









## November 2021 Update - Audit of Inequalities Action Plan

Annex 1

### Status Key:

-  Complete or Complete for this reporting period
-  In progress/ongoing OR on schedule to be progressed in line with timeline
-  Partially achieved
-  Overdue
-  Not achieved
-  Action suspended / not commenced
-  New action
-  Amended action

## November 2021 Update - Audit of Inequalities Action Plan

Action taken to better promote equality of opportunity/good relations	Inequality Identified and Outcome Area(s)	S75 Category	Intended outcome/impact and how this will be measured	In the current service Business Plan (Yes/No)	Status Update
1) Improve accessibility to the Chamber and Official's Boxes within the Chamber	Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme 1a of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons with a disability and persons without	Improved accessibility to Chamber for all Members. Increased capacity for Official's with mobility issues.	No. Minor alterations have recently been carried out to facilitate a wheelchair-using MLA. Further improvements will require extensive re-modelling of the chamber. If required (and approved), such works will be included in future Business Plans.	<p><b>Lead:</b> Head of Building Services.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Keep under review.</p> <p><b>Status: Complete for the reporting period.</b> A project is being undertaken by the Communications Office to refresh broadcasting facilities, including in the Assembly Chamber and will include further consideration of accessibility issues.</p>
2) Implementation of access audits completed by RNIB, Disability Action and Action on Hearing Loss regarding a programme of works	Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme 1a of Audit of Inequalities)  Access to Services (Theme 1b of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons with a disability and persons without	Improved accessibility to Parliament Buildings for persons with a disability. All works projects are designed and constructed in accordance with Building Regulations and other relevant legislation.	No. All work items within our remit relating to the audits have been completed. Other wider 'estate' issues have been passed to DFP. Further agreed improvements will be included in relevant Business Plan.	<p><b>Lead:</b> Head of Building Services.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Keep under review.</p> <p><b>Status: Complete for the reporting period.</b></p>
3) Investigate options to further improve facilities for wheelchair users	Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme	Persons with a disability and persons without	Improved accessibility to Parliament Buildings for all building users	Will be included in current Business Plan (being	<p><b>Lead:</b> Head of Building Services.</p>

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	1a of Audit of Inequalities)  Access to Services (Theme 1b of Audit of Inequalities)		and specifically for wheelchair users. Improvements to means of escape in the event of an emergency for wheelchair users.	developed in February 2016).	<p><b>Timescale:</b> Proposals and recommendations will be brought to the Assembly Commission by March 2016. Timescale for works (subject to approval) TBA.</p> <p><b>Status: Complete for the reporting period.</b> Agreed alterations have taken place to the counters in the Members' Bar, the Business Office, Reception and Office Resources.</p>
4) Maintain Action on Hearing Loss Award	Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme 1a of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons with a disability and persons without	Work towards maintaining Action on Hearing Loss 'Louder than Words' accreditation.	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Environmental Services Manager.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Annually.</p> <p><b>Status:</b> Complete for the reporting period.</p>
5) Maintain National Autistic Society Autism Award	Access to Parliament Buildings (Theme 1a of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons with a disability and persons without	Work towards maintaining Autism accreditation.	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Environmental Services Manager.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Annually.</p> <p><b>Status:</b> Complete for the reporting period</p>
6) Provision of translation from Irish and Ulster Scots to English to the Speaker and Clerks at the table	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different religious belief Persons of different political opinion Persons of different racial group	That the Speaker/Clerks at Table receive and understand what is being said. Without such a service there could potentially be a breach of Assembly Standing	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Editor of Debates.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing.</p> <p><b>Status: Partially achieved.</b> A simultaneous interpreting service is being provided in Irish. No Ulster Scots service is available because no service provider has been identified and, other</p>

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			Orders. Measured by exception i.e. Speaker/Clerks at Table advise that no such service is provided and by recording translation audio channel on SLIQ system.		than single words and/or phrases, there has been no usage of Ulster Scots during Assembly sittings. On 15 June, the Assembly noted the provision in para 5.21.2 of New Decade, New Approach, to allow any person to conduct their business before the Assembly through Irish or Ulster Scots; further noted that a simultaneous interpretation system will be made available in the Assembly to ensure that a person without Irish or Ulster Scots is not placed at a disadvantage; and directed the Assembly Commission, where there is appropriate demand and subject to review, to provide a simultaneous and passive system for interpretation in the Assembly that is capable of supporting one meeting at any one time. Work in relation to the Assembly's decision is under way.
7) Ensure Parliament Buildings is welcoming to all sections of society and cultures by reviewing art, artefacts and exhibitions	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different religious belief Persons of different political opinion Persons of different racial group	Review of initiatives on how art and exhibitions might be used in Parliament Buildings	Consideration of new art initiatives to allow opportunities to reflect the wider community within Parliament Buildings.  A paper was tabled at the January 2016 Commission	<b>Lead:</b> Speaker's Office and Engagement.  <b>Timescale:</b> Long term direction to be revisited by new Speaker and Commission in 2016/17.  <b>Status:</b> On 17 February 2021, the Assembly Commission agreed a project to review the display of artefacts within Parliament Buildings and develop key events and figures connected to the parliamentary

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				meeting updating the Commission on the Speaker's exploration of new art initiatives including working with local schools of art and architecture. Review and operation of current exhibitions policy suspended in the interim.	<p>history of the buildings which will be reflective of different sections of the community. A working group was established and first stage proposals were prepared on 30 September 2021. The Assembly Commission is due to consider the proposals for a revised display of items and images in Parliament Buildings in October 2021.</p> <p>A review of how art and exhibitions are used within Parliament Buildings as part of community outreach will also be undertaken.</p>
8) Language Policy	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different religious belief Persons of different political opinion Persons of different racial group	The Education Service now provides a programme in Irish to primary and post primary pupils. In 2015, plans were put in place to translate the primary section of the website – this will be available in Feb 2016. Some video resources are also available in Irish.	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Education Manager.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing.</p> <p><b>Status: Complete for this reporting period.</b></p> <p>The Education Service continues to offer its education programme in Irish on request. During the period, no schools requested an Irish programme. However, the Education Service was involved in consultation exercises on a Bill of Rights (Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights), and the Impact of Lockdown and Restart on the Emotional Well-being and Mental Health of Children and Young People (Education Committee). Invitations and questionnaires were provided in Irish. In September 2021 a mailshot letter in Irish</p>

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					<p>was sent to Irish-medium schools inviting them to participate in the education programme.</p> <p>The Irish translation of the Key Stage 3 section of the Education Service's website was quality assured and completed, in line with the need to pitch the content at the right level for primary readers, and will be published by mid-November 2021.</p>
			<p>Development of a Language Policy for the Assembly Commission</p>		<p><b>Lead:</b> Equality and Good Relations Unit.</p> <p><b>Timeline:</b> Jan 2017 and 2017.</p> <p><b>Status: Action suspended.</b></p> <p>While a language paper was presented to SMG in March 2017 in anticipation of it being presented to the Assembly Commission when the Assembly resumed normal business, this action has now been superseded by the language commitments in the New Decade, New Approach (NDNA) deal, which was published in January 2020. The Assembly Commission will consider the actions required within its remit in the context of the legislation passed by the Assembly.</p> <p>A motion from CoP was passed through the Assembly in June 2021 to "<i>direct(s) the Assembly Commission to provide a</i></p>

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					<p><i>simultaneous and passive system for interpretation in the Assembly that is capable of supporting one meeting at any one time; and calls on the Assembly Commission to make any other arrangements as may be necessary for the operation of such a system". This was a motion agreed by simple majority and did not involve any change to Standing Orders on the subject of language.</i></p> <p>Subject to the development of Standing Orders by the Assembly, the Assembly Commission will need to consider the associated resourcing implications.</p>
9) Monitoring the outcome of the EQIA on the Flying of the Union Flag at Parliament Buildings	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different religious belief Persons of different political opinion Persons of different racial group	That no detrimental impact is identified as effecting section 75 groups during the monitoring period.	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Equality and Good Relations Unit.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing, schedule to be progressed in line with timeline.</p> <p><b>Status: Complete.</b> Monitoring complete as per Equality Scheme and Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) commitments.</p>
10) Monitoring of revised Engagement Strategy	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	All groups	Monitoring by July 2016 in line with directorate wide business plan reviews	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Engagement.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> July 2016.</p> <p><b>Status: Complete.</b></p>

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					The Engagement Strategy was incorporated into the Corporate Strategy 2018-23 and Corporate Plan 2019-23.
11) Engaging with women, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities under-represented in public life through Assembly Community Connect	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Men and women generally Persons with a disability and persons without Persons of different racial group	Increased engagement with women, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities; inform groups how to utilise resources available through Assembly Community Connect & partner organisations	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Engagement.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing.</p> <p><b>Status: Complete for this reporting period.</b> Consultation and co-design has taken place with a wide range of Section 75 groups in this reporting period, including older people, women, LGBTQ, disability, BAME, asylum seekers and young people outside of education. This work has led to tailored training, diverse Committee stakeholder events, development of a range of diversity parliaments (pensioners, disability and BAME) and successful promotion of the consultation to develop the 2022-2025 Good Relations Action Plan.</p>
12) Engagement with young people through Education Service visits programme	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different age	Education Programmes provided for young people from Key Stage 2 (age 8) to Key Stage 5 (Post 16)	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Education Service.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing.</p> <p><b>Status: Complete for this reporting period.</b> With the continued closure of Parliament Buildings to the public until mid-July and</p>



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					<p>subsequent restrictions on the capacities of rooms in Parliament Buildings, the Education Service continued to provide a virtual visits programme (through use of MS Teams) for primary and secondary level students, from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 5. From 1 April, the Education Service engaged with 61 school groups. Some of those groups took part in more than one session and some of them also participated in consultation focus groups in relation to three Committee consultation exercises on Bills.</p>
13) Engagement with young people	Access to Services (Theme 1b of the 2011 Audit of	Young people	In 2016, the Education Service will apply for Erasmus+ to fund a youth partnership programme. This project will aim to recruit young people who face social and economic barriers to participation	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Education Service.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> 2016 – 2018.</p> <p><b>Status: Complete.</b> The application was unsuccessful.</p>
14) Development of appropriate resources to support learning about the Assembly	Access to Services (Theme 1b of the 2011 Audit of Inequalities)	Young people	Develop and update a variety of educational resources across all Key stages ( all ages) this will include new website	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Education Service.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing.</p> <p><b>Status: Complete for this reporting period.</b></p>

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			activities and video resources		The Education Service produced a variety of new resources during the period, including: three online quizzes for Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3-4 and Key Stage 5 students; recorded interviews with the Chair of the Health Committee and the Chief Equality Commissioner for Northern Ireland. All new resources are available on the Education Service website.
15) Implementation of Secretariat Gender Action Plan	Recruitment and Selection (Theme 2a of Audit of Inequalities)  Equality issues for existing staff	Men and women generally	The removal of any actual or perceived barriers to gender equality within the secretariat through the implementation of a gender action plan.	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Equality Manager.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> This project lasts 2016-2018.</p> <p><b>Status: Complete for the reporting period.</b> The 2016-18 Gender Action Plan is complete; the 2019-23 Gender Action Plan is now in place and six-monthly updates are provided to SMG. Within the reporting period, a six-monthly update was tabled at the October 2021 SMG meeting, and meetings of the Gender Action Plan Implementation Group were held in June and September 2021.</p>
16) Provision of an Irish Language champion	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Young People	Translation of the primary section of the Education website will complete in February 2016. Delivery of	yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Education Service.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing.</p> <p><b>Status: Complete for this reporting period.</b> The Irish translation of the Key Stage 3 (primary) section of the Education</p>

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			programmes in Irish continues.		Service's website was quality assured and completed, in line with the need to pitch the content at the right level for primary readers, and will be published by mid-November 2021. In addition, the Education Service was involved in consultation exercises on a Bill of Rights (Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights), and the Impact of Lockdown and Restart on the Emotional Well-being and Mental Health of Children and Young People (Education Committee). Invitations and questionnaires were provided in Irish. In September 2021 a mailshot letter in Irish was sent to Irish-medium schools inviting them to participate in the education programme.
17) Continued facilitation of the Pensioners' Parliament	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different age	To facilitate one Parliament per year	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Engagement.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> 2016-2021.</p> <p><b>Status: Complete for this reporting period.</b> The Pensioners' Parliament took place on 17 September 2021.</p>
18) Additional Minority Parliaments	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Persons of different racial group/people with a disability	To facilitate one BEM Parliament per year	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Engagement.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> 2016-2021.</p> <p><b>Status: In progress</b> Planning for a BAME Parliament is under way and a planning meeting took place in</p>

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	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)				September 2021. The Parliament is due to take place in early 2022.
19) Continued Implementation of the 'Perspective on...' series	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.	To hold events as agreed by the Assembly Commission for 2016, namely: Easter Rising; Battle of the Somme	Assembly Commission to agree future events at the beginning of the 2016-2021 mandate in 2016.	<p><b>Lead:</b> Speaker's Office.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> 2016-2021.</p> <p><b>Status: Actions complete for period.</b> The Assembly Commission agreed a programme of events for 2021. From April to June 2021, the Speaker hosted four "Perspectives On" ... lectures delivered by Dr Eamon Phoenix. The virtual lectures covered events and different perspectives around the centenary of the creation of Northern Ireland/ partition and were open to the public. The Assembly Commission also launched "100 years, 100 words" a social media initiative to allow MLAs to record their reflections on the centenary. Short videos were posted on the Assembly website.</p>
20) Continued lighting of the exterior Parliament Buildings	Good Relations (Theme 1c of Audit of Inequalities)	Promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.	To light the exterior of Parliament Buildings as agreed by the Assembly Commission.  The Commission will schedule up to 4 days (consecutive or	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Events.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> 2016-2021.</p> <p><b>Status: Complete for this reporting period.</b> A revised Special Lighting Policy was approved by the Commission in December 2019. A review of this policy</p>

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			<p>not) during a calendar year for event(s) of its choice in line with the policy.</p> <p>b) The Northern Ireland Charity of the year will have access to the system for up to 5 days (consecutive or not) during its 12 months term.</p> <p>c) The Assembly Commission will grant up to another 8 days for events during a calendar year when requests are made (paragraphs g) in line with the policy (1 day per event).</p> <p>Altogether there will be up to 17 days scheduled per year in line with the policy with potential extraordinary ad-hoc requests as</p>		<p>was completed in March 2021 and was approved by the Commission in May 2021.</p> <p>Lighting applications continue to be processed in line with the Special Lighting policy.</p>

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			specified at paragraphs h) & i).		
21) Continue annual series of 'Let's Talk' events across constituencies	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Young People	Hold events in school venues which will involve all constituencies	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Education Service.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> 2016-2021.</p> <p><b>Status: Partially achieved.</b> Due to the public health situation, there were no physical outward visits/events during the reporting period. However, the Education Service offered a virtual programme to schools in all constituencies throughout the period.</p>
22) Speaker to host 'Assembly Women's Week' in 2016 which will focus on encouraging women to participate and increasing female representation	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Gender	The week will host a range of different events including discussion with female role models, increasing female representation on public and private boards, increasing female presence in the media.	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Speaker's Office and Communications and Engagement.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> 2016.</p> <p><b>Status: Action complete in 2016.</b> Since 2016, the Speaker has hosted an annual event for International Women's Day. The Assembly Commission is also currently engaging with the Assembly Women's Caucus to explore creating a permanent artwork or alternative to reflect the role female MLAs have played.</p>
23) Develop a business outreach plan by delivering targeted training to	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	Men and Women generally	Increase NIABT members by 5% year on year and improve wider	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Engagement.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing.</p>

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businesses to raise awareness of the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust (NIABT) in the private sector.			understanding of how businesses can engage with the Assembly. The NIABT will specifically run events to encourage the involvement of women.		<p><b>Status: In progress.</b></p> <p>The Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust (NIABT) Board of Trustees agreed in 2017 that the NIABT should be dissolved. Dissolution was not possible because of the political situation from early 2017 to January 2020. Since the restoration of normal Assembly business in January 2020, work has been under way to effect dissolution, which is expected to happen in the 2021/22 year. The Corporate Strategy and Plan include actions to improve connections and ensure engagement with a wide range of groups, including the business community. An independent piece of research was carried out to assess how the Assembly should engage with business. The output from this research will develop future engagement strategies.</p>
24) Regular meetings with Section 75 groups to inform reviews of Engagement Strategy.	Participation (Theme 1d of Audit of Inequalities)	All s75 Groups	Annual meetings with appropriate groups to inform reviews of Strategy.	Yes	<p><b>Lead:</b> Engagement.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Annually.</p> <p><b>Status: Complete for reporting period.</b></p> <p>The Engagement Strategy was incorporated into the Corporate Strategy and Corporate Plans. Consultation and co-design has taken place with a wide range of Section 75 groups in this reporting period, including older people, women, LGBTQ, disability, BAME,</p>

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					asylum seekers and young people outside of education. This work has led to tailored training, diverse Committee stakeholder events, development of a range of diversity parliaments and successful promotion of the consultation to develop the 2022-2025 Good Relations Action Plan.

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

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25) Continue to implement fair and inclusive recruitment practices	Recruitment and Selection (Theme 2a of Audit of Inequalities)	All	Ensuring that all recruitment competitions are fully accessible  Apply welcome statements or		<b>Lead:</b> Head of HR.  <b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing. The procedures for internal and external recruitment have been reviewed to ensure compliance with good practice. A guaranteed interview scheme



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			affirmative action if appropriate in consultation with the Equality Commission for NI.		<p>has been implemented for both internal and external recruitment.</p> <p><b>Status: Complete.</b> A number of recruitment competitions have progressed during 2021 in line with the Assembly Commission's policies and procedures. The Guaranteed Interview Scheme remains in place.</p>
26) Continue to implement staff surveys	Recruitment and Selection (Theme 2b of Audit of Inequalities)	All	<p>Use the results of the staff survey to produce and implement an action plan if required</p> <p>Monitor the progress of the implementation of this action plan</p>		<p><b>Lead:</b> Corporate Support.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Staff surveys to be undertaken regularly between 2016 and 2021.</p> <p><b>Status: In progress.</b> The implementation of staff surveys continues. The Secretariat Management Group (SMG) agreed in May 2021 that the biennial staff survey be held in the autumn of 2021. In September 2021, SMG agreed to the proposed methodology and indicative timescale for the survey, which is likely to be held in November 2021. The Internal Communications Group is now working on the content of the survey.</p>