



Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Draft Audit of Inequalities Report and Action Plan 2026-2031



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Equality Unit
Room 402
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 9052 1214
Email: equality@niassembly.gov.uk
Web: www.niassembly.gov.uk

Foreword

We are pleased to present the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's Draft Audit of Inequalities Report and Action Plan 2026–2031.

Under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, public authorities must have due regard to promoting equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across nine equality categories. Guidance from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland recommends undertaking an Audit of Inequalities to identify strategic inequalities and to develop an Action Plan to address them.

This Audit involved a comprehensive review of internal and external data sources and assessed progress in mainstreaming equality and good relations over the past five years. The resulting draft Action Plan sets out measures to reduce or eliminate identified inequalities and ensure compliance with statutory duties.

We welcome your feedback on this draft Action Plan. Following consultation, the final report will be published on the Assembly website. The Assembly Commission remains committed to embedding Section 75 statutory duties into all aspects of its work.



The Speaker, Edwin Poots MLA



Clerk/Chief Executive, Lesley Hogg

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1 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public bodies, when carrying out their work, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine categories of persons:
- Between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
 - Between men and women generally;
 - Between persons with a disability and persons without; and
 - Between persons with dependants and persons without.
- 1.2 Section 75 also requires a public authority, in carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.
- 1.3 The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's Equality Scheme was approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) on 28 March 2012 and reviewed on a regular basis, most recently in late 2025. The Equality Scheme contains a commitment to conduct an Audit of Inequalities which informs the development of an Action Plan.

Purpose of an Audit of Inequalities

- 1.4 In April 2010 the ECNI published statutory guidance '*Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: A Guide for Public Authorities*ⁱ' which defines an Audit of Inequalities as a systematic review and analysis of inequalities which exist for service users and those affected by a public authority's policies.
- 1.5 The Guide for Public Authorities recommends that: '*In order to effectively demonstrate that a public authority has paid due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations through the implementation of its equality scheme, a public authority should develop action measures/action plans to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.*'

- 1.6 The ECNI recommends designated public authorities undertake a systematic audit of inequalities on a five-yearly basis, or earlier.
- 1.7 The purpose of carrying out an audit of inequalities is to provide a strategic picture of evidence-based inequalities, rather than considering inequalities on a policy-by-policy basis, through for example, screening or equality impact assessments.
- 1.8 Therefore, the Audit of Inequalities is used to identify key inequalities and the Action Plan will detail appropriate actions such as policies, programmes, and services to reduce or mitigate any inequalities it has identified.
- 1.9 This action plan is also used for monitoring performance on equality measures and provides a basis for regular reporting to the ECNI.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission – Who we are and what we do

- 1.10 The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (the ‘Assembly Commission’) finds its statutory basis in Section 40 and Schedule 5 to the 1998 Act. As a body corporate, it is responsible for providing the property, services and staff required for the Northern Ireland Assembly’s purposes. The Assembly is the devolved legislature for Northern Ireland. It is responsible for making laws on transferred matters in Northern Ireland and for scrutinising the work of Ministers and Government Departments.

Membership of the Assembly Commission

- 1.11 Membership of the Assembly Commission comprises the Speaker to the Northern Ireland Assembly as Chair, and five other Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) appointed by the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Clerk to the Assembly/Chief Executive

- 1.12 The Clerk to the Assembly/Chief Executive is a full-time Assembly Commission official. This dual role confers the following responsibilities:
 - as Clerk to the Assembly, she is the principal adviser to the Speaker and the Assembly on procedural matters; and

- as Chief Executive, she leads and manages the Assembly Commission's staff, co-ordinates the essential procedural and corporate support services and acts as Accounting Officer for the Assembly Commission's budget.

1.13 The Assembly Commission employs staff to support delivery of its work. The Assembly Commission consists of four directorates; Corporate Services, Legal, Governance and Research Services, Parliamentary Services and a Corporate Support Unit. An organisational chart can be found at Annex A.

Our Priorities

1.14 The Assembly Commission's Corporate Strategy and Corporate Plan 2023-2028 sets out our ambitions, priorities and the overall direction for



achievement of these over a five-year period. The Assembly Commission's annual plans outline the actions identified for each financial year and reports on progress made against each of the identified actions. Equality was an integral consideration in the Corporate Strategy and Plan development process which, alongside our values, underpins these priorities.

2 Equality Scheme Review

Review of the Equality Scheme (2026-2031)

- 2.1 The Audit of Inequalities and associated Action Plan form part of the Assembly Commission's Equality Scheme, which sets out how we comply with the statutory duties under **Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998**.

These duties require public authorities to:

- **Section 75(1):** Have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity across nine equality categories, including religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, disability, and dependency status.
- **Section 75(2):** Have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, and racial group.

- 2.2 Under **Schedule 9 of the Act**, public authorities must prepare an Equality Scheme detailing arrangements to fulfil these duties. This includes staff training, equality screening and consultation on policies, monitoring adverse impacts, and publishing relevant information. Equality Schemes must also conform to guidance issued by the ECNI with the approval of the Secretary of State, as set out in Chapters 5–7 of the ECNI's Section 75 Guide (April 2010).

- 2.3 The Assembly Commission's last reviewed Equality Scheme (2022-2026) was approved by the Assembly Commission on 13 February 2023.

- 2.4 We have now reviewed our current Equality Scheme to ensure that it remains fit for purpose for the 2026-2031 period. We conducted a desk audit to ensure compliance with Schedule 9 requirements and ECNI guidance. We also assessed the effectiveness of the scheme through a five-year review and analysis of [Annual Equality Progress Reports](#). These reports confirm consistent delivery of Section 75 duties, including consultations, equality

screenings, staff training, implementation of equality action plans, and publication of relevant information.

Changes to the Equality Scheme (2026-2031)

- 2.5 In order to ensure our Equality Scheme remains up to date, the following sections and appendices have been updated for the 2026-2031 period.
- Foreword: signed by the current Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly and updated to reflect the Assembly Commission's continued commitment to the Section 75 duties.
- Appendix 2: updated list of Assembly Commission equality consultees.
- Appendix 3: new draft Audit of Inequalities Action Plan for the 2026-2031 period.
- Appendix 5: updated Equality Scheme timetable for measures proposed.
- 2.6 The proposed changes to the Equality Scheme for the 2026-2031 period are administrative in nature and **do not establish the requirement for a new Equality Scheme**, which would require public consultation and submission to the ECNI for approvalⁱⁱ. The reviewed Equality Scheme (2026-2031) was approved by the Assembly Commission on 4 March 2026.

Five-year review report on the application of the Assembly Commission's Equality Scheme (2021-2026)

- 2.7 As required by Schedule 9 paragraph 8 (3) of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998ⁱⁱⁱ, public authorities who have Section 75 Equality Schemes are obliged to review those schemes every 5 years.
- 2.8 The purpose of a 5-year review of the application of the Equality Scheme is to examine how Equality Scheme arrangements have been applied, and to assess how effective they have been in assisting the Assembly Commission to comply with the Section 75 duties.
- 2.9 A 5-year review was conducted in line with [guidance produced by the ECNI](#) and covered the period 2022-2026.

- 2.10 The report provided evidence that the 2022-2026 Equality Scheme was robustly and consistently applied and was effective in its implementation.
- 2.11 The 5-year review was approved by the Assembly Commission on 4 March 2026 for submission to the ECNI and is available on the Assembly website [here](#).
- 2.12 During the period of the review, the Equality Scheme continued to be mainstreamed into the Assembly Commission's activities, and senior management took the lead in ensuring that equality was an integral part of Assembly Commission business. The Assembly Commission remains committed to the fulfilment of its section 75 obligations in all parts of its work.

Audit of Inequalities Closure Report (2022-2026)

- 2.13 In preparation for drafting the new Audit of Inequalities 2026-2031, a Closure Report was prepared on the Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2022-2026.
- 2.14 The Audit of Inequalities Action Plan and Closure Report 2022-2026, was approved by the Assembly Commission on 4 March 2026 and is available on the Assembly website [here](#).
- 2.15 The Audit of Inequalities Closure Report 2022-2026 indicated that actions have been consistently delivered and monitored and progress was reported to the ECNI on an annual basis. The Closure Report also highlighted that 100% of actions put in place were achieved. That is, following the use of focused welcome statements in recruitment advertising, and other measures, there was a rise in application rates for employment from ethnic minority groups, from those aged 21-30, from females and from those whose community background was Catholic. The current draft Audit of Inequalities Report found that whilst the application rates rose, that differentials remained in the workforce composition, and therefore actions will continue to be applied.

3 Draft Audit of Inequalities

Development Overview of the Draft Audit of Inequalities Report and Action Plan 2026-2031

- 3.1 The ECNI recommends designated public authorities undertake a systematic audit of inequalities on a five-yearly basis, or earlier. The purpose being to provide a strategic picture of evidence-based inequalities for the nine Section 75 categories.
- 3.2 The Audit of Inequalities Report and Action Plan require to be publicly consulted upon as a stand-alone document and approved by the Assembly Commission following a period of public consultation. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) has stated that until such times as a reviewed Equality Scheme and new Audit of Inequalities Action Plan are approved for the 2026-2031 period by the Assembly Commission, the current (2022-2026) Equality Scheme can remain in place, which includes the previous Audit of Inequalities, regardless of its status.
- 3.3 The Audit of Inequalities does not examine identified inequalities or potential inequalities on a policy by policy basis. These are scrutinised through the policy screening^{iv} and Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)^v processes, instead the audit is intended to produce a strategic picture of inequalities which the Assembly Commission may influence.

Methodology

- 3.4 A two-step approach was adopted to review the Assembly Commission's Equality Scheme and develop the Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan.
- 3.5 **Step One:** The Equality Scheme was reviewed to ensure it remains current, compliant with ECNI guidance, and aligned with the Assembly Commission's Corporate Strategy 2023–2028. Following approval of the Audit of Inequalities and Action Plan (2026–2031), the Action Plan will be annexed to the Equality Scheme and submitted to the ECNI.

Step Two: An assessment was undertaken to identify key inequalities across the nine Section 75 categories and to examine the functions and services delivered by the Assembly Commission. This process included:

- Consultation with relevant staff
- Review of recent public consultation data
- Analysis of workforce data
- Examination of internal and external evidence sources

3.6 The development and assessment stages of the Audit of Inequalities were as follows:

Audit of Inequalities Development and Assessment Stages

Stage 1: Review of internal and external qualitative and quantitative information as an evidence base to inform the audit

Stage 2: Pre-engagement with stakeholders

Stage 3: Analysis of data received including the identification of gaps and potential areas for improvement going forward, for example, a review of previous consultation feedback and an examination of strategic and equality plans

Stage 4: Collation and analysis of both external and internal information received disaggregated by Section 75 categories

Stage 5: Consideration of impacts and outcomes

Stage 6: Meetings with staff from relevant business areas to draft an Action Plan with specific, measurable, achievable and timebound actions where findings indicated gaps

Stage 7: Publication of the Audit of Inequalities Report and draft Action Plan for a 12 week public consultation

Stage 8: Review of consultation feedback, amendment of the Action Plan, and publication of a consultation summary report and final agreed Action Plan

Stage 9: On-going review and bi-annual monitoring of the Action Plan

4 Draft Audit of Inequalities Assessment and Action Plan (2026-2031)

4.1 We have completed an audit of inequalities to identify key issues that may impact the Assembly Commission's work and services

4.2 This assessment was informed by a robust evidence base, including internal and external data sources such as:

- Business and service plans, organisational strategies, workforce data
- Equality screening, staff surveys, and consultation feedback
- Census data, labour market statistics, and relevant publications.

4.3 Action Plan measures may include existing initiatives where they address identified inequalities. The focus is on capturing gaps and setting actions to reduce or eliminate them.

4.4 Table 1 provides an overview of the key issues identified, which informed the draft Audit of Inequalities Action Plan. Detailed findings by Section 75 category are provided at Annex A.

Table 1 Overview of Key Issues

S75 category	Issue to address	Action(s)
Disability	Accessibility limitations to the Assembly website.	Develop and launch a new website to improve accessibility and enhance communication of the Assembly's work.
Disability, Race, Gender, Age	Ensuring public voices are represented.	Host a minimum of one Outreach Parliament annually to strengthen public engagement and understanding of the Assembly's role.
Disability	Access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities.	Continue provision of BSL and ISL interpretation for at least one weekly Question Time, with Question Time to The Executive Office always interpreted to promote inclusive participation.
Disability	Physical accessibility limitations in Parliament Buildings.	Implement recommendations from the Disability Access Audit.
Disability	Staff wellbeing requires improvement.	Implement a Wellbeing Framework, which includes staff mental health, based on five pillars: 1. Leadership & Support: Train managers to hold wellbeing conversations and provide a Wellbeing Toolbox.

S75 category	Issue to address	Action(s)
		2. Workload & Balance: Streamline processes, reduce duplication, and integrate AI tools. 3. Learning & Development: Promote a continuous growth culture, mentoring programmes, and e-learning on wellbeing. 4. Relationships & Culture: Foster positive feedback and collaboration. 5. Wellbeing Supports: Enhance communication on available supports, develop a dedicated wellbeing staff webpage, and expand initiatives such as Men's and Women's Health Networks.
Religious Belief, Race, age.	Workforce composition disparities.	Continue to monitor the community background, race and age of applicants and appointees through avenues such as Fair Employment Annual Monitoring and Article 55 reviews. Take action as required to ensure representation aligns with comparator data.
Political Opinion	Public Engagement provision across all constituency areas of Northern Ireland.	Continue to deliver outreach services across all constituencies to increase awareness, improve understanding, and enable participation. Activities include: • Publicising Assembly services • Reaching diverse audiences • Providing engagement opportunities • Supporting public participation through training and familiarisation.

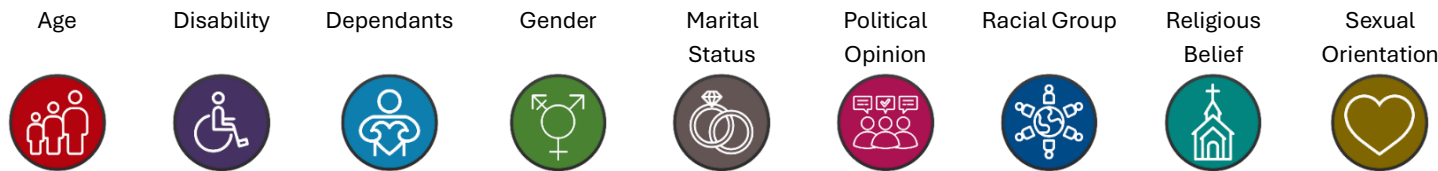
5. Next Steps in the consultation process

- 5.1 As part of our commitment under the Assembly Commission's Equality Scheme, we invite consultees to provide feedback on the draft Audit of Inequalities Action Plan for the 2026-2031 period.
- 5.2 Responses will be considered and summarised for presentation to the Assembly Commission. Following approval, a Consultation Response Report and the final Audit of Inequalities Report and Action Plan 2026–2031 will be published on the Assembly website and circulated to consultees.
- 5.3 All information provided during this consultation will be managed in compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).
- 5.4 The draft **Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2026–2031** is set out in **Table 2**, and findings by Section 75 category are included at **Annex A**.

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Table 2 Draft Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2026-2031

Table Key by Section 75 Group



S75 Group	Objective	Outcome	Action /Milestone 2026-2027	Action /Milestone 2027-2028	Action /Milestone 2028-2029	Action /Milestone 2029-2030	Action /Milestone 2030-2031	Recording/monitoring
1.Disability 	Make the Assembly website more accessible (online accessibility) Develop and launch a new website to improve accessibility and enhance communication of the Assembly's work.	Public can easily access Assembly information in multiple formats through a user friendly, compliant website.	Continue progress on the website redevelopment project, incorporating the findings and research carried out in preceding years.	Review the new Assembly website (anticipated launch Quarter 1 or Quarter 2 of 2027).	Monitor website usability and accessibility on an ongoing basis, using user feedback, analytics, and support requests to identify issues.	Monitor website usability and accessibility on an ongoing basis, using user feedback, analytics, and support requests to identify issues.	Monitor website usability and accessibility on an ongoing basis, using user feedback, analytics, and support requests to identify issues.	This objective will be recorded and monitored via: Priority 2 (2) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Plan 2023-2028 and the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Annual Plan – End of Year Performance Report. The Assembly Website Redevelopment Project. Aim 1 (Actions 4 and 5) of the Northern Ireland
			Continue to deliver training, and provide guidance, to ensure staff who are content creators/publishers, understand online	Conduct user research to gather information on the usability and accessibility of the website. Review findings and consider	Conduct an annual accessibility audit to ensure WCAG (Web content Accessibility Guidelines) AA compliance (at a minimum), and	Conduct an annual accessibility audit to ensure WCAG AA compliance (at a minimum), and implement remediation	Conduct an annual accessibility audit to ensure WCAG AA compliance (at a minimum), and implement remediation	

S75 Group	Objective	Outcome	Action /Milestone 2026-2027	Action /Milestone 2027-2028	Action /Milestone 2028-2029	Action /Milestone 2029-2030	Action /Milestone 2030-2031	Recording/monitoring
			accessibility and compliance with the relevant regulations.	appropriate action plan.	implement remediation actions within an agreed timeframe.	actions within an agreed timeframe.	actions within an agreed timeframe.	Assembly Commission Disability Action Plan 2025-2030.
					Provide regular accessibility training and updated guidance to website publishers to ensure awareness of current standards and best practice.	Provide regular accessibility training and updated guidance to website publishers to ensure awareness of current standards and best practice.	Provide regular accessibility training and updated guidance to website publishers to ensure awareness of current standards and best practice.	
					Review and update the website's Accessibility Statement annually to reflect audit findings and improvements made.	Review and update the website's Accessibility Statement annually to reflect audit findings and improvements made.	Review and update the website's Accessibility Statement annually to reflect audit findings and improvements made.	
2.Disability Race Gender Age 	Develop and implement a public engagement strategy (Outreach Parliaments)	Improved public understanding of the Assembly's role and functions.	Conduct interim review of Outreach event calendar; secure resources for expansion if required.	Hold a Women's Parliament.	Hold a Parliament for Ethnic Minority Groups.	Hold a Women's Parliament.	Hold an Ethnic Minority Parliament.	This objective will be recorded and monitored via: Priority 2 (1) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Plan 2023-

S75 Group	Objective	Outcome	Action /Milestone 2026-2027	Action /Milestone 2027-2028	Action /Milestone 2028-2029	Action /Milestone 2029-2030	Action /Milestone 2030-2031	Recording/monitoring
  	Implement delivery of a Youth Assembly.		Hold an Older Person's Parliament.	Hold a Disabled People's Parliament.	Hold an Older Person's Parliament.	Hold a Disabled People's Parliament.	Hold an Older Person's Parliament.	2028 and the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Annual Plan – End of Year Performance Report.
	Host a minimum of one Outreach Parliament event annually to strengthen public engagement and understanding of the Assembly's role.		Hold an event for Ethnic Minorities.					Public Engagement Strategic Plan 2025-2027.
			Deliver Youth Assembly Mandate three: Plenary 2 and Plenary 3.	Deliver Youth Assembly Mandate three: Plenary 4. Youth Assembly Recruitment for Fourth Mandate. Deliver Youth Assembly Mandate four: Plenary 1.	Deliver Youth Assembly Mandate four: Plenary 2 and 3	Deliver Youth Assembly Mandate four: Plenary 4. Youth Assembly Recruitment for Fifth Mandate. Deliver Youth Assembly Mandate five: Plenary 1.	Youth Assembly Mandate five: Plenary 2 and Plenary 3.	Aim 2 (Action 18) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Disability Action Plan 2025-2030.

S75 Group	Objective	Outcome	Action /Milestone 2026-2027	Action /Milestone 2027-2028	Action /Milestone 2028-2029	Action /Milestone 2029-2030	Action /Milestone 2030-2031	Recording/monitoring
3.Disability 	Create more opportunities to engage with Committees (Sign Language Provision) Enhance committee engagement through inclusive practices (Sign language provision).	Improved public participation and connection between committees and the public through the provision of sign language.	Provide BSL and ISL interpretation for at least one weekly Question Time, with The Executive Office sessions always interpreted.	Provide BSL and ISL interpretation for at least one weekly Question Time, with The Executive Office sessions always interpreted.	Provide BSL and ISL interpretation for at least one weekly Question Time, with The Executive Office sessions always interpreted.	Provide BSL and ISL interpretation for at least one weekly Question Time, with The Executive Office sessions always interpreted.	Provide BSL and ISL interpretation for at least one weekly Question Time, with The Executive Office sessions always interpreted.	This objective will be recorded and monitored via: Priority 2 (5) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Plan 2023-2028 and the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Annual Plan – End of Year Performance Report. Monitored periodically as part of contract management arrangements. Aim 1 (Action 6) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Disability Action Plan 2025-30.

S75 Group	Objective	Outcome	Action /Milestone 2026-2027	Action /Milestone 2027-2028	Action /Milestone 2028-2029	Action /Milestone 2029-2030	Action /Milestone 2030-2031	Recording/monitoring
4.Disability 	Disability access audit	Parliament Buildings maintained and enhanced as an iconic historic building and centre for the delivery of modern parliamentary services.	Implement Disability Access Audit recommendations	Continued implementation of Disability Access Audit recommendations	Continued implementation of Disability Access Audit recommendations	Continued implementation of Disability Access Audit recommendations	Continued implementation of Disability Access Audit recommendations	This objective will be recorded and monitored via: Priority 4 (6) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Plan 2023-2028 and the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Annual Plan – End of Year Performance Report. DDA recommendation Project 2026-2028.
5.Disability 	Implementation of Wellbeing Framework (including staff mental health)	The Assembly will be a confident legislature with a strong parliamentary culture where staff will feel valued, trusted, empowered and have confidence and trust in their leadership.	Implement a Wellbeing Framework. Pilot Leadership Development Programme with Senior Leaders. Performance and Wellbeing Management Framework launch.	Continue implementing the Leadership Development Programme. Continue promoting the Performance and Wellbeing Management Framework.	Continue implementing the Leadership Development Programme. Continue promoting the Performance and Wellbeing Management Framework.	To be determined based on new Strategy.	To be determined based on new Strategy.	This objective will be recorded and monitored via: Priority 3 (1) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Plan 2023-2028 and the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Annual Plan – End of Year Performance Report. Assembly Commission People and Culture Strategy 2024-2029.

S75 Group	Objective	Outcome	Action /Milestone 2026-2027	Action /Milestone 2027-2028	Action /Milestone 2028-2029	Action /Milestone 2029-2030	Action /Milestone 2030-2031	Recording/monitoring
			Launch of the Women's and Men's Health Networks.	Continue the Women's and Men's Health Networks.	Continue the Women's and Men's Health Networks.			Assembly Commission Wellbeing Framework 2026 – 2029.
			Learning Needs Analysis Pilot commenced.	Learning Needs Analysis continued.	Learning Needs Analysis continued.			
			Internal Comms plan to promote Wellbeing Resources.	Promote Wellbeing Resources.	Promote Wellbeing Resources.			
			Explore and implement new technologies to streamline processes and support workload balance.	Explore and implement new technologies to streamline processes and support workload balance.	Explore and implement new technologies to streamline processes and support workload balance.			
6. Religious Belief, Race and age.	  Our staff will be a motivated, resilient and expert team. (Workforce composition and application rates) Continue to ensure	Applicant rates reflect community background comparators (Standard Occupational Categories), and race/age representation aligns	Submit Annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return to the Equality Commission for NI (legal requirement under Article 53 FETO).	Submit Annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return to the Equality Commission for NI (legal requirement under Article 53 FETO).	Submit Annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return to the Equality Commission for NI (legal requirement under Article 53 FETO).	Submit Annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return to the Equality Commission for NI (legal requirement under Article 53 FETO).	Submit Annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return to the Equality Commission for NI (legal requirement under Article 53 FETO).	This objective will be recorded and monitored via: Annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return to the Equality Commission for NI.
				Conduct Article 55 Review every three years to			Conduct Article 55 Review every three years to	

S75 Group	Objective	Outcome	Action /Milestone 2026-2027	Action /Milestone 2027-2028	Action /Milestone 2028-2029	Action /Milestone 2029-2030	Action /Milestone 2030-2031	Recording/monitoring
	workforce composition and recruitment practices align with equality standards under the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 and Section 75 duties.	with economically active population data.		assess fair participation and take affirmative action if required (Article 55 FETO).			assess fair participation and take affirmative action if required (Article 55 FETO).	Article 55 review to the Equality Commission for NI. Recruitment monitoring exercises.
			Review recruitment monitoring data (community background, race, age) and implement measures where underrepresentation is identified.	Review recruitment monitoring data (community background, race, age) and implement measures where underrepresentation is identified.	Review recruitment monitoring data (community background, race, age) and implement measures where underrepresentation is identified.	Review recruitment monitoring data (community background, race, age) and implement measures where underrepresentation is identified.	Review recruitment monitoring data (community background, race, age) and implement measures where underrepresentation is identified.	
7. Political Opinion 	Develop and implement a public engagement strategy (Outreach Services across all NI constituencies to support Parliamentary Services).	There will be a greater public understanding and knowledge of the role and function of the Assembly.	Conduct interim review of outreach calendar and secure resources if expansion is needed.	Continue to develop community outreach, aiming to reach all 18 constituencies annually.	To be determined based on new Public Engagement Strategy 2028-2032.	To be determined based on new Public Engagement Strategy 2028-2032.	To be determined based on new Public Engagement Strategy 2028-2032.	This objective will be recorded and monitored via: Priority 2 (1) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Plan 2023-2028 and the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Annual Plan – End of Year Performance Report. Public Engagement Strategic Plan 2025-2027.
			Increase Community Outreach Workshops to ensure all 18 constituencies have been covered by the end of 2026.	Attend community events, such as, Mela and the Balmoral Show etc.				

S75 Group	Objective	Outcome	Action /Milestone 2026-2027	Action /Milestone 2027-2028	Action /Milestone 2028-2029	Action /Milestone 2029-2030	Action /Milestone 2030-2031	Recording/monitoring
			Develop a structured approach for the Participation and Outreach Team to collaborate with Assembly Committees to gather relevant lived experiences and input from citizens.	Support Assembly Committees to conduct public engagement and gather relevant lived experience information.				
			Attend community events, such as, Mela and the Balmoral Show etc.					

Annex A Audit of Inequalities Findings by Section 75 Group

Table Key by Section 75 Group

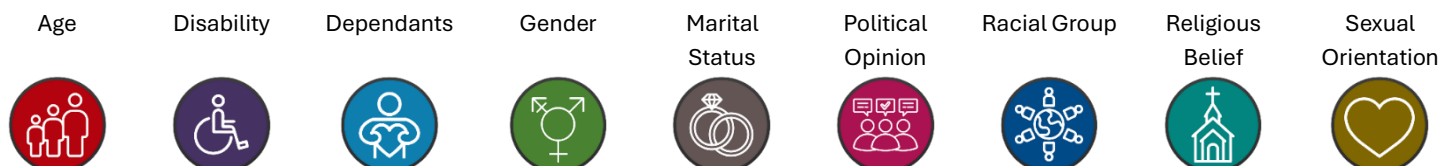


Table 1 Table Key by Section 75 Group

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
1. Disability  Population data^{vi} The 2021 Census ^{vii} in Northern Ireland indicated that 34.7% of resident people in Northern Ireland had one or more long-term health condition or disability that limited their day to day activities. The Census also indicated that	Public Engagement 1. Online Accessibility The accessibility regulations require UK public sector organisations to make their websites and mobile applications (apps) accessible to disabled people. Research by the Government Digital Service has highlighted gaps in the accessibility of public sector websites and the importance of meeting user needs. Research conducted by other organisations such as AbilityNet and the Business Disability Forum indicate that public sector websites have work to do to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 . As a public sector body, the Assembly Commission is legally obliged to ensure that online content and services meet accessibility standards. Making our online content accessible ensures that we reach as wide an audience as possible. 2. What you told us The main finding from engagement with internal and external stakeholders via stakeholder workshops, one-to-ones and surveys was difficulty finding and understanding information. You told us we need to:	Priority 2 (2) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy 2023-2028, 'Make the work of the Assembly more accessible'. Assembly Website Redevelopment Project.

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
approximately a quarter of those with a health problem or long-term disability (23.2%) are economically active. Therefore, almost one in five people of working age in Northern Ireland has a disability. Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Staff Profile^{viii} In a Section 75 staff survey^{ix}, 161 staff responded to the question on disability, with 21.6 per cent (over one in five) declaring they had a disability, twice the proportion (10.6%) of the comparator population. The figure of 21.6 per cent is also more than three times higher than the corresponding figures for the Northern Ireland Civil Service (6.4%).	• Simplify and optimise the information architecture: people find it too difficult to find the information they need and that the user experience must be improved. • Develop a robust search functionality: the current search facility is not up to expected standards. • Streamline and support key user journeys: people have difficulty navigating the website. We conducted research with an independent partner, whose accessibility review concluded that ‘Several key opportunities for increasing the accessibility of the website were identified, including colour, layout, metadata, file formats, and navigation.’ An accessibility audit carried out by the research partner (using the WAVE auditing tool) also confirmed the findings of the Assembly web team’s internal audit i.e. there are several areas where the Assembly website requires upgrading. Part of our research included a public survey which was conducted from February to March 2024 and was open to anyone interested in providing feedback. The survey ran for a number of weeks and received 173 responses. Among other findings, it produced the following relevant statistics: • 23% of participants identified as disabled. • 37% said the Assembly website does not meet their needs. • 65% said the Assembly website is not easy to use. • 48% said the Assembly website is not accessible. • 80% said the Assembly website is not visually appealing. • 39% said the Assembly website is not easy to understand. • 73% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that the Assembly website is to the standard a local government website should be. This evidence and research confirmed that the current Assembly website presents a number of barriers and accessibility issues that can only be resolved with a new website, built with these considerations factored in as an essential requirement.	Aim 1 (Actions 4 and 5) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Disability Action Plan 2025-2030.

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
	3. Current actions to address the issue In July 2024, the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission approved the business case for the redesign and restructuring of the Assembly website. A project team was established. It is anticipated that the project will complete in the next few years (indicative target early-mid 2027) creating a new Assembly website that will be a trusted authority on all Assembly business and a modern online tool where people can come to learn and engage. The redesign will support the Assembly Commission's corporate objectives to make the work of the Assembly more accessible and to communicate the impact of the Assembly's work. A parallel enabling project commenced in October 2024 to modernise the Assembly information management system (AIMS) platform, which will make a step change in the way in which IT applications and services are delivered. That will be closely linked to enabling many Assembly business-related functions of the new website. 4. Outcome The public will be able to connect with the Assembly through better information provision in a range of formats and in ways that are easy to understand and through services that are user-friendly.	
Examples of evidence sources ‘Accessibility Monitoring of Public Sector website and mobile apps from 2022-2024’, Government Digital Service, 2024. Office of National Statistics says 81% of disabled adults in UK are recent internet users (2020 figures). Digital exclusion. House of Lords (2023). Northern Irish Digital Accessibility Index 2022. ForSight NI (2022). Internet users, UK: 2020. Internet use in the UK; annual estimates by age, sex, disability and geographical location. ONS (2020). Exploring the UK’s digital divide. ONS (2019). The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 Consultation Report Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Research Report - Accessibility Review section of the discovery phase.		

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
2.Disability 	Public Engagement 1. Participation in Public Life: Disabled People’s Parliament ECNI research, and their publication Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people and encouraging participation of disabled people in public life, The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as modified by Schedule 8 thereof for application in Northern Ireland), ECNI, March 2007 indicates that people with a disability are underrepresented in public life* Whilst the Assembly Commission has very limited public life positions, it considered various alternatives to ensure that people’s voices could be heard. The Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy, reflected in the Public Engagement Strategy, states that <i>the public will understand and value the role of the Assembly and be engaged in its work</i>. This recognises the fact that the success of the Assembly is very much connected to its ability to engage meaningfully with the public. The Public Engagement Strategy takes this further and aims to provide activities ‘...that are inclusive and seek to reach those who would not usually engage’. Outreach Parliaments are one of the most impactful ways for the Assembly to deliver this aim, providing the opportunity for a diverse range of people to have their voices heard on issues that matter to them. Outreach Parliaments are a key deliverable in the Public Engagement Strategy 2025-2027. Relevant commitments in the strategy are as follows: • to create opportunities for a diverse range of voices to be heard in the Assembly; • to support public participation by providing information, familiarisation and training; and • provide MLAs with opportunities to take part in and support our activities and programmes. 2. What you told us and actions to address the issue A framework for delivery of outreach parliaments was developed by the Participation and Outreach (P&O) team, and this is currently being piloted with a view to reviewing its effectiveness at the end of the current mandate. Previous Assembly Commission research with the public indicated that a ‘co-design^{xi}’ approach was vital. Therefore, the second step of the framework was to establish a co-design or consultative panel in order to shape the process, and ultimately the Parliament in order to make/influence all the key decisions. The role of the P&O team was to facilitate the co-design group and guide them through the design and delivery of the Parliament. The	Priority 2 (1) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy 2023-2028, ‘<i>Develop and implement a public engagement strategy</i>’. Public Engagement Strategic Plan 2025-2027. Aim 2 (Action 18) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Disability Action Plan 2025-2030.

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans																		
	P&O team wanted to ensure widened participation and to have a diverse range of groups represented. Using information provided by the Assembly's Research and Information Service (RaISe), the team approached a number of groups and individuals to join the co-design panel. The final list of member organisations is below: Table 1 Disabled People's Parliament - Consultative Panel Membership <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Centre for Independent Living NI</td><td>Mindwise</td><td>Carers NI</td></tr> <tr> <td>Disability Action</td><td>Mencap NI</td><td>Royal National Institute for the Blind</td></tr> <tr> <td>Disability Sports NI</td><td>Imtac</td><td>Versus Arthritis NI</td></tr> <tr> <td>Alzheimer's Society NI</td><td>Omnibus Partners</td><td>Positive Futures</td></tr> <tr> <td>My Way Access</td><td>British Deaf Association</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>NOW Project</td><td>IFL Scotland</td><td></td></tr> </table> The Public Engagement Unit provided support to panel members, meeting with them on a monthly basis for up to a year prior to the Parliament. Parliamentary Services staff provided information and training to panel members regarding Assembly protocols when presenting to Ministers in the Assembly Chamber. A public survey to identify the issues for debate at the Parliament was launched on 30 June 2025 and was aimed at Deaf and disabled people and those who have experienced disability across Northern Ireland. The survey was promoted on the Assembly's social channels and by the consultative panel through their own networks. There were 1,025 responses received from the public, and this enabled the panel to identify the main issues and narrow these down to create a motion and topics for debate: • Equal access to appropriate healthcare and services, including relevant and appropriate equipment • Social security & benefit payments, welfare reforms (for example PIP, Universal Credit) • Suitable standards of living and social protection • Living independently • Affordable and accessible transport	Centre for Independent Living NI	Mindwise	Carers NI	Disability Action	Mencap NI	Royal National Institute for the Blind	Disability Sports NI	Imtac	Versus Arthritis NI	Alzheimer's Society NI	Omnibus Partners	Positive Futures	My Way Access	British Deaf Association		NOW Project	IFL Scotland		
Centre for Independent Living NI	Mindwise	Carers NI																		
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Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
	• Barriers to employment • Social isolation • Access to affordable housing • Education opportunities • Unpaid care and support. The motion for the parliament was as follows: <i>That this Parliament affirms that laws and policies are most effective when informed by the lived experience of those they affect; recognises that Deaf and disabled people seek to enjoy only the same freedoms and opportunities as all citizens, and that barriers are too often created when decisions are taken without their involvement; believes that the issues raised today will demonstrate the adverse impact these barriers have on the physical and mental health of Deaf and disabled people, their educational and employment opportunities, and their frequent isolation from society. This Parliament calls on Ministers, Departments and public bodies to ensure the full involvement of Deaf and disabled people in decisions which affect them; and further calls for strengthened interdepartmental communication so that the impacts and unintended consequences of new laws and policy changes are properly assessed and addressed.</i> On 21 November 2025, the Disabled People's Parliament took place in the Assembly Chamber in Parliament Buildings and the key issues that impact the lives of disabled people were raised directly with decision makers. A report will be published on the Parliament which will include the issues and recommendations discussed for distribution to MLAs and Ministers. The session was recorded and can be viewed here. The next Disabled People's Parliament is scheduled to take place in the 2027-2032 mandate. 3. Outcome There will be a greater public understanding and knowledge of the role and function of the Assembly.	

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
Examples of evidence sources Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Disability Action Plan 2025-2030 Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Public Engagement Strategy 2025-2027. Inaugural Disabled People's Parliament Northern Ireland Assembly (2021). Disabled People's Parliament (2025). Disabled People's Parliament Survey (2025). Topical Digest: Disabled People's Parliament. NI Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) (2025). Participation in Public Life in Northern Ireland. Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2024). A Guide for Public Authorities: Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people and encouraging participation of disabled people in public life. Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2007). Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Disability Action Plan 2025-2030. Northern Ireland Assembly. The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy 2023 – 2028. Northern Ireland Assembly. Disability Action Plans. Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.		
3.Disability 	Public Engagement 1. Sign Language Provision The promotion of equality of opportunity entails more than the elimination of discrimination. It may also require proactive measures to be taken to maintain and secure equality of opportunity. The provision of sign language will have direct benefit to Deaf and Hard of Hearing Communities who are considered as falling within the S75 category of 'persons with a disability and persons without'. Deaf people who use sign language as their first or preferred language identify themselves as part of a cultural and linguistic minority and view their signed language as a 'language of need' which, along with deaf culture, should be respected and celebrated. It is recognised that some sign language users are fully bilingual in signing and English. However, many have limited literacy skills. It is recognised that this can lead to misunderstandings around complex concepts and specialist language, both of which are common in parliamentary proceedings. This can mean that sign language users can not automatically read or understand parliamentary information or language. One further aspect worth noting is that this has led to an underdevelopment of sign language for many parliamentary concepts and language. This aspect was identified by the interpreters utilised by the Northern	Priority 2(5) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 '<i>Create more opportunities to engage with Committees</i>'. Aim 1 (Action 6) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans																						
	Ireland Assembly, and a process of developing appropriate signs is ongoing between interpreters and the deaf community. There is little qualitative evidence/information about the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Communities. Table 1 below, taken from the Assembly's Research and Information Service (RaISe) Paper NIAR 303-20 (November 2020), illustrates the estimated number of Deaf British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) users in Northern Ireland. Table 1 Numbers of sign language users in the UK and Ireland¹⁰ <table data-bbox="521 727 1653 1082"> <tr> <th>Jurisdiction</th><th>Deaf SL users</th><th>Total numbers of SL Users</th></tr> <tr> <td>Northern Ireland</td><td>7,500</td><td rowspan="3">18,000¹¹</td></tr> <tr> <td>British Sign Language</td><td>5,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Irish Sign Language</td><td>2,500</td></tr> <tr> <td>Scotland</td><td>7,000</td><td>12,500</td></tr> <tr> <td>England</td><td>73,000</td><td>127,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Wales</td><td>4,000</td><td>7,200</td></tr> <tr> <td>Ireland¹²</td><td>5,000</td><td>40,000</td></tr> </table> Findings from the Continuous Household Survey published by the Department for Communities in October 2022 stated the following in relation to respondents with knowledge of sign language (please note this refers to knowledge of sign language in the general population). Knowledge of Sign language. In 2021/22, one out of ten adults (10%) in Northern Ireland were able to communicate using Sign language. Females (13%) were more likely to have knowledge of Sign language than males (7%).	Jurisdiction	Deaf SL users	Total numbers of SL Users	Northern Ireland	7,500	18,000 ¹¹	British Sign Language	5,000	Irish Sign Language	2,500	Scotland	7,000	12,500	England	73,000	127,000	Wales	4,000	7,200	Ireland ¹²	5,000	40,000	Disability Action Plan 2025-30.
Jurisdiction	Deaf SL users	Total numbers of SL Users																						
Northern Ireland	7,500	18,000 ¹¹																						
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Ireland ¹²	5,000	40,000																						

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
	- Adults who have dependants were more likely to have knowledge of Sign language compared to those who do not have dependants (13% and 9% respectively). - In 2021/22, adults living in the least deprived areas were more likely to have knowledge of Sign language than those living in the most deprived areas (13% and 9% respectively). - There was no significant difference found between adults who live in rural areas compared to urban areas regarding knowledge of Sign language (10% and 11% respectively). - Similarly, no significant difference was found between adults who have a disability and those who do not have a disability (12% and 10% respectively). 2. What you told us In November 2021 the Assembly Commission approved a pilot for the provision of live sign language interpretation of Question Time to the Executive Office Ministers to the end of the 2017-22 Assembly mandate. The pilot was in both BSL and ISL and was made available on the Assembly Website. The resignation of the First Minister on 3 February 2022 meant that Question Time to the Executive Office could not continue. As a result, the pilot was continued with interpretation provided for questions to other Executive Ministers. In April – May 2022, a review of the pilot was undertaken with representatives from the deaf community, Assembly utilised interpreters and internally with the various business areas involved in the delivery of the pilot. The main finding was that the pilot was well received by members of the deaf community, who indicated a desire for a continuation of the services and approach adopted in the pilot. In November 2022 the Assembly Commission’s Senior Management Team (SMT) agreed the pilot be continued with the aims of: - increasing access for the Deaf Community to the business of the Assembly with specific reference to Question Time to Executive Ministers which takes place in the Assembly Plenary each week that the Assembly is sitting; - facilitating certain special events such as the first sittings in a new mandate, tributes such as that to Her Late Majesty, VIP addresses to the Assembly, etc. are sign language interpreted; - bringing the Assembly’s provision of sign language interpretation closer to that provided in other legislatures;	

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
	- allowing the Assembly to respond proactively in the context of growing expectations and potential statutory duties being placed on public bodies relating to accessing services; - helping to deliver on the Assembly Commission's Corporate Plan objective of Strengthening Engagement with the Public; and - preparing the Assembly for the introduction of a potential Sign Language Bill. In December 2023, SMT approved the Business Case for procurement of interpretation, translation and transcription services, and interim contractual arrangements were put in place in 2024. In April 2025, the Assembly contracted a supplier of sign language services to the Assembly until 2027. The specification of services in the sign language contract is based on the review of the pilot which was undertaken with representatives from the deaf community, the interpreters and internally with the various business areas involved in the delivery of the pilot. The contract also includes provision to support the passage of the Sign Language Bill. This Bill was introduced in February 2025 and is scheduled for consideration stage in Plenary. 3. Current actions to address the issue Sign language interpretation in both BSL and ISL is being provided for at least one Question Time per week, with Question Time to The Executive Office always interpreted. Sign language interpretation in both BSL and ISL has also been provided at meetings of the Committee for Communities to support the scrutiny of the Sign Language Bill. The Bill began Committee Stage in February 2025, and is scheduled for consideration stage in plenary. Sign language interpretation has been provided for: - Face to face interpretation between committee Members and witnesses from the Deaf community; - Simultaneous interpretation of committee sessions relating to the Sign Language Bill; - Translation of call for evidence materials; - Stakeholder engagement sessions; and - Provision of short BSL and ISL videos for social media. Assembly plenary and committee proceedings, and signed resources (e.g. commonly used terms in legislation), with BSL and ISL are available online on the Assembly's website. Content with BSL / ISL - Northern Ireland Assembly TV.	

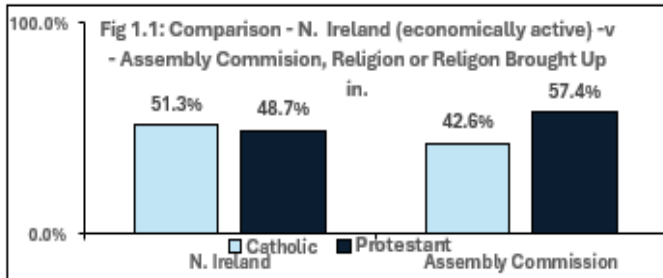
Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
	In addition, the Communities Committee delivered an engagement event in June 2024, to raise awareness among the Deaf communities of the work of that Committee in preparation for the Sign Language Bill. In September 2025, sign language classes in BSL and ISL (each course comprises 8 x 30-minute classes) were underway for the Committee for Communities Members and staff team. While interpreters will always be needed, the ability to engage at an introductory/conversational level will help create a welcoming and inclusive environment for witnesses at meetings and with stakeholders at engagement events. The current contract provides for the delivery of social value and ongoing engagement between the consortium of interpreters delivering the contract and the deaf community. The first scheduled update from this engagement was received in December 2025, and focused on feedback and lessons learned on accessibility of the services provided, impact on engagement with the BSL and ISL communities, and development of signs for parliamentary language. 4. Outcome Through wider, innovative and more inclusive engagement practices we are connecting decisionmakers with the public, enhancing the ability of committees to perform their role and enabling the public to contribute.	
Examples of evidence sources The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 Topical Digest: Sign Language Legislation, September (2024) Department for Communities, Communities Minister outlines way forward for Sign Languages (20 February 2024). Assembly Questions: AQO 36/22-27, Questions on Sign Language (2022-Present). Research and Information Service Briefing Papers: Sign Language Legislation (November 2020). Legislation and policy on sign language in the UK and Ireland (May 2014). Section 75 Equality Screening Form Continuous Household Survey 2022 (see main text). Department for Communities Consultation Document on Sign Language Framework https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/dca/Sign%20Language%20Framework%20Document.PDF		

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
4.Disability 	Disability Access Audit 1. Parliament Buildings Physical Access Audit The Assembly Commission engaged the Department of Finance to carry out a multi-faceted Conservation Survey for Parliament Buildings which included a disability access audit. The audit commenced in March 2025 and a final report was produced. The Disability Access Audit was undertaken to appraise defined areas of the existing accommodation to assess the extent of accessibility to services and facilities and propose the extent of works required to improve the current facilities in accordance with the definitions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. BS 8300 also provided comprehensive guidance on designing the built environment to meet the needs of disabled people. Part 1 addresses external environments, while Part 2 covers building interiors. Adherence to these standards is essential for promoting accessibility, supporting user independence. 2. What you told us The report identified ten key areas to address, these included: • Automated Door Opening Systems • Lift Controls and Sensory Access • Sanitary Facilities • Accessible Tea Points • Evacuation Arrangements • Horizontal circulation 3. Current actions to address the issue Work will proceed on the ten key recommendations. Business cases will be submitted for approval for projects over the course of the action plan. 4. Outcome Parliament Buildings will be maintained and enhanced to ensure it remains an iconic historic building; and functions as the centre for the delivery of modern parliamentary services.	Priority 4 (6) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Plan 2023-2028 <i>'Deliver a life cycle plan for the refurbishment of Parliament Buildings'.</i> DDA recommendation Project 2026-2028.

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
Examples of evidence sources The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 Northern Ireland Assembly Commission. Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Disability Access Audit (2025). Audit of Inequalities (Workforce data) Northern Ireland Assembly Commission. NI Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) Briefing Paper (2025). External Disability Advisory Group Minutes External Disability Advisory Group Terms of Reference The lived experience of disabled people in the UK: a review of evidence. Office for Equality and Opportunity (2025). Breaking Down Barriers: Improving Disabled Political Representation & Participation across the United Kingdom. Disability Policy Centre (2022). UK Disability Survey research report. Disability Unit (2021). Essential Principles Guide for Built Environment Professionals – Creating an Accessible and Inclusive Environment. Construction Industry Council (2017).		
5.Disability 	Assembly Commission staff wellbeing 1. Wellbeing Strategy The Assembly Commission has had a Health and Wellbeing Strategy/Framework in place since 2011. In 2025, the Assembly Commission developed an updated Wellbeing Framework. This was approved by the Assembly Commission's Senior Management Team in October 2025 and was launched to staff in November 2025. The Framework aligns with our key corporate priority 'Our staff will be a Motivated, Expert and Resilient team' and the People and Culture Strategy 2025 – 2029 action to '<i>Build resilience and embed a culture of health and wellbeing</i>' This Wellbeing Framework has been developed through consultation with staff, the health and wellbeing group and the Assembly Leadership Team. It was informed by data from the 2024 WorkL Staff Survey, the Wellbeing at Work questionnaire issued in July 2025 and the organisational findings from the Chest, Heart and Stroke checks carried out in June 2025. 2. What you told us 297 (78%) members of staff completed the WorkL Staff Survey in September 2024. As an organisation we scored 61% for Wellbeing. This score indicates that this is an area that 'requires improvement'.	Assembly Commission People and Culture Strategy 2024-2029. Assembly Commission Wellbeing Framework 2026 – 2029.

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
	192 members of staff completed a Wellbeing at Work Questionnaire in July 2025. Results indicated that access to wellbeing supports required action. 3. Current Actions to address this issue Data from the Staff Survey 2024, the Wellbeing at Work Questionnaire and the Chest Heart and Stroke Health Checks were used to inform the development of a Wellbeing Framework for the Assembly Commission based on the following five domains: Leadership and Support, Workload and Balance, Relationship and Culture, Learning and Development, and Wellbeing Supports. A range of initiatives will support staff under these five pillars, for example: 3.1. Leadership and Support – the framework focuses on the positive role that effective leadership and management can play in staff wellbeing. The new Performance and Wellbeing Framework prioritises wellbeing as the first of its four pillars. All managers in the Assembly Commission will be trained to have effective conversations with staff about their wellbeing. Managers will also be provided with a Wellbeing Toolbox which they can use to signpost staff to support. 3.2. Workload and Balance – a range of initiatives will be put in place to support staff to manage workload, this includes: • Discussion of workload and priorities in Performance and Wellbeing Conversations; • An ongoing performance and improvement project which seeks to streamline processes to minimise repetition and duplication of work; and • Integration of AI as an efficiency tool. 3.3. Learning and Development – wellbeing will be supported through initiatives such as: • The development of a ‘Continuous Growth’ culture where feedback is sought and given in a positive manner; • The Interparliamentary Mentoring Programme – mentoring support for our staff from mentors from across the other UK parliaments; and • The adoption of an Learning Management System with a range of eLearning modules on wellbeing;	

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
	3.4. Wellbeing Supports – the Assembly Commission has a range of wellbeing support delivered through the Health and Wellbeing Group and the Employee Assistance Programme. A communications plan will be developed to support staff to understand how to access supports when they need them. A new webpage will also be developed to provide links to relevant resources. Other recent initiatives include the establishment of a Men’s Health Network and a Women’s Health Network. 4. Outcome: The Wellbeing Framework will deliver the Corporate Strategy priority ‘<i>Our staff will be a Motivated, Expert and Resilient Team</i>’ and the People and Culture strategy action to <i>Build resilience and embed a culture of health and wellbeing</i>’.	
Examples of evidence sources Assembly Commission Wellbeing Framework 2026 – 2029. Assembly Commission People and Culture Strategy 2024 – 2029. Wellbeing at Work Questionnaire July 2025. A scoping review of UK local government workplace health and wellbeing programmes. BMC Public Health (2025). Health and Wellbeing Inquiry. UK Parliament (2025). Civil Service People Survey 2024 – Results Highlights. Cabinet Office (2024). Civil service wellbeing over time: exploring data from the Civil Service People Survey 2019-22. What works wellbeing (2023). New report reveals culture of working life for MPs and their staff. Compassion in Politics (2021).		
6. Religious Belief  Population data Of All Usual Residents who stated their religion, Catholics and Protestants^{xii}	1. Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Staff Profile : What you told us While the total population of Northern Ireland has historically been more Protestant than Catholic, census data reveals that a shift is occurring, with the working population showing a higher proportion of Catholics and a growing number of individuals identifying with no religion. Table 1.1 and Fig 1.1 presents a comparison between the composition of the economically active (aged 16+) in Northern Ireland, and the Assembly Commission workforce, excluding those whose religious affiliation could not be determined. Table 1.1 shows that Catholics account for 42.6 per cent of the Assembly Commission Workforce, while its comparator population (economically active, aged 16+) makes up 51.3 per cent, a gap of 8.7 percentage points. However, when the figures are disaggregated by Assembly Grade (AG), a more nuanced picture emerges (Table 1.2).	Fair Employment Annual Monitoring Return to the Equality Commission for NI. Article 55 monitoring return

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Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data																																										
represented 42.31% and 37.36% respectively. Of All Usual Residents, 18.99% (361,512) either had no religion or religion not stated. There has also been an increase in those with ‘Other’ and ‘No religion’, both in the counts and in their share. A follow-up question on ‘religion brought up in’, also referred to as ‘religion of upbringing’, was asked for those who either indicated that they had no current religion or chose not to answer the religion question. When the two questions are combined, the highest prevalence rates for people who belonged to, or who had been brought up in, were found for the Catholic	Table 1.1 Composition of Economically Active (16+) by Religion or Religion brought up in, versus Assembly Commission workforce. <table><tr><th></th><th colspan="2">Northern Ireland (Economically Active 16+)</th><th colspan="2">Assembly Commission (Workforce)</th></tr><tr><th>Religion / Religion brought up in</th><th>Count</th><th>Percent</th><th>Count</th><th>Percent</th></tr><tr><td>Catholic</td><td>365,396</td><td>51.3%</td><td>146</td><td>42.6%</td></tr><tr><td>Protestant and Other Christians</td><td>347,24</td><td>48.7%</td><td>197</td><td>57.4%</td></tr><tr><td>Other Religions</td><td>10,835</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>None</td><td>63,445</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Non-determined</td><td></td><td></td><td>13</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>786,919</td><td></td><td>356</td><td></td></tr></table> Source: Census 2021; Assembly Commission HR Department, 1 May 2025.  Table 1.2 reveals that employees from a Catholic background are well represented in all Assembly Grades up to and including AG1 – 6, and it is only in the two lowest grades (AG7 – AG8) that a significant disparity exists (between 29 and 35 percentage points respectively).		Northern Ireland (Economically Active 16+)		Assembly Commission (Workforce)		Religion / Religion brought up in	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Catholic	365,396	51.3%	146	42.6%	Protestant and Other Christians	347,24	48.7%	197	57.4%	Other Religions	10,835				None	63,445				Non-determined			13		Total	786,919		356		to the Equality Commission for NI (Every 3 years)
	Northern Ireland (Economically Active 16+)		Assembly Commission (Workforce)																																							
Religion / Religion brought up in	Count	Percent	Count	Percent																																						
Catholic	365,396	51.3%	146	42.6%																																						
Protestant and Other Christians	347,24	48.7%	197	57.4%																																						
Other Religions	10,835																																									
None	63,445																																									
Non-determined			13																																							
Total	786,919		356																																							

Section 75 Group	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans																																																
Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data																																																		
religion 45.7%. Those belonging to, or who had been brought up as Protestant, represented 43.48% of All Usual Residents. Northern Ireland Census 2021	Table 1.2 Composition of Assembly Commission Workforce by Religion or Religion Brought up in and Assembly Grade, 1 May 2025 <table><tr><th>Assembly Grade</th><th>Protestant</th><th>Catholic</th><th>Non-determined</th><th>Protestant (%)</th><th>Catholic (%)</th></tr><tr><td>1-3</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>0</td><td>46.7%</td><td>53.3%</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>18</td><td>25</td><td>4</td><td>41.9%</td><td>58.1%</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>26</td><td>25</td><td>1</td><td>51.0%</td><td>49.0%</td></tr><tr><td>6</td><td>31</td><td>29</td><td>1</td><td>51.7%</td><td>48.3%</td></tr><tr><td>7</td><td>56</td><td>31</td><td>2</td><td>64.4%</td><td>35.6%</td></tr><tr><td>8</td><td>59</td><td>28</td><td>5</td><td>67.8%</td><td>32.2%</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>197</td><td>146</td><td>13</td><td>57.4%</td><td>42.6%</td></tr></table> Source: Census 2021; Assembly Commission HR Department, 2024 – 2025. It is important to note that, due to the small numbers involved, even a minor increase in the count can change the percentages significantly^{xiii}. Audit of Inequalities Closure Report 2022-2026 It should be noted that actions taken on this issue and recorded in the ‘Audit of Inequalities Closure Report 2022-2026’ indicate that the HR Office used welcome statements in recruitment advertising to encourage applications from Catholic applicants, for Assembly Commission roles at AG7 and AG8. There has been positive increases in the number of applications from applicants from a Catholic background which showed and overall increase (application rates increased from 39% in 2022, 47% in 2023, 39% in 2024 and 40% in 2025).	Assembly Grade	Protestant	Catholic	Non-determined	Protestant (%)	Catholic (%)	1-3	7	8	0	46.7%	53.3%	4	18	25	4	41.9%	58.1%	5	26	25	1	51.0%	49.0%	6	31	29	1	51.7%	48.3%	7	56	31	2	64.4%	35.6%	8	59	28	5	67.8%	32.2%	Total	197	146	13	57.4%	42.6%	
Assembly Grade	Protestant	Catholic	Non-determined	Protestant (%)	Catholic (%)																																													
1-3	7	8	0	46.7%	53.3%																																													
4	18	25	4	41.9%	58.1%																																													
5	26	25	1	51.0%	49.0%																																													
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Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
	2. Current actions to address the issue The community background of applicants and appointees will continued to be monitored via the Fair Employment Annual Monitoring Return to the Equality Commission for NI and though the 3-yearly Article 55 review and consideration will be given through these to any further actions required. 3. Outcome Our staff will be a motivated, resilient and expert team.	
Examples of evidence sources Audit of Inequalities (Workforce data) Northern Ireland Assembly Commission. NI Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) Briefing Paper (2025). Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2022-2026 Closure Report. Northern Ireland Assembly Commission application rates data 2022-2025. Article 55 monitoring return to the Equality Commission for NI (2 January 2021-1 January 2024). Fair Employment Annual Monitoring Returns 2022-2025. Application Rates 2022-2025.		
7. Political Opinion  The Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service paper provides an analysis of the Northern Ireland Assembly elections held on 5 May 2022, and compares the outcome with the 2017	Public Engagement 1. Outreach Services to support Parliamentary Services (strategically planned engagement work which covers all constituency areas in Northern Ireland) The Corporate Strategy, reflected in the Public Engagement Strategy, states that <i>the public will understand and value the role of the Assembly and be engaged in its work</i>. The Public Engagement Strategy takes this further and aims to provide activities ‘...that are inclusive and seek to reach those who would not usually engage’. ‘More Community Outreach’ is how this work is described in the Public Engagement Strategy. This is an effective way to engage with groups who cannot, will not or do not visit Parliament Buildings, to talk to them about how the Assembly works. The Public Engagement Strategy has three clear pillars: Increase Awareness, Improve Understanding and Enable Participation. Community Outreach helps achieve all three. Our relevant commitments in the strategy are as follows:-	Priority 2 (1) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy 2023-2028, ‘Develop and implement a public engagement strategy’. Public Engagement

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
election. The paper also includes an analysis of historic voter turnout and results by party and constituency. Election Report: Northern Ireland Assembly Election, 5 May 2022	- Publicise our activities and services so that the public know what we do and what we can offer. - Reach out to a wider and more diverse audience, across all 18 constituencies. - Provide MLAs with opportunities to take part in and support our activities and programmes. - Support public participation by providing information, familiarisation, and training. 2. What you told us (internal or external stakeholders) We are aware anecdotally that there are a range of reasons why people do not engage with the Assembly or visit Parliament Buildings. We also know that there are misconceptions or misunderstandings about the work of the Assembly and the Northern Ireland Executive. 3. Current actions to address the issue Through the Assembly Connects programme, the Participation and Outreach (P&O) team's 'Assembly Explained' workshop provides information in a plain, easy to digest way and has been well received. Experience has indicated that outreach works well for lots of groups and often leads to groups arranging follow-up visits to Parliament Buildings. Sessions have been, and will continue to be, arranged out in communities across all 18 constituencies either by the P&O team proactively contacting community groups, or groups having heard about the sessions making contact with the team. Since the resumption of normal business in February 2024, the Assembly Connects programme has been delivered to over 1000 participants in 53 online or in-person sessions for groups including trade unions, older persons, persons with a disability, women's groups and refugees and asylum seekers. The P&O team also visit community events like Mela and the Balmoral Show where they engage with the public about the work of the Assembly. At the Balmoral Show in 2025 the Public Engagement Unit engaged directly with an estimated 12,000 people with a wider reach of 60,000 people. The team will be attending the Show in 2026. 4. Outcome There will be a greater public understanding and knowledge of the role and function of the Assembly.	Strategic Plan 2025-2027.

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
Examples of evidence sources The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 . Northern Ireland Assembly. Good Relations Action Plan 2025-20230 Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (2025). Trust, public engagement and UK Parliament . UK Parliament (2025). Communicating the Commons: how effectively does the House of Commons Administration communicate about Parliament? House of Commons Administration Committee (2024). Parliament's engagement with the public . House of Commons Library (2018).		
8.Race  Population data On Census Day 2021, the number of All Usual Residents who stated that they were from a White Ethnic group was 96.55% of the total population. In total, 3.45% of All Usual Residents belonged to ethnic minority groups. The ethnic minority groups with the highest prevalence were those belonging to the Mixed Ethnicity	Public Engagement 1. Ethnic Minority Sub-group and Ethnic Minority Parliament The Public Engagement Strategy aims to provide activities ' <i>...that are inclusive and seek to reach those who would not usually engage</i> '. Outreach Parliaments are one of the most impactful ways for the Assembly to deliver this aim, providing the opportunity for a diverse range of people to have their voice heard on issues that matter to them. Our relevant commitments in the strategy are as follows: • to create opportunities for a diverse range of voices to be heard in the Assembly; • to support public participation by providing information, familiarisation and training, and • provide MLAs with opportunities to take part in and support our activities and programmes. The Outreach Parliaments are a key deliverable in the Public Engagement Strategy 2025-2027. The Assembly aims to build stronger, more inclusive relationships with ethnic minority communities across Northern Ireland. The Outreach Parliament initiative seeks to increase awareness and understanding of the Assembly's role, while empowering individuals, community groups and organisations to take part in shaping decisions that affect their lives. Through open dialogue, co-designed activities, and sustained partnership, the Assembly will strive to create a welcoming space where every community feels informed, represented, and heard.	Priority 2 (1) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy 2023-2028, ' <i>Develop and implement a public engagement strategy</i> '. Public Engagement Strategic Plan 2025-2027. Good Relations Action Plan 2025-

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
categorisation, followed by those belonging to the Indian, Chinese, and Black African ethnicity categorisations. Since 2001, ethnic minority groups, as a proportion of All Usual Residents in Northern Ireland, have grown by 2.6 percentage points. Northern Ireland Census 2021	This is about partnership, not just outreach. By working <i>with</i> ethnic minority communities, listening, co-designing, and sustaining dialogue, the Assembly can help ensure that Northern Ireland's democracy is inclusive, representative, and strengthened by the voices of everyone who lives in Northern Ireland. 2. What you told us and current actions to address the issue A framework for delivery of Outreach Parliaments was developed by the Participation and Outreach (P&O) team, and this is currently being piloted with a view to reviewing the effectiveness at the end of the current mandate. The second step of the framework is to establish a co-design or consultative panel in order to shape the process, and ultimately the Parliament itself by making/influencing all the key decisions. The role of the P&O team is to facilitate the co-design group and guide them through the design and delivery of the Parliament. The P&O team are very keen to have a diverse range of groups represented and commissioned a paper to look at this sector. The team have also spoken to colleagues in The Executive Office and will soon be in a position to reach out to groups. Anecdotal data and feedback from previous public consultations provided data on the need for an Ethnic Minority Parliament. Current and scheduled actions to address this issue are as follows: Relationship Building and Outreach (November 2025–June 2026) Purpose: Establish trust, map existing networks, and introduce the Assembly's engagement offer. • Mapping and consultation: Identify key community organisations, umbrella bodies, and intermediaries across Northern Ireland (e.g. faith groups, cultural networks, migrant support organisations). • Initial outreach: Meet with sector representatives to listen and shape workshop content together, ensuring it reflects community priorities and real barriers to participation. • Workshops and tours: Offer each participating group a tailored workshop on "Understanding Your Assembly", followed by a guided tour of Parliament Buildings. ○ Sessions will use plain English, optional multilingual support, and accessible materials. ○ Content will include modules focusing on the role of the Northern Ireland Assembly, who your MLAs are, what MLAs do, how your voice shapes decisions, how committees work, and an overview of the ways to get involved. Case studies and practical examples used to demonstrate how communities can influence decision-making will be used.	2030 Aim 2, Actions 4 and 5.

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
	- Discussions to include barriers to participation, review of engagement activities for cultural accessibility and inclusivity, and what would encourage more people to get involved. Following this, a consultative/co-design panel will be established. The Ethnic Minority Event (Autumn 2027) Purpose: To celebrate inclusion, showcase community voices, and provide a platform for civic participation. - Co-produced by the Engagement Panel and Assembly staff, the event will invite participants from across the sector to discuss and highlight a range of issues that the sector face, directly with decision-makers. - A secondary outcome would be to naturally highlight the many positive contributions ethnic minority communities make to life in Northern Ireland, from cultural and social enrichment to innovation, leadership, and community resilience. 3. Outcome There will be a greater public understanding and knowledge of the role and function of the Assembly.	
Examples of evidence sources Public Engagement Strategy and Action Plan Actions 2025-2027. The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy 2023-2028. Northern Ireland Assembly. Good Relations Action Plan 2025-20230 Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (2025). The experiences of minority ethnic and migrant people in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (2022). Barriers to participation in standing to election to local government in Scotland. Equality and Human Rights Commission (2019). Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2023 – 2027. UK Parliament.		
9.Race 	Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Staff Profile: What you told us Assembly Commission workforce data on ethnicity was originally based on answers to a monitoring question in the Section 75 Staff Survey (March 2024). In the survey, 98.5 percent of respondents (N=195) declared a white ethnicity, while the remainder (1.5%) preferred not to say. A more recent update (May 2025), however, has confirmed there are now two permanent members of staff from a minority ethnic background working in	Recruitment monitoring exercises.

Section 75 Group	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans																									
Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Parliament Buildings (0.6%). This percentage matches the comparable figure for the Northern Ireland Civil Service as a whole (0.7%). The percentage of Assembly Commission staff from a minority ethnic background (0.6%) is 2.4 percentage points lower than the economically active population aged 16+ (3.0%), see Table 1.1. Table 1.1: Census 2021 - Composition of the Economically Active population (16+) and Assembly Commission workforce by Racial Group. <table><tr><td></td><td colspan="2">Northern Ireland (Economically Active 16+)</td><td colspan="2">Assembly Commission (Workforce)</td></tr><tr><td>Sex</td><td>Count</td><td>Percent</td><td>Count</td><td>Percent</td></tr><tr><td>White</td><td>741,113</td><td>97.0%</td><td>354</td><td>99.4%</td></tr><tr><td>Other</td><td>22,961</td><td>3.0%</td><td>2</td><td>0.6%</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>764,074</td><td>100.0%</td><td>356</td><td>100.0%</td></tr></table> Source: Census 2021; Assembly Commission HR Department, May 2025. However, data from the Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2022-2026 Closure Report indicates there was an increase in applications from people from ethnic minority communities. Percentage rates rose from 4% in 2022 to 7.3% in 2025. 2. Current actions to address the issue A welcome statement will continue to be used for all external recruitment competitions to attract applications from minority ethnic communities. Application rates and appointee rates will continue to be monitored and reported on via the monitoring of recruitment exercises.		Northern Ireland (Economically Active 16+)		Assembly Commission (Workforce)		Sex	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	White	741,113	97.0%	354	99.4%	Other	22,961	3.0%	2	0.6%	Total	764,074	100.0%	356	100.0%	
	Northern Ireland (Economically Active 16+)		Assembly Commission (Workforce)																								
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Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
	3. Outcome Our staff will be a motivated, resilient and expert team.	
Examples of evidence sources Audit of Inequalities (Workforce data) Northern Ireland Assembly Commission. NI Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) Briefing Paper (2025). Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2022-2026 Closure Report. Northern Ireland Assembly Commission potential employees application rates data 2022-2025. Ethnic diversity in politics and public life . House of Commons Library (2025). Census 2021 main statistics ethnicity tables . NISRA (2022).		
10.Age  Population data In 2021, children aged 0 to 14 made up 19% of the population (365,200 people). People aged 65 and over made up 17% of the population (326,500 people). The remaining 64% of the population (1,211,400 people) were aged between 15 and 64. Northern Ireland Census 2021	Public Engagement 1. Northern Ireland Youth Assembly The concept of a Youth Assembly was first publicly announced by the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission in July 2020, following a formal request made in March 2018 to explore viable options for youth participation in parliamentary processes. This request initiated a comprehensive period of consultation with both internal Assembly stakeholders and over 130 external organisations and individuals, including youth advocacy groups, educators, and civic leaders. Following a multi-year process of consultation, design, and stakeholder engagement, the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly was formally established in June 2021. Its primary purpose is to provide young people with a structured and meaningful platform to engage directly with the Northern Ireland Assembly and its Committees, ensuring that youth voices are represented in legislative and policy discussions. The Youth Assembly was established to perform three functions: - to engage with the work of the Northern Ireland Assembly, specifically legislation and inquiries relevant to young people; - to undertake project work generated by the Youth Assembly Committees; and - to enable consultation in partnership with government Departments.	Priority 2 (1) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy 2023-2028, ' <i>Develop and implement a public engagement strategy</i> '. Public Engagement Strategic Plan 2025-2027. Disability Action Plan 2025-2030, Aim 2, Action 19.

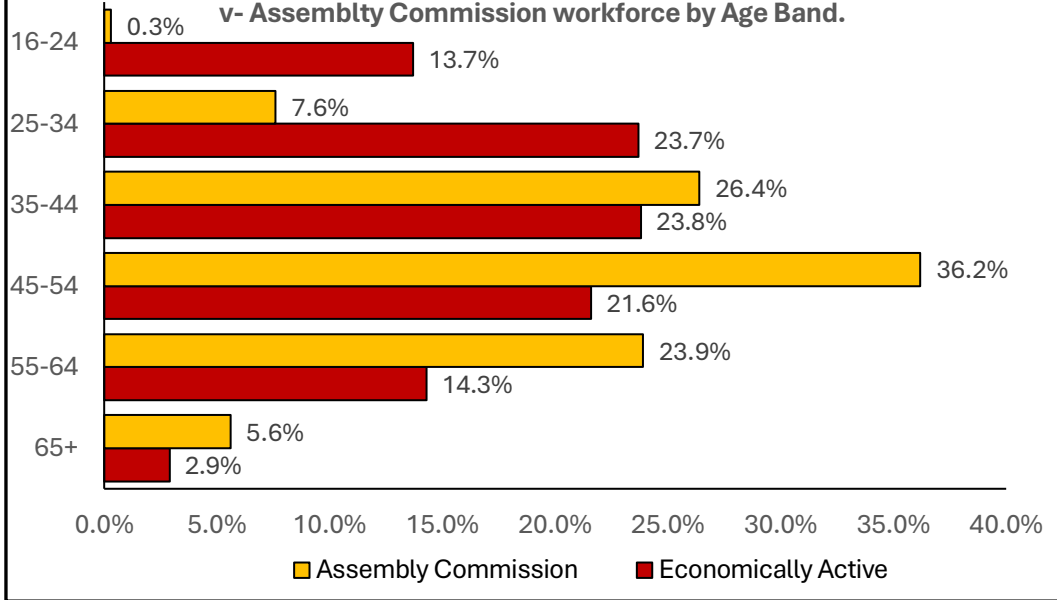
Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
	The inaugural cohort of 90 Youth Assembly Members were appointed in June 2021 for a two-year term, concluding in June 2023. During this period, Members participated in plenary sittings, committee work, and consultation work. Their contributions helped shape discussions on education, health, equality, and other key policy areas. The success of this phase laid a strong foundation for future engagement and demonstrated the value of youth-led input in parliamentary processes. Building on the achievements of the 'Pioneer Phase', the recruitment process for the second mandate was launched in September 2023, and this group completed their mandate in October 2025. The third mandate of the Youth Assembly began on 1 November 2025. When establishing the Youth Assembly, a comprehensive and inclusive recruitment methodology was developed in collaboration with young people. This co-designed approach ensured that the process reflects the values of fairness, transparency, and representation. 2. What you told us The third mandate of Youth Assembly Members launched their "Big Youth Survey" in December 2025, targeting young people aged 11-21 years old in schools and youth organisations across Northern Ireland. Almost 1,700 young people completed a survey, which sought to inform Youth Assembly Members about the priorities for their mandate. The first plenary meeting occurred in January 2026, where Youth Assembly Members engaged in a structured debate on the top 10 issues identified in the survey and choose 3 issues which will become the Youth Assembly focus for the current mandate and will be reflected through their work. 3. Current actions to address the issue In the coming months the Youth Assembly Committees will meet regularly to explore their chosen issues in depth. Youth Assembly Members will consult with departmental officials, non-governmental organisations, and a range of experts including young people.	

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
	The Youth Assembly Members will also take part in a wide range of activities to ensure youth voices are heard at the Assembly. This will include their own plenary sittings but also working with the Assembly Committees on legislation and inquiries. For example, in the second mandate, Youth Assembly Members worked on a wide range of legislation and inquiries, including justice, school uniform, pension reform, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), Careers Education, Tobacco and Vapes, and child poverty and the expectation is that the recently appointed young people will experience something similar. The third mandate will run for 2 years (Nov 2025-Nov 2027) and during that time the 90 young people will hold plenary sittings in the Assembly Chamber, attend Youth Assembly Committee meetings, work with Assembly Committees, receive training, have opportunities to become involved in lots of different projects, and so much more. At the end of the 2-year period they will produce a legacy report which provides a summary of everything they will have achieved. Reports and information relating to the Youth Assembly can be found on the website. 4. Outcome There will be a greater public understanding and knowledge of the role and function of the Assembly.	
Examples of evidence sources The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 Northern Ireland Assembly . Young Voices on Democracy. The Electoral Commission (2025). ‘Big Youth Survey’ Summary Report. Youth Assembly for Northern Ireland (2024). Youth engagement impact study: summary. Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2023). Youth Engagement Impact Study. ECORYS (2023).		
11.Age 	Public Engagement 1. The Older People’s Parliament The Public Engagement Strategy aims to provide activities ‘...that are inclusive and seek to reach those who would not usually engage’. Outreach Parliaments are one of the most impactful ways for the Assembly to deliver	Priority 2 (1) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
	this aim, providing the opportunity for a diverse range of people to have their voice heard on issues that matter to them. Our relevant commitments in the strategy are as follows: • to create opportunities for a diverse range of voices to be heard in the Assembly; • to support public participation by providing information, familiarisation and training; and • provide MLAs with opportunities to take part in and support our activities and programmes. The Outreach Parliaments are a key deliverable in the Public Engagement Strategy 2025-2027 and will be monitored and reviewed accordingly. 2. What you told us A framework for delivery of the outreach parliaments was developed by the Participation and Outreach (P&O) team, and this is currently being piloted with a view to reviewing the effectiveness at the end of the current mandate. The second step of the framework is to establish a co-design or consultative panel in order to shape the process, and ultimately the parliament itself by making all the key decisions. The role of the P&O team is to facilitate the co-design group and guide them through the design and delivery of the Parliament. The team were very keen to widen participation and have a diverse range of groups represented. Using information provided by the Assembly's Research and Information Services (RaISe) the team approached a number of groups and individuals to join the panel and the final list of member organisations is below Older People's Parliament - Consultative Panel Membership: • Greater Shankill Senior Citizens' Forum / West Belfast Forum 50+ - Volunteer Now • North Belfast Senior Citizen's Forum • Age NI • Coleraine Borough 50+ Forum • Mid & East Antrim Agewell Partnership • East Belfast Seniors' Forum and South Belfast Lifestyle Forum – Engage with Age • University of the third Age Groups – Regional organisation • Building Communities Resource Centre • Age North Down and Ards (Agenda)	Strategy 2023-2028, '<i>Develop and implement a public engagement strategy</i>'. Public Engagement Strategic Plan 2025-2027.

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
	• Verbal Arts Centre, Londonderry • South West Age Partnership, Fermanagh • Retired Workers Committee NI of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions The Public Engagement Unit provided support to panel members, meeting with them on a monthly basis for up to a year prior to the Parliament taking place. Parliamentary Services staff provided information and training to panel members regarding Assembly protocols when presenting to Ministers in the Assembly Chamber. 3. Current actions to address the issue A survey to identify the issues for debate at the Parliament was launched on 31 July 2024 and was aimed at older people and those who work with or care for older people across Northern Ireland. The survey was promoted on the Assembly's social channels and by the consultative panel through their own networks. There were 1,635 survey responses received; this enabled the panel to identify the main issues and narrow these down to create a motion and topics for debate: • Equal access to appropriate healthcare and services • Transport and Travel • Education and work • Loneliness and isolation • Older people and poverty • Keeping safe from scams, computer accessibility, communication and digital exclusion • Housing for older people • Rights of older people The motion for the Parliament was as follows: <i>That the Parliament expresses disappointment with the minimal mention of older people in the draft Programme for Government; calls on the Executive to place the rights of older people at the centre of the new Programme for Government to address issues such as health, housing, transport, loneliness, poverty and safety; and further</i>	

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
	<i>calls on the Executive to include affirmative, measurable actions in the new Programme for Government that will meet the needs of all older people.</i> On 12 October 2024, the Older People's Parliament took place in the Assembly Chamber in Parliament Buildings and the key issues that impact the lives of older people were raised directly with decision makers. The Minister for Health and the Deputy First Minister met with participants before proceedings and several MLAs were also in attendance. The Parliament was broadcast live and recorded by Hansard. The Participation and Outreach team produced a summary report which, along with the Hansard, was shared with Ministers, MLAs and relevant Committee teams. The session was recorded and can be viewed here. 4. Outcome There will be a greater public understanding and knowledge of the role and function of the Assembly.	
The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 Northern Ireland Assembly . Topical Digest: Older People in Northern Ireland (2024)		
12.Age 	1. Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Staff Profile: What you told us As shown in Fig 1.1, the Assembly Commission has an older age profile than the comparator, economically active population aged 16+. Almost two-thirds (65.7%) of Assembly Commission staff are aged 45 and over, compared with 39 per cent of the economically active. In contrast the percentage of Commission staff aged 16-24 is 0.3% compared with 13.7% in the economically active population. Table 1.1 overleaf presents the figures in more detail.	Recruitment monitoring exercises.

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans																					
	Fig 1.1: Composition of the Economically Active population (16+) - v- Assembly Commission workforce by Age Band.  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age Band</th> <th>Assembly Commission</th> <th>Economically Active</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>16-24</td> <td>0.3%</td> <td>13.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25-34</td> <td>7.6%</td> <td>23.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>35-44</td> <td>26.4%</td> <td>23.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>45-54</td> <td>36.2%</td> <td>21.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>55-64</td> <td>23.9%</td> <td>14.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>65+</td> <td>5.6%</td> <td>2.9%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age Band	Assembly Commission	Economically Active	16-24	0.3%	13.7%	25-34	7.6%	23.7%	35-44	26.4%	23.8%	45-54	36.2%	21.6%	55-64	23.9%	14.3%	65+	5.6%	2.9%	
Age Band	Assembly Commission	Economically Active																					
16-24	0.3%	13.7%																					
25-34	7.6%	23.7%																					
35-44	26.4%	23.8%																					
45-54	36.2%	21.6%																					
55-64	23.9%	14.3%																					
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Section 75 Group	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans																																													
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	Table 1.1 Composition of the Economically Active population (16+) and Assembly Commission workforce by Age Band. <table><tr><th></th><th colspan="2">Northern Ireland (Economically Active)</th><th colspan="2">Assembly Commission (Workforce)</th></tr><tr><th>Age Band</th><th>Count</th><th>Percent</th><th>Count</th><th>Percent</th></tr><tr><td>16-24</td><td>107,596</td><td>13.7%</td><td>1</td><td>0.3%</td></tr><tr><td>25-34</td><td>186,482</td><td>23.7%</td><td>27</td><td>7.6%</td></tr><tr><td>35-44</td><td>187,119</td><td>23.8%</td><td>94</td><td>26.4%</td></tr><tr><td>45-54</td><td>170,321</td><td>21.6%</td><td>129</td><td>36.2%</td></tr><tr><td>55-64</td><td>112,557</td><td>14.3%</td><td>85</td><td>23.9%</td></tr><tr><td>65+</td><td>22,848</td><td>2.9%</td><td>20</td><td>5.6%</td></tr><tr><td>Total</td><td>786,923</td><td>100.0%</td><td>356</td><td>100.0</td></tr></table> Source: Census 2021; Assembly Commission HR Department, 1 May 2025. Whilst the Assembly Commission will continue to encourage more applications from younger people, it is important to note that many of the job roles in Parliament Buildings, particularly at AG6 and above, require both higher level qualifications (degree and above) and significant job experience. Both of these criteria are more likely to be met by older people. This is reflected in current Assembly workforce data, which shows that just over two-thirds (67.9%) of those aged 34 or younger are employed in the lowest grades (AG7/8). Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2022-2026 Closure Report indicates that the number of applications from those aged 21-30 increased from 17.5% in 2022 to 23% in 2025, while the number of applications from those aged 31-34 remained constant over the period.		Northern Ireland (Economically Active)		Assembly Commission (Workforce)		Age Band	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	16-24	107,596	13.7%	1	0.3%	25-34	186,482	23.7%	27	7.6%	35-44	187,119	23.8%	94	26.4%	45-54	170,321	21.6%	129	36.2%	55-64	112,557	14.3%	85	23.9%	65+	22,848	2.9%	20	5.6%	Total	786,923	100.0%	356	100.0	
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Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
	2. Current actions to address the issue A welcome statement is used for recruitment competitions to attract applications from young persons (under the age of 35) and recruitment exercises and workforce flows will continue to be monitored. 3. Outcome Our staff will be a motivated, resilient and expert team.	
Examples of evidence sources Audit of Inequalities (Workforce data) Northern Ireland Assembly Commission. NI Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) Briefing Paper (2025). Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2022-2026 Closure Report. Northern Ireland Assembly Commission potential application rates data 2022-2025. Census 2021 main statistics demography tables – age and sex. NISRA (2022).		
13. Gender and Dependants  Population data: The population of Northern Ireland on census day 2021 was 1,903,100 people. There were 967,000 females and 936,200 males, representing 51% and 49% of the population	Public Engagement 1. The Women's Parliament The Public Engagement Strategy aims to provide activities '<i>...that are inclusive and seek to reach those who would not usually engage</i>'. Outreach Parliaments are one of the most impactful ways for the Assembly to deliver this aim, providing the opportunity for a diverse range of people to have their voice heard on issues that matter to them. The Outreach Parliaments are a key deliverable in the Public Engagement Strategy 2025-2027 and will be monitored and reviewed accordingly. 2. What you told us and current actions to address the issue A framework for delivery of the outreach parliaments was developed by the Participation and outreach (P&O) team, and this is currently being piloted with a view to reviewing the effectiveness at the end of the current mandate. The second step of the framework is to establish a co-design or consultative panel in order to shape the process, and ultimately the parliament itself by making all the key decisions. The role of the P&O team is to facilitate the co-design group and guide them through the design and delivery of the Parliament. The team were very keen to widen participation and have a diverse range of groups represented. Using information provided by	Priority 2 (1) of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy 2023-2028, '<i>Develop and implement a public engagement strategy</i>'. Public Engagement Strategic Plan 2025-2027.

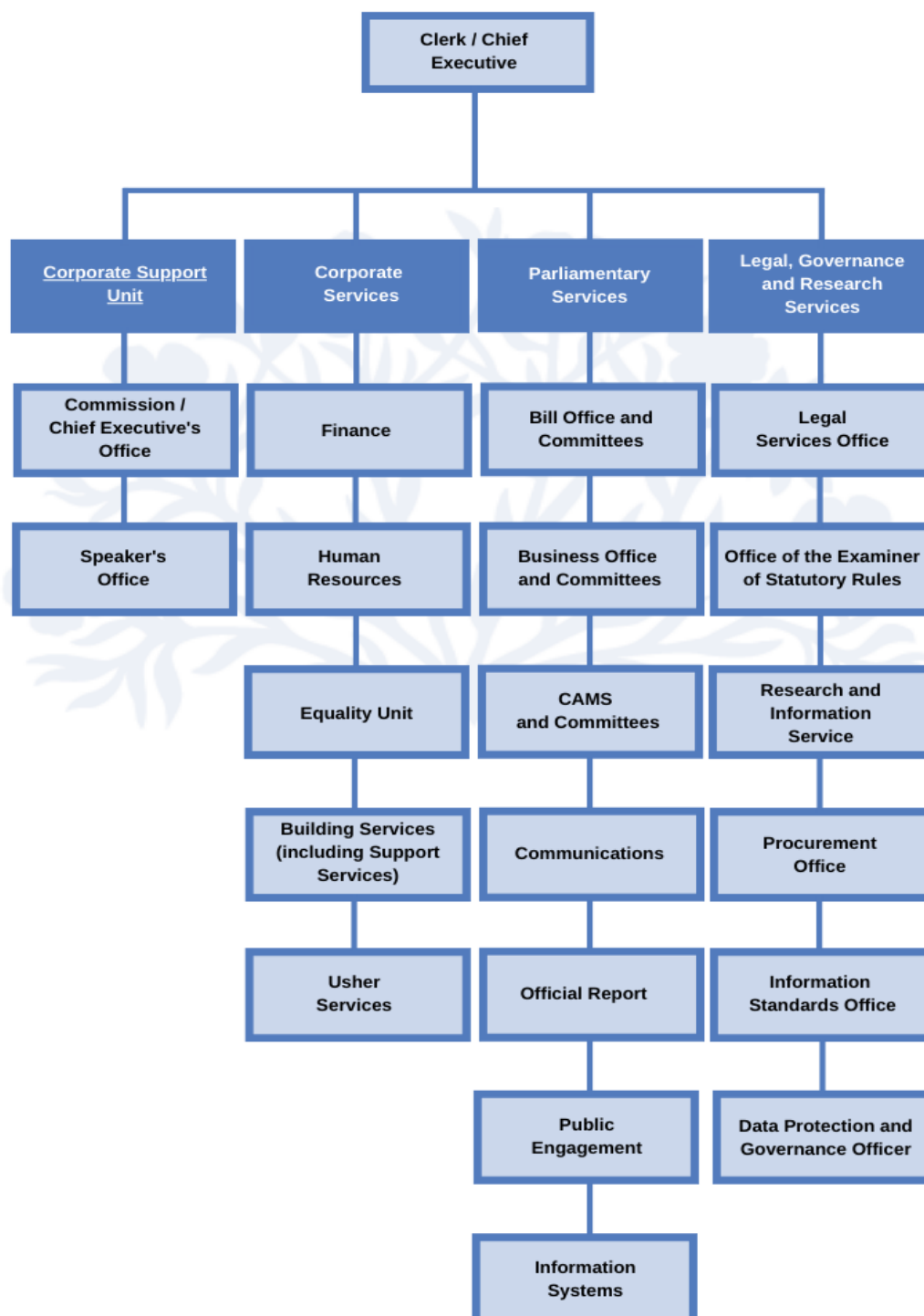
Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
respectively. Northern Ireland Census 2021 Population data: The 2021 Census indicates that 53.15% of households in Northern Ireland have children. The census further indicates there are 105,791 dependent children aged under 20 living with a lone parent Northern Ireland Census 2021. According to the 2021 Census, one in eight (222,200) people in Northern Ireland provide unpaid care to a relative or friend with a health condition or illness. From this number, 1 in 25 provided 50 or more hours of care unpaid. Carers UK indicates that the number of those caring for older	the Assembly's Research and Information Services (RaISe), the team approached a number of groups and individuals to join the panel and the final list of member organisations is below. Women's Parliament - Consultative Panel Membership • Women's Support Network (WSN) • Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group (NIWBG) • Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland (WAFNI) • Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA) • Women's Platform NI (WPNI) • Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN) • Women's Forum NI The Public Engagement Unit provided support to panel members and Parliamentary Services staff provided information and training to panel members regarding Assembly protocols when presenting to Ministers in the Assembly Chamber. A survey to identify the issues for debate at the Parliament was launched on 17 October 2024 and was aimed at women and those who work for Women's organisations across Northern Ireland. The survey was promoted on the Assembly's social channels and by the consultative panel through their own networks. There were 1,137 responses received, and this enabled the panel to identify the main issues and narrow these down to create a motion and topics for debate: • Rural Women's Issues • Access to Health Services for Women • Older Women's Issues • Affordable Childcare • Women in the Economy • Carers and unpaid work • Disabled Women	

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
people and people with disabilities in Northern Ireland increased substantially during the COVID-19 pandemic, from 212,000 to 310,000 in 2021. Northern Ireland Census 2021.	• Violence against Women & Girls • Equality and Human Rights Legislation The motion for the parliament was as follows: <i>That this Women's Parliament awaits the publication of the Programme for Government; recognises the progress made and the work still to be done in a number of areas such as ending violence against women and girls, improving access to healthcare services for women, delivering affordable childcare, and the impact on rural women; calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister, working with the Executive colleagues, to embed gender equality, as identified in this Women's Parliament, in all aspects of the Programme for Government, and further calls for the development and delivery of affirmative, measurable actions that will ultimately deliver gender equality for all.</i> On 28 February 2025, the Women's Parliament took place in the Assembly Chamber in Parliament Buildings and the key issues that impact the lives of women were raised directly with decision makers. Junior Minister Reilly and Junior Minister Cameron, along with the Minister for Health and the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, responded to the motion in the Chamber. Claire Sugden MLA, Chair of the Women's Cacus addressed participants before the proceedings, and several MLAs were also in attendance. The Parliament was broadcast live and recorded by Hansard. The P&O team produced a summary report which, along with the Hansard, was shared with Ministers, MLAs and relevant Committee teams. The session was recorded and can be viewed here. The next Women's Parliament will take place in the 2027-2032 mandate. 3. Outcome There will be a greater public understanding and knowledge of the role and function of the Assembly.	
Examples of evidence sources The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Corporate Strategy 2023-2028. Northern Ireland Assembly. Audit of Inequalities Action Plan 2022-2026 Closure Report. The Women's Parliament. Northern Ireland Assembly (2025).		

Section 75 Group Relevant population data and Assembly Commission Staff Profile data	Strategic Issue/Inequality	Corresponding actions in Organisational and Equality Plans
	Topical Digest: Women in Northern Ireland. NI Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) (2025). Submission to the Committee for the Executive Office Inquiry into Gaps in Equality Legislation. Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) (2024) Economic inactivity, key employment barriers and childcare costs potentially impacting those barriers: initial considerations for Northern Ireland. NI Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) Research Paper (2024). Gender and labour market inclusion on the island of Ireland. Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) (2024). Women and Equalities Committee's Inquiry into the Unequal Impact of COVID19: Disability and Access to Services. Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (2021). Support for Unpaid Carers in Northern Ireland a preliminary consideration. NI Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) Research Paper (2024). Career or care: Women, unpaid caring and employment in Northern Ireland. Carers UK (2024). Supporting Women in the Workplace – Models of Good Practice. NI Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) Research Paper (2017). Making the Case for Change: Supporting Unpaid Carers in Northern Ireland. WPI Economics and Carers NI (2014).	

Annex B Northern Ireland Assembly Commission organisational structure

Staff of the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission



Endnotes

ⁱ ‘Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: A guide for Public Authorities - An Outline Guide’, Equality Commission NI , February 2012.

ⁱⁱ [Northern Ireland Act 1998, Schedule 9, paragraphs 5 and 8\(2\)](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ [Northern Ireland Act 1998, Schedule 9, paragraph 8\(3\)](#)

^{iv} [ECNI, The Guide, Chapter 7, Page 40.](#)

^v [ECNI, The Guide, Chapter 7, Page 41.](#)

^{vi} Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) [second phase of main statistics results](#) for the 2021 Census in Northern Ireland.

^{vii} For the purpose of this report, the data from the Northern Ireland Census 2021 relating to health problem or disability (long-term) has been used.

^{viii} The term *economically active* essentially refers to those persons who are “available for work”. It includes persons **in employment** and the **unemployed** who are actively seeking work. Figures for sex, religion, age, disability and ethnicity are sourced from Census 2021. In the research undertaken, the relevant comparator is the economically active aged 16 and over, with Level 1 qualifications or above. The economically active population aged 16 or over is adopted instead of the working age population (aged 16-64) to take into account those Assembly Commission employees who are currently working beyond State Pension age (66 years). Similarly, while some posts in the Assembly Commission may have no qualification requirement, most will have at least a basic qualification requirement, and so the current workforce is compared with the economically active population with Level 1 qualifications and above. Level 1 qualifications include NVQ level 1, GNVQ Foundation or equivalents, GCSE (grades D-G), CSE (grades 2-5), 1-4 CSEs (grade 1), 1-4 GCSEs (grades A-C), 1-4 ‘O’ level passes.

^{ix} Workforce figures cited in this audit are drawn from two sources, namely: a staff survey of Section 75 categories, dated March 2024, and data extracts from the Assembly Commission’s HR systems, dated 1 May 2025. A total of 195 responses to the Section 75 survey were received, representing 61 per cent of all permanent Assembly Commission staff.

^x The requirement to give due regard to the need to encourage participation in public life requires that steps are taken to ensure that the formal structures of governing and advisory bodies are accessible to and inclusive of disabled people. ‘Public life’ is a very broad term. It incorporates government public appointments; public bodies’ focus or working groups; user groups for a service provided by a public authority. This is not an exhaustive list. For ease of reference such opportunities/ appointments are referred to as ‘public life positions’. [Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people and encouraging participation of disabled people in public life, The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 \(as modified by Schedule 8 thereof for application in Northern Ireland\), ECNI, March 2007](#)

^{xi} Co-design can be viewed as a collaborative process where statutory bodies and community members work together so that the outcomes from this process are beneficial to all involved.

^{xii} The categorisation of those stating their religion as Protestant is the amalgamation of the Protestant denominations: Presbyterian Church in Ireland; Church of Ireland; Methodist Church in Ireland; and Other Christian (including Christian related).

^{xiii} Taking the AG4 grade as an example, an increase of only three in the Protestant count (and a corresponding fall in the Catholic count) would lead to an increase of almost 7 percentage points in the Protestant share, from 41.9% to 48.8%.