



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2022-2026 Closure Report



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Annex A Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2022 – 2026: Closure Report

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to review the implementation of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's ('the Assembly Commission') Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2022-2026 and to establish if outcomes contained within the Action Plan have been achieved.
- 1.2 An Audit of Inequalities provides a strategic picture of inequalities relevant to an organisation's role and functions. The Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2022-2026 details action measures and timeframes which were put in place to address identified inequalities.

2. Background

- 2.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires 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 to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between people in nine equality categories: 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 have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different: religious belief; political opinion; and racial group.
- 2.2 In accordance with Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) guidance, the Action Plan (2022-2026) set out how the Assembly Commission aimed to address the identified inequalities.
- 2.3 The Assembly Commission's current Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan 2022-2026 were approved by the ECNI in February 2022 and are due to come to an end in February 2026.

2.4 The Audit of Inequalities 2022-2026 sits within the Assembly Commission’s Equality Scheme. The Equality Scheme, and a successor draft Audit of Inequalities Action Plan, are due to come into place in early 2026. To allow this to occur, the current review has been undertaken slightly earlier than its concluding date. This however has not impacted on the closing status of any of the 8 actions contained within the Audit of Inequalities Action Plan.

2.3 The Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2022-2026 contained 8 actions.

3. Performance Against Actions

3.1 Table 1 below summarises the number of Audit of Inequalities actions completed. Final status and narrative updates for individual actions are provided at Annex A.

Table 1 – Final status of Audit of Inequalities actions

Status Key	Number of Actions	Percentage of Actions
Complete	8	100%
Not Complete	0	0%
Total Actions	8	100%

3.2 One hundred percent of actions were completed within the Audit of Inequalities over the 2022-2026 period. More detailed information on the achievement of a number of these actions, and their related outcomes, are set out in the ‘Achievements’ section of this report.

4. Achievements

4.1 In this section we record the achievements in the work of the Assembly Commission in delivering the measures identified in the Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2022-2026.

- 4.2 **Action 1: HR Office to use a focused welcoming statement on recruitment advertising, targeting a range of ethnic minority groups.** An increase in applications from people from ethnic minority communities has been achieved, data indicates application rates rose from 4% in 2022 to 6.2% of applicants in 2023 and decreased to 5% in 2024 and increased to 7.3% in 2025.
- 4.3 **Action 2: HR Office to monitor the age of applicants applying for jobs with the Assembly Commission and consider findings with the intention of taking steps to address any known problems.** The number of applications from those aged 21-30 increased from 17.5% in 2022 to 31% in 2023 and decreased to 20% in 2024 and increased to 23% in 2025. The number of applications from those aged 31-34 remained constant over the years of 2022, 2023 and 2024 at 30% and decreased to 15% in 2025. Applications from those aged 35 and younger made up 38% of all applications in 2025.
- 4.4 **Action 3: To participate in relevant University Recruitment Fairs and relevant Job Fairs.** The HR Recruitment team attended recruitment fairs twice a year over the course of the Action Plan to promote current and future job opportunities to a range of potential applicants - these included university students and younger people under the age of 35.
- 4.5 **Action 4: The HR Office to use a focused welcoming statement on recruitment advertising targeting people under the age of 35 years old.** A welcome statement was used for recruitment competitions to attract applications from young persons (under the age of 35). In 2025 38% of all applications for permanent external recruitment competitions were received from young persons (under the age of 35).
- 4.6 **Action 5: Using the relevant Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) categories, take positive action in recruitment and selection at Assembly Grades 7 and 8 to attract more female applicants to the Assembly Commission.** The number of applications from female applicants

increased from 42% in 2022 to 56% in 2023 and has decreased to 51% for 2024 and increased to 56% in 2025.

- 4.7 **Action 6: To consider new contracts of employment for relevant posts at Assembly Grades 7 and 8 which may appeal to females e.g. not working during Summer Recess.** A statement regarding flexible working is considered for every external recruitment competition and where appropriate, is included in the Candidate Information Booklet. Consideration is given to required working hours for recruitment at Assembly Grades 7 and 8.
- 4.8 **Action 7: HR Office to monitor the community background of applicants applying for jobs with the Assembly Commission and consider findings with the intention of taking steps to address any known problems.** The HR Office monitors applicants in relation to section 75 categories on an ongoing basis and if necessary, considers steps to address any known problems. The number of applications from applicants from a Roman Catholic background increased from 39% in 2022 to 47% in 2023, 39% in 2024 and 40% in 2025. The Assembly Commission is in line with comparator with the exception of SOC 9 (which equates to AG8 Ushers).
- 4.8: **Action 8: Using the relevant Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) categories, take positive action in recruitment and selection at Assembly Grades 7 and 8 to attract more applicants from the Roman Catholic community.** The HR Office refers to relevant Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) categories for each recruitment competition and takes positive action in recruitment and selection to attract applicants from the Roman Catholic Community where the SOC indicates that staff make up is not reflective of the economically active population of Northern Ireland. The Assembly Commission is in line with comparators with the exception of SOC 9.

5. Next steps

- 5.1 A new Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2026-2031 is currently being developed and will be informed by this Audit of Inequalities Closure Report 2022-2026, together with quantitative data gathered for the purpose of identifying areas in which the Assembly Commission can progress equality of opportunity for staff, service users and visitors.

- 5.2 The Assembly Commission will ensure the effective communication of the Audit of Inequalities Action Plan Closure Report 2022-2026 to all staff and consultees and continue to provide training and guidance for staff in relation to their responsibilities.

Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2022 – 2026: Closure Report Update

Status Key:

8	Number – Complete	100%
0	Number - Not complete	0%
8	Total Actions	Percentage 100%

Equality Group	Audit of Inequality Findings	Equality Actions	Expected Outcomes	Lead and Timescale	Closure Report Update
<p>1. Ethnicity</p>	<p>The majority of Assembly staff have a White ethnicity (98.5%)</p> <p>The proportion of Assembly staff from an ethnic minority is two percentage points lower than the comparable figure for the economically active population (3.6%) in Northern Ireland, as drawn from the March 2021 Labour Force Survey (LFS).</p> <p>Ethnic minorities are under-represented in Assembly Commission staff.</p>	<p>HR Office to use a focused welcoming statement on recruitment advertising, targeting a range of ethnic minority groups.</p>	<p>An increase in applications from people from ethnic minority communities.</p>	<p>HR Office</p> <p>Ongoing Yearly</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>A welcome statement is used for all external recruitment competitions to attract applications from minority ethnic communities.</p> <p>The number of applications from those in minority ethnic communities has increased from 4% of applicants in 2022 to 6.2% of applicants in 2023 and has decreased to 5% in 2024 and increased to 7.3% in 2025.</p> <p>Expected Outcome observed.</p>

<p>2. Age (Younger People)</p>	<p>The proportion of Assembly staff aged 34 or under (6.4%) is substantially less than the comparable economically active population (45.2%).</p> <p>Younger people are under - represented in Assembly Commission staff.</p>	<p>HR Office to monitor the age of applicants applying for jobs with the Assembly Commission and consider findings with the intention of taking steps to address any known problems.</p>	<p>To see an increasing number of applications for employment by the Assembly Commission from younger people i.e. under the age of 35.</p>	<p>HR Office Ongoing Yearly</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>The HR Office monitors applicants in relation to Section 75 categories on an ongoing basis and where appropriate, takes steps to address any known problems, including using welcome statement for younger people for all external recruitment competitions.</p> <p>The number of applications from those aged 21-30 increased from 17.5% in 2022 to 31% in 2023 and decreased to 20% in 2024 and increased to 23% in 2025.</p> <p>The number of applications from those aged 31-34 remained constant over the years of 2022, 2023 and 2024 at 30% and decreased to 15% in 2025.</p>
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Equality Group	Audit of Inequality Findings	Equality Actions	Expected Outcomes	Lead and Timescale	Closure Report Update
					<p>Applications from those aged 35 and younger made up 38% of all applications in 2025.</p> <p>Expected Outcome observed.</p>

Equality Group	Audit of Inequality Findings	Equality Actions	Expected Outcomes	Lead and Timescale	Closure Report Update
<p>3. Age (Younger People)</p>	<p>See findings for action 2.</p>	<p>To participate in relevant University Recruitment Fairs and relevant Job Fairs.</p>	<p>See Above.</p>	<p>HR Office Ongoing Yearly</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>The HR Recruitment team attends recruitment fairs twice annually, where we promote current and future job opportunities to a range of potential applicants - these included university students and younger people under the age of 35. The HR Recruitment team attended a national recruitment fair in 2025, promoting current and future job opportunities to a range of potential applicants - these included university students and younger people under the age of 35.</p> <p>Expected Outcome observed.</p>

Equality Group	Audit of Inequality Findings	Equality Actions	Expected Outcomes	Lead and Timescale	Closure Report Update
<p>4. Age (Younger People)</p>	<p>See findings for action 2.</p>	<p>The HR Office to use a focused welcoming statement on recruitment advertising targeting people under the age of 35 years old.</p>	<p>See Above.</p>	<p>HR Office Ongoing Yearly</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>A welcome statement is used for recruitment competitions to attract applications from young persons (under the age of 35).</p> <p>In 2025, 38% of all applications for permanent external recruitment competitions were received from young persons (under the age of 35). Year by year comparison not possible due to changes in age band data collection.</p> <p>Expected Outcome observed.</p>

Equality Group	Audit of Inequality Findings	Equality Actions	Expected Outcomes	Lead and Timescale	Closure Report Update
<p>5. Gender</p>	<p>There is a slight under representation of women in the Assembly Commission staff. Monitoring figures record that Assembly Commission staff is composed 53% Male and 47% female.</p> <p>There are however variations between different grades of staff. So, for example, for staff at Assembly Grades 1 to 4 and Assembly Grades 5 and 6 there is a slight imbalance in favour of females.</p> <p>However, the largest differential is evident at Assembly Grades 7 and 8 in favour of males and that is the largest contributor to the overall figure.</p>	<p>Using the relevant Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) categories, take positive action in recruitment and selection at Assembly Grades 7 and 8 to attract more female applicants to the Assembly Commission.</p>	<p>To see an increasing number of applications for employment by the Assembly Commission from females.</p>	<p>HR Office Ongoing Yearly</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>The Human Resources Office refers to relevant Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) categories for each recruitment competition and where appropriate, we have taken action in recruitment and selection for Assembly Grades 7 and 8 to attract female applicants.</p> <p>The number of applications from female applicants increased from 42% in 2022 to 56% in 2023 and has decreased to 51% for 2024 and increased to 56% in 2025.</p> <p>Expected outcome observed.</p>

Equality Group	Audit of Inequality Findings	Equality Actions	Expected Outcomes	Lead and Timescale	Closure Report Update
6. Gender	Please see above.	To consider new contracts of employment for relevant posts at Assembly Grades 7 and 8 which may appeal to females e.g. not working during Summer Recess.	See Above.	HR Office Ongoing Yearly	<p>Complete</p> <p>Consideration will continue to be given to required working hours for future recruitment at Assembly Grades 7 and 8.</p> <p>A statement regarding flexible working is considered for every external recruitment competition and where appropriate, is included in the Candidate Information Booklet.</p> <p>Expected Outcome observed.</p>

<p>7. Religious Belief</p>	<p>HR data (2021) confirms that 56% of the permanent workforce is from the Protestant community and 39% from a Roman Catholic Background.</p> <p>When compared to the economically active population in Northern Ireland at the 2011 census where 52.6% Protestants were economically active compared to 47.4% Roman Catholics.</p>	<p>HR Office to monitor the community background of applicants applying for jobs with the Assembly Commission and consider findings with the intention of taking steps to address any known problems.</p>	<p>Assembly Commission staff are more reflective of the economically active population of Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>HR Office Ongoing Yearly</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>The Human Resources Office monitors applicants in relation to Section 75 categories on an ongoing basis and if necessary, considers steps to address any known problems.</p> <p>The number of applications from applicants from a Roman Catholic background increased from 39% in 2022 to 47% in 2023, 39% in 2024 and 40% in 2025.</p> <p>The Assembly Commission is in line with comparator with the exception of SOC 9.</p> <p>Expected Outcome observed.</p>
<p>8. Religious Belief</p>	<p>See Above.</p>	<p>Using the relevant Standard</p>	<p>See Above</p>	<p>HR Office</p>	<p>Complete</p>

Equality Group	Audit of Inequality Findings	Equality Actions	Expected Outcomes	Lead and Timescale	Closure Report Update
		Occupational Classification (SOC) categories, take positive action in recruitment and selection at Assembly Grades 7 and 8 to attract more applicants from a Roman Catholic community		Yearly Ongoing	<p>The HR Office refers to relevant SOC categories for each recruitment competition and takes positive action in recruitment and selection at Assembly to attract applicants from the Roman Catholic Community where the SOC indicates that staff make up is not reflective of the economically active population of Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The Assembly Commission is in line with comparators, with the exception of SOC 9 (AG8 Ushers).</p> <p>Expected Outcome observed.</p>