 2012 Assembly Secretariat Staff Attitudes Survey. It has also been discussed at SMG (03/09/14).

This issue has also been discussed at several Assembly Commission meetings (05/06/13, 26/06/13, 29/01/14, and 02/04/14). At its meeting on 29 January 2014, the Assembly Commission agreed that it would procure an independent service provider to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the flying of the Union Flag at Parliament Buildings and the subsequent consultation process. Those tasked with carrying out the consultation will examine and assess all the issues relating to the current position on flying the Union Flag on designated days, as set out in the Northern Ireland Flags Order 2000, amended in 2002. The consultation period began in October 2014 and will last for approximately 14 weeks. A final EQIA report will be presented to the Assembly Commission which will contain the findings of the consultation as well as the assessment of impacts. It is expected that this will take place in March 2015.

The table below details Assembly Questions regarding the flying of flags directed to the Assembly Commission during the current mandate.

Ref No.	Member	Question
AQO 1690/1 1-15	Mr Alex Maskey	To ask the Assembly Commission what consideration has been given to the flying of the Irish National Flag in order to better represent Nationalist and Republican communities who use Parliament Buildings.
AQO 5069/1 1-15	Mr Jim Allister	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on increasing the number of days on which the Union Flag is flown from Parliament Buildings.
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.

### 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.

The Northern Ireland Assembly sits in Parliament Buildings and is open to all members of the public. They can attend debates, watch committee hearings or tour Parliament Buildings.

Data is collected on the age, gender and disability of those using Assembly Education and Outreach services as detailed in this section. Data is also held on school type for groups participating in school visits. This is often used as a proxy for religion.

### *Engaging with young people*

An Assembly Question was asked regarding the Assembly Commission's strategy for engaging with young people.

Ref No.	Member	Question
AQO 235/1 1-15	Mr Paul Maskey	To ask the Assembly Commission to outline its strategy for engaging with young people.

### *School visits*

The table below shows a gender breakdown of groups who have used the Education Service for the period January 2012 – September 2014. While the majority of groups were mixed (90%), a higher proportion of both groups and participants were female only (6%) when compared to male only (3%). It should be noted that school visits are open to all schools in Northern Ireland.

### **Groups who have used the Education Service by gender, January 2012 – 24 September 2014**

Group Type	No. of groups	Percentage	No. of participants	Percentage
<b>Female</b>	92	6.34%	3,259	6.97%
<b>Male</b>	43	2.96%	1,655	3.54%
<b>Mixed</b>	1,310	90.28%	41,658	89.05%
<b>Total</b>	1,445		46,572	

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, 2011/12 – 24 September 2014

School Type	2011/2012		2012/2013		01/09/13-24/09/14	
	Total Groups	Total Visitors	Total Groups	Total Visitors	Total Groups	Total Visitors
Controlled Grammar	18	428	20	554	20	622
Controlled Grammar (External Outreach)	3	84	1	60	3	350
Controlled Primary	86	2414	68	2143	61	1748
Controlled Primary (External Outreach)	3	153	4	222	3	206
Controlled Secondary	53	1579	59	2139	44	1357
Controlled Secondary (External Outreach)	2	250	5	306	6	508
Further & Higher Education	9	197	14	271	6	128
Integrated Primary	4	85	1	46	5	172
Integrated Secondary	19	578	13	363	12	332
Integrated Secondary (External Outreach)	4	238	2	88	0	0
Maintained Primary	102	2916	39	1187	48	1706
Maintained Primary (External Outreach)	3	132	0	0	3	284
Maintained Secondary	69	2171	70	2572	57	2053
Maintained Secondary (External Outreach)	10	1056	9	628	9	712
Special Primary	2	70	0	0	0	0
Special Secondary	13	339	4	88	3	65
University	7	170	9	185	5	91
Voluntary Grammar	65	1717	65	1925	58	1778
Voluntary Grammar (External Outreach)	7	226	17	982	8	909
Voluntary Primary	1	25	2	54	5	180
All	480	14828	402	13813	356	13201

A number of Assembly Questions to the Assembly Commission related to school visits, as shown below. These questions tended to focus on the number of school visits, where the schools came, from and school type.

Ref No.	Member	Question
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AQO 2347/ 11-15	Mr Ian McCrea	To ask the Assembly Commission what plans are in place to encourage more schools to engage with the Education Service and visit Parliament Buildings.
AQO 3044/ 11-15	Mr Declan McAleer	To ask the Assembly Commission how many Irish medium schools have visited Parliament Buildings in the current mandate.
AQO 3632/ 11-15	Ms Michaela Boyle	To ask the Assembly Commission what outreach has taken place with schools, colleges and universities in the Republic of Ireland about visiting Parliament Buildings.
AQO 3642/ 11-15	Mr Mervyn Storey	To ask the Assembly Commission how many schools have participated in the Education Service programme in the last 12 months.
AQO 5799/ 11-15	Mr Raymond McCartney	To ask the Assembly Commission for a breakdown of school visits to Parliament Buildings from each constituency since January 2014.
AQO 6327/ 11-15	Mr Phil Flanagan	To ask the Assembly Commission to outline the schools that have visited Parliament Buildings since April 2014.
AQO 6337/ 11-15	Mr Joe Byrne	To ask the Assembly Commission for an overview of the schools and organisations that have visited Parliament Buildings in 2014.
AQW 32534 /11- 15	Mr Pat Sheehan	To ask the Assembly Commission to list all the schools from West Belfast that have visited the Assembly in the last 12 months.
AQW 34363 /11- 15	Mr Gregory Campbell	To ask the Assembly Commission how many (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools from (a) controlled; (b) maintained; and (c) integrated sectors have paid educational visits to Parliament Buildings in each of the last three years.

### *Engaging with Young People*

The proposed Youth Assembly was discussed by SMG on 05/12/12, 04/11/13 and 03/09/12, and by the Assembly Commission on 27/11/13. An update on progress was also provided to the external Disability Advisory Group on 21 March 2012. A number of Assembly Questions to the Assembly Commission related to engaging with young people in general and specifically to the Youth Assembly, as shown below. These questions mainly sought an update on progress and details on how the Youth Assembly would operate.

As already noted, the Northern Ireland Assembly has also just been 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”. The Education Service will establish a youth panel for Northern Ireland, which will give 36 young people the opportunity to actively participate in democratic life by working closely with the Northern Ireland Assembly. The youth



panel will assist the Assembly in its work by representing the views of young people by consulting young people across Northern Ireland about the issues that concern them. The young people involved will complete an inquiry into an issue chosen by the participants. The recruitment process will ensure the representation of young people from different community backgrounds (nationalist, unionist, other), different social backgrounds and those with disabilities.

<b>Ref No.</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Question</b>
AQO 2344/11-15	Mr Alban Maginness	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly.
AQO 2351/11-15	Mr Basil McCrea	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the establishment of a Northern Ireland Youth Assembly.
AQO 247/11-15	Mr Basil McCrea	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly.
AQO 3045/11-15	Mr Chris Lyttle	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the Youth Assembly.
AQO 959/11-15	Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the establishment of a Northern Ireland Youth Assembly.
AQW 17745/11-15	Mr Colum Eastwood	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail what meetings have been held on planning for the establishment of the Youth Assembly.
AQW 17747/11-15	Mr Colum Eastwood	To ask the Assembly Commission, in relation to the Youth Assembly, to detail the (i) terms of reference; (ii) constitution; and (iii) election process.
AQW 17749/11-15	Mr Colum Eastwood	To ask the Assembly Commission when it is envisioned that the Youth Assembly will first sit.

### *Youth Work*

Since January 2012, three youth worker conferences were organised by the Education Service, two on the theme of 'Youth Work is Political' (March 2012 and June 2012) and one on the representation theme, "Working for You" (September 2012). The Education Service also held three youth worker training events in Parliament Buildings. In June 2013, young people from the NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training)

community were involved in a Let's Talk, Let's Act event on the theme of "The Value of Volunteering".

### *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 since 2012:

- Falls Road Women's Centre;
- Roe Valley Learning Community;
- Southern Partnership PEACE III Chinese/Islamic Programme;
- Reach Across;
- West Belfast Youth Talks Back;
- Guide Dogs for the Blind;
- Same Difference Project;
- Omagh Young Adult Leadership Programme;
- Military Families;
- Change Makers;
- Save the Children;
- 3P2 Project (Cross-community women's group);
- Accessing Youth Engagement – Strabane;
- Breakout Project; and,
- Belfast YMCA.

### *Outreach events*

The following table outlines Outreach events focusing on gender, disability and ethnic group that the Assembly has been involved in since 2012.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>No. of Participants</b>
14 Oct 14	NI Rural Women's Network Annual Conference	60

22 Sept 14	Guide Dogs for the Blind – How the Assembly Works presentation	20
4 Sept 14	Foyle Women's Information Network – had exhibition stand at networking day	200
24 Aug 14	Belfast Mela – had exhibition stand at intercultural event	2000
24 June 14	'Get Involved' Ethnic Minorities	30
18 June 14	Black and Minority Ethnic Football tournament	60
17 June 14	Guide Dogs for the Blind – How the Assembly Works presentation	20
23 April 14	Black and Minority Ethnic Parliament	60
20 March 14	Women and Peacebuilding: Sharing the Learning – had an exhibition stand at the event.	250
13 March 14	NI Rural Women's Network – International Women's Day event. Had an exhibition stand at event.	130
6 March 14	Shankhill Women's Centre – How the Assembly Works presentation	20
5 March 14	Footprints Women's Centre – How the Assembly Works presentation	15
13 February 14	Community Relations Council – How the Assembly Works presentation	20
2 Feb 14	Chinese New Year – exhibition stand	
21 Jan 14	Black and Minority Ethnic Study Visit – How the Assembly Works presentation	30
10 Sept 13	Foyle Women's Information Network – had exhibition stand at networking day	200
25 Aug 13	Belfast Mela – had exhibition stand at intercultural event	2000
5 March 13	RNIB football tournament	
5 Feb 13	Women Leading the Way – How the Assembly Works presentation	40
13 Nov 12	Women in Society – How the Assembly Works presentation	
9 Oct 12	Guide Dogs for the Blind – blindfold tour	15
1 May 12	Carers NI – presentation and tour	15

A number of upcoming events are also planned for 2014 as follows:

Date	Title	No. of Participants
23 Oct 14	AERC Women in Politics stakeholder event – assist Committee with organisation	60
8 Nov 14	Women of the World festival – ‘Women in Politics’ panel	70
26 Nov 14	Stronger Together Network – encouraging civic participation seminar	27
8 Dec 14	Disability Sport NI – 5 star taster event	50

The table below presents a demographic profile of ‘Insight Into’ participants in 2014. ‘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.

Overall, a lower proportion of those aged over 60 (12.9%) attended the seminars when compared to their proportion in the general population (19.7%, 2011 Census). A higher proportion of participants were female (61.1%) than male (38.9%). A lower proportion of people with disabilities (14.6%) attended these seminars when compared to the estimate of people with disabilities in the general population which is around 20%.

#### Age, gender and disability of ‘Insight into’ seminar participants, 2014

	May-14	Apr-14	Mar-14	Feb-14	Jan-14	Total	%
<b>Age Group</b>							
<b>Under 25</b>	0	0	0	21	2	23	24.7
<b>25-39</b>	1	6	4	8	12	31	33.3
<b>40-59</b>	0	3	9	6	9	27	29.0
<b>60+</b>	4	1	7	0		12	12.9
<b>Gender</b>							
<b>Male</b>	2	2	4	15	12	35	38.9
<b>Female</b>	3	8	15	19	10	55	61.1

<b>Disability</b>							
<b>Yes</b>	2	2	2	3	4	13	14.6
<b>No</b>	3	8	15	32	18	76	85.4
<b>Mental Health</b>	0	2	1	1		4	
<b>Learning</b>	0			1		1	
<b>Physical</b>	2	1		1	3	7	
<b>Other</b>	0		2	1	3	6	

The table below presents a demographic profile of 'Get Involved' participants in 2014. 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.

A higher proportion of those aged over 60 (21.1%) attended these conferences when compared to their proportion in the general population (19.7%, 2011 Census). A lower proportion of under 25 year olds (8.8%) attended 'Get Involved' when compared to the general population. A higher proportion of participants were female (57.9%) than male (42.1%). A slightly higher proportion of people with disabilities (21.4%) attended these seminars when compared to the estimate of people with disabilities in the general population which is around 20%.

#### Age, gender and disability of 'Get Involved' conference participants, 2014

	Jun 2014	Apr 2014	March 2014	Total	%
<b>Age Group</b>					
<b>Under 25</b>	3	1	1	5	8.8
<b>25-39</b>	6	3	1	10	17.5
<b>40-59</b>	12	6	12	30	52.6
<b>60+</b>	0	5	7	12	21.1
<b>Gender</b>					
<b>Male</b>	12	9	3	24	42.1
<b>Female</b>	9	6	18	33	57.9

Disability					
Yes	4	2	6	12	21.4
No	17	13	14	44	78.6
Mental Health	1		0	1	
Learning	0		0	0	
Physical	1		1	2	
Other	1		6	7	

The table below presents a demographic profile of 'How the Assembly works' participants in 2014. 'How the Assembly works' is Assembly Community Connect training 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 years 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 (70.8%) than male (29.2%). A lower proportion of people with disabilities (8.8%) attended this training when compared to the estimate of people with disabilities in the general population which is around 20%.

#### Age, gender and disability of 'How the Assembly works' training participants, 2014

	September 2014	June 2014	May 2014	April 2014	March 2014	January 2014	Total	%
Age Group								
Under 25	0	0	0	2	1	2	5	5.5
25-39	2	1	7	11	13	7	41	45.1
40-59	4	6	7	2	8	5	32	35.2

<b>60+</b>	4	4	2	1	1	1	13	14.3
<b>Gender</b>								
<b>Male</b>	4	3	2	5	5	7	26	29.2
<b>Female</b>	6	7	12	11	19	8	63	70.8
<b>Disability</b>								
<b>Yes</b>	1	2	0	4	0	1	8	8.8
<b>No</b>	9	8	16	12	24	14	83	91.2
<b>Mental Health</b>			0	1			1	
<b>Learning</b>			0	0			0	
<b>Physical</b>	1	2	0	3			6	
<b>Other</b>			0	0			0	

### *Pensioners Parliament*

The Pensioners Parliament survey has provided the basis of discussions at each local parliament and determined the issues taken to the two-day Pensioners Parliament in May 2014. Over 1,100 people completed the 2014 survey. The two-day Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament took place on 29-30 May 2014, with almost 200 older people from across Northern Ireland in attendance. The Parliament also saw participation from policy experts, influential people, and high level politicians during its two-day agenda. The 2014 Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament report will be published in the autumn and distributed to MLAs, MPs, MEPs, councils, statutory bodies, the private sector and other relevant organisations.

### *Results from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey*

Annex A presents a profile of the Northern Ireland population taken from the 2011 Census. Findings from the 2011 Census and subsequent mid-year population estimates have shown that the population of Northern Ireland is increasing, particularly the older population. The results of the 2011 Census compared to the 2001 Census has also showed that the proportion of the population born outside Northern Ireland is increasing, as is the proportion of the population who consider themselves to be neither Protestant nor Catholic. In considering action to increase participation, these demographic changes should be considered.

Results from the Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) Survey by gender, age and religion are presented below. In 2013, there was little difference in the proportion of

males and females who think that having a Northern Ireland Assembly is giving ordinary people more say in how Northern Ireland is governed. In 2012, a higher proportion of males than females said this.

**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	
	2013	2012	2013	2012
	%	%	%	%
<b>...more say in how Northern Ireland is governed</b>	21	36	20	26
<b>less say</b>	7	7	7	4
<b>or, is it making no difference?</b>	64	48	63	56
<b>Don't know</b>	9	9	10	13

*Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) Survey*

Those aged 18-34 were least likely to think that having a Northern Ireland Assembly is giving ordinary people more say in how Northern Ireland is governed. Attitudes to the Assembly tend to become more positive with 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+	
	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>...more say in how Northern Ireland is governed</b>	15	24	17	25	23	29	19	39	24	32	23	32
<b>less say</b>	3	8	6	2	9	5	8	7	5	6	8	6
<b>or, is it making no difference?</b>	68	45	55	52	61	54	69	49	63	55	63	56
<b>Don't know</b>	14	23	22	21	7	12	5	6	8	7	6	7

*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. In 2012, a higher proportion of Protestants than Catholics said this. 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	
	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>...more say in how Northern Ireland is governed</b>	23	36	22	29	11	25
<b>less say</b>	6	4	8	7	6	7
<b>or, is it making no difference?</b>	63	49	64	57	65	54
<b>Don't know</b>	8	12	6	8	17	14

*Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) Survey*

### *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 September 2014, 22 of the 108 MLAs are women (20.4%) 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.

A number of Assembly Questions to the Assembly Commission concerned childcare and support for Members and their support staff.

<b>Ref No.</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Question</b>
AQO 2346/11-15	Mr Roy Beggs	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on the implementation of a revised payroll system so that Members' staff can benefit from the tax efficient Childcare Voucher Scheme.
AQO 2350/11-15	Mr Phil Flanagan	To ask the Assembly Commission to detail the childcare provisions that are in place for MLAs and all staff who use Parliament Buildings.
AQO 3638/11-15	Mr Roy Beggs	To ask the Assembly Commission for an update on extending the Childcare Voucher Scheme to Assembly Secretariat staff.
AQO 5805/11-15	Mrs Karen McKeivitt	To ask the Assembly Commission to outline the criteria used to determine the level of support provided by the Childcare Allowance Scheme to Members and Assembly staff.
AQW 12670	Mr Roy Beggs	To ask the Assembly Commission when the payroll system, through which Members are obliged to pay their staff, will be able to facilitate those Members who wish to enable

/11-15		their staff to avail of the tax efficient Childcare Voucher Scheme.
AQW 32852 /11-15	Mr Phil Flanagan	To ask the Assembly Commission whether it would consider carrying out a survey to assess the demand for crèche provision within Parliament Buildings to encourage and support more parents of young children to be MLAs.
AQW 3536/11-15	Mr Roy Beggs [R]	To ask the Assembly Commission when Assembly Secretariat staff will be able to benefit from the tax efficient Childcare Voucher Scheme.
AQW 5171/11-15	Mr Phil Flanagan	To ask the Assembly Commission (i) what provision is made to meet Members' childcare requirements; (ii) for its assessment of the adequacy of this provision; and (iii) what improvements are planned to encourage more parents, and particularly women, to become MLAs.
AQW 8949/11-15	Ms Michaela Boyle	To ask the Assembly Commission if it would undertake a survey of Members and staff in Parliament Buildings to assess the demand for crèche facilities.
AQW 8950/11-15	Ms Michaela Boyle	To ask the Assembly Commission whether it will consider providing crèche facilities at Parliament Buildings to encourage more women to get involved in politics.
AQW 9109/11-15	Mr Roy Beggs [R]	To ask the Assembly Commission why staff who work outside Parliament Buildings are unable to join a Childcare Voucher Scheme and are excluded from its Childcare Scheme.

The Assembly has been involved in numerous projects to encourage women to get involved in democracy. Since the start of the new mandate, the Outreach Unit has hosted and attended 19 events specifically targeting women's groups to inform them about how they can get involved with the Assembly, the political process and political life. A detailed list of the events can be seen in Annex B. Additionally, women's groups regularly take part in Assembly Community Connect monthly training.

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

The Outreach Unit has also helped facilitate the Assembly's involvement in the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) group which is part of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). The CWP was established to find ways to increase female representation in Parliament and works towards the mainstreaming of gender considerations in all CPA activities and programmes. Jo-Anne Dobson MLA stood for election for the role of Regional CWP Representative in 2013 but was unsuccessful. However, she is a member of the CWP and attended the British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Inaugural Conference, in March 2014, with the theme of Enhancing the Participation of Women in Politics.

The Assembly, in conjunction with Belfast City Council, is also about to embark on a project with Cinemagic which will encourage young women to create a short film to

inspire a new generation of young women to step up, participate and become leaders in public, political and civic life. Three teams will create a film that will educate, inform and inspire young women to engage and influence the Northern Ireland political decision-making process.

The Head of Communications and Outreach is a member of WINNET – an organisation made up of senior women in leadership roles from all sectors in Northern Ireland. She sits on the network's media sub-committee, which aims to increase women's visibility in the media, and to build experience and confidence for women participating in media interviews. The Network's mission statement is:

“WINET is a cross-sector network of female leaders committed to the advancement of more women into leadership roles in Northern Ireland.”

The Education Service has also been involved in projects to promote female involvement in public life. On 22 Oct 2013, the Education Service collaborated with Politics Plus on an event involving over 100 female students from a range of schools in Belfast. A similar event will take place in Feb 2015.

### *Disability*

The Health and Safety Officer and Fire Precautions Officer are made aware of guests who need assistance, in advance of scheduled events and tours. This data is not currently collated for monitoring purposes. It is recommended that consideration be given to recording and collating this information in a way that is easily accessible.

## **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 disability, age, gender and community background is gathered for Assembly Secretariat staff. Data on the other Section 75 categories is not collected at present. As at December 2014, there were 33 members of Secretariat staff with a declared disability. The following tables show the age breakdown of Secretariat staff as at December 2014.

<b>Age group</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
20-24	0	0
25-29	17	4.545455
30-34	56	14.97326
35-39	67	17.91444

40-44	67	17.91444
45-49	60	16.04278
50-54	45	12.03209
55-59	39	10.42781
60-64	19	5.080214
65 +	4	1.069519

The following tables show the breakdown of Secretariat staff by grade, gender and community background as at December 2014.

Grade	Protestant		Roman Catholic		Not determined		All
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
1,2	5	0	2	0	0	0	7
3	2	1	4	2	0	0	9
4	8	7	10	11	0	2	38
5	9	14	9	10	3	3	48
6	16	16	18	21	2	0	73
7	36	27	21	19	1	1	105
8	55	15	11	8	3	2	94

The below table shows the gender and community background of Assembly Secretariat staff as at 01 December 2014 (Fair Employment Monitoring Return, 12 February 2014) when compared with the Northern Ireland Public Sector<sup>11</sup>. Roman Catholics continue to be under-represented in Standard Occupational Classification<sup>12</sup> 9 which comprises of Ushering staff, despite affirmative action being undertaken when recruiting for these posts.

### Comparison of Northern Ireland Assembly (NIA) Secretariat staff to the Northern Ireland Public Sector by Standard Occupational Classification, gender and Community Background

Standard Occupational Classification	Male				Female			
	Protestant		Roman Catholic		Protestant		Roman Catholic	
	NIA	NI Public Sector	NIA	NI Public Sector	NIA	NI Public Sector	NIA	NI Public Sector
SOC 1	51.3	56.4	48.7	43.6	45.2	50.7	54.8	49.3
SOC 2	52.6	50.2	47.4	49.8	48.1	47.1	51.9	52.9

<sup>11</sup> Fair Employment Monitoring Report 24, ECNI, <http://www.equalityni.org/Delivering-Equality/Addressing-inequality/Employment/Monitoring-Report-24/Fair-Employment-Monitoring-Report-24>

<sup>12</sup> Standard Occupational Classification is a common classification of occupational information. Within the context of the classification, jobs are classified in terms of their skill level and skill content.

SOC 3	43.5	62.1	56.5	37.9	47.1	55.4	52.9	44.6
SOC 4	60.6	48.0	39.4	52.0	61.3	52.2	38.7	47.8
SOC 9	86.9	54.5	13.1	45.5	71.4	52.9	28.6	47.1

*Note: Employees whose community background cannot be determined have been excluded due to low numbers (9 males and 8 females in total)*

### *Gender equality*

Gender equality within the Assembly Secretariat has been discussed at meetings of the Assembly Commission (13/05/14) and SMG (04/10/13, 04/02/14, and 04/07/14).

In terms of gender, there is an under-representation of females at the most senior grades of the NIA Secretariat, with no females in Secretariat Management Group (Clerk/Chief Executive and Directors). There is also a gender imbalance amongst the Usher/Control Room Operative group, the majority of whom are male.

As of 30 April 2014, the majority of staff working in the NIA Secretariat at grades 1-3 were male (80%) whilst a minority (20%) were female. There was a higher proportion of males than females at grades 7 (56.4% compared to 43.6%) and 8 (69.3% compared to 30.7%). There was a higher proportion of females than males at grades 4 (52.6% compared to 47.2%), grades 5 (52.8% compared to 47.2%) and grades 6 (54.1% compared to 45.9%); although the gender gaps are smaller.

SMG (Senior Management Group), which comprises the Clerk/Chief Executive (Chair) and 5 Directors, are all male. Staff in Facilities Directorate (and particularly ushering) and in the IS Office are predominately male. Staff in Human Resources are predominately female.

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

NIA conducts the Staff Attitudes Survey every two years, with the latest staff survey conducted in 2012. It includes a section on Equality to find out the views staff have on equality issues within the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Results from the Staff Attitudes Survey 2012 show that:

- Around two thirds of staff (65.5%) feel that the Assembly Commission is committed to promoting Good Relations. Just over a third of staff (36.4%) believe that more could be done to promote good relations in the Assembly Secretariat, a decrease of 10.3 percentage points from the 2010 figure of 46.7%;
- 83.6% of staff said that they are familiar with and know how to access the Assembly Secretariat's equal opportunities policies; and
- Almost half of staff (48.6%) said they believe that the Assembly Secretariat offers appropriate support to staff with disabilities, an increase of 13.5 percentage points on 35.1% in 2010.

### *Positive Working Relationships*

The Positive Working Relations Initiative (PWRI) was introduced within the Ushering Business Area in response to a number of work related issues, including the number of complaints raised under HR policies, the 2012 staff survey and poor absence statistics.

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.

This led to Stage 1 of the PWRI in which 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.

Stage 2 of the PWRI was then implemented to build on this work, begin changing the culture of Ushering Services and embed new working behaviours in staff. This was done through facilitated meetings to establish working agreements and goals; individual coaching sessions for managers and team workshops for managers and staff.

The outcome of Stage 2 has been an improvement in the trust and rapport between Ushering staff and in particular between AG8 staff and their managers. It has also provided the opportunity to equip managers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to deal better with inappropriate behaviour and to be more supportive in encouraging positive behaviours in staff. Finally it has helped to equip AG8 staff with the knowledge, skills and confidence to interact positively with their managers and, when necessary challenge the behaviour of their colleagues.

A report on the results of Stage 2 has now been shared with all Ushering staff and we are asking for their views on how we continue the positive work and momentum created through the PWRI. This may result in further actions being taken in 2015.

### *Gender equality*

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 full report will be made available after it is presented to the Assembly Commission this autumn.

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.

### 5.2c Contracts and agency staff

Work is currently underway in relation to the fair employment practices of contractors such as Assembly Broadcasting and Related Services Contract and Support services Contract. Advice is being sought regarding this. Information is being gathered on the fair employment practices of all companies with contracts where employees work in Parliament Buildings. This includes the community backgrounds of these employees, including agency staff.

## 6 Data Gaps

Data on seven of the nine equality categories exists, namely for persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group and age; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without and persons with dependents and persons without. Further, representative from the LGBT community, namely the Rainbow Project, Lesbian Line and Cara are on the Assembly Commission's equality consultation list and no specific issues have been raised by these groups. There is no data for persons of different marital status.

It is recommended that consideration be given as to how data collection and monitoring can be improved. For example, the Events Office could record data on organisations representing Section 75 groups that use Parliament Buildings to host events.



## 7 Summary of inequalities identified in the review

The purpose of this mid-point review of the audit of inequalities is to provide a strategic picture of inequalities relevant to the role and functions of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission, as recommended in the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's 'Advice to Public Authorities: Approaching an 'Audit of Inequalities'.<sup>13</sup>

The table below summarises the inequalities identified in this review for each of the Section 75 categories and the ongoing work in addition to that identified in the 2011 Audit of inequalities. The inequalities identified below have already been identified by the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission and work is on-going to address these complex issues.

	<b>Issues identified in the review</b>
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.</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>
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.</p> <p>Development of a Language Policy is ongoing.</p> <p>An EQIA on the review of the policy on the flying of the Union Flag from Parliament Buildings is underway.</p>
Racial group	<p>Work is on-going, through a number of activities such as Assembly Community Connect, to ensure Parliament Buildings continues to be welcoming and to engage with all racial groups, including minority ethnic groups and new migrants.</p>

<sup>13</sup>

[http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/Public%20Authorities/Public\\_Authorities\\_Audit\\_of\\_Inequalities\\_Mar12.docx](http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/Public%20Authorities/Public_Authorities_Audit_of_Inequalities_Mar12.docx)

	Issues identified in the review
Age	<p>Work is on-going to engage with young people through the Education Service and funding has been secured to establish a youth panel.</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.</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>Work is on-going to encourage the participation of women in politics including support for female Members.</p>
Disability	<p>Work is on-going, through the Disability Action Plan, to optimise access in Parliament Buildings for Members, visitors and staff with disabilities.</p> <p>Work is on-going to engage with those with disabilities.</p>
Dependants	Work is on-going to address the needs of Members and staff with child care responsibilities.

## 8 Next steps

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's 'Advice to Public Authorities: Approaching an 'Audit of Inequalities' states that 'the review of an audit of inequalities is an opportunity to assess whether current actions aimed at addressing existing inequalities already identified need revised. It is also an opportunity for a public authority to assess whether there are additional / new inequalities that need addressed and whether further action can be taken in order to address those inequalities.' It is clear from the evidence presented that the Assembly Commission has been proactive in addressing 'new inequalities' as they arise. The associated action plan should now be updated to reflect this.

## Annex A Section 75 profile of the Northern Ireland population

### Gender of usual residents (Census 2011)

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

### Age of usual residents by Broad Age Band (Census 2011)

Age Band	N	%
0-15 years	379,323	20.9
16-24 years	227,634	12.6
25-44 years	498,046	27.5
45-59 years	347,850	19.2
60-64 years	94,290	5.2
65-74 years	145,600	8.0
75+ years	118,120	6.5

### Marital Status of residents 16+ years (Census 2011)

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

### Ethnic Groups in Northern Ireland (Census 2011)

Ethnic group	N	%
White	1,778,449	98.2
Chinese	6,303	0.4
Indian	6,198	0.3
Mixed	6,014	0.3
Other Asian	4,998	0.3
Other	2,353	0.1
Black African	2,345	0.1
Irish Traveller	1,301	0.1
Pakistani	1,091	0.1
Black Other	899	0.1
Bangladeshi	540	0
Black Caribbean	372	0

**Religion (or religion brought up in) (Census 2011)**

<b>Religion (or religion brought up in)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Protestant and Other Christian	875,717	48.4
Catholic	817,385	45.1
Other religions	16,592	0.9
None	101,169	5.6

**National Identity of usual residents (Census 2011)**

<b>National Identity</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
All usual residents	1,810,863	
British only	722,379	39.9
Irish only	457,482	25.3
Northern Irish only	379,267	20.9
British and Northern Irish only	111,748	6.2
Irish and Northern Irish only	19,132	1.1
British, Irish and Northern Irish only	18,406	1.0
British and Irish only	11,877	0.7
Other	90,572	5.0

**Long-term conditions (Census 2011)**

<b>Long-term conditions</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
No condition	1,241,785	68.6

**Households with dependent children (Census 2011)**

<b>Households with Dependent children</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Total number of households	703,275	
Households with dependent children	238,071	33.8

**Residents who provide Unpaid care to those with a long-term physical or mental health disability (all ages)**

<b>Unpaid Care</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
All usual residents	1,810,863	
Provides no unpaid care	1,596,883	88.2
Provides 1-19 hours unpaid care per week	122,301	6.8
Provides 20-49 hours unpaid care per week	35,369	2.0
Provides 50+ hours unpaid care per week	56,310	3.1

**Care of a Dependent Older Person**

<b>Unpaid Care</b>	<b>N</b>
Number of residents providing unpaid care to those aged 65 or over	32,328

## Annex B: Events focusing on women

### **Assembly Community Connect**

#### Past women's events:

##### **6 Jun 11                    Leading Ladies (Attendees – 48)**

Leading Ladies is an initiative developed within the Irish Peace Centres (IPC) Consortium. It is an event-based training that brings together small numbers of women from throughout Belfast from all walks of life, to meet some of Ireland's leading ladies.

The Outreach Unit worked with Leading Ladies to host an event to encourage women to get involved in political life. The group received the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation, a round table discussion with female MLAs, sharing experiences on women in public life and talking about women's under-representation in political and public life, and a tour of Parliament Buildings

##### **21 Nov 11                    Women into Public Life (Attendees – 16)**

and

##### **20 Mar 12                    Women into Public Life (Attendees – 42)**

Women into Public Life (WIPL) is a unique partnership project between three women's organisations, Foyle Women's Information Network (FWIN), Derry/Londonderry, Second Chance Education Project for Women (SCEPW), County Donegal and Engender in Scotland. WIPL aims to address the continuing under representation of women in decision making fora and to influence the development of policies to address this issue.

The Outreach Unit worked with Women into Public Life to host an event to encourage women to get involved in political life. The group received the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation, a round table discussion with female MLAs, sharing experiences on women in public life and talking about women's under-representation in political and public life, and a tour of Parliament Buildings.

**13 Nov 12      Women in Society (Attendees – 30)**

The overall aim of the project is to continue good relations built between women aged 50 + across Ballysillan, Ligonell and Oldpark. The project will look at women in specialised roles in Northern & Southern Ireland.

The Assembly Outreach worked with Women in Society to host an event to encourage women to get involved in political life. The group received the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation, a round table discussion with female MLAs, sharing experiences on women in public life and talking about women's under-representation in the political and public life, and a tour of Parliament Buildings

**5 Feb 13      Women Leading the Way (Attendees – 22)**

A group of women made up of cross community, cross sector, and a small number of German Muslims. Most had never visited Stormont before, and were keen to learn the basics about decision making, women's role and how the Assembly works.

This group received the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation, a tour of Parliament Buildings, a meeting with the Speaker – William Hay MLA, and a speed networking session with female MLAs. They shared experiences on women in public life, and talked about women's under-representation in the political and public life.

**10 Sep 13      Foyle Women's Information Event (Attendees – 200)**

and

**4 Sep 14      Foyle Women's Information Network (Attendees – 200)**

The aim of this event was to inform women at grassroots level about the range of services, support, advice and training that is available to them by the Assembly.

Assembly Community Connect hosted an information stand providing information on how women's groups can get involved with the Assembly and the political process.

**11 Sep 13      Women & Leadership Programme (Attendees – 11)**

This event involved a group of women from North Belfast who are completing a Women and Leadership Programme.

This group received the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation, a tour of Parliament Buildings, a speed networking session with female MLAs sharing experiences on women in public life and talking about women's under-representation in political and public life.

**5 Mar 14                      Footprints Womens Centre (Attendees – 20)**

Footprints Women's Centre has provided services for women within the Colin Neighbourhood since 1991. Responding to the needs of local women and their families, Footprints Women's Centre has filled recognised gaps and offers a relaxing and welcoming environment, where local women are encouraged and supported to build self-esteem, confidence and develop skills through participation in the range of programmes and activities on offer.

As part of the International Women's Day series of events, Assembly Community Connect visited Footprints Women's Centre and delivered the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation to the group to provide information on how they can get involved in the Assembly and the encourage them to get involved with the political process.

**6 Mar 14                      Shankill Women's Centre (Attendees – 30)**

Shankill Women's Centre formed in 1987, is located in a disadvantaged ward in North Belfast. It arose because of an expressed local need for women specific education, support and training.

As part of the International Women's Day series of events, Assembly Community Connect visited Shankill Women's Centre and delivered the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation to the group to provide information on how they can get involved in the Assembly, and to encourage them to get involved with the political process.

**13 Mar 14                      NI Rural Women's Network (Attendees – 130)**

The Northern Ireland Assembly Community Connect Team was invited to attend the Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN) International Women's Day. This cross

community event, funded by the Community Relations Council, was held at Glenavon Hotel, Cookstown.

Assembly Community Connect hosted an information stand to provide information on how women's groups can get involved with the Assembly and the political process.

#### **20 Mar 14      Women & Peace Building (Attendees – 300)**

'Sharing the Learning' Conference - involving participation of international guests from the ***Foundations for Peace*** network.

Assembly Community Connect was invited to attend the conference. The Assembly had an information stand at this event to provide information on how women's groups can get involved with the Assembly and the political process.

#### Upcoming events:

#### **15 Oct 14      Rural Women's Network (Attendees – Approx. 150)**

NIRWN will celebrate International Rural Women's Day in Parliament Buildings, Belfast, in partnership with the Northern Ireland Assembly through Assembly Community Connect.

This group will receive the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation and take part in a speed networking session with female MLAs sharing experiences on women in public life and talking about women's under-representation in political and public life. They will also receive a presentation on the inquiry process and practical advice for responding to inquiries to encourage participation.

#### **NIABT**

#### Past women's events:

#### **16 September 2010 Women in Leadership Seminar (Attendees – 60)**

Organised in partnership with the Institute of Directors, women from the businesses across Northern Ireland attended. Women in leadership positions from the business sector and



politics spoke about their roles in public life and how important it is for women to have a voice in the NIABT and NI Assembly.

**11 March 2013      Women in Business Event (Attendees – 35)**

Organised in partnership with Women in Business, women from the business sector received the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation and took part in a speed networking session with female MLAs, sharing the experiences and challenges women face in public life and how important it is for women to have a voice in the NIABT and NI Assembly.

**15 May 2014      International Business Women's Conference Women in Philanthropy Breakfast & Networking Walk (Attendees – 40)**

The NIABT hosted a session during the Women in Business, International Business Women's Conference 2014. Women from Northern Ireland and across the world attended this breakfast event, which aimed to inspire women.

Upcoming events:

**27 January 2015      Women in Business Event (Attendees – Approx. 50)**

To be organised in partnership with the Institute of Directors and Women in Business, women from the business sector will receive the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation and take part in a speed networking session with female MLAs, sharing the experiences and challenges women face in public life and how important it is for women to have a voice in the NIABT and NI Assembly.

**Parliamentary Outreach**

**14<sup>th</sup> March 2011      Commonwealth Day (Attendees – 61)**

Women, from a variety of backgrounds, with connections to the Commonwealth spoke to invited guests on the subject of 'Women as Agents of Change'. Attendees included children from local secondary schools and representatives from Commonwealth connected community groups.

**23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013 Visit by Jessica Grounds (Attendees – 9)**

The Assembly hosted a visit by Ms Grounds, the Executive Director of Running Start, a non-profit organisation that she co-founded which inspires girls and young women to run for elected office. Jessica is also the founder and principal strategist for Solid Grounds Strategy, a firm she created to consult women candidates who have never run for office before. In 2010, she co-founded Women's Campaign Consortium, a collaboration of female campaign consultants dedicated to serving women candidates.

Ms Grounds visited Dublin and Belfast in a week-long visit to discuss her work and to find out more about the role of women in politics in Northern Ireland. During her visit to Northern Ireland Ms Grounds met MLAs to discuss how to encourage women into politics and public life.

**19<sup>th</sup> May 2014 Visit by Mexico Electoral Office (Attendees – 7)**

Elections to the European Parliament took place in Northern Ireland on 22 May 2014. The delegation from INE were in Northern Ireland to participate in a joint mission to observe these elections alongside members of the School of Politics, International Studies and Philosophy at Queen's University Belfast. The mission had a gender focus, aiming to observe the effect of key aspects of the electoral administration, political context and institutional arrangements that affect women's participation and representation in Belfast.

During their visit to Northern Ireland they met MLAs to discuss the issues of women's participation and representation in Northern Ireland.

### Annexe 3 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	Head of Building Services	To be agreed.

<b>Action taken to better promote equality of opportunity/good relations</b>	<b>Inequality Identified and Outcome Area(s)</b>	<b>S75 Category</b>	<b>Intended outcome/impact and how this will be measured</b>	<b>In the current service Business Plan (Yes/No)</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
				future Business Plans.		
Implementation of access audits completed by RNIB, Disability Action and Action on Hearing Loss regarding a programme of works	<p>Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme 1a of Audit of Inequalities)</p> <p>Access to Services (Theme 1b of Audit of Inequalities)</p>	Persons with a disability and persons without	<p>Improved accessibility to Parliament Buildings for persons with a disability.</p> <p>All works projects are designed and constructed in accordance with Building Regulations and other relevant legislation.</p>	<p>No. All work items within our remit relating to the audits have been completed.</p> <p>Other wider 'estate' issues have been passed to DFP.</p> <p>Further agreed improvements will be included in relevant Business Plan.</p>	Head of Building Services	To be agreed.
Investigate options to further improve facilities for wheelchair users	Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme 1a of	Persons with a disability and persons without	Improved accessibility to Parliament Buildings for all building users and	Will be included in current Business Plan (being	Head of Building Services	Proposals and recommendations will be brought to the Assembly

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>Audit of Inequalities)</p> <p>Access to Services (Theme 1b of Audit of Inequalities)</p>		<p>specifically for wheelchair users.</p> <p>Improvements to means of escape in the event of an emergency for wheelchair users.</p>	developed in February 2016).		<p>Commission by March 2016.</p> <p>Timescale for works (subject to approval) TBA</p>
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	Persons with a disability and persons without	Work towards maintaining Autism accreditation.	Yes	Environmental Services Manager	Annually

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)					
Provision of translation from Irish and Ulster Scots to English to the Speaker and Clerks at the table	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different religious belief  Persons of different political opinion  Persons of different racial group	That the Speaker/Clerks at Table receive and understand what is being said. 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	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
			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	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
				the Speaker's 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	The Education Service now provides a programme in Irish to primary and post primary pupils. In 2015,	Yes	Education Manager/ 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
		Persons of different racial group	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.			
Monitoring the outcome of the EQIA on the Flying of the Union Flag at Parliament Buildings	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different religious belief  Persons of different political opinion  Persons of different racial group	Monitoring includes regular consideration of: complaints and other forms of feedback through current complaints mechanisms;  the results of research/surveys relating to the promotion of good relations. A visitor survey is conducted three times a year in	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
			<p>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>			

<b>Action taken to better promote equality of opportunity/good relations</b>	<b>Inequality Identified and Outcome Area(s)</b>	<b>S75 Category</b>	<b>Intended outcome/impact and how this will be measured</b>	<b>In the current service Business Plan (Yes/No)</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
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 public life through Assembly Community Connect	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Men and women generally  Persons with a disability and persons without  Persons of different racial group	Increased engagement with women, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities; inform groups how to utilise resources available through Assembly Community Connect & partner organisations	Yes	Outreach Manager	Ongoing
Engagement with young people through Education	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different age	Education Programmes provided for young people from Key Stage 2 (age 8) to	Yes	Education Manager	Ongoing

<b>Action taken to better promote equality of opportunity/good relations</b>	<b>Inequality Identified and Outcome Area(s)</b>	<b>S75 Category</b>	<b>Intended outcome/impact and how this will be measured</b>	<b>In the current service Business Plan (Yes/No)</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Service visits programme			Key Stage 5 (Post 16)			
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 include new website activities	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
			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

<b>Action taken to better promote equality of opportunity/good relations</b>	<b>Inequality Identified and Outcome Area(s)</b>	<b>S75 Category</b>	<b>Intended outcome/impact and how this will be measured</b>	<b>In the current service Business Plan (Yes/No)</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
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 Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different racial group/people with a disability	To facilitate one BEM Parliament per year	Yes	Outreach Manager	2016-2021
Continued Implementation of the 'Perspective on...' series	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief,	To hold events as agreed by the Assembly Commission for 2016, namely:	Assembly Commission to agree future events at the beginning of the 2016-2021	Speaker's Office	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
		political opinion or racial group.	Easter Rising;  Battle of the Somme	mandate in 2016.		
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.	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>b) The Northern Ireland Charity of the year will have access to the system for up to 5 days (consecutive or not) during its 12 months term.</p> <p>c) The Assembly Commission will grant up to another 8 days for events during a calendar year when requests are made</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>(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) &amp; i).</p>			
Continue annual series of 'Let's Talk'	Participation (Theme 1d of	Young People	Hold events in school venues	Yes	Education Team	2016-2021

<b>Action taken to better promote equality of opportunity/good relations</b>	<b>Inequality Identified and Outcome Area(s)</b>	<b>S75 Category</b>	<b>Intended outcome/impact and how this will be measured</b>	<b>In the current service Business Plan (Yes/No)</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
events across constituencies	Audit of Inequalities)		which will involve all constituencies			
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	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Men and Women generally	Increase NIABT members by 5% year on year and improve wider	Yes	Outreach	Ongoing

<b>Action taken to better promote equality of opportunity/good relations</b>	<b>Inequality Identified and Outcome Area(s)</b>	<b>S75 Category</b>	<b>Intended outcome/impact and how this will be measured</b>	<b>In the current service Business Plan (Yes/No)</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
businesses to raise awareness of the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust (NIABT) in the private sector.			understanding of how businesses can engage with the Assembly. The NIABT will specifically run events to encourage the 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 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
Continue to implement staff surveys	Recruitment and Selection	All	Use the results of the staff survey to produce and implement an		Corporate office	Staff surveys to be undertaken regularly between 2016 and 2021

<b>Action taken to better promote equality of opportunity/ good relations</b>	<b>Inequality Identified and Outcome area(s)</b>	<b>Section 75 Categories</b>	<b>Intended outcome/impact and how this will be measured</b>	<b>In the current service plan (Yes/No)</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
	(Theme 2b of Audit of Inequalities)		<p>action plan if required</p> <p>Monitor the progress of the implementation of this action plan</p>			Action Plan following on from 2014 survey will be reviewed in March 2016.

## **Annexe 4**

### **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.

<b>Inequality Identified</b>	<b>Section 75 Categories</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Action Measures</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
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

<b>Inequality Identified</b>	<b>Section 75 Categories</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Action Measures</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
	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.
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	Creation of a quiet room, signage and review internal policies. All front line staff to be	Facilities Manager	Complete. Autism accreditation award received in 2012 and reassessed



<b>Inequality Identified</b>	<b>Section 75 Categories</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Action Measures</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
		on the autistic spectrum	trained and Autism Champions to be identified.		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

<b>Inequality Identified</b>	<b>Section 75 Categories</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Action Measures</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
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+	Education Team	Complete  February 2016

<b>Inequality Identified</b>	<b>Section 75 Categories</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Action Measures</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
			– 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.		

<b>Inequality Identified</b>	<b>Section 75 Categories</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Action Measures</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
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	Education <b>Manager</b>	West Tyrone/Mid Ulster. Complete November 2014

<b>Inequality Identified</b>	<b>Section 75 Categories</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Action Measures</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
			discussions with MLAs. These 'Let's Talk' style events will take place in different constituencies		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	Equality Manager  Equality Manager	Complete. Contract commenced on 16 July 2014.

<b>Inequality Identified</b>	<b>Section 75 Categories</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Action Measures</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
			<p>Consultation strategy developed</p> <p>Interim report developed</p>		
	Religious belief, Political opinion and/or race	Consultation, to include public engagement, comments returned within agreed deadline	<p>Pre-consultation exercise conducted</p> <p>Formal public consultation exercise conducted</p>	Equality Manager	Complete. Pre-consultation ran from 1 October to 14 October 2014
	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.

<b>Inequality Identified</b>	<b>Section 75 Categories</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Action Measures</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>

<b>Inequality Identified</b>	<b>Section 75 Categories</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Action Measures</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
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	To assist the Environment Committee in seeking views of young	Education Manager	Oct-Nov 2014. Complete

<b>Inequality Identified</b>	<b>Section 75 Categories</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Action Measures</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
		young people (Involving young people in the work of the Assembly)	people on the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill		
	Age	To encourage increased participation in politics amongst young people (Involving young people in the work of the Assembly)	Assist OFMdFM Committee in seeking views of young people  (TBUC inquiry)	Education Manager	2014 -15  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  (School Inspection Inquiry)	Young People	2015  Complete
	Age	To encourage increased participation in politics amongst	Assist Education Committee in seeking views of young people	Young People	2015 -2016  Complete

<b>Inequality Identified</b>	<b>Section 75 Categories</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Action Measures</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
		young people (Involving young people in the work of the Assembly)	(Anti Bullying legislation)		
	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 Community Connect (ACC) is currently targeting the S75 groups of Women, people with		'Get Involved' campaign and participation at Mela Festival	Outreach Manager	Complete



<b>Inequality Identified</b>	<b>Section 75 Categories</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Action Measures</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
	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	Outreach Manager	Complete March 2015

<b>Inequality Identified</b>	<b>Section 75 Categories</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Action Measures</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
			about the benefits of young women in politics.		
	Women	To encourage increased participation in politics amongst women	Assembly Community Connect (ACC) to target women's groups and provide relevant training	Outreach Manager	Complete.

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

<b>Inequality Identified</b>	<b>Section 75 Categories</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Action Measures</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
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

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



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 Review<sup>1</sup>, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland published a revised guide to the two statutory duties.<sup>2</sup> 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

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

<sup>2</sup> 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 groups<sup>3</sup>. They have also met with a small number of Early Years groups<sup>4</sup>. 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

<sup>3</sup> Key Stage 1 covers years 3 and 4 at Primary school

<sup>4</sup> 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;<sup>5</sup>
- Section 75 and Fair Employment monitoring data;
- Minutes of meetings (e.g. Assembly Commission and Secretariat Management Group);
- Annual Reports to the Equality Commission;<sup>6</sup>
- 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;

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

<sup>6</sup> <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.

<b>Ref No.</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Question</b>
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.

<b>Ref No.</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Question</b>
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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.

<b>Ref No.</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Question</b>
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.

<b>Ref No.</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Question</b>
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**

<b>Group Type</b>	<b>No. of groups</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>No. of participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Female</b>	32	7.5%	1,236	8.4%
<b>Male</b>	7	1.4%	327	2.2%
<b>Mixed</b>	390	91.1%	13,184	89.4%
<b>Total</b>	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
<b>All</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>10054</b>

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.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>No. of Participants</b>
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	%
<b>Age Group</b>						
<b>Under 25</b>	3	1	5	3	12	27%
<b>25-39</b>	4	3	10	3	20	45%
<b>40-59</b>	3	5	2	2	12	27%
<b>Gender</b>						
<b>Male</b>	5	2	3	5	15	34%
<b>Female</b>	5	7	14	3	29	66%
<b>Disability</b>						
<b>Yes</b>					2	4.5%
<b>No</b>					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.	%
<b>Age Group</b>		
<b>Under 25</b>	1	6%
<b>25-39</b>	7	41%
<b>40-59</b>	7	41%
<b>60+</b>	2	12%
<b>Gender</b>		
<b>Male</b>	9	56%
<b>Female</b>	7	44%
<b>Disability</b>		
<b>Yes</b>	1	6%
<b>No</b>	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	%
<b>Age Group</b>										
<b>Under 25</b>	1	1	1	6	0	4	2	1	16	10%
<b>25-39</b>	8	6	3	20	7	8	5	1	58	38%
<b>40-59</b>	13	6	8	4	11	15	9	7	73	47%
<b>60+</b>	2	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	7	5%
<b>Gender</b>										
<b>Male</b>	8	6	4	8	1	10	7	1	45	29%
<b>Female</b>	16	8	9	22	20	17	8	8	108	71%
<b>Disability</b>										
<b>Yes</b>	5	0	0	2	1	3	0	0	11	7%
<b>No</b>	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. However, following a change in Commission membership, four of the five Assembly Commission Members are female

#### *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. In recent months, the gender balance of Secretariat Management Group (SMG) and the Assembly Commission has changed. Following a recruitment exercise, a female director has been appointed to SMG. The complement of SMG has also reduced by one, so there are now three male directors and one female director. 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
	%	%	%	%
<b>...more say in how Northern Ireland is governed</b>	18	21	15	20
<b>less say</b>	10	7	10	7
<b>or, is it making no difference?</b>	65	64	66	63
<b>Don't know</b>	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
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>...more say in how Northern Ireland is governed</b>	17	15	19	17	19	23	14	19	21	24	13	23
<b>less say</b>	9	3	5	6	10	9	11	8	9	5	12	8
<b>or, is it making no difference?</b>	56	68	57	55	64	61	72	69	68	63	71	63

<b>Don't know</b>	17	14	19	22	7	7	2	5	2	8	5	6
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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
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>...more say in how Northern Ireland is governed</b>	19	23	16	22	12	11
<b>less say</b>	9	6	10	8	11	6
<b>or, is it making no difference?</b>	61	63	71	64	64	65
<b>Don't know</b>	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.

	<b>Issues identified in the review</b>
Religious Belief	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.



	<b>Issues identified in the review</b>
	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.
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

	<b>Issues identified in the review</b>
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> <p>Work is on-going to encourage the participation of women in politics including support for female Members.</p>
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	<p>Mitigating measures regarding changes to the Childcare scheme have been agreed and are to be implemented.</p>

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission  
**Draft Disability Action Plan 1 July 2016-  
30 June 2021**



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## ANNEXE 6

### **Draft** DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2016 – 2021

**Measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.**

The action plan is broken down into six categories:

- 1) Staff Training
- 2) Representation
- 3) Communication, Consultation and Engagement
- 4) Outreach and Education
- 5) Structural changes to increase participation and accessibility
- 6) Awards and Accreditation

## 1. Staff Training

Action Measure	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	By when	Origin of Measure
Ensure staff receive training and guidance on disability equality legislation and disability awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design or acquire online e-disability training for staff through the Assembly's Moodle system.</li> </ul>	Learning and Development Team	May 2017	Builds upon a previous action with new measures added.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mandatory training provided to all staff following establishment of e-disability training programme.</li> </ul>	Learning and Development Team	Sept 2017	Builds upon a previous measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring of records to ensure that each member of staff receives training</li> </ul>	Learning Co-ordinators	Sept - Dec 2016	Builds upon a previous measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All staff made aware of the revised Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan through e-learning training and direct communication to staff via intranet and email. Key awareness messages delivered through a range of information materials, eg, leaflets, flyers and posters.</li> </ul>	Learning and Development Team and Equality and Good Relations Unit.	Sept – Dec 2017	Builds upon a previous measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality assurance of equality training packages and provision of feedback on any equality training courses.</li> </ul>	Learning and Development Team.	Jan – March 2018	Builds upon a previous measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate training to determine if course objectives were met and staff knowledge of the disability duties has increased through the staff iTrent system, through, for example, completed questionnaires.</li> </ul>	Learning and Development Team.	Jan – March 2018	Builds upon a previous measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide specific training sessions for staff on mental health issues. Examples of training programmes include:</li> </ul>	Learning and Development Team	Ongoing	Builds upon a previous measure

Action Measure	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	By when	Origin of Measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Building Personal Resilience;</li> <li>○ Mood Matters; and</li> <li>○ Living Life to the Full.</li> </ul>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide auditory and visual awareness programmes to front-line staff</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for staff to obtain Level 1 sign language training</li> <li>• Consider scope for provision of level 2 sign language training</li> </ul>	Learning and Development Team	2016-17 2016-17 2016-18	Builds upon a previous measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deaf awareness training to be provided to all frontline staff as required.</li> <li>• Autism awareness training to be provided to relevant staff, including refresher training for the Assembly's appointed Autism Champions as required. (See Louder Than Words Charter Mark and Access Award (NAS) Standards and at annexes 2 and 3)</li> </ul>	Facilities	As required	Builds upon a previous measure

## 2. Representation

Action Measure	Planned Outcome/Measurement	Lead	By when	Origin of Measure
Continue to hold meetings of the external Disability Advisory Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to hold meetings twice a year, or as agreed by the group.</li> <li>Review current membership with a view to developing a list of additional representatives to be invited to participate on the group.</li> </ul>	Equality and Good Relations Unit	Ongoing/ September 2016	Group established in 2009
Erasmus+ Application for future youth engagement project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply to Erasmus+ for funding for a second youth engagement project.</li> <li>If successful in securing funding, design recruitment process to promote the opportunity to people with a disability.</li> <li>If successful in securing funding, set target for number of participants with disabilities</li> </ul>	Education Service	2016	New but builds on previous initiative
Explore concept of Parliament for People with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop concept with Disability Groups</li> <li>Hold regional Parliaments</li> <li>Submit Paper to Speaker</li> <li>Final Parliament to be held in Assembly Senate Chamber</li> <li>Consider hosting yearly event</li> </ul>	Outreach/ Disability Groups	2017	New



### 3. Communication, Consultation and Engagement

Action Measure	Planned Outcome/Measurement	Lead	By when	Origin of Measure
Provide guidance for visitors and staff on further disability access arrangements in relation to participation in Assembly business and events, eg, Committees, Plenary Session, seminars.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver regular Committee Witness Training (4 per year)</li> <li>• Incorporate familiarisation of Parliament Buildings access arrangements</li> </ul>	Outreach	Ongoing	New
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop Q&amp;A guide for disability arrangements for visitors to Parliament Buildings, covering events, Committee meetings, Plenary sittings, Gallery rules, etc.</li> <li>• Issue guidance to Disability Advisory Group for feedback</li> </ul>	Equality and Good Relations to lead, with input from Events, RaSe and Committees	December 2016	New
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop guidance for staff organising events, including Committee stakeholder events, seminars, receptions, etc.</li> <li>• Include checklist of issues to consider, including signage, accessibility, presentation, etc.</li> <li>• Issue guidance to Disability Advisory Group for feedback</li> </ul>	Equality and Good Relations to lead, with input from Events, RaSe and Committees	June 2017	New
Sign language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop proposals to progress a sign language policy, and include consideration of DCAL's work on sign language</li> <li>• Work with relevant agencies in the development of this policy and stakeholders</li> <li>• Present proposals to the Assembly Commission</li> </ul>	Equality and Good Relations Unit	2016	New
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather information on practice in other legislatures as regards sign language</li> </ul>	Parliamentary Services	30 April 2016	New

	provision for Plenary debates and Committee meetings			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to arrange, where appropriate and by prior arrangement, for a sign language interpreter to be in the Public Gallery to provide service during a relevant debate</li> <li>Continue to arrange, where appropriate and by prior arrangement, for a sign language interpreter to attend relevant committee meetings</li> <li>Develop guidance on when it is appropriate to arrange the services of a sign language interpreter for use in the Public Gallery (in line with the scheduled development of a sign language policy)</li> </ul>	Parliamentary Services	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure
Provision of Braille business cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide the Speaker and Deputy Speakers with Braille business cards.</li> </ul>	Speaker's Office	For next mandate (2016-21)	Builds on an existing measure
Committee Gallery Rules	<p>In January 2016, rules for visitors to Committee Galleries were amended to enable building users with a disability to use electrical devices if required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep rules under review</li> </ul>	Committees	Annually	New
Continue Assembly Community Connect training to people with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver bespoke 'How the Assembly Works' sessions to disability groups on request</li> <li>Deliver training regionally on request</li> </ul>	Outreach	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure
Continue to use web-based material to promote positive attitudes towards disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to provide web-based videos showing how to access Parliament Buildings</li> <li>Monitor/respond to any customer complaints/compliments in relation to access to information about services</li> </ul>	Facilities	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure

Employer-supported volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to work with Business in the Community to identify and offer volunteering opportunities to staff</li> </ul>	Human Resources Office	Continuous	Introduced in 2012
Conduct annual exercise to encourage staff to provide anonymous information to assist with monitoring and reporting on disabilities in the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual disability survey issued each year to collect statistical data in order to calculate numbers and percentages of staff who have a disability</li> </ul>	Human Resources Office	March 2016 and annually thereafter	Builds on an existing measure
Ensure that customer satisfaction surveys are carried out that allow for a review of findings by disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visitor survey to include an additional question on access</li> <li>Survey to be issued three times a year</li> <li>Monitor survey responses for compliments/complaints</li> <li>Identify action points as required</li> </ul>	Equality and Good Relations Unit, in conjunction with RalSe, Events and Outreach	Survey conducted three times a year	Builds on an existing measure
Increase the level of accessible/inclusive information so that users with a disability can access digital services and information as independently as possible and make informed choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Outcome:</u> Users with a disability are aware of the availability of accessible information and services and can make use of them</li> <li>Develop and implement an accessible information guidance to improve access to information for users who have a disability. The guidance will accompany the Digital First Strategy.</li> <li><u>Measurement:</u> Feedback from users via website feedback mechanisms, surveys, and feedback from other partnerships and networks.</li> <li>The above will be published in the NI Assembly Commission's (the Commission) annual Section 75 report to the Equality Commission.</li> </ul>	<p>Communications Office / IS Office</p> <p>Communications Office</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Sept 2016</p>	Builds on an existing measure

Digital First EQIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Outcome:</u> Improve our understanding of any issues and needs that may impact Digital First</li> <li>• <u>Measurement:</u> Regular consultation with and feedback from partnerships, formal and informal networks that will assist us in assessing and monitoring products and services in relation to equality issues and their impact.</li> <li>• Compliments and complaints received about services will also be used to help identify the impact of good practices and any adverse impact of existing practices.</li> <li>• The above will be published in the NI Assembly Commission's (the Commission) annual Section 75 report to the Equality Commission.</li> </ul>	Communications Office	Ongoing	Digital First EQIA undertaken from July to October 2015
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#### 4. Outreach and Education

Action Measure	Planned Outcome/Measurement	Lead	By when	Origin of Measure
Education for Special Needs Schools	<p>The Education Service conducts focus groups on behalf of Assembly Committees. The Research and Information Service (RaISe) has developed a framework for selecting a broad cross-section of the youth population. The framework will continue to ensure that children who attend special schools participate in every focus group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to engage with special schools through focus groups. (At least one special school will always be included in the focus group sample)</li> </ul>	Education Service/RaISe	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure
	<p>The Education Service has a continued engagement with special schools, several of which make repeat bookings to visit the Assembly. Staff from the service also conduct outreach visits to several of these schools. Services are advertised to every special school in Northern Ireland.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to engage with special schools</li> <li>Continue to advertise Education Service to every special school in Northern Ireland and encourage an increase in the number of special schools participating in the Education programme each year. (12.5% of special schools participated in the Education programme in 2014-15 – 5 out of 40)</li> </ul>	Education Service	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the number of outreach and inward visits involving special schools.</li> </ul>			
Youth Congress	<p>Approximately 90 young people took part in the annual sitting of the Northern Ireland Youth Congress in the Assembly Chamber on 25 November 2015. Participants came from across Northern Ireland and included young people with a range of special educational needs (ADHD, Asperger's syndrome, autism). Young people from Mencap also participated in the debate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore possibility of hosting another Youth Congress at Parliament Buildings (subject to necessary approvals).</li> </ul>	Education Service	2016/17	New
Films	<p>The Education Service has created a number of short films which aim to explain the work of the Assembly to young people and encourage them to engage with its work. Videos have been subtitled to broaden the appeal of the resources to young people who have hearing impairments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to make available subtitled short films</li> <li>Subtitle any future short films</li> </ul>	Education Service	Ongoing  As required	Builds on an existing measure
Continue to provide support to Assembly Charity of the Year	<p>The Assembly's Charity Policy notes the charitable purposes listed in the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, which include relief of those in need by reason of disability.</p> <p>Positive Futures, the leading local charity for people with a learning disability, acquired brain injury or autistic spectrum condition, is the chosen charity for the Sept 2015-June 2016 period</p>	Outreach	Ongoing. New charity year begins September every year.	Builds on an existing measure

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate regular meetings of Charity Fundraising Group</li> <li>• Facilitate regular meetings with Charity of the Year</li> <li>• Host minimum of two events per year involving Assembly and Charity of the Year.</li> <li>• Facilitate year-round collection points to raise money for charity</li> </ul>			
Regular meetings with Section 75 groups to inform reviews of Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement Strategy reviewed with Disability Action Group</li> </ul>	Outreach	Annually	Builds on an existing measure
Continue to work with disability organisations through Assembly Community Connect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver accessible training within Parliament Buildings and around NI (Monthly 'How the Assembly Works' and 'Insight into' training during session, and four regional 'Get Involved' conferences across NI)</li> <li>• Develop bespoke programmes and projects for disability groups by working with disability groups to tailor training and resources to make them more accessible</li> </ul>	Outreach	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure

## 5. Structural changes to increase participation and accessibility

Action Measure	Planned Outcome/Measurement	Policy Lead	By when	Origin of Measure
Review of access audits as per standards 4, 5 and 8 of Access Award (NAS) Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review access audits as per standards 4, 5 and 8 of Access Award (NAS) Standards (see annexe 3)</li> <li>Continue to follow and review health and safety procedure</li> </ul>	Facilities	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure.
Fire Evacuation - explore potential options to provide or upgrade lift(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial meetings with Architect and Fire Officer have taken place to explore options.</li> <li>Alternative proposals will be provided for consideration at a future meeting of the Commission.</li> </ul>	Facilities	Work to be completed during 2016, subject to approval	New
Maintain signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain quality of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pictorial signage images;</li> <li>Braille signage and other signage in Parliament Buildings</li> <li>Tactile 'tour map' of Parliament Buildings;</li> </ul> </li> <li>Add additional signage as required</li> </ul>	Facilities	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure
Web publishing training for staff - Training is provided to Assembly Staff on the use of the content management system used to publish to the Assembly website. Part of this training includes accessibility issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Outcome:</u> Improved accessibility of information/content on the Assembly website for all users.</li> <li><u>Measurement:</u> Monitor and assess accessibility of information/content on the Assembly website.</li> </ul> <p>The above will be published in the NI Assembly Commission's (the Commission) annual Section 75 report to the Equality Commission.</p>	Communications Office	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure



Accessibility web publishing guidance for staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Outcome:</u> Improved accessibility of information/content on the Assembly website for all users.</li> </ul> <p>Formal guidance will be developed by the Web Manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Measurement:</u> Monitor and assess accessibility on our website.</li> </ul> <p>The above will be published in the NI Assembly Commission's annual Section 75 report to the Equality Commission.</p>	Communications Office	Ongoing	Builds on an existing measure
<p>Monitor and assess accessibility of our website</p> <p>Undertake assessment exercise and address issues of inaccessibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Outcome:</u> Improved accessibility</li> <li>• <u>Measurement:</u> Website accessibility of recognised standard. (Level AAA of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0)</li> <li>• Monitor and assess accessibility on our website.</li> <li>• The above will be published in the NI Assembly Commission's annual Section 75 report to the Equality Commission</li> </ul>	Communications Office	Ongoing	Builds on a previous measure
Increase the number of disabled parking bays in upper car parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of upper car park disabled parking bays above the required minimum under DDA. Extra spaces were provided in December 2015.</li> </ul>	Facilities	Keep under review	Builds on an existing measure
Consideration of access/egress requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate potential options to provide ramped access from ground floor to lower ground floor level and removal of current lift.</li> </ul>	Facilities	Work to be undertaken in 2016,	Builds on an existing measure

from ground floor to lower ground floor			subject to approval	
Review existing layout of Assembly Chamber and previous options to improve accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential options provided for consideration by the Assembly Commission</li> </ul>	Facilities	Keep under review	Builds on an existing measure
Consideration of options for provision of automatic opening of corridor doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate options and clarify the requirements in relation to escape routes, potential for access control, etc. Option study to be provided for consideration by the Assembly Commission</li> </ul>	Facilities	Work to be undertaken in 2016 (subject to approval)	New
Consideration of alterations to counter in Members' Bar to provide serving area for wheelchair users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential layout with provision for wheelchair users at low level to be provided for the Assembly Commission</li> </ul>	Facilities	Work to be undertaken in 2016 (subject to approval)	New
Maintenance of access items for members of the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular checks throughout the year on items, including iPad, Braille tour map and changing places facility.</li> <li>Continue to promote accessible tours and facilities</li> </ul>	Facilities	As required	Builds on an existing measure
Continue to participate in Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS), which offers a guaranteed interview to applicants with a disability who meet the essential criteria for the post.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to offer scheme for internal and external recruitment exercises.</li> <li>Continued provision of disability section in application form whereby an applicant can indicate whether they wish to apply under the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for that particular role and the basis on which they qualify for the scheme. (NB, the scheme will only apply if there are shortlisting criteria for the post.)</li> </ul>	Human Resources Office	Continuous	Introduced in December 2011

## 6. Awards and Accreditation

Action Measure	Planned Outcome/Measurement	Policy Lead	By when	Origin of Measure
Maintain Action on Hearing Loss Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undergo assessment as required to indicate that standards have been met (See standards attached at annexe 2)</li> </ul>	Facilities	As required	Award first received in 2011
Maintain Autism Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to meet standards as outlined at annexe 3)</li> </ul>	Facilities	As required	Award first received in 2012
Continue to proactively raise awareness of work of the Assembly through Equality Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued participation in speaking events, and contribution to any relevant articles/activity by Equality Commission</li> </ul>	Equality and Good Relations Unit	As required	Builds on an existing measure

## Reporting and Monitoring

Issue Identified	Action	Planned outcome/measurement	Lead	Timeline
Regular monitoring of progress against identified actions	Provide progress update to SMG and the Assembly Commission every year	Every year, following liaison with business areas, provide summary of directorate activity to SMG/Commission, charting progress against targets and including any additional actions.	Equality and Good Relations Unit	Annually
	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.	Equality and Good Relations Unit	31 August every year

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